

## CONNOTATIVE AND DENOTATIVE MEANING IN POEM "WHO AM I, WITHOUT EXILE?" BY MAHMOUD DARWISH

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### ABSTRACT

Poetry is a form of literary work that becomes a medium for poets to describe an idea that is in their minds, usually this idea is based on something they have experienced or felt. In making poetry, poets usually use grammar that rhymes and is well structured, this results in poetry that has a beautiful impression in its writing. The purpose of this research is to look at the denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings of the object of research, namely the poem "Who Am I, Without Exile?" by Mahmoud Darwish. This study uses the semiotic theory proposed by Roland Barthes. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive interpretive approach. Researchers found writing that has denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings such as exile, water, river, roses, singer. The results of this study explain the purpose of the poet who gives a new picture to mankind about the life of a nation that is ruled by another nation. In addition, the poet also describes the point of view of an individual who was expelled from their own homeland. This poem is a form of resistance from Palestinians who have been expelled by other nations, and feel like strangers in their own homeland. One example of a word that has a connotative meaning is exile, the word alienated in this study not only describes someone who has lost his place of residence, but also has lost his identity. The poet who made this poem has the aim of increasing human awareness of what is happening around him that the colonial practice still exists in this modern era and shows the consequences that occurred because of the colonialism.

**Keywords:** poetry, denotative, connotative, mythology, who am i without exile.

### ABSTRAK

*Puisi merupakan salah satu bentuk karya sastra yang menjadi media bagi para penyair untuk menggambarkan suatu ide yang ada didalam pikiran mereka, biasanya ide ini berdasarkan dari sesuatu yang pernah mereka alami atau rasakan. Dalam membuat puisi biasanya para penyair menggunakan tata bahasa yang bersajak dan terstruktur dengan baik, hal ini menghasilkan puisi yang memiliki kesan indah dalam penulisannya. Tujuan dalam penelitian kali ini adalah untuk melihat makna denotatif, konotatif, dan mitologi pada objek penelitian yaitu puisi "Who Am I, Without Exile?" ciptaan Mahmoud Darwish. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori semiotika yang dikemukakan oleh Roland Barthes. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan interpretatif deskriptif. Peneliti menemukan penulisan yang memiliki makna denotatif, konotatif, dan mitologi seperti diasingkan, air, sungai, mawar, penyanyi, kupu-kupu. Hasil dari penelitian ini menjelaskan maksud dari sang penyair yang memberikan gambaran baru kepada umat manusia tentang kehidupan suatu bangsa yang dikuasai oleh bangsa lain. Selain itu, penyair juga memberi gambaran sudut pandang dari sebuah individu yang terusir dari tanah kelahiran mereka sendiri.*

*Puisi ini merupakan sebuah bentuk perlawanan dari orang Palestina yang sudah terusir oleh bangsa lain, dan merasa seperti orang asing di tanah kelahiran mereka sendiri. Salah satu contoh kata yang mengandung makna konotatif adalah diasingkan, kata diasingkan dalam penelitian ini bukan hanya menggambarkan seseorang yang telah kehilangan tempat tinggalnya, tapi juga telah kehilangan identitas dirinya. Penyair yang membuat puisi ini memiliki tujuan untuk meningkatkan kesadaran manusia dari apa yang terjadi disekitarnya bahwa praktik penjajahan yang masih ada di era modern ini dan memperlihatkan akibat-akibat yang terjadi karena penjajahan tersebut.*

**Kata Kunci:** puisi, denotatif, konotatif, mitologi, *who am i without exile*.

## INTRODUCTION

Writing activities are a place for writers to pour their creativity into writing, usually the writers have prepared the theme they want to use. This writing activity can also be classified as a literary works. According to Mutiarani (2017, p. 536) there are two types of creative writing or work of art, but sometimes the author also deal with an imaginary work such as drama, novel and poetry.

In this case, poetry is classified as a work of imagination. Sakinah & Aufa A., (2019, p. 116), stated that poetry is a literary work that can be categorized as an imaginative form, because writing in poetry making so much involves imaginative power. To write poetry requires the imagination of the writers, in order to produce good quality poetry and can be an inspiration for the readers.

