

**Transformation of Suffering into Empowerment in Arabic  
War Poetry in Light of Trauma Theory with Special  
Reference to Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud's Poetry**

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**Abstract:**

This study explores how personal and collective suffering resulting from wars is transformed into empowerment in Arab war poetry, in light of trauma theory. Arab poets do not only document personal and national pains but also seek to transform suffering into a form of resistance that preserves self and national dignity and calls for independence. Examples of Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud's poetry are used in the analysis, as he was among the first generation of resistance poets. The study discusses the concepts of trauma according to Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman, revealing how trauma has been transformed into a means of restoring meaning and creating an effective poetic narrative. The study seeks to answer these questions: How does trauma theory enable us to reread Arab war poetry within its historical and political context? How did Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud succeed in expressing the suffering resulting from war and collective trauma? Does the poet in Arab war poetry represent a victim, a witness, or an active element in the resistance? And how is this manifested in the poetic text? Furthermore, the study examines the poetic techniques Mahmoud uses to raise morale among his people.

**Keywords :** Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud, Trauma, Arabic War Poetry, Poetic Testimony, Empowerment.

**تحول المعاناة إلى تمكين في شعر الحرب العربي في ضوء نظرية الصدمة، مع التركيز على شعر عبد الرحيم محمود**

**الباحثة/ أمانى جادالله رشيدى محمد**

**باحث مقيد بدرجة الدكتوراة بكلية الألسن قسم اللغة الإنجليزية جامعة المنيا**

**الملخص:**

تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيفية تحول المعاناة الشخصية والجماعية الناتجة عن الحروب إلى تمكين في شعر الحرب العربي، في ضوء نظرية الصدمة. لم يكتفِ الشعراء العرب بتوثيق الآلام الشخصية والقومية، بل سعوا أيضًا إلى تحويل المعاناة إلى شكل من أشكال المقاومة التي تحفظ الكرامة الذاتية والقومية وتدعو إلى الاستقلال. تستخدم الدراسة نماذج من شعر عبد الرحيم محمود في التحليل، كونه من الرعيل الأول من شعراء المقاومة. وتناقش الدراسة مفاهيم الصدمة وفقًا لكاثي كاروث وجوديث هيرمان، كاشفةً عن تحول الصدمة إلى وسيلة لاستعادة المعنى وبناء سرد شعري مؤثر. كما تسعى الدراسة إلى الإجابة على هذه الأسئلة: كيف تُمكننا نظرية الصدمة من إعادة قراءة شعر الحرب العربي في سياقه التاريخي والسياسي؟ كيف نجح عبد الرحيم محمود في التعبير عن المعاناة الناجمة عن الحرب والصدمة الجماعية؟ هل يُمثل الشاعر في شعر الحرب العربي ضحيةً أم شاهدًا أم عنصرًا فاعلاً في المقاومة؟ وكيف يتجلى ذلك في النص الشعري؟ علاوة على ذلك تفحص الدراسة التقنيات الشعرية التي يستخدمها محمود لرفع معنويات شعبه.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** عبد الرحيم محمود، الصدمة، شعر الحرب العربي، الشهادة الشعرية، التمكين.

## 1. Introduction

Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud is a Palestinian poet born in 1913 in Anabta, Tulkarm Governorate, and is considered one of the prominent poets of the Palestinian resistance. He dedicated his poems to the Palestinian cause, the Palestinian people, and their experiences from the war till the Nakba. Mahmoud was a skilled young poet whose poetry discussed different topics, including love, nature, and other human relationships, such as the relationship between a mother and her children, as well as religious and national events. Mahmoud's poetry is distinguished by its clarity and simplicity despite the profoundness of its meanings, allowing it to spread fast and reach people from different cultural backgrounds.

In 1936, Mahmoud was an Arabic literature teacher when the Great Palestinian Revolution began. To defend his homeland, he resigned from his job to join the revolutionaries and oppose the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. He moved to Iraq to join the Military College after the British Mandate administration pursued him. After three years, he graduated as a lieutenant. With ongoing attempts to occupy Palestine, Mahmoud adopted poetry as a weapon to fight his enemies and defend his homeland. Mahmoud created various works that document the history of suffering and address the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Mahmoud's war poetry focuses on the human side of war rather than its brutality. His life experience enabled him to represent the suffering of the injured, the grief of bereaved mothers and widows, and the sorrows of orphans.

