



## The Transformation of Being in Mahmoud Darwish's *The Dice Player*: A Heideggerian Perspective

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*"The poets are in the vanguard of a changed conception of Being."*

**Martin Heidegger**

Received 5 November 2022 | Received in revised form 07 January 2023 | Accepted 08 February 2023

### APA Citation:

Ghnaim, F., Khoury, O., Alkhawaja, L., Mahmoud, H., M., Badrakhana, S. S. E. (2023). The Transformation of Being in Mahmoud Darwish's *The Dice Player*: A Heideggerian Perspective. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(1), 1-12. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.32601/ejal.901001>

### Abstract

This research paper aimed to study the transformation of Being in Mahmoud Darwish's last poem *The Dice Player* through a Heideggerian framework analysis. It took Heidegger's famous quote "The poets are in the vanguard of a changed conception of Being" as a point of departure in investigating and unveiling the assumed transformation in the Darwishian Being in the poem. By employing a descriptive-interpretative qualitative research method, the paper argued that *The Dice Player* depicted Darwish's implicit and explicit changed conception of his own Being which Heidegger called 'mineness' particularly in relation to his *amour propre*, his perception of Death and the 'Other'. The findings reveal that the Darwishian changed conception of Being, which was driven by his anxiety and submission to death, gave rise to a new Darwishian Being. The new Darwishian Being developed a different perception of himself (*amour propre*), death and others in *The Dice Player* when compared to his previous poems. Therefore, the paper concluded that Darwish seemingly joined "the vanguard of a changed conception of Being" by showing a transformation in his Being at three different levels.

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**Keywords:** Dasein, Mineness, Nothingness, Other, *The Dice Player*

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.32601/ejal.901001>

## Introduction

Martin Heidegger (German philosopher, 1889-1976) is recognized as one of the most prominent twentieth century philosophers who have discussed philosophical and intellectual perspectives of life and whose existential and humanistic philosophical propositions has penetrated into contemporary poetry. Heidegger's philosophy of Being, existence, Dasein and ontology draw linkages between thought, existence and nothingness in poetry. Arabic poetry, for instance, which has evolved recently to keep pace with global modernism, portrays such philosophical thoughts in contemporary poetic texts. Several Arabic poets, including Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), have addressed the concerns, challenges and pains arising from existential questioning in the hope of mitigating some of the anxiety and perplexity that dwell in people.

Mahmoud Darwish has been and is still considered one of the most prominent contemporary poets who were preoccupied with the Palestinian Cause where he extensively expressed the suffering of his nation. However, he did not remain confined to this Cause as he also raised questions of existence in his poetry. As described by Qattous (2019), the Darwishian poetry contributed to his readers' cultural, self, collective and philosophical memory where aesthetic and intellectual perspectives were added to a memory that was open to interpretation. Drawing on philosophical thoughts suggested by Heidegger, Nietzsche and Schär Rene, Darwish questioned life, death, destiny and eternity (Qattous, 2019). His philosophical perception was most evident in the last part of his collected poetical works titled *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?* and the subsequent poetical works as well.

*The Dice Player* was published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2008, about forty days before the death of the poet on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August in 2008. The poem, written in Arabic with 371 free verse lines, has been included in his last poetical collection *I Don't Want This Poem to End*. It came out to readers as an autobiography as some critics believe (e.g. Alshaer (2011)). *The Dice Player* was also the last Darwishian poem in which images of anxiety, apprehension of death and nothingness were presented within a Heidegger-based Being and Dasein's analytics. The poet's extensive questioning of life and death in his last poems could be attributed to his critical health condition then, after an open heart surgery. During that period of time, Darwish found himself confronting death as it appeared to his readers in his long poem *Mural* that he raised in the face of death (Almasawi, 2009; Furani, 2020).

It has been previously argued that Darwish's poetry unveiled an intensive occupation with the Heideggerian idea of poetry (Azzam, 2016). However, the argument in the present research does not shed light on the assumed Heideggerian influence on Darwish in the poem in question but rather reveals certain aspects of the Darwishian Being and its transformation in light of Heidegger's ontological constitution. The argument opens up the assumption that towards scripting his last verse, Darwish immersed into the 'vanguard' in Heidegger's saying "The poets are in the vanguard of a changed conception of Being".

The quoted verses from *The Dice Player* throughout the current research paper are extracted from the translation of the American- Palestinian poet and translator, Joudah (2008). Joudah was the winner of Yale Series of poets' competition in 2007. He translated Darwish's most recent poetry collected in *The Butterfly's Burden* which he has been praised for (Bittar, 2008). Joudah's English translation of *The Dice Player* was published in *VQR: A National Journal of Literature and Discussion*, volume 98, issue 3, available at <https://www.vqronline.org/vqr-symposium/dice-player>. References in this paper have also been made to other Darwishian poems, each reference is cited in the text according to the English translation referred to. The *Mural's* English version, for instance, is cited from two sources; Hammami's and Berger's translation, published in 2016 as well as from Boulus' translation published in 2004 since each version reflected a different excerpt of the poem (Furani, 2020).

This research aimed to elucidate the Darwishian poetic experience in *The Dice Player*. It tried to reveal how the poet was open to the questioning of existence, and how he formed and [trans]formed himself in the poetic text. Specifically, this research paper sought to answer the question: What aspects of transformation of the Darwishian Being exist in *The Dice Player* in relation to three levels of *amour propre*, perception of death and the 'Other'? These three levels within the Heideggerian framework of Being have so far been neglected in previous studies and hence the current study would fill this research gap.