Poetry is one of the form of literature that used to express the feelings of the writer. According to Tomatala & Latupeirissa (2020, p.31) "Poetry is a literary work with condensed language, shortened and has a rhythm with a coherent sound and the choice of figurative words (imaginative)". Which means that poets can share experiences with readers about what they have experienced through the writings in the poem because a work of poetry is usually taken based on what has been experienced or felt by the author.

In the history of Islamic literature, for muslims poetry has also become a way of expressing their feelings. There are several examples of famous Islamic poets throughout Islamic history such as, Abu Layla al-Muhalhel, Antarah ibn Shaddad, Imru' al-Qais, Al-Khansa, and Al-A'sha.

In Islam itself, the Qur'an is a written literary work that exceeds other literary works. And poetry has an important role to interpret the meaning inside al-Quran. Mohamed & Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff (2017, p.44) stated that poetry has become one of the tools used as arguments and evidences by most interpreters when interpreting the Quran. which means that poetry has played an important role in the development of Islamic literature.

Mahmoud Darwish is a Palestinian poet, in his poem entitled "Who am I, without exile?", Darwish tries to describe the misery of the Palestinian people who are trying to defend their homeland against the invasion from Israel.

This research uses semiotics or semiotic methods through Roland Barthes' theory. Semiotics or semiology is the discipline of studying signs. Barthes' semiotic term is called the term order significant, which includes several terms in semiotics namely, denotation, connotation and myth.

The purpose of this research is to find out the true meaning of the poem. Quoting from Setiawan et al "Poetry can be a motivation for lovers of writing, especially for readers who want to know the meaning or meaning contained in a poem (2020). Which means by analyzing a poem we can see the true meaning inside of that poems.

## METHODS

The method used in this study is the semiotic method of Roland Barthes. He was known to be someone that acknowledge Ferdinand De Saussure theory, and Barthes try to continue and develop that theory. Saussure was the initial mastermind of this semiotic theory. Saussure was interested in

the advanced method in that sentences are fashioned and the way sentences confirm meaning, however Saussure was less curious about the actual fact that identical sentence will convey completely different meanings to people of different situations.

Barthes uses the "levels of meaning" of extension and connotation to analyze the signs of intangible objects. Barthes divides personality analysis into two types: verbal and nonverbal. The focus of this method is to analyze signals, sign, and symbol. According to Sobur (2013, p.15; in Isnaniah, S., & Agustina, T. 2020, p. 254), stated that semiotics according to Roland Barthes is a method and science used to analyze a sign. Which basically means that semiotic is a study about humans trying to find meaning in everything around them. To give meaning means that everything about the object is not only the object to be provided or conveyed, but also the constitutionalization of the structure of the sign itself.

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, this approach is used to describe the picture of the situation in this poem and find out its true meaning. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe the phenomenon and its characteristics. This research focuses more on what happened, rather than how and why it happened. Therefore, observation and survey tools are often used to collect data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). While in qualitative research Nassaji, H. (2015, p. 129), stated that qualitative research is more comprehensive and usually involves collecting large amounts of data from various sources in order to gain a deeper understanding of each participant, including their opinions, point of views, and attitudes.

According to the theory outlined in this study, this qualitative description is expected to provide clear data through descriptions, texts, articles, etc., and then systematically explain the intelligibility of the results in the form of text descriptions. The source used for data collection in this research is the poem "Who Am I, Without

Exile?" by Mahmoud Darwish. In addition, in this study, the researchers used Roland Barthes' leading semiotic theory, emphasizing denotation, connotation, and mythology.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Poetry used as the object of this research is entitled "Who Am I, Without Exile?" was created by Mahmoud Darwish. Mahmoud Darwish was born on March 13, 1941. Darwish is a poet and author from Palestine. Darwish has won a number of awards for his literary works and was named the Palestinian national poet. As is well known, the Palestinian state is currently in conflict with Israel and that conflict is still ongoing today. This situation becomes the background for the creation of works made by Darwish that describe the misery and suffering felt by the Palestinian people. In his work, Palestine becomes a metaphor for the loss of Eden, the birth and resurrection, and the suffering of dispossession and exile. the poem "Who Am i, Without Exile?" is an example of a literary work made by darwish whose background was created from the situation that occurred in his country.