Trauma theory studies psychological injury, not physical injury. These injuries are often too severe for an individual to overcome, leaving a lasting impact. War is one of the events

that greatly affects people's psychological well-being. For example, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has resulted in massive loss of life, displacement, and destruction, which have impacted the psyches of the Arab people as a whole—not just the Palestinian people. This has led to the spread of trauma among many individuals who have directly experienced or witnessed violence, especially those who lost their loved ones or were displaced from their homes.

Mahmoud's poetry is a clear expression of the empowering potential of trauma. Most of his poetry revolves around the collective suffering of the Palestinian people, addressing themes of war, loss, and displacement. However, he decided to transform this suffering into a source of strength. Rather than mourning the victims of war, he used his poetry as a means of resistance, encouraging the Palestinians to confront colonialism and resist its oppression. According to Tal, trauma literature can serve as a form of resistance and collective healing. She explains:

Accurate representation of trauma can never be achieved without recreating the event since, by its very definition, trauma lies beyond the bounds of "normal" conception. Textual representations—literary, visual, oral—are mediated by language and do not have the impact of the traumatic experience. (1996, p. 15)

By documenting trauma and making it visible to readers, trauma becomes something that can be witnessed and thus addressed. For example, the poem "The Martyr" "*Al-Shahid*" does not lament death as an end but rather frames it as a beginning—through the rebirth of a national consciousness. This is what Laub expresses when describing the transformation of trauma into testimony: "The testimony is, therefore, the process by which the narrator (the survivor) reclaims his position as a witness: reconstitutes the internal

‘thou,’ and thus the possibility of a witness or a listener inside himself.” (Felman & Laub, 1992, p. 85) From this perspective, Mahmoud transforms his poetry into both a weapon of resistance and a catalyst for empowerment by documenting and defining the collective trauma of the Palestinian people.

## 2. Review of Literature

Zawati (1976) discusses the role of the first generation of resistance poets in the Palestinian national movement. According to the article, the resistance poets expressed their desire for liberation and independence, as well as the sorrow and tragedy that the Palestinian people had experienced under Israeli occupation. It is worth noting that they were passionate supporters of the Palestinian struggle and used poetry to express national feelings and thoughts. The article emphasizes that resistance poets were an integral part of the Palestinian national cause, playing a significant role in raising awareness and boosting the Palestinian people's fortitude and determination.

Al-Alam (1986) investigates the literary commitment in modern Arabic poetry, Ibrahim Touqan and Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud as examples. Al-Alam believes that literary commitment is an expression of taking on social responsibility for literary works since the poet is viewed as a reflection of society and a voice for the oppressed and vulnerable. He examines poems by Ibrahim Touqan and Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud that discuss social, political, and cultural themes. He argues that these poems express the poets' sympathy for the public and explain their difficulties in an influential way. The article highlights the role of poetry in addressing social and political themes, as well as the necessity for this commitment to continue in contemporary Arabic poetry.

Abu Amsa (1995) addresses the Palestinian poets Ibrahim Tuqan, Abi Salma, and Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud, who were martyred during the Arab-Israeli conflict. Because of his poems on the land, death, and martyrdom, Tuqan is regarded as a representative of Palestinian national poetry. As for Mahmoud, he was regarded as one of the most well-known poets who contributed to the development of Palestinian national culture. In his poetry, he captured the disillusionment and anxiety of the Palestinian people. His poems became symbols of sacrifice and struggle and had a profound impact on Palestinian writing.

Mohammadi (2016) analyses the theme of resistance in Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud's poetry. Resistance poetry is one of the broadest fields of Arabic literature, and Palestinian poets frequently base their works on this literature. By expressing his attitude of defiance and resistance, together with his longing for freedom, a resistant poet aims to stir up the audience. The martyr poet Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud is regarded as a key figure in Palestinian resistance poetry. When chanting love and nostalgia for the motherland, his voice surged in the face of the oppressive invaders and did not stop until his death. He had a spirit of enthusiasm and revolution, which led him to give his life as a martyr in defense of his country. The researchers conclude that this poet feels that the only solution to achieve freedom is resistance alone, as Jews are not willing to negotiate with them. Mahmoud hopes to awaken the nation's consciousness and reclaim its glory by inspiring resistance among the people.