## Literature Review

After years of intensive writing on the Palestinian resistance, Darwish's discourse slightly changed to become more concerned with experimentalist poetry than with realistic poetry and with humanistic issues rather than with nationalist ones (Madi, 2013). Disappointed with Arab nationalism and the political ideology that he had earlier espoused, Darwish became indulged in subjective experiences and existential reflections,

hence moving from Palestinian existentialism to human existentialism (Wazen, 2008). Owing to his prestigious position among Arab poets, Mahmoud Darwish's poetic works have been extensively studied. In his study, Qattous (2019) dealt with philosophical questions posed by Darwish's poems as related to thoughts about life, death, destiny, existence, identity, the ego and the 'other'. Qattous analyzed Darwish's questions in view of Nietzschean thoughts and explained how the existential questions he reflected on have operated to enhance the depth of the aesthetic vision of the poems.

Some other studies analyzed Darwishian perceptions and attitudes towards life, death, his homeland and enemy. Almasawi (2009) tackled the theme of death in Mahmoud Darwish's poetry. He found that before the mid-eighties, Darwish spoke about the mass death, which was an inevitable result of the occupation, displacement and resistance to very powerful oppressor. At this stage, death is positively portrayed by Darwish; death is the wedding of the martyr, love for the homeland, the route to restore freedom and the lost homeland, the proof of identity and the path for life. This stage is reflected in *Olive Leaves* (1966), *Birds Die in Galilee* (1969), and *A Siege of Sea Praises* (1984). In the second stage which began with *Mural* in 1999, Mahmoud Darwish found himself in a severe confrontation with death after the critical surgery he had. He was more mature in his talk about death, asserting that mass death was a violent act committed by the enemy against the helpless 'others'.

Other studies that have investigated the aesthetic features of the Darwishian poetry include Al-Shanoufy's (2020) treatise on Darwish's collection *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?* and on *Mural* in the light of poetic discourse theories and reader-response theory, stressing how contexts affect readership. Al-Shanoufy (2020) based his analysis of the poems on stylistics to show the connection between the form and content in poetic writing. He argued how modern techniques in poetic writing can be effective in expressing emotional conditions and how semantics can be used to link the personal with the collective, the real with the imaginary, and the historical with the legendary in Darwish's poetry. Al-Shanoufy (2020) showed that Mahmoud Darwish was establishing a new poetic discourse in philosophical vein which proved a turning point in the Arabic poetry. Darwish was thus attempting to transform the Palestinian issue from a nationalist political conflict to an existential one.

His last poem, *The Dice Player* was no exception. Among the studies which dealt with this poem was the one conducted by Aljalooob (2018) which discussed the impact of the 'Other' in *The Dice Player* in the formation of the poet. Aljalooob (2018) built his study on the mechanism of the poetic discourse according to the theories of the French critic, Henry Meschonnic, Meschonnic's theory highlighted the concept of the Self formation at three levels; place of existence, social fabric and personal relationships (Meschonnic & Bedetti, 1988). The Aljalooob's study (2018) concluded that the failures inflicted on the poet's Self came as a result of sickness in witnessing the fall and death of his body. It concluded that the poetic discourse in *The Dice Player* depicted the collapse inflicted on the Self by the opponent other on one hand and death on the other.

Another interesting study was the one carried out by Al Karaki (2019). Based on Deleuze's theory of the logic of meaning drawn from Platonic and Stoic philosophical thoughts and influenced by "Alice in Wonderland" by Lewis Carroll, Al Karaki (2019) analyzed the two Darwishian poems; *Mural* and *The Dice Player*. The analysis concluded that unlike *Mural* which was seen as an attempt to maintain persistence – reflected in the use of nouns, adjectives and state verbs, *The Dice Player* reveals succumbing to the idea of the infinity of 'becoming' through intensive use of action verbs.

A comparative study by Kahlouch (2013) addressed questions of place and Being in *The Dice Player* compared to Mallarmé's 'A Roll of the Dice'. In her comparison of the two poems, Kahlouch (2013) showed how each poem dealt with the ego's search for its nebula in a self-narrative poetic text. From a different perspective, Alshaer (2011), focused in *The Dice Player* on the Darwishian poetic journey in the Palestinian context with special emphasis on images of existence, resistance and his contribution to the Palestinian identity. The Darwishian poetic journey also witnessed the poet's transformation of Being in *The Dice Player* at three levels; *amour propre*, perception of death and attitude towards others. A few studies were reviewed prior to framing these objectives of the study to understand how these three levels were portrayed in the Darwishian poetry before *The Dice Player*. A study by Halabi (2017) discussed how Darwish used to reflect a great *amour propre* and perceived himself as a prophet to his people. Another study conducted by Jaradat (2013) revealed that Darwish's earlier poetry envisaged death as a martyrdom wedding that generated life after life. Last but not least, a recent study carried out by Mahfoodh (2021) described how Darwish was fully engaged in the Palestinian Cause and how he called for continuous resistance in his earlier poetry to the extent that he was labeled as 'the poet of resistance'.

The present research paper aimed to investigate how the Darwishian Being was getting transformed in *The Dice Player* in the light of the three levels, namely *amour propre*, his perception towards death and the 'Other'. This angle to examine *The Dice Player* within the Heideggerian framework of Being has been overlooked in all previous studies. To fill this research gap, this study therefore sheds light on the transformations which seem to have taken place in the Darwishian Being. The study conducts an analysis of the role played by the abovementioned levels in the transformation of the Darwishian Being both before and after *The Dice Player* discourse.