In the Nineteen Seventies Darwish started to stray from those precepts and followed a "free-verse" approach that did now no longer abide strictly through classical poetic norms. The quasi-Romantic diction of his early works gave manner to a extra personal, bendy language, and the slogans and declarative language that characterised his early poetry have been changed through oblique and ostensibly apolitical statements, despite the fact that politics turned into in no way a long way away. In this research the author tries to find the denotative and connotative meanings in Darwish's poem, but before that it is necessary to explain the meaning of denotative and connotative

The denotative that means of a word is its predominant that means, and no longer along with the emotions and thoughts that human beings might also additionally connect with that word. According to

Isfandiyary in Zuhdah and Alfain (2020, p. 105) denotation is commonly defined as literal meaning or a word which has only one specific meaning. which means denotation meaning in a word shows the true meaning of the word. An example of a denotative word is the word "car" which is used to describe the true meaning of a vehicle. The concern of denotative meaning is to find the truth behind the information. and dealing with literal and expression meaning. while connotative is more focused on finding additional meanings in a word. For example, in the word "water" which has meaning as a mirror of human life.

In the data below, researcher will show and explain what the denotative and connotative meaning of the poem "who am i, without exile?".

*A stranger on the riverbank, like the river ...  
water*

*binds me to your name.*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 1)

In the data, above the denotative meaning of the word 'stranger' is a person who is not a member of the family or group according to the dictionary. The connotative meaning in the word stranger in this poem refer to someone who already lost his identity. The next denotative meaning in the word 'river' which means a natural stream of water. Then the poet adds the word riverbanks as adverb of place that if refers to dictionary has a meaning the slopes that on the side of a river. The phrase, *water binds me to your name* contains connotative meaning which describe water as a symbol that supports humans life just like a river that is meaningless if there is no water in it , and your name in this poem refer as his soul. This phrase is appear in the opening of every stanza in this poem. There is a myth in the data above aswell, according to Fady Joudah the translator of this poem, the pharse water binds me to your name was "a mantra of biological simplicity that compels me to repeat it as I live my days, with the conviction that the more I hum those words to myself, the more likely they will become

a truth through which I can conduct my life".

*Nothing brings me back from my faraway  
to my palm tree: not peace and not war.*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 2)

In the data above denotative meaning of the word 'nothing' refering to the dictiaonary means something that is nonexistent, the next is word peace which means a state of harmony between people, and also in the word war that means a state or period of armed hostility or active military operations. The data above also has connotative meaning in the word 'faraway' which in dictionary means distant or out of reach but in this poem the meaning of faraway is refer as the future. And there is a myth about "palm tree" that originated from the Middle East and Mediteranian world, which has a meaning as symbol of victory, triumph, peace and eternal life.

*Nothing*

*makes me enter the gospels. Not*

*a thing ... nothing sparkles from the shore of  
ebb*

*and flow between the Euphrates and the  
Nile.*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 3&4)

Based from the dictionary 'gospel' has a meaning as something regarded as a belived, which in this case gospel has the meaning of a place of peace. The next one is the word 'sparkles' which comes from the word spark that has a meaning as a a small light in the sparke form. which in this case sparkles describes as something that can light the way. Next one is the denotative from the word 'ebb' which refer to the dictionary has a meaning of the flowing back of the tide when the water returns to the sea. While the eupharates and the nile is taken from the name of a river. The connotative meaning that can be drawn from the data above is that nothing can restore peace, and there is not the slightest bit of light along the way.

*Nothing*

*makes me descend from the pharaoh's boats.*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 5)

Denotative meaning in the data above is from the word 'descend' that means going down. then added with the statement "nothing makes me" which means no one can make him get off the pharaohs boat. pharaohs itself is a term for the king of ancient egypt and a symbol of god, while the boat is a means of transportation that basically can only go with the flow, so from the data above the meaning taken is that nothing can take him away from the flow of life or the destiny from god.

*Nothing*

*carries me or makes me carry an idea: not longing and not promise.*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 6)

The denotative meaning from the word 'carry' base from the dictionary is hold or wear something. then added the denotative explanations of 'longing' and 'promise', the meaning of longing itself is strong, persistent want or craving, particularly for one thing impossible or distant. The connotative meaning here is found in the word 'idea' which means a way to get freedom and peace. So the meaning of the data above is that nothing else can give him a way to get freedom.