Taha (2017) examines the manifestations of identity in the works of Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud, revealing the role of Palestinian intellectuals in crystallizing the essential ideas of identity patterns, in line with the general cultural function based on insight, criticism, and foresight. In the pre-Mandate

era, the articulated images of the “Rebel intellectual” and the “Martyr intellectual” all fit within the framework of the literary modeling of the cultural function. The analytical study of poetry presents another aspect of the uniqueness of Palestinian identity. The study also investigates the characteristics of collective identity—both national and international—within the poetic discourse, which is based on the values of defiance and steadfastness. Using an ontological perspective through the applied framework, the researcher analyzes the concepts of “intellectual” and “identity” concisely and descriptively. By analyzing poetic models that evoke the frameworks of self-identity and national identity, this approach culminates in illuminating implications for the question of identity.

Ashti (2017) discussed the phenomenon of repetition in Palestinian poet Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud's poetry. Through this study, Ashti gained an understanding of Mahmoud's specific poetic vision, which defines his style in terms of repetition. The study consists of three chapters. The first chapter examines both internal repetition (verbal and semantic) and external repetition (rhythm and rhymes). The second chapter discusses three sorts of repeated motivation: psychological, inspirational, and artistic (rhythmic) motivation. This chapter shows Mahmoud's poetic maturity. The third chapter looks at repetition from a rhetorical perspective, studying the frequency of repetition in his poetry and how it corresponds to words that are highly linked with repetition, such as (altathyeel, almoshakalah, altasdeer). Ashti's conclusion, which is summarized in a list of sources and references, as well as messages that enriched the study, is that repetition is a prevalent and deeply embedded

phenomenon in his poetry, manifested in a word, a line, or a poem attributed to the poet.

Khudair (2020) examines some of Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud's poems that belonged to resistance literature. Resistance literature is well known for its faithful depiction of people's feelings. Poets have a duty to their country. This duty, though, has the potential to become one that requires the poet's life. As a martyr poet who dedicated his poems to his motherland before his life, Mahmoud was a symbol of patriotism. A reader of Palestinian literature can easily recognize the poet's contribution to the literary canon of Palestinian resistance. By analyzing the literary techniques Mahmoud employs in his poetry, this research seeks to identify certain components of resistance literature in his works. The resistance movement used poetry as a potent tool to depict the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Likewise, this study contributes to the literature by exploring the transformation of suffering into empowerment in Arab war poetry, which constitutes a richly connotative trajectory—especially when examined through the lens of trauma theory, which addresses how traumatic experiences are represented, internalized, and expressed in literature and art. Accordingly, Mahmoud's transition from victim to fighter can be traced, from pain to rebellion, and from wounded memory to voice of resistance.

### **3. Discussion**

Mahmoud powerfully depicts the Palestinian people's anguish and pain, from land occupation to displacement, making his poetry an invaluable resource for researching war trauma. Mahmoud lived through several traumatic events in Palestine before being occupied and the establishment of the State of Israel. Based on the ongoing events in his time, he



predicted his country's bleak future and documented it in his poems. He predicted the loss of his land as it is cleared in the poem he has recited in the presence of Prince Saud during his visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque, saying: "O Al-Aqsa Mosque, have you come to visit it, / Or have you come to bid it farewell before its loss?"<sup>1</sup> This prediction came true on May 14, 1948, with the announcement of the establishment of the State of Israel and Jerusalem's occupation in 1967.

Defending the land and resisting colonialism are the most prominent themes in Mahmoud's poetry, clearly indicating his great patriotism and sense of commitment to his homeland. Mahmoud was not writing about the tragedy of war, but rather recounting the reality of the land, which he sensed was about to be lost. He was documenting the events and telling the truth about the land's usurpation for all. Mahmoud's poetry did not address his own trauma as much as it addressed the collective trauma of the Palestinian people, who were struggling to reclaim their land and preserve it from loss. According to Khudari:

His poems were a truthful reflection of Palestine and the hardships experienced by the Palestinian people. This militant poet, with utmost sincerity, analyzes the status of the martyr, calls for struggle, and motivates spirits toward a bright future in his poems.<sup>2</sup> (Khudari et al., 2016, p.2)

Mahmoud succeeded in documenting the pain of his people and narrating the truth to future generations. This was