## Methodology

As poetry is an art rather than science, the research method employed in this study was a descriptive-interpretive qualitative method, with philosophical and phenomenological approach. It attempted to unveil the Heideggerian Dasein in *The Dice Player*. However, the research was limited by lack of previous empirical studies that link Darwish with Heidegger. Hence, it is difficult to judge the real approaches used in previous writings. However, this research followed the premise that *The Dice Player* was a result of 'anxiety of Heideggerian influence' (Bloom, 1973), so this perspective was adopted as the research design of this study. Such perspectives are recommended in qualitative research studies (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) as they help in capturing the essence of naturally occurring scenarios, as evident in Heideggerian perception of Being and nothingness. Such philosophical and ontological perspectives are also easily revealed with the qualitative method. Philosophical reasoning (Conolly, 1999) is beyond scientification and the problems are examined from a philosophical perspective, with dialogical integration of items, events, instruments, the self, and the 'Other' playing important roles.

## Theoretical framework

- *Dasein and Being*

Martin Heidegger was the first to coin the term 'Dasein' bringing about a revolution in modern philosophical thought. *Dasein*, is a German word which means human presence or 'being there'. According to Heidegger, a human being exists within the Dasein, that is, it is the only Being that is able to question existence. By questioning so, a human being is identified as the existence of the Being. Heidegger suggested that a Dasein or a human subject is the only entity able to uncover and disclose itself as well as other entities (Olafson, 2019). According to Heidegger, 'being there' is also related to 'the inquiry of being an entity' and this entity is what was denoted by Heidegger as Dasein (Heidegger, 2012). It is 'being in a way that one has an understanding of Being' (Heidegger, 2012). Accordingly, the world is constructed within the Dasein and for the world to be revealed to Dasein, it must be pulled out of its invisibility and nebulae into visibility. In that sense, the world is a movement by which the presence of human existence is felt (Mehnana, 2010).

The characteristic of a being, who is capable of asking about his Being, is peculiar to a human being only. A human being alone is gifted with the ability of questioning the universe and the reality of its existence. Thus, Dasein's understanding of Being entails both; understanding the world and understanding the Being of those entities which become accessible within the world (Heidegger, 2012). In other words, Dasein's understanding of Being is an openness of a human being to the world. However, Dasein understanding of Being needs to be authentic and it can only be authentic in its evolution to existence through an ontological constitution (Aspers & Kohl, 2013). It would be inauthentic existence if Dasein is thrown into the everyday, ordinary world as Being. If done so, it would be obscured by being preoccupied with this everyday and ordinary world. Therefore, Dasein needs to aspire to what is authentic and transcending the ordinary in the everyday world. According to Heidegger, my being or 'mineness,' as he called it, belongs to any existent Dasein that may be 'authentic or 'inauthentic.' In other words, if Dasein discovers the world in its own way, it discloses to itself its own authentic Being. This discovery of the world and disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing away of concealments and obscurities' (Heidegger, 1927).

- *Anxiety - Nothingness - Death*

Based on the foregoing, the true meaning of Dasein in its authentic existence cannot be manifested, except through the ontological structures that distinguish the Being from other beings such as anxiety, nothingness and death which in their entirety make the Being look at itself from above; a panoramic view. The ontological structure of 'mineness' lies in the core of self-subsistence of existence because the authentic self cannot be a mere object; it is rather grounded in existence (Heidegger, 1977)

Anxiety was perceived by Heidegger as a basic state of mind of Dasein which is significant from an ontological standpoint (Heidegger, 1977). Experiencing anxiety triggers self-awareness as a basic conscience that brings about the original openness of the Being to what it is (Heidegger, 1977). In this sense, the Being is pulled out of decadence, generality, and preoccupation with the daily and the ordinary, to be placed in a distinctive way before itself in an effort to achieve self-awareness transcending it from inauthentic into authentic existence. According to Heidegger, this world in which the Being unwillingly exists is an inauthentic existence.



**Table 1.** Heidegger's ontological description of authentic and inauthentic

Time	Authentic existence	Inauthentic existence	Implication
The authentic future	Anticipation	Plan and aim	Openness to the possibility awaiting
The inauthentic future	Doubtfulness and uncertainty	Take care	Resoluteness and self awareness
The authentic present	Moment of Vision	Now	Unwillingness
The inauthentic present	Preoccupation with the daily	Unplanned	Factual and existent
The authentic past	Repetition, taking back	Forgetfulness	Sense of loss
The inauthentic past	Decadence and generality	Remote	

The anxiety that floats on the surface of the Being discloses the world for us to realize that this world and whatever it entails is headed to no-thingness, which is the essence of nothingness. Being there is always subject to uncertainty since lives are limited to and shaped by death. For Dasein to be authentic it wants to have a conscience; but this is an existential possibility which tends to be made definite in an existential way by Being-towards-death.

As per Heidegger, nothingness permeates our daily life in the sense that any act of the Being turns out to be a null unrecognized act due to complete preoccupation with the daily and ordinary in this world on one hand and its relationship with the 'Other' on the other hand (Morrow, 2013). Anxiety leads the Being to a phase in which no-thingness is manifested, where the Being escapes being as a whole into being-towards-death. Such an escape is perceived as a nothingness-dominated escape that strips the Being of one of its most important possibilities; namely, the possibility to die. As per Heidegger, death is a unique possibility that is especially manifested and opened up in the Being within the Dasein which is peculiar to the human Being.

The certain possibility of death discloses Dasein as a possibility (Heidegger, 1927). The Heideggerian Dasein is clearly manifested in *The Dice Player* as the present paper reveals. The poet's Dasein is exposed to himself as he raises questions of who he is, how he submits to death and disengages from his people and his context.

