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Original Research Paper

"A Whiff Like the Effect of Butterflies at the End of the Earth"[1] : Esthetics of Linguistic Discourse in the Poems of Arab Poetesses as Mirrors of Liberation and Influence

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Abstract

Many female Arab writers have chosen poetry as the most efficient and esthetically most gratifying medium for expressing the discourse of liberation and influence that they are leading. The present paper discusses the new poetic devices adopted by various women poets, from the use of shocking titles to the creation of unusual devices for communication between reader and poem. In this study, we focus on three poems by three women poets and compare the role that verbal esthetics play in promoting the concept of liberation and influence in them. The first poem is 'Taḥaddin' (Challenge) by the Algerian poet Aḥlām Mustaghāminī (b. 1942). In it, language appears as an instrument for a discourse of liberation in face of great challenges: politics, society, the writer herself. The poet uses such traditional devices as harmonizing intertexuality and functional rhyme to construct her vision. The Iraqi poet Wafā Abd al-Razzāq (b. 1952) in her 'Waqfāt' (Pauses) takes symbols out of their usual context and deprives them of their evocative power in the reader's mind, enabling her to use them to create images of her own vision of women composers of poetry. Maysūn Ṣaqr (b. 1958) of the United Arab Emirates expresses redemption through the act of writing by using meta-linguistic esthetic constructions such as écart, contrasting intertextuality and enjambement that shatter the meaning. All three poems use devices that are similar to those used by male Arab poets in modern times, the poetesses have succeeded in giving these devices a feminine coat unique to them. The difference lies in the mode of their use: 1) clearly hearing the feminine first person, 2) allusions to children's voices, masks and stories, and 3) biographical tales whose protagonists are women, all of which are rarely to be found in the writings of male poets.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Following the rise in literary activity on the part of Arab women writers[2] in recent years[3] and the influential role they have come to play in the discourse of liberation from the dominant intellectual establishment,[5] we find that many of them choose poetry as their preferred tool for engaging in the discourse of liberation and influence (Gottesfeld, 2010; Safuri, 2017; Al-Maḥbashī, 2010). Arab women poets use existing linguistic and poetic devices[5] (Freelock and Vega, 1989) which they try also to put to new uses in order to express this discourse[6] (Genette, 1988; Grast, 1982). However, the big challenges they are facing to write poetry in an age of the classical Arabic poem (*qaṣīda*) no longer play the political and cultural role in the past and no longer dictates the taste of the Arab public (Snir, 1998 ; Taha, 2007) an age of social media in which prose has come to occupy a central position. This challenge has led women poets to strive to use unusual and extra-linguistic devices in order to attract readers to their poems[7] (Samrīn, 1990; Shabān, 2000). The present study focuses on the use of Arab women poets make of existing linguistic and poetic devices to express a discourse of liberation, and the extent to which this discourse has been successful in the

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creation of cohesive linguistic patterns that break traditional molds. We chose three poems as representatives of three currents in the poetic discourse of liberation. One is Algerian poet Aḥlām Mustaghānimī's (b. 1942) poem 'Taḥaddin' (Challenge), which represents the loud voice of modern traditionalist poetic discourse, with its focus on conflict with the other in order to achieve collective liberation in its various contexts: political, social and literary. Another is the Iraqi poet Wafā Abd al-Razzāq's (b. 1952) poem 'Waqfāt' (Stops), which represents whispered poetry of inner experiences of the self, in which the poet digs within himself/herself in order to attain liberation and reconciliation. The last is the poem 'Anā waḥdī al-qiṭṭa hunā' (I'm Alone the Cat Here) by the Emirate poet Maysūn Ṣaqr (b. 1958) which represents the third current deviates from accepted traditional norms through the use of a discourse filled with action, uses inner weakness to build strength and hones devices for the purpose of smashing traditional norms and creating texts that are not similar to anything except themselves.

2 THE FIRST MIRROR

Traditional discourse with a feminine voice from Aḥlām Mustaghānimī's poem 'Challenge'[8] is the voice of discourse and the great challenges: politics, society and writing (**Mustaghānimī, 1972**).