<sup>1</sup>All translations are rendered by the researcher

<sup>2</sup>"المسجد الأقصى أجنت تزوره / أم جنت من قبل الضياع تودعه؟" (المناصرة، ١٩٩٨، ص. ٦١)  
"كانت أشعاره مرآة صادقة حول فلسطين والمصاعب التي عاشها الفلسطينيون، وهذا الشاعر المجاهد يقوم بكل صدق بتحليل مكانة الشهيد والدعوة إلى الكفاح وتشجيع الهمم نحو مستقبل زاهٍ في أشعاره." (خضري وآخرون، ٢٠١٦، ص. ٢)

evident in the recirculation of the poem "The Martyr," which he wrote in 1938, on Facebook in 2023 as a comment on the events of October 7, 2023. Mahmoud transformed his personal trauma and the collective trauma of his people into a national trauma and an identity crisis.

Mahmoud begins his poem "The Martyr" with a powerful declaration of his readiness to die in defense of his homeland, a powerful opening which resembles an act of voluntary sacrifice. This reflects his deep sense of oppression, injustice, genocide, and the occupation of his country. He writes:

I will carry my soul upon my palms, / And cast it into the  
abyss of doom

For either a life that pleases the friend, / Or a death that  
enrages the hateful enemy<sup>3</sup>.

Mahmoud turned fear into courage and death into freedom. Instead of being powerless in the face of violence, he turned his painful experience into a heroic act. This transformation is consistent with Laub's view:

The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to—and heard—is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the "knowing" of the event is given birth to. The listener, therefore, is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo*. (Felman & Laub, 1992, p. 57)

When Mahmoud transformed his trauma into a narrative—something that, as Laub explains, can only arise in the presence of a witness—he reasserted control over his experience through words and action. This reclamation of

<sup>3</sup> "سَأَحْمِلُ رُوحِي عَلَى رَاخَتِي وَأَلْقِي بِهَا فِي مَهَاوِي الرَّدَى/ فَأَيُّمَا حَيَاةً تَسُرُّ الصَّدِيقَ وَإَيُّمَا مَمَاتٍ يَغِيظُ الْعَدِي" (المناصرة، ١٩٩٨، ص. ٣١)

voice and agency extended even to Mahmoud's understanding of death itself, which he reimagined not as a defeat but as a form of resistance and empowerment. Mahmoud treated death as a source of pride and power through which he could achieve victory over his enemy. Qatous states that:

When Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud presents the "death option" or the "fighting option," it does not come out of a desire for death or killing others. Rather, it arises from a deeply sensitive and refined sense of humanity—one that believes in human being and his right to live in peace. However, this simple human desire, despite its simplicity, clashes with the greed of his enemy, so he finds that it is his duty to advocate for the second option in order to achieve the first<sup>4</sup>. (١٩٩٥, p.219)

Mahmoud could not endure humiliation or witness his homeland under occupation, so he chose to stand firm for freedom and a life of dignity. He sees only two options: either die with honor or achieve the desired goal.

The noble soul has two goals: / To face death or achieve dreams.

And what is living? I shall not live, if I am not / Feared in the region, protector of the sacred land<sup>5</sup>

His question about the value of life reflects a psyche deeply scared by the collective trauma of colonialism and the accompanying sense of humiliation and shame caused by the

<sup>4</sup> "حين يطرح عبدالرحيم محمود "خيار الموت" أو "خيار القتال"، فإنه لا يصدر عن رغبة في الموت أو رغبة في قتل الناس، وإنما ينبع هذا الطرح من إنسانية مرهفة حساسة، تؤمن بالإنسان وبحقه في العيش بسلام. ولكن هذه الرغبة الإنسانية، على بساطتها، تصطدم بأطماع عدوه، فيجد أن من واجبه أن يطرح الخيار الثاني من أجل الحصول على الخيار الأول." (قبوس، ١٩٩٥، ص. ٢١٩)  
<sup>5</sup> "وَنَفْسُ الشَّرِيفِ لَهَا غَايَتَانِ وَرُودُ الْمَنَايَا وَثِيْلُ الْمُنَى / وَمَا الْعَيْشُ؟ لَا عِشْتُ إِنْ لَمْ أَكُنْ مَخُوفَ الْجَنَابِ حَرَامَ الْجَمَى" (المناصرة، ١٩٩٨، ص. ٣١)

loss of land. Mahmoud decided to use his poetry as a means of rebellion—not only against political injustice but also against the constraints imposed by his trauma—transforming it into a source of strength. This poetic transformation of trauma echoes similar artistic strategies by other Palestinians, such as Naji al-Ali, who created Handala, a famous cartoon character that represents Palestinian identity and the struggles of the Palestinian people. Al-Najjar writes about Handala:

This drawing and its artist were loved by entire Arab public, especially the Palestinians, because Handala symbolizes the oppressed yet resilient Palestinian. Despite all the hardships he faces, he turns his back to the ‘enemy.’ Regarding Handala, Naji al-Ali says: “Handala was born at the age of ten and will always remain ten years old. At that age, he left Palestine, and when he returns, he will still be ten. Only then will he begin to grow up, for the laws of nature do not apply to him—he is an exception, just as losing one’s homeland is an exception<sup>6</sup>.” (Al-Najjar et al., 2015, pp.190-191)

Artistic expression transforms trauma into a source of strength. Handala is a symbol for al-Ali himself who left Palestine at the age of ten. Writing or drawing a traumatic experience transforms negative suffering into an effective process of meaning-making. Therefore, al-Ali was assassinated in 1987 because of his artistic works. Despite the disagreement over who was responsible for his assassination, the reason is the same: his drawings, which highlight the role

<sup>6</sup> "وقد لقي هذا الرسم وصاحبه حب الجماهير العربية كلها وخاصة الفلسطينية؛ لأن حنظلة هو رمز للفلسطيني المعذب، والقوى رغم كل الصعاب التي تواجهه فهو دائر ظهره "العدو" وعن حنظلة يقول ناجي: ولد حنظلة في العاشرة من عمره وسيظل دائما في العاشرة من عمره، ففي تلك السن غادر فلسطين وحين يعود حنظلة إلى فلسطين سيكون بعد في العاشرة، ثم يبدأ في الكبر، فقوانين الطبيعة لا تنطبق عليه لأنه استثناء، كما هو فقدان الوطن استثناء." (النجار وآخرون، ٢٠١٥، ص ١٩٠-١٩١)

of art in making a difference for Arab nations, especially those experiencing suffering.

Similarly, Mahmoud believed that his death, along with the deaths of other heroic Palestinians, would lead to the freedom and independence of his country. Thus, dying for a noble purpose becomes a form of life. This is related to the concept of heroic trauma, where the poet overcomes suffering through heroic sacrifice. Heroism is one of Mahmoud's coping mechanisms to restore dignity and reduce the shame caused by colonial trauma—even if it means death. According to trauma theory, people may symbolically replay traumatic experiences as a form of processing, as Freud observed in the case of the father who dreamed of his burning child. In Mahmoud's case, he glorifies and even desires death, believing that martyrdom ensures both victory and eternal honor. Thus, heroism becomes a path toward healing the psychological wounds of humiliation and loss.

Verily, by your life, I see my destined end, / Yet onward  
I hasten to it, with steps sincere.

I see my death, whose value is less than my stolen right, /  
Or my homeland, the goal I seek<sup>7</sup>.

His willingness to die for the restoration of his land illustrates the immense trauma produced by occupation and colonization. He realizes that the colonizers will not allow him to peacefully reclaim his homeland. Mahmoud expresses this trauma in his poetry, where he uses repetition as an effective tool to engage readers and allow them to experience his pain. Fighting and seeing bloodshed have become his sources of happiness: "The clashing swords delight my ears, / And the

<sup>7</sup> "لَعْمُزُكَ إِنِّي أَرَى مَصْرُعِي وَلَكِنْ أَغْذُ إِلَيْهِ الْخُطَى/ أَرَى مَصْرُعِي دُونَ حَقِّي السَّلِيبِ وَدُونَ بِلَادِي  
هو المُبْتَغَى" (المناصرة، ١٩٩٨، ص. ٣١)

flow of blood delights my soul.”<sup>8</sup> The contradiction between bloodshed and happiness emphasizes his profound sense of trauma, which transforms horrific situations into sources of happiness. Not only is Mahmoud happy to defend his homeland, but his people also honor those who fight to liberate their land, which reflects the Palestinians' collective trauma and their way of transforming suffering into pride.