## Results and Discussion

### Mineness: *My Being*

As a prominent contemporary poet who fully interacted with his national context, Darwish presented a poetic contribution as an offspring of the suffering of his people as well as his own suffering. *The Dice Player* comes out as a detailed poetic autobiography (Alshaer, 2011), however, in a different mode and mood from all his previous poetic discourses. Darwish raises questions of his Dasein, his *amour propre*, the power of death and the 'Other' in which a transformation of the post-Darwishian perception is sensed throughout the poem. In an attempt to comprehend and absorb the dilemma he was going through, Darwish initiates the poem with a question addressed from the poet's Self to its ego:

*Who am I to say to you / what I say to you?  
When I was not a stone burnished by water  
To become a face / or a reed punctured by the wind  
to become a flute... / I'm a dice player  
I win some and lose some just like you or a little less ... (Lines 1-9)*

The Heideggerian Dasein is immanent in the Self of the poet that is experiencing moments of anomaly, influx of anxiety and perplexity about the causality of 'being there' as well as knowing what this 'I' is, for "the essence of Dasein lies in its existence" (Heidegger, 1927; Lakhali, 2011, 2015). In the quoted verses above, Darwish dismantles himself from its ego speculating existence-related questions with explicit reflection of anxiety and uncertainty of who he was. As per Heidegger, anxiety is closely related to nothingness and nothingness is intrinsically linked to passivity and denial. In Chapter 6 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger claims that anxiety is not fretting about something. Unlike fear -which poses a source of some threat- anxiety allows the Being to enter into a mood of peace and tranquility. Moreover, Being-in-the-world as a whole is revealed in anxiety as it disrupts the Dasein in its envelopment. This openness of the Darwishian Dasein makes him pose questions about 'Being there'. By posing such questions, Darwish is found to deny his prominent position as a poet, depriving himself of his unique poetic identity. By saying "just like you or a little less", Darwish no longer sees himself as a distinguished Self. He rather descends from above to be like the 'Other', or a little less.

The poet was clearly exposed to a huge amount of daily events in different walks of life with full awareness that "the conscious writer or thinker is the most capable of revealing reality, the environment and the transformations taking place as well as their impact" (Al-Yousifi, 2016). This subjective experience intensified the feeling of alienation, so the ego wonders about its Self as if it had never known what that Self was before. The questioning of "who am I" a refrain that is repeated five times throughout the poem- also reflects a feeling of absurdity, purposelessness and anxiety which Soren Kirkjar considers 'the essence of alienation' (Al-Yousifi, 2016). It confirms a feeling of fragility and rupture of the ego on the one hand, and its nihilism on the other hand, making his Being seem completely defeated and void.

The poet's Self was depicted in previous works to have had influential presence because this Self was confident of the prominent role it played in poetic discourse. In his *Mural* (Darwish, 1999), the poet seemed strong, confident and felt he was able to defeat even death as shown in the following verse: *Green / The land of my poem is green/ The song carries her as she was/ fertile from past to past* (Lines 128-131). Between *Mural* and *The Dice Player*, the 'mineness' of the poet is Being transformed. Such a transformation probably took place at the moment of writing his last poem in an attempt to understand the poet's Being, for which the question "Who am I" was posed. The Being in *The Dice Player* emerged in its entirety due to the brokenness and weakness of the body (Darwish, 2008). As a result, his perception of his Being changed. At the moment of writing, a new Darwishian identity was born. Darwish cast himself outside himself to discover it again at the moment of creative writing in response to his feeling at that moment.

Before *The Dice Player*, the Darwishian Being fully manifested itself in poetic discourse as a mediator between the recipient and the metaphysical world conveying messages from an unknown world (Heidegger, 1994). In those poems, Darwish describes traits of his ego delving into its formations that came as a result of chance which is a basic notion in philosophical existentialism (Kahlouch, 2013). The poet discloses a Being which was woven by chance in the world of the unseen. In the previous images, the poet is depicted as a mere dice player who wins sometimes and loses others, dismantling previous achievements of all features of fame and prestige. In *The Dice Player*, Darwish is no longer 'the prophet' that was depicted in his *Mural* where he proudly stated: "I am the message and the messenger" (Darwish, 1999). The transformation is reflected here in descending his being from being a prophet into a being that wonders about itself attributing its existence to chance and coincidence. The poet's ego is envisaged differently; it is perceived as an entity formed by a roll of a dice, thrown by an unknown power. 'I in *The Dice Player*' is similar to that of the others or perhaps it is 'a little less'.

From a different angle, the burden of existential concern residing in the Self of the poet can be clearly sensed; a state of anxiety that was almost absent in previous poems. In *Arabic Music* (published in 1984), which is initiated with 'I wish I were a stone', Darwish wished to turn into a mere inanimate object in an attempt to escape the anxiety of existence; a far-fetched escape in *The Dice Player*. In the quoted stanza above, Darwish denies that he might have been a stone. He is not a mere object; his being is 'being there' wondering about its existence. This implicit meaning is based on the Heideggerian notion that the human Being -which is more than a mere thing existing in this world- is the only Being that may manifest responsibility for its existence and existential transformations. The Heideggerian basic concept of the authentic Being within the Dasein "is a Being that cannot but exist" and bear the possibility of its Being towards its own potential. Heidegger's conception of human existence or the Dasein is 'Being-there' rather than Being a mere object among others (Heidegger, 1927). So the poet's Being here opens to the world fusing into a dice player who may win or lose by chance. Mere chance is perceived here to have constituted the poet's Being, on the one hand, and the duality of profit and loss on the other hand. The transformation to an anxious Being that is wondering about its existence and role in this universe is reflected in the first nine lines of the poem.

