

**NEW HISTORICISM IN THE SELECT POEMS OF
STEPHEN GILL AND MAHMOUD DARWISH**

**Synopsis submitted to the Madurai Kamaraj University for the
award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English**

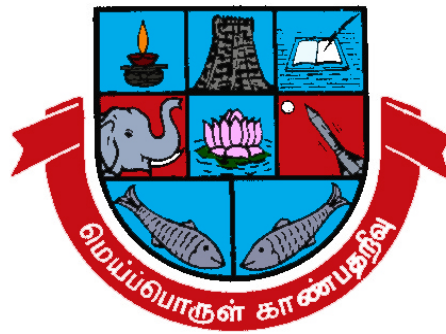
By

E. PRATHEEBAA

(Reg. No. F9868)

Under the Guidance and Supervision of

Dr. S. J. KALA, M.A., M.A., M.A., MCJ., M.Phil., Ph.D., SLET.



MADURAI KAMARAJ UNIVERSITY

MADURAI 625 021

INDIA

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Literature, philosophy, science, and history have witnessed immense interrelated growth in the modern literary arena. The interrelationship has led to the interdisciplinary explorations, extending the sphere of knowledge across disciplines. Criticism widely helps in understanding and scrutinising a piece of art. Down the ages, literary genres, especially poems express the intensified feelings and ideas by the use of distinctive style and manner.

The poets mirror and critique their societies through their poems. The poems reflect the cultural background of a particular epoch breaking all conventions in terms of structure and form. There have been numerous experiments in writing poetry that can be traced to the second half of the twentieth century. The historical events of a particular era form an important source for writing and poetry is no exception to it.

Poetry written during a specific time period covers the poet's personal experiences involving social, emotional and political happenings. The political events like religious controversies, border conflicts and economic deprivation create greater impact in the minds of the poets and eventually poetry as their end products reflect the same.

The world of poetry has even echoed political issues ranging from World War-I, World War-II, Afro-American racist conflicts, South African Apartheid issue, Indo-Pakistan partition, Israel-Palestine exodus and the like. Stephen Gill, an Indo-Canadian and Mahmoud Darwish, an Israel-Palestinian have created magnificent and indelible portrayals of the history, through the present and into the future in their poetry.

Stephen Gill is an Indo-Canadian poet, fiction writer, essayist and literary critic. He is the poet laureate of Ansted University. He is also the subject of many dissertations and research papers and has authored more than thirty books, including collections of

poems, novels and literary criticisms. Gill has written a number of critical studies on a wide range of writers including G. B. Shaw, H. G. Wells, and Yeats.

The main focus of his writing is on love and peace, and it is also based on his ideology of 'live and let live'. He has authored and published book reviews and research papers on writers and on peace. Stephen Gill's writings have appeared in more than thousand publications. Prominent singers from India and Pakistan have given musical renditions of some of his Urdu and Hindi poems.

Stephen Gill was born and brought up in Sialkot, now in Pakistan, where his father owned a sports company that manufacture goods like field hockey sticks, cricket bats, tennis rackets and shuttlecocks. This company too experienced bankruptcy like several others, when India and Pakistan was divided in 1947. Eventually, Gill's father shifted his family to New Delhi, India with the hopes of living in a calmer area. It is in Delhi that Stephen Gill spent his early childhood.

Partition had seriously affected Gill's family leaving them with the fear of uncertain future. Remorseless brutalities on the border have hardened the minds of both the Hindus and Muslims, resulting in creating gloomy atmosphere of grief for the Christians in New Delhi too. Slowly, Gill figured out ways to escape from the murderous religious rage and to settle down in a peaceful atmosphere. Soon, he fetched his teaching position in Ethiopia for three years which he considers as a miracle but after a short stint there, he immigrated to England before settling down in Canada.