2.1 Poster Titles and First-person Verbs

No doubt the linguistic form of the title (Al-Jūh, 1999), a singular, indefinite noun, evokes in the reader the idea of opposition, individualism, struggle and flying away from the flock. A careful reading of the poem's text reveals that it is full of verbs in the first person at the beginning of the lines, providing support for our initial reading: 'I declared', 'I smash', 'I free', 'I shall remain, giving a sense of action, change and resistance (Bin Masūd, 2002).

2.2 Enticing the Receiver Through Linguistic Devices

The poet begins her text with the causative phrase 'Because I', which is repeated as an anaphora five times at the beginning of other lines, an indication of the causal linguistic relations among the poem's lines, all the way to the end. The reader expects the speaker to be informed of the result in the next line, but in fact the reply to the opening 'Because I' and the second and third occurrences of 'Because' is only given in the twelfth line, thus enticing the reader to continue reading until the entire idea has been expressed.

2.3 Expression of Rejection, Open Resistance, Individual Adventure and Exposure

Because I rejected the short paths
And declared my resistance despite everyone
I shall continue
On to the bottomless depths of the sea
Perhaps one day
I shall smash Shahriyār's ivory tower
I shall free the slave girls from his clutches
Perhaps, my homeland, despite your defeat
I shall return with a pearl from my seas.

The verb 'reject' in the first line is cotemporaneous with the verb 'declare' in the second line. The two verbs together create a high-voiced pace that confronts the accepted traditional approach, hinted at by 'the short paths' and 'despite everyone'. The persona in the poem has not been learned the lesson of Little Red Riding Hood and takes a well-used and safe path, with no adventures. It does not want to take the path of hypocrisy and social expediency, but, as shown by the verb 'continue' in line 3, insists on persevering and resisting. However, the semantic shift in line 4 changes the meaning of the latter verb, which now denotes absorption and application. The paradox in line 4 shows that the challenge is an adventure that may bring either death or rescue, but is closer to the abyss than to the horizon, in the depths of a bottomless sea, that is, the challenge has no bounds and no fixed standards. The depths of the sea may allude to the inner persona rather than to its exterior. Therefore, the type of adventure and the type of challenge differ from what the reader expected. However, the phrases 'Perhaps' and 'one day' in line 5 indicate that the outcome is not certain and is not likely to come about soon. Lines 6, 7 and 8 hint at the desired outcome. Line 6 evokes in the reader's mind the associations connected to Shahriyār, but in a way that exceeds the traditional concept: here Shahriyār is not only the oppressor of women, but any despot or authoritarian figure; he stands for the intellectual establishment that thinks uniformly, and for the traditionally-oriented social establishment[9]. Freeing of slave girls is not the same as the liberation of women,[10] but liberation in all the aforementioned dimensions. We not used the phrase 'his clutches', a reference to the power to enslave and oppress others (Malti-Douglas, 1991; Cooke, 1996) this explains, returning now to line 5, the use of 'Perhaps one day' to indicate the difficult nature of the challenge facing the speaker. Line 8 highlights the previous meanings, with 'my homeland' and 'your defeat' referring to the political, social and intellectual aspects,[15] in order to stress the fact that the struggle was not between men and women, but had a much broader scope. The 'pearl' refers to the desired outcome, whether political or social change, or literary[11] or intellectual accomplishment (Ibrāhīm, 1991).

2.4 Words for Semantic Field of Pregnancy and Birth

Because I screamed: I want to live
Because I stood up to the raiders
The pirates were furious with me
Every path to me was blocked
Every one of my sails was torn to pieces

The shouted desire to live in line 10 reminds the reader of the screams of giving birth telling him that this challenge is not undertaken for amusement, but rather something necessary and instinctive, involving as it does a struggle against intellectual and political assault. Line 12 completes the linguistic structure opened in line 1, in

which 'Because I' appears for the first time. Everything that precedes it is why the poetic persona is besieged by 'pirates'. A siege by sea is harsher than a siege on land: here the persona has no life buoy, and no one to help it, for 'every path' was blocked. It was unable to move and extricate itself, for 'every one of my sails was torn to pieces'.