*The Dice Player* does not only depict the Darwishian Being transformation but frames that transformation in time. Darwish narrates a transparent autobiography through listing sequence of living experiences that he went through highlighting the coincidences that shaped his existence since birth (Darwish, 2008). His ontological perception is manifested in tracing his time within the time frame of his Dasein through what happened to him in reality. Time of his past experiences along with the foreseen time in the future envisages time in both modes; horizontal and vertical, in an attempt to reveal all the possibilities and anticipate them to reveal and understand the essence of his Being. Darwish intensively uses the past imperfect (what was happening or used to happen in reference to his horizontal time and the present and future tenses (possible and foreseeable) in reference to his vertical time. The swing between the two times is an attempt to explore his Being in the past and its transformation in the present to unveil who he was or may have been.

*The Dice Player* reflects a narration of incidents in the poet's life commencing with birth with which the life of Dasein begins (Darwish, 2008; Heidegger, 1927) ending with an explicit surrender to no-thingness. Birth which is the real temporal event with which the poet's existential concern began is depicted as an incident that occurred out of place and time in figurative language: "born beside the water well and three lonely trees like nuns." (Darwish, 2008) Such images indicate self-denial and indefiniteness of time and place which is a complete deviation from the Darwishian poetic norm. Prior to *The Dice Player*, specifically in his *Mural*, Darwish envisaged -in full pride- the power of his Being within his horizontal time in his homeland (Darwish, 1999). That powerful Self of the poet and its influence within its national context as a prominent patriotic poet is no more reflected in *The Dice Player*. A dominant passivity tone is heard instead as all incidents and achievements are attributed to coincidence as the lines below reveal:

*I was given my name by chance/ belonged to a family by chance  
And inherited its traits, features, and illnesses:/First, arterial disease and high blood pressure  
Second, shyness when addressing my parents/ and the tree/my grandmother  
Third, a hope in Being cured of influenza/ with a cup of hot chamomile  
Fourth, a laziness when speaking about doves and larks/ Fifth, a boredom in winter nights  
Sixth, a failure in singing (Darwish, 2008)*

In the lines above, birth is highlighted in the existence of a being that is searching for its ego. The poet is found here to perceive his birth as a transient incident of the past. It dwells in the poet's imagination as being thrown in place and time. The history of the poet plays a major role in shaping his ontological presence that is driven by coincidence in which birth may have had a positive or a negative impact. Therefore, Darwish initiates the poem by recalling the incident of birth, which had an everlasting influence on his entire life, as the past probes the present and the future together. His ego seems to be lost in the labyrinths of existence that is close to nothingness; a reflection of a no-identity ego and a loss of the true essence of existence.

The poet seems to marginalize the pride he used to enjoy. In his *Mural*, a different mood was reflected as he described with pride all the positive denotations and connotations associated with his name 'Mahmoud'. This is not only absent in *The Dice Player* but he even strips himself of any distinctive trait as he believes he was named by chance. Chance and Coincidence are manifested for the poet as causal abstracts behind his existence. Coincidentally, he belonged to [a] family inheriting its diseases and habits. Hence, coincidences follow in the life of the poet by which it was detached from the reality of its existence. His life experiences seemed -for him- to be driven by some unknown metaphysical powers. Anxiety penetration into the depth of us reveals nothingness, vainness of existence and absurdity. Attributing life experiences and achievements to mere coincidence reflects a passive stance of the speaker as he states in the following verses: *I have no role in what I became or will become.../ It is luck. Luck has no name.* (Lines 194 &195)

The passivity reflected in '*I have no role in what I became*' was also related to Heidegger's anxiety, as for Heidegger, anxiety is Being in a state of calmness of mind or when the Being assumes a stance that fulfills the highest claim; a mood of attunement towards the world. (Heidegger, 1927). In a study of the Heideggerian 'anxiety', Hila (2020) concludes that anxiety, as defined by Heidegger, is a means of 'exiting the system within which one exists'. However, that same anxiety is what turns the Being from inauthentic into authentic as discussed before.

As the poet allows this great space for chance, and coincidence in whatever he became, he envisages himself to be deprived of will and freedom as well as identity which is "an expression of self-freedom" (Hasanein, 2012). The poet voluntarily relinquished freedom of choice to escape its burdens attributing several life experiences -including his survival- to chance and coincidence as he says:

*It was coincidence that I was/ the one alive in the bus accident  
Because I didn't board the bus:/ I'd forgotten about existence and its matters  
Reading through the night before/ a love story in which I impersonated the author  
and the lover/the victim, became love's martyr/ but alive in the traffic accident / (Darwish, 2008)*

The tone of denial and erasure remains loud in *The Dice Player* even in reference to the most influential events in his life and his distinctive contribution to poetry. The poet here is confined to and focused on the space of his Being. The fact that Darwish absolved himself of the role he plays in the poem does not reflect his despair of existing or the weirdness of his conditions, but presents a creative poetic discourse embracing a summary of his poetic experience in a farewell tone as he says: *My only hand in a poem/ is to obey its rhythm* (Darwish, 2008).

The only role the poet sees as playing in *The Dice Player* is maintaining its rhythm, detaching rhythm from all other poetry aesthetic features. With reference to pre-*The Dice Player* Darwishian poetry, one can sense a switch in perception and amour propre. In one of his interviews, Darwish stressed that the poem is born from the rhythm as he states "once the first line is written, the rest flow" (Wazen, 2008). The poetic act in *The Dice Player* seems to Darwish to be driven by a state of unconsciousness that is inaccessible to thinking. It all came as a result of inspiration and revelation where he plays no role since revelation is a matter of luck after all. For the poet, revelation remains a mysterious matter as he describes his ego moving from his Self into another: "my self's image as it relocates from my "I" to another's". He depicts his ego as uniting with another's, reflecting a transformation from the specific to the whole (Wazen, 2008). Such a mood was described by Heidegger as the anxiety that allows peace of mind and tranquility to transform the Being into authentic. In *The Dice Player*, the voice of the ego molds in attunement with the 'Other' where the self becomes that absent 'He'.