Stephen Gill is a multiple award winning writer and has recieved many awards and recognition. They include three honorary doctorate and the **Laureate Man of Letters** from the United Poets Laureate International in the year 1990, **Pegasus International Poetry for Peace Award**(1991), Canada and **Empowerment Peace**

Poet Award (1994) from World poetry Canada, **The Best Poet of Peace Award** from Roger Cable (1994), **Sahir Award of Honor**(1999) from Sahir Cultural Society, **Lifetime Achievement Award** from South Asian Bible Church (2000), **The Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal** (2002), the **Best Inspirational Writing Award** from Bharath Times in the year 2009.

Stephen Gill tried his hands at varied genres including prose, poetry, novel, short story, translations and critical writings. His poetry collections are *Reflections & Wounds* (1978), *The Dove of Peace* (1993), *Songs for Harmony* (1993), *Divergent Shades* (1995), *Flashes* (2007), *The Flame* (2008), *Amputee* (2013) and *The Singer of Life* (2016). Along with his poetry, Gill has also written *Lifes's Vargaries* (1974), a short story and two children story named "Simon & the Snow King" (1981), "The Blessings of a Bird" (1983). His novels are *Why* (1977), *The Loyalist City* (1979), *The Coexistence* (2010) and *The Chattisgarh* (2015).

With regard to Darwish, the 1947 event and the following riots between the Arab inhabitants and the Zionists forces change his living condition. Along with his family he sought refuge for a short period in the town of Damour, southern Lebanon. Darwish was much influenced by his grandfather who taught him to read and write and also bought books for him from Acre. Darwish's brother Ahamed was a teacher and it was from Ahamed that Darwish acquired his early interest in literature. He completed his elementary education in a school in Deir al-Asad, and continued his secondary schooling in the village of KfarYasif.

After his high school education, Darwish moved to the city of Haifa in 1960, where he joined the Israeli Communist Party and began his profession in the Arab newspapers and magazines. He worked in the newspaper *al-Ittihad* and in the

magazine *al-Jadid*, for which he later became the editor. He also served as a member of the editorial board of the magazine *al-Fajr*, an Arab literary magazine. Darwish travelled to Moscow in 1970, and studied at the Institute of Social Sciences.

He dropped out of school and moved to Cairo a year later and decided not to return to Israel in future. In 1973, Darwish moved to Beirut and worked at the PLO Research Center, and soon became its director and the editor of its monthly journal *Shu'un Filastiniyya*. He founded a cultural magazine called *al-Karmel* in 1981 in Beirut. At this period, he witnessed the Lebanese Civil war in 1975 and Israel Invasion in 1982. He returned to Palestine in 1995 and he continued to edit *al-Karmel*, and Amman, with occasional travel elsewhere. He was also given permits by the Israeli authorities to see his mother and visit the village where he lived during his childhood.

Darwish has published more than 30 volumes of poetry and eight books of prose along with being the editor for many periodicals that are mentioned earlier. Many accolades have come his way like: **The Lotus Prize** in the year 1969 from the Union of Afro-Asian Writers, **Lenin Peace Prize** in 1983 from the USSR, **The Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters** in 1993 from France, the **Lannan Foundation Prize** for Cultural Freedom in the year 2001, **The Prince Claus Awards** in 2004, **Golden Wreath of Struga Poetry Evenings** (2007), **The International Forum for Arabic Poetry prize** in 2007 and the **Argana International Poetry Prize** in the year 2008 from Morocco.

Darwish received his great influences from the Iraqi poets Abd al-Wahhab Al-Bayati, Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, Rimbaud and Ginsberg. He also admired the Hebrew poet Yehuda Amichai, but described his poetry as a challenge to him, because he writes about the same place. Darwish tries to use the landscape and history for his own benefit,

based on his fractured identity. Mahmoud Darwish died on 9 August 2008 at the age of 67, after the heart surgery at Memorial Hermann hospital in Houston, Texas.