In 1939, Mahmoud wrote his poem “Death of the Hero” “*Mut Al-Batala*” as an elegy to Abdel-Rahim Al-Hajj Mohamed, the leader of the Nablus Mountains region in the Palestinian revolution. In “Death of the Hero,” he explores themes of sacrifice and redemption for the homeland. “Death of the Hero” explores the psychological impact of war and its consequences on individuals and society. The psychic toll of war considerably outweighed the tangible losses, leaving lasting psychological scars on those who lived through it and on future generations. Poetry offered a space for the expression of pain—whether through depictions of death or the complex interplay of heroism and psychological agony. Since trauma is a difficult experience to convey directly, poetry, with its symbolic language and rhetorical imagery, provided an effective medium for articulating wartime trauma.

In 1939, Mahmoud wrote his poem “Death of the Hero” as an elegy to Abdel-Rahim Al-Hajj Mohamed, the leader of the Nablus Mountains region in the Palestinian revolution. In “Death of the Hero,” he explores themes of sacrifice and redemption for the homeland. Mahmoud also discusses the psychological impact of war and its consequences on individuals and society. Poetry provides Mahmoud with a space to express pain, whether through the death or the interplay between heroism and psychological suffering. Since

<sup>8</sup> "يَلْدُ لأذني سماغ الصليل ويُبهِجُ نفسي مَسِيلُ الدما" (المناصرة، ١٩٩٨، ص. ٣١)

trauma is a horrible experience to convey directly, poetry, with its symbolic language and rhetorical imagery, provided an effective medium for conveying trauma of war.

Mahmoud begins the poem asking if words will be sufficient to show gratitude for what the martyred hero accomplished for his country and people. He writes: "If I chant, will my ode fulfill/ Your rightful due, O best of martyrs?"<sup>9</sup> This opening line conveys a sense of greatness and pride in the martyr, portraying sacrifice as sacred. Mahmoud believes that language cannot portray the martyr's greatness and magnificence: "Which words can encompass the meaning that I derive/ From you, O muse of my poetry"<sup>10</sup>? Literature serves as an archive for the traumas and sufferings that individuals or nations experience, preserving even the most agonizing moments of struggle. Caruth argues that "trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival." (1996, p. 58) The writer conveys his trauma and pain through writing, putting his thoughts into words so that he can see them, cope with them, and eventually come to terms with his situation.

Mahmoud shows deep sadness and pain over the martyrdom of the martyr who represents the homeland, dignity and faith. The martyr's loss signals that the homeland is about a dangerous phase, foreshadowing its possible demise. Mahmoud writes:

Alas, for the religion and glory that/ Were struck in you,  
O steadfast pillar!

<sup>9</sup> "إذا أنشدت يوفيك نشيدي حَقُّكَ الواجب يا خيرَ شهيدٍ" (المناصرة، ١٩٩٨، ص. ٣٩)  
<sup>10</sup> "أيُّ لفظٍ يَسْغُ المعنى الذي منك استوحيه يا وحي قصيدي" (المناصرة، ١٩٩٨، ص. ٣٩)

Alas, for the suffering homeland, / The fading hope, and  
woe to the ancestors<sup>11</sup>!

Mahmoud emphasizes the importance of religion and glory as national virtues. The hero's death represents the loss of a key pillar of the nation, as he was a great leader. The death of this hero also highlighted the injustice and hardship that the country faces under occupation. His death represents the end of future hopes for the nation's liberation. Caruth believes that: "history is not only the passing on of a crisis but also the passing on of a survival that can only be possessed within a history larger than any single individual or any single generation." (1996, p. 71) Following their martyrdom, those heroes became part of the nation's collective trauma, transcending not only their own trauma but also that of their entire generation.

Mahmoud believes that death is not a tragic end, but a heroic ambition that everyone strives to achieve: "O leader, this is a death/ you have longed for."<sup>12</sup> Both the leader and Mahmoud share the same desire for martyrdom, as Mahmoud had previously expressed his willingness to die for his homeland in his 1938 poem "The Martyr," which reflects the great sacrifices Palestinians make in defense of their country. Despite the suffering, these sacrifices were not in vain for without them the nation would not have existed: "They irrigate the soil with their blood and /they henna it over the palm of the child"<sup>13</sup>." Because "blood" represents life and renewal, it mitigates the trauma by giving meaning to the sacrifice.