2.5 Functional and Semantically Paradoxical Rhymes

Because I did not know the ways of hypocrisy
And at the beginning of the road ignored
The path of doing business in the name of values (*qiyam*)
I implored on the highest summits (*qimam*)
Every day I was besieged by a dwarf (*qazm*)
In order to become a sail with no identity
Because the backdrop takes away (*taghtālu*) my voice
I call out with no echo
Because I …

The linguistic construction 'Because I' is repeated in line 15, and is completed in line 19. Its content appears in the form of the idea of 'the ways of hypocrisy', 'doing business in the name of values', which are an expansion of the idea of the 'short paths' in line 1. However, the lines devoted to give further emphasis to this idea and impose a more rhetorical character on the text, in addition to the repeated allusion to the story of Snow White, albeit here presented in a manner that contradicts the original story, since the dwarf besieges her instead of helping her. Furthermore, she chose the long path in line 1 rather than the short path, but in the end, it is a midget[12], while in the previous line she strove towards the 'highest summits'. Here we clearly see the use of rhyme in words with contradictory meanings in the service of meaning, in this case to highlight to distinction between the persona, which strives towards the 'summits', and the obstacles put in place by the 'dwarf'. The purpose of the siege is to deprive the persona of its identity. The boats without a sail to identify and make them outlaws. The speaker here appears to be searching for an identity for himself, whether social, literary, political or other.

In line 21, we see the pain felt by the persona through the verb '*taghtālu*', which harmonizes with the meaning of the 'backdrop'. The verb frequently used in a political context, where it means 'assassinate'. The 'backdrop' here points to the contrast between what declared on the political, literary and social stage, and what happens in the background. Its thoughts are 'with no echo', because its voice has been 'assassinated'. The phrase 'Because I' in line 23 indicates that there are many causes for this, which it would take too long to explain.

2.6 The ending (Torgovnick, 1981; Whiston, 1986; Allen, 1986)

But I, despite all my absence from my land
I shall remain on a filly of my suffering
And shall sow the light of youth in life
And at the beginning of every fire
I shall die and the flame shall remain.

The last five lines constitute a single integrated linguistic unit that begins with a linguistic style, which contrasts with that of the text's beginning instead of 'Because I' the poet here puts 'But I'. In addition, we noted the use of rhythmic structures that serve the meaning, the phonetic similarity between 'my absence' (*ightirābī*) and 'my suffering' (*ʿadhābī*) is opposed to the semantically incongruous 'youth', as well as the phonetic similarity between 'flame' (*ḥarīq*) and 'fire' (*iḥtirāq*) and their incompatible meaning. She also uses verbs associated with life: 'I shall remain', 'shall sow'. The poet uses words that belong to one semantic field and gives them meanings outside that field: 'light', 'flame', 'fire'. The reader will certainly notice the speaker's femininity for example, she chooses a 'filly' rather than a 'stallion', and despite the fact that she is a 'filly of suffering', she is at the beginning of her journey and her fertility.

But then the verb 'die', highlighted through the use of the overt personal pronoun 'I', clearly conflicts with the previous words 'youth', 'life' and 'filly'. Still, death here is connected with resurrection through the verb 'remain'. The fact that both verbs appear in Arabic in the imperfect form (*amūt* and *yaẓall*) points to an unbroken continuation. The fire and flame allude to two sources, which are often used by Arab poets, the legend of the Phoenix[13] and the story of Abraham[14]. However, the way they are used here contradicts the original sources. In the poem (contrary to the stories of the Phoenix and Abraham) the persona dies as a victim of the fire, sacrificed for the sake of intellectual, social and literary revolution.

3 THE SECOND MIRROR

Whispered discourse and individual experience in Wafāʾ al-Razzā's poem 'Stops', Self-birth.