Mahmoud Darwish's poetry collections include *Wingless birds* (1963), *Leaves of Olives* (1964), *Identity Card* (1964), *A Lover From Palestine* (1966), *Eleven planets* (1992), *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?* (1995), *The End of the Night* (1967), *Diary of a Palestinian Wound* (1969), *Birds are Dying in Galilee* (1970), *The Adam of Two Eden* (2000), *Mural* (2000), *State of siege* (2002), *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems* (2003), *Almonds and Blossoms and beyond* (2005), *In the Presence of Absence* (2006) and *The Butterfly's Burden* (2007). His prose works are *Something about the Homeland* (1971), *Diary of a Citizen without a Country* (1971), *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1987), *Bypassers in Bypassing Words* (1991) and *A River Dies of Thirst: Journals* (2009)

The works of Gill and Darwish could be analysed from different perspectives with regard to the wide range of themes and issues their works deal with. Their works received great recognitions and appeal. Resultantly, many books have been published on their works. The interview and book review on Stephen Gill is published in the year 1999 and is titled *Glimpses*. The book consists of critical insights, reviews and a critical evaluation of his fiction and poetry. George Hines published the book, *Stephen Gill and His works* in the year 2008. This book gives a short outline of Gill's Stories and novels.

Dr. Nilanshu Kumar Agarwal's book *Discovering Stephen Gill* in the year 2008 deals with racial prejudice and religious fanaticism. The book justifies the rightful place of Gill in Indo- Canadian literature. *Stephen Gill: A Poet of World Peace* was edited by K.V. Dominic in the year 2010. The book consists of fourteen critical articles written

on Stephen Gill. The anthology comprises of Gill's poetry, interviews, his publications and critical articles. Shaleen Kumar Singh wrote a book, *Essays on the Poetry of Stephen Gill: An Anthology of Critical Papers and Articles* in the year 2010. This book deals with the poems of Gill and there are fourteen articles highlighting the predominant themes of Gill. The book, *Interpretation of the Mind and Art of Stephen Gill* (2011) by Anuradha Sharma is a critical evaluation of Gill's novels and short stories.

Edward W Said in the journal *Grand Street* has written an article titled, "On Mahmoud Darwish" which got published twice in the year 1981 and 2004. Here Said comments on Darwish that, "he never belonged to any political party; his mordant wit, fierce political independence, and exceptionally refined cultural sensibility kept him at a distance from the frequent coarseness of Palestinian and Arab politics" (112). "The Geography of Poetry: Mahmoud Darwish and Postnational Identity" is an article by Erica Mena in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* was published in the year 2009.

In the year 2009, Ned Cuthoys published an article, "Diaspoic vision: Al-Andalus in the German Jewish Imaginary in the journal *Arena*. The article covers the diaspoic experiences of Mahmoud Darwish in his poems. Hamoud Yahya, ZalinaMohidLazim and Ravichandran Vengadasamy have written a journal article in 2012 titled, "Eco Resistance in the Poetry of the Arab poet Mahmoud Darwish" in the journal *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*.

Khaled Mattawa come out with a book named *Mahmoud Darwish: The Poet's Art and His Nation* (2014). The book covers a wide range of topics related to Darwish, his PLO movement, his exiled self and poet's appropriate contingency. Nahla A. K.

Alhitani has published an article, “The Image of Women in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish” in the *International Journal of Humanities, Philosophy and Language* in 2018. The paper deals with the prominence of women characters in the poems of Darwish also brings out the painful sufferings of the Palestinian women.

Theory is the process of understanding and analysing the nature of literature, its function, its relation with text with its author, reader, language, society and history. Literature alters itself according to the social change that takes place in history. An individual can read the literature of a particular age in history in order to understand the life style of that epoch. The relationship between literature and history is complicated. Literature records history and history shapes many forms of literature. It is influenced by history, and the approach that helps in gauging literature through history and history through literature is termed as ‘New Historicism’. New Historicist’s approach to literature helps to evaluate literature through a comprehensible analysis of the social and cultural discourse, aiming at a clear understanding of the intellectual past through literary works and cultural context.