Darwish's statement "*this poem has more than one poet*" (line 302) can be perceived as philosophically relevant. In the course of Heidegger's reading of the poetry of Hölderlin and Trakl- he states that "the pure speaker is the poem itself" (Heidegger, 1994). In *The Dice Player*, Darwish sees that he could have never become a poet if certain supporting factors did not play a role in that as he says:

*And I could have not been afflicted / with the jinn of the Mu'allaqat  
Had the house's gate faced north / instead of overlooking the sea (Lines 55-58)  
Revelation might not have been / my ally, and revelation  
Is the luck of the lonesome/ the poem is a dice throw (Darwish, 2008)*

Darwish, who previously declared that "remains of a poet can only be found in his poetry if he is to endure his legacy throughout time" (Wazen, 2008) is now found to marginalize his poetic legacy. While the poet strips himself from any poetic abilities in *The Dice Player*, the land of his poems was green in *Mural* (cited above). Interestingly, Darwish's previous opinion about the power of the poem echoes Heidegger's as the latter had pointed out that a good poem is characterized by the presence of the poem where the poet's role is ruled out (Heidegger, 1994).

The anxiety dwelling in the Darwishian Being changed his conception of his Being not only as a poet but as a lay person. In the following lines, the poet expresses the exhaustion he arrived at throughout a journey of different life acts. A successive use of action present tense verbs is noticed as if the poet is calling into mind a sequence of scenes evoked from his horizontal time.

*I'd walk/jog/run/ascend/descend/scream/bark/howl/call/wail/speed up/slow down/  
Plummet/lighten/dry up/march/fly/see/not see/stumble/turn yellow/green/blue/  
Crack/sob/thirst/tire/starve/get up/run/forget/see/not see/  
Remember/hear/envision/mumble/hallucinate/whisper/scream/  
Or not/moan/go mad/get lost/become less/  
Become more/drop/soar/descend/bleed/fall unconscious/ (Darwish, 2008)*

While the poet recalls his horizontal memory, different life acts and emotions are pictured in a sequence which reflects a falling Being; a being that used to be active in different walks of life and is eventually falling unconscious. Trivializing all acts he conducted in life and the emotions concerned with those acts come as a result of the anxiety the poet was living which also entails a desperate tone. Both anxiety and despair are contributing to the change his Being is going through. Emotions of despair were never explicitly revealed in the Darwishian tone as they are in *The Dice Player*. There has always been a hopeful tone in his previous poetic discourse; e.g. *Hope* (1964) and *On This Land* (1986) at a time when he believed there was still on Earth that was worth living for.

Hence, it can be argued that the Darwishian Being 'mineness' is depicted differently in relation to his *amour propre*. He no longer portrays himself as a great poet or a prophet as he used to in the past (Halabi, 2017). The transformation in his Being here is reflected in picturing himself inferior rather than superior to others. After all, the change of the Darwishian Being was not only read between the lines of *The Dice Player* but was explicitly expressed by the poet as he says "my self's image as it relocates from my 'I' into 'another's'" (lines 133 & 134).

- *Being-towards-death*

It is noted that from all of the foregoing that the theme of death dominates the poem. Darwish made death a focal point permeating his life by which he became controlled and obsessed. This is not unusual for a dying self that is approaching its nothingness. The poet seems to marginalize his role, perceiving life with the possibility of death as meaningless, no matter how long it can be postponed. Darwish was able to anticipate events and put himself in the face of death throughout different phases of his life. It is anxiety in front of death; anxiety of death is anxiety of the inevitable (Heidegger, 1927). Towards the end of the poem, the poem concludes:

*It's my good fortune that I sleep alone/ and that I listen to my body  
And believe my talent in discovering/ pain in time to call the doctor  
Ten minutes before dying . . . / ten minutes, enough for me to live by chance  
And disappoint the void/ Who am I to disappoint the void  
Who am I, who am I? (Lines 321-329)*

The poet seems to contemplate the cycle of his existence in this world surrendering to death as a possibility that cannot be overcome. He eventually provides an answer to a recurring rhetorical question "Who am I?". When the soul understands the reality of death, it diminishes the importance of life. He concludes that death is 'the expected' while enjoying some more days alive remains an exception.

The poem continues to build on the duality of luck and chance and the game of fate as well as and randomness in constituting the poet's life. This temporal stretch between birth and death is governed by chance and luck leaving him in a state of perplexity as to the secret and meaning of his existence. Therefore, the poet repeatedly states "I played no role in what I was or will become...it was luck and luck is nameless". In reference to horizontal time of his life, the poet sounds submissive, and bereft of will, power and freedom which he used to possess previously. Luck and coincidence is referred to repeatedly to be the creator of several incidents in his horizontal life. Luck and coincidence is pictured as causes and results of brokenness, inability and limitation of freedom. The physical weakness along with anticipated death resulted in complete submission to death. His Being seemed more discerning towards situational coincidences, opening up to the perplexity of his existence. In different lines, Darwish says: *The only hand I had in my life/was when life taught me its recitations/ I asked it: Are there more? Then I lit the lanterns and tried to edit the recitations.. (Darwish, 2008)*