*What will I do? What*

*will I do without exile, and a long night that stares at the water?*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 7)

Connotative meaning is found in the word exile which is a symbol of his suffering as a Palestinian. then the author asks the question "what will i do?" who asked what he should do next, and the words "long night that stares at the water" describe an activity which describes spending a long night gazing at the water, so the sentence above describes a person who is used to his suffering so he asks himself what he should do when his suffering is over.

*Nothing takes me from the butterflies of my dreams*

*to my reality: not dust and not fire.*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 9)

Denotative meaning from the data above first from word 'dreams' which refering to the dictioanry means image of humans that comes form their mind, and in the word 'reality' that means something that exists severally of all different things and from that all other things derive. Connotative meaning in the data above from the word 'butterfly' which describes his peace and hope, then on the words 'dust' and 'fire' which describe the current situation of his homeland.

*What*

*will I do without roses from Samarkand?*

*What*

*will I do in a theater that burnishes the singers with its lunar stones?*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 10&11)

The word 'Samarkand' is refering to the name of the city in Uzbekistan. and the word 'roses' symbolizes a fertile land, and this sentence is in the form of a meaningful question what should he do with the state of the soil in his country that has been damaged

Denotative meaning for the word 'burnishes' according to dictionary comes from the word burnish than means flatten. Connotative meaning contain in the word 'theater' which symbolizes the place of occurrence which is his country, and the word 'singers' which symbolizes the people who live there, and the word 'lunar stone' symbolizes the light comes from the fired weapon.

*Our weight has become light like our houses in the faraway winds.*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 12)

The data above contain connotative meaning from the word 'weight' which symbolizes the soul. And the word 'light' here means more loss. And the author add comparison in the phrase "like our houses in the faraway wind" symbolize the

condition of their house which has been destroyed and becomes 'light'. So the meaning of the sentence above says those who are light or have almost lost their souls. *We have become two friends of the strange creatures in the clouds ... and we are now loosened*

*from the gravity of identity's land.*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 13)

Denotative meaning on the word 'friend' has a meaning a person hooked up to a different by feelings of fondness or personal regard. Then there is the connotative meaning of the word "strange creature in the clouds" which symbolizes military aircraft above their sky. And from the next line and "we are now loosened from the gravity of identity's land" which is a sign that they have lost their identity.

*What will we do ... what*

*will we do without exile, and a long night that stares at the water?*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 14)

This sentence above is similar with sentence 7, the only difference is the instead of using the pronoun 'i' this sentence use 'we' symbolizing the Palestinian people.

*There's nothing left of me but you, and nothing left of you*

*but me, the stranger massaging his stranger's thigh: O stranger!*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 16)

The phrase "There's nothing left of me but you, and nothing left of you but me" has connotative meaning someone who is talking with his own identity, who says they are meaningless without each other, and in the next phrase Darwish explains the conversation they are having as if they don't know each other anymore

*what will we do with what is left to us*

*of calm ... and of a snooze between two myths?*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 17)

Denotative meaning of the word 'calm' is a controlled state and free from excitement. While 'snooze' describe as something boresome according to the dictionary. The meaning from the sencece above is try to describe an atmosphere with only emptiness and silence left.

*And nothing carries us: not the road and not the house.*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 18)

Denotative meaning for 'road' that means a way that can be used to go to another place, and 'house' that has meaning the building for people to live.

*Was this road always like this, from the start,*

*or did our dreams find a mare on the hill*

*among the Mongol horses and exchange us for it?*

(Darwish, Mahmoud. "Who Am I, Without Exile?": sentence 19)

The meaning for the first line In the form of a question, he asked if this country's suffering had existed from the begining, have their (Palestinian) dreams found something better, and exchanged them for it. Myth about Mongol horses for Mongolian people is a symbol of nation pride.

## CONCLUSION

Darwish is one in every of the modern Arab writers who managed to achieve a unrivalled position as a poet of Palestinian people. he has already experienced getting exiled and jailed makes his poetry filled with nationalism. a Darwish poem entitled "who am i, without exile?" is one of his poems which contains the struggle and suffering of the Palestinian people. In this study, several denotative and connotative meanings were found in the language used inside the poem. A word in this poem like river, water, palm tree, are used to become a symbol of palestinian people that are trying to survive. For example, the meaning of 'palm tree' in this poem is not like what other peoples think. This makes this poem gain the beauty of

literature touch in it, and make the reader appreciate the meaning of this poem.

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