New Historicism has become unavoidable in academic concerns with reference to the increasing relationship between literature and history. It has gained importance amid literary theories forming a base for other literary, cultural and historical studies. This theory approaches the bond between text and context with a vital consideration of the political consequences of literary interpretation. From a New Historicist’s perspective, texts of all kinds act as medium of politics such that the texts contemplate the framework of social, political and cultural formations. It is important to keep in mind that these critics break down the simple distinction between literature and history and open up a complex dialogue between them. They refuse to see literary texts against

an overriding background of history or to see history as a set of facts outside the written texts.

New Historicism provided its advocates with a practice of literary analysis that underlined the interrelatedness of all human endeavours. It also confessed its own prejudices, and gave a more complete understanding of a text than other interpretative approaches. New Historicists entailed that history was always textual and oral. New Historicism was not a see through process, but a practice bound up with the historian's subjectivity. Historian's own social and cultural differences resulted in potential prejudices and also reflected in writings that record history.

According to New Historicists, history was not close or final as suggested by traditional historians. It was an act of analysis that conferred new reading of the textual sketches of the past. New Historicists gave equal critical purview to analyse the ways in which literature and historical texts settle social and political power. They never prioritised the literary text alone. These critics also observed the life of the poets and looked at traditional historical credentials like newspaper reports, letters or journals for more accurate and minute details of the past events. Literature along with these mixtures of texts, allowed the New Historicists to find proof of widespread power structures in the society. They also identified prospective patterns of rebellion that pictured the working of power structure across the text.

New Historicist restructured the interpretation of literature along with the social, political and historical age that produced it. They do not consider literature as the record of a single mind, but the end product of a specific cultural milieu. These critics place literature alongside other cultural aspects to explain how concepts, attitudes and ideologies operated across a wider cultural spectrum which is not solely literary. Along

with analysing the impact of historical context and ideology, this New Historicist acknowledges that their own criticism endures prejudices that propagate from their historical position and ideology. It is impossible to escape one's own history because the meaning of a text is fluid and it is not stable.

Ideology operates in producing the kind of people required by a particular social organisation, most persistently capitalism that makes individuals recognise their place within a social structure. There are some parallels between Althusser's ideology and Greenblatt's culture. Greenblatt's notion of culture also involves restraints that are enforced both in formal and informal ways. New Historicism considers that all aspects of a culture is shaped and being shaped by each other in a complex way that not one approach is solely enough to provide a complex picture of what has happened in the past.

New Historicist recognises that history is a narrative that is highly subjective and is coloured by the cultural context of the recorder, a powerful individual who neglect the stories of the powerless. Discourses that vary from the norms and digress from that are likely to be suppressed, neglected or unrecognised as they challenge the values of a culture and the dominance of the powerful.

New Historicists connect historical, social and economic background of a text. They identify the dominant social group in a society that determines what is acceptable and unacceptable for the larger sect. It defines the ideology, the notion of culture and its values. They show interest towards groups who do not belong to the dominant side and who challenge the hegemony of the powerful. They tend to make their marginalised culture and history known and valued for their present as well as future. They also

engage in making the subjugated and marginalised more visible and influential maker of history, text and culture. They concentrate on the voices of those seldom heard.

A close study of the critical studies on Stephen Gill and Mahmoud Darwish brings to the fore the fact that their literary creations especially poems promote world peace and universal brotherhood. Their views against violence, terrorism and war are recorded in their poems. The review of literature on Gill and Darwish proves how as poets they have gained world-wide attention.