Here too, the poet denies having any control over the conduct of his life affairs in their entirety. He seems bereft of freedom and choice in front of the propositions offered to him by chance. Despite the harsh conditions he experienced and the turmoil of the existing world around him, the poet still has the desire to live and hold the responsibility of exiting the state of despair he has arrived at. As quoted in the lines above "I asked it: Are there more? then I lit the lanterns and tried to edit the recitations," the poet seems to testify life—in its ambiguity—through poetry. In some lines, it can be noted that there is a repeated reflection of the theme of modifying the dysfunctional standards of existence. As a conscious human Being, he insists to improve the conditions of his existence as reflected in the following stanza: *When the sky appears ashen /and I see a rose that has suddenly burst/ out of a crack in a wall I don't say:/ The sky is ashen!/ I extend my study of the rose/ and say to it: What a day! (Lines 256-261). Also quoted in a different stanza: I don't say: Life over there is real /and has imaginary places . . . / I say: Life, here, is possible (Lines 275-277)*



As nothingness approaches his 'mineness,' a complete submission to death becomes apparent towards the end of the poem. His anxiety disclosed his Being to his existence. His new authentic Being finally admits that he is doomed to death. This submission to death unveils a new Darwishian attitude towards life and nothingness. In contrast, his poem, *On This Land* (published in 1986) is initiated with 'on this land all of that which makes life worth living' (line1). While *On This Land* showed strong desire to live, his *Mural* showed a challenge in the face of death as he says *I wasn't born to know I was going to die" and screamed in the face of death "wait for me death beyond the earth... I want to live.* (lines 82, 220 & 310) (Darwish, 1999).

Between 'who am I that you should visit me' in *Mural* and 'who am I to disappoint the void' in *The Dice Player*, Darwish is not only switching a statement but a whole mindset. In light of the discussion above, the aspect which clearly transformed in his Being here is his perception of and attitude towards death. In lieu of challenging death as the poet used to prior to *The Dice Player* (Jaradat, 2013), Darwish is fully submitting to death in *The Dice Player*.

- *Disengagement from 'The Other'*

According to Heidegger, 'The Other' or 'The Others' are those engaged in the same projects as one's own or those against whom 'I' stands out (Heidegger, 1927). In other words, 'The Others' are those entities with which we co-exist and interact. The Palestinian Cause occupied a considerable space in the Darwishian poetry in which he depicted the collective suffering and pains that he shared with his nation. In most of his poetic discourse, Darwish saw himself as fully-integrated with his people without whom he would never solely exist. However, in *The Dice Player* this integration was dismantled and perceived as a result of a mere chance. For him, the fact that he was born in that place to witness what happened in that geographical spot was all driven by chance. It was a coincidence for him to become a national poet to defend the cause of his nation and end up in exile. Had the history of the place not witnessed a series of conflicts, neither the poet nor the Palestinian selves would have experienced such a harsh near-death life. Even surviving such conditions was nothing but a mere coincidence as he says:

*Who am I to say to you / what I say to you at the church's door  
when I'm only a dice throw / between predator and prey . . .  
I gained in clarity / not to enjoy my moonlit night  
but to witness the massacre / By chance I survived:  
I was smaller than a military target (Lines 68-76)*

In a flashback to what happened in that spot, he imagines how being in a different place or time could have given him the chance to enjoy moonlit nights instead of witnessing massacres on that 'nameless' land. Places are evoked in memory within specific time while the poet remains detached from the places with which he coexisted as revealed in the following lines:

*I might not have been a swallow / had the wind chosen differently for me,  
And wind is the traveler's luck . . . / I headed north, east, and west  
But the south was harsh and obstinate / because the south is my country . . .  
I became a swallow's metaphor to hover over my relic / in autumn and spring . . . (Lines 103-110)*

In the lines above, the poet reflects the suffering of fragmentation and displacement with regard to the place that constituted his history. The poet roamed north, east and west in places where he was welcomed, except for the south. His country lies in the south from which he was detached; a detachment which indicates a moral distance rather than a physical one. The conditional clause 'had the wind chosen differently for me' came to deepen that feeling and clarify how staying in that place was far-fetched. Hence, the image of the 'swallow' metaphorically drawn, came to express ability of flight and freedom of movement. It is worth wondering here whether 'the freedom of movement' here is physical or it just mirrors the Heideggerian "movement of falling, with temptation, tranquillizing, alienation, and entanglement as its essential characteristics" (Heidegger, 1927).

One aspect of the poet's disintegration from his homeland is seen in refraining from mentioning names of people or places. It can be noticed that no reference is made to names of his homeland cities as his previous poetic discourse reflected. Prior to *The Dice Player*, Darwish used to highlight names of Palestinian cities bragging about places where he was brought up. He is found here, however, to be detached from all those lands by referring to indefinite nameless places. In his poem *In Jerusalem* (published in 2004), Darwish depicts Jerusalem as the land of prophets 'The prophets over there are sharing the history of the holy ... ascending to heaven' (lines 4 & 5) and continues *We sing Jerusalem: / O children of Babylon / Born in chains / You shall return to Jerusalem soon* (lines 7-10).