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<sup>11</sup> "حسرتا للدين والمجد الذي قد أصيب فيك بالركن الوطيد/ حسرتا للوطن العاني ولأمل الفاني  
ويا تغش الجدود" (المناصرة، ١٩٩٨، ص. ٣٩)  
<sup>12</sup> "أيها القائد هذي ميتة طالما رجيت لها منذ بعيد" (المناصرة، ١٩٩٨، ص. ٣٩)  
<sup>13</sup> "فيريؤون الثرى من دمهم ويخشون بها كف الصعيد" (المناصرة، ١٩٩٨، ص. ٤٠)



Mahmoud closed the poem by stating that all words of condolence do not soothe the bereaved about their loss. He conveys that his psychological suffering was too much for his body to bear or his tears to wash away, as he says: "So I melted the soul to weep for you/ instead of tears, it flowed into my ode<sup>14</sup>." This line highlights the importance of writing in the healing process after trauma. Writing is beneficial in trauma recovery as it allows traumatized persons to reconstruct the narrative behind their experiences. Herman argues that trauma causes memory fragmentation, resulting in disjointed and disconnected memories. Writing helps bring these fragments and transforms them into a cohesive narrative. This process enables survivors to revisit traumatic memories and liberate themselves by expressing their pain. As Herman said that:

The next step is to reconstruct the traumatic event as a recitation of fact. Out of the fragmented components of frozen imagery and sensation, patient and therapist slowly reassemble an organized, detailed, verbal account, oriented in time and historical context. (1992, p.126)

Herman believes that writing allows survivors to recall traumatic memories, confront them, express repressed feelings, and take control of their experience, making it a vital tool in trauma recovery.

In the context of war trauma, the fighting identity serves as both a means of physical resistance and a coping mechanism for restoring control after violence. Herman believes that: "TRAUMATIC EVENTS destroy the sustaining bonds between individual and community. Those who have survived learn that their sense of self, of worth, of humanity,

<sup>14</sup> "فأذبت الروح أبكيك بها بدل الدمع فسالمت في نشيدي" (المناصرة، ١٩٩٨، ص. ٤٠)

depends upon a feeling of connection to others.” (1992, p.154) Healing from such trauma is dependent on the restoration of these connections and the reconstruction of a cohesive self-identity. War traumatized individuals frequently use acts of resistance to reconnect with a sense of purpose and identity, allowing them to overcome the psychological damage caused by trauma. Caruth also argues that trauma is: “the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available.” (1996, p.4) In this context, resistance represents significant psychological defiance, a means of rejecting victimhood and rewriting the trauma narrative by active engagement in war. The transformation of suffering into empowerment is a recurrent topic in Mahmoud’s war poetry and highlights the interconnectedness of identity, memory, and resistance in the aftermath of war.

The patriotic role Mahmoud played through his poetry represents the Palestinian experience of pain and sacrifice. He was faithful to his country, did what he called for in his poems, and was martyred in the Battle of Al-Shajara in 1948. His poetry is a literary document that conveys both the trauma and heroism, transforming the individual experience of suffering into a collective one that forms national consciousness. He powerfully conveyed pain and resistance through vivid poetic images and emotionally charged language, establishing his poetry as an integral part of resistance literature. Despite his martyrdom, his poetry continues to bear witness to the Palestinian struggle; it also portrays the psychological toll of war and highlights the resilience of the national spirit in the face of suffering.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study sheds light on one of the most intertwined literary and psychological phenomena in the Palestinian experience: transforming the suffering resulting from war and occupation into personal and collective empowerment. This is accomplished through an analysis of the experience of Palestinian poet Mahmoud, who represents a unique voice within the context of resistance poetry, where the wounded self and the struggling identity converge in an intense and inspiring poetic discourse.

In Mahmoud's poetry, the transformation from suffering to resistance is clearly evident. Rather than retreating into pain, he works to invest it with meaning, value, and symbolism. His poetry thus becomes a vivid example of empowerment in light of trauma theory, where pain is reimagined as a form of resistance that revives memory, consolidates identity, and plants hope in the collective Palestinian consciousness.

Mahmoud's poetry stands as a living model of how trauma can be transformed into creative energy, turning pain into awareness, loss into resistance, and absence into a permanent poetic presence within the Palestinian national consciousness. Mahmoud succeeded in transforming the poem into a document of struggle, a historical testimony, and a collective voice that remains alive in cultural memory to this day.

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