However, the present research differs from earlier studies as it aims at unravelling the New Historicism in the select poems of Gill and Darwish. Further, a New Historicism reading helps unearthing the hidden past of the poets. The research is an attempt to explore how Stephen Gill and Mahmoud Darwish project the ideological stereotypes, their causes and a new directional means of New Historicism in their well-crafted poems. The poems of Gill and Darwish are different in the ways they discuss various damages done to the masses, the loss of meaning and the real aim of living. These poets try to identify a common mechanics to reshape the creation, and that had in part generated their own stories.

This study is a library research in which the select poems of Stephen Gill and Mahmoud Darwish are analysed using New Historicism. This research study is structured into seven chapters. Chapter-I – **Introduction** provides the bio-critical information of Stephen Gill and Mahmoud Darwish. This chapter gives a detailed review of the primary resources and the secondary resources. The chapter fixes the poets in their respective contexts, justifies the research work and puts forth the thesis statement. Further, the research design comprising of the chapter summaries are presented.

Chapter- II – **New Historicism – An Overview** is to give a detailed account of the theory to be applied in this thesis. It will trace the roots of New Historicism, its features and its proponents. The chapter will discuss the variations of New Historicism theory from its base from Marxism, New Criticism and Cultural Materialism. The differences between Old Historicism and New Historicism are comprehended. The chapter will outline the importance of New Historicism and its impact of textual history. The chapter will present some note-worthy observations of New Historicist critics like Michael Foucault, Stephen Greenblatt, Catherine Gallagher and Louise Montrose. It elaborates on Foucault's power relation, care for self and Stephen Greenblatt's circulation of social energy and the concept of speaking with the dead. The chapter is to be an explication of the impacts of New Historicism on literature.

Chapter- III – **Notionality** will present the created ideologies and the related problems experienced from the poets' point of view derived from their respective poems. This chapter will deal with Eric Hoffer's unifying agents namely, hatred, imitation, persuasion and coercion, leadership, action and suspicion. It will also identify how each of these agents play a major part in the lives of Stephen Gill and Mahmoud Darwish. Moreover, the chapter would move forward to analyse the combined efforts of interconnections between the universal sufferings of the poets, irrespective of their differences and their various manifestations in the poems of both the poets.

Chapter-IV – **Neglectification** is to focus on the root cause beyond all the ideological problems mentioned in the poems based on three divisions namely, historical, mythological and political past. It will probe the historical past through the Biblical and Quranic references mentioned by the poets in their respective poem. The chapter will also study on the mythological past by the Hindu, Greek, Mesopotamian, and Sumerian myths. The political past is to be identified using the poets' social

background throwing light on the historicity of the poems. Each types of past, their meanings and features in the poems of Gill and Darwish will find a place in the chapter.

Chapter- V – **New Directionality** will put forth a detailed study of the possible scope for a new life in the poems of Gill and Darwish, with the help of Foucault’s concept of ‘Care for Self’. Using the concepts from textual historicity, the chapter will categorise the different types of new directions that are mentioned by the poets in their works. The chapter will highlight on the ways to lead a peaceful and meaningful living as projected by the poets in their respective poetry.

Chapter-VI – **Narratification** will move on to critique Stephen Gill and Mahmoud Darwish with regard to the genre of poetry. It will deal with the forms of the poems namely the distinctive patterns of writings evinced in Gill’s trilliums in Haiku, epic poems and sonnet collection as well as in Darwish’s prosaic poem and epic poem. The chapter would also focus on the structures and forms of individual poetry collections, the setting of the poetry, characterisations, themes, narrative styles. The chapter will emphasis on the poetic techniques employed by Gill and Darwish that a facilitate study of their poem from a New Historicist approach.

Chapter-VII – **Summing up** will make an attempt to summarise each aspect of the research work, validating the various aspects of New Historicism in the select poems of Stephen Gill and Mahmoud Darwish. It will be followed by the research findings of the thesis. The scope for future research on the poets and their works would also be listed to further upcoming research endeavours on the chosen writers. As the chosen poets are to be viewed under the context of New Historicism, the next chapter would highlight the importance of New Historicism.