In his poem *Returning to Jaffa* (published in 1972) both Jaffa and Nazareth are referred to by name : *And now he departs from us / Jaffa and settles in / And he knows it stone by stone / (lines 1-3) ...and it continues: And what shall we say to him? Does the memory fall / On a dagger / When evening is far from Nazareth? / Now he is going to it (Darwish, 1977)* (Translated by Johnson-Davies) Other examples are also found in his Complete Poetic Collection where names of Al-Karmel and Gaza are mentioned in in addition to writing a

whole book titled *Birds Die in Galilee* (published in 1969) (Darwish, 1973). In *The Dice Player*, places are left nameless and only recalled as abstract references. The Palestinian cities in his previous poetry are now somewhere in the south, 'the south is my country' (line 108) including his hometown (Galilee) which became some place close to a water well, 'born beside the water well' (Darwish, 2015). His detachment and disintegration from 'The Other' was also reflected in relation to places and entities with and within whom he co-existed. With reference to Heidegger's definition of 'The Others', it says "those engaged in the same projects as one's own or those over against whom 'I' stands out" to include both friends and enemies (Darwish, 2015).

In *The Dice Player*, the poet reveals an overwhelming desire to detach himself from beloved ones as well as from enemies. In *Identity Card* (published in 1964), Darwish described his enemy as 'the rapist of my land' (Darwish, 1973). In *The Dice Player*, this same enemy is merely referred to as 'the Other' when he says "If [those] had triumphed over [these] (line 295) depicting the people of his nation and his enemy as equal entities (others) who lie in some far or nearby place. He neither shows solidarity with his nation nor hostility towards his enemy. Becoming indifferent and perceiving his people and his enemy in an equal position is a turning point in the Darwishian perception towards 'The Other'. His disintegration from his own people is also reflected in the following lines where the suffering and pains are not seemingly shared anymore. 'I' is becoming an independent entity from 'We' as seen in the following: *and it is my good fortune that [I] am divinity's neighbor . . . / as it is [my] bad fortune that the cross/ is [our] tomorrow's eternal ladder* (Lines 115-117)

Even his reference to his family was indefinite 'I belonged to [a] family by chance' (Darwish, 1973). The lady (Rita) whom he referred to as his lover in poems such as *Rita and the Riffle* (published in 1967) and *Rita's Long Winter* (published in 1992) became an undefined girl in *The Dice Player* 'It was possible that I not love the girl' (line 140). Darwish's Being detachment is reflected in relation to homeland and people 'The Others' he was once very much attached to. He explicitly experienced a sense of alienation from whatever he once co-existed. This detachment from the place and 'The Other' is disclosing the Darwishian Dasein in *The Dice Player*. He started imagining the Beings he could have been other than what he came to be. Had the place not been broken, he might have become an olive tree or a geography teacher, rather than a poet who shoulders the burden of his existence. He feels that addressing his cause and defending it in poetry was a burden he could not take off his shoulders (lines 63-67).

Beyond the detachment discussed above, *The Dice Player* unveils an unprecedented Darwishian ideological transformation towards the Palestinian resistance as shown in the following lines: *thousands of soldiers perished there, / from either side, defending two leaders / who say: Charge! Two leaders who wait inside two / silken tents for the loot of either side / Soldiers repeatedly die but never know / which side triumphed!* (Lines 288-293) As a Palestinian icon of patriotism who was described by many as 'poet of Palestinian resistance' (Tenório, 2021), it is hard to read the verses above without perceiving a Darwishian ideological transformation. The notion of 'martyrdom' in *When the Martyrs Go to Sleep* (published in 1986) was replaced with 'death' in the verses above. Martyrdom which was a form of festivity to him became in *The Dice Player* an aimless act, where soldiers die aimlessly.

The examples cited in this section reveal that the anxiety dwelling the poet's self is allowing him to 'exit the system' within which he existed as Hila (2020) described the Heideggerian anxiety. Based on the discussion above, it can be argued that the Darwishian Being also transformed in relation to his perception to homeland, friends and enemies (The Others). He showed little interest in returning to his homeland, in being engaged in resistance or memorizing people or places. That was found to be a complete transformation in his Being that used to be highly engaged in the Palestinian Cause and resistance (Mahfoodh, 2021).

## Conclusion, Limitation and Recommendations

The research attempted to investigate how the Darwish's Being [Dasein] has transformed from whatever the poet scripted before *The Dice Player*. The transformation was apparent at three different levels: his own Being or mineness, Being-towards death and detachment from the 'Other' as coined by Heidegger. Prior to *The Dice Player*, Darwish used to perceive himself as a prophet, a challenger to death and a resistance poet. In *The Dice Player*, his Being was transformed as he sees himself less than others, submissive to death and disengaged from his homeland's Cause, friends and enemies. Coincidence, chance and luck are envisaged as driving the poet's Being. As a result, the poet's ontological constitution in relation to existence, life and death was formed and [trans]formed. Towards the end of his life, the poet's self was underestimated amid a feeling of chaos and absurdity. Those feelings opened his Dasein up to existence on the one hand and allowed him to marginalize himself on the other hand. Marginalizing him revealed his fragility, fragmentation, submission to impotence and death. Reality of existence and the fact that man heads towards death from the moment s/he is born is clearly manifested throughout the poem. Anxiety led the poet eventually to a mood of detachment 'exiting the system' (Hila, 2020).

The present research argues that Darwish seemingly joined 'the vanguard of a changed conception of Being' in his last poem *The Dice Player*, which Heidegger claims all poets do. As poetry is art rather than science, the method employed was a descriptive-interpretive qualitative method. It attempted to unveil the

Heideggerian Dasein in *The Dice Player*. However, the research was limited by lack of previous any empirical studies that link Darwish with Heidegger.

For future research, it is worth investigating whether *The Dice Player* as a whole was a result of 'anxiety of Heideggerian influence' (Bloom, 1973) from a different perspective other than the Dasein. Moreover, future research can also shed light on any other Heideggerian voice in the Darwishian poems prior to *The Dice Player*.

## Statements and Declarations

- Competing Interests and Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.
- Conflicts of Interest: The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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