3.1 Linguistically Neutral Title (Levinson, 1985)

From this poem[15] we have chosen the 'first stop'. A stop is associated with a variety of different meanings: deliberateness, reflection, accounting, inspection, decision. It can also be used in a social context, as in a stop for assistance, for mourning, for respect, for remembrance, for protest, etc.

3.2 Selective Words as an Alternative Music to Traditional Meter

This poem creates its rhythm in a unique manner through the use of phonetic structures, rhythmical or linguistics through the use of the sounds *ḥ* and *q* or the use of long vowels as in *kurūm* and *rūḥ* or geminated consonants as in *atashawwaq*, ushadhdhib and *urawwiḍ*, or through the use of adverbial expressions of time and places introduced by 'where' and 'when'. Furthermore, thirteen out of twenty lines open with an imperfect verb in the first person singular. Many of these verbs express movement from one place to another, as in 'I ascend', 'I enter', 'I cross', 'I flee', 'I stand'. The verbs that

dominate the poem's structure give the text a rhythm that compensates for the lack of traditional meter (feet and rhyme).

3.3 Shift in the use of Oxymorons and Intertextuality

I ascend to where the trees of my grief are
I enter a flower that dances on the mirror of the wind
I hear a quiet voice
I accept its tranquility.

The reader sees in the first two lines the linguistic signs whose meaning belongs to the space of the self: 'I ascend', 'I enter', 'where'. However, the reader will also note the oxymoron in these two lines. The verb 'ascend' implies movement from the bottom upwards, associated with the meaning of ascent and making a mental, psychological and physical efforts whereas the phrase 'my grief' draws the reader back into an intertextual reading. Ascents are associated with spiritual and religious texts, such as the Christian idea of Christ's ascent after the crucifixion, or Joseph's ascent from the pit[16], in both of which there is the idea of spiritual and mental development through psychological or physical torment. The idea behind the use of the verb 'ascend' is thus not restricted to the psychological, physical and mental aspect, but contains the spiritual aspect as well. The use of the metaphor 'trees of my grief' thus refers to the extent of this grief, and its fruitfulness. The verb 'enter' in line 2 loses its usual meaning in light of the previous line; here it means 'plunge into'. The 'flower that dances'[17] implies that the 'trees of grief' bloom and bear fruit, and do not possess the usual negative meaning associated with grief. Now, it is usually the case that a tree blossoms before it bears fruit, and furthermore, a 'dance' does not merely express conflicting human emotions such as joy and grief[18], but it also serves as a language of communication, for example among bees, and is also used as such in the rites of Ṣūfī mystics[19]. Such a dance, 'on the mirror of the wind', signifies freedom and unfettered instinct.

3.4 Meta-poetics and Cosmic References: Language, Birth and Realm

I bear an alphabet that goes deep
Where the first seed is

The words 'alphabet' and 'first' point to the meta-poetic level and suggest beginnings, roots and the linguistic dimension. 'I bear' and 'the first seed' involve life, pregnancy and (poetic) birth, a return to nature. These references are connected with others that point to an unlimited spatial dimension, such as 'where' and 'deep'. Together with the verbal relative clause 'that goes deep' the create a cosmic meaning and make language into an additional realm for life and birth.

3.5 Liberation Comes from the Self Toward the Self

And when I desire to land on my mirror
I leave my prison behind and prune the spirit's vineyards
I grant my soul the breadth of the sea
And pacify its assault
I know that I stand deep
In the joy of grief
And the rejoicing of weeping

In these lines the reader will note an increase in the frequency of the use of words which evoke a spatiotemporal spectrum and are associated with a reflexive verb: 'when I desire', 'my mirror', 'I leave my prison behind', '(I) prune the spirit's vineyards', 'I grant my soul'. When the reader seeks the other end of 'I desire' he finds himself paradoxically before 'landing', although desire is usually associated with distance, aspiration and sublimity. The 'landing' here parallels the 'ascent' of line 1, but the movement is not to the same point, because the verb 'enter' in line 2 refers to the persona's movement towards the deep. The landing here is thus more of a penetration into the deep rather than the converse of the ascent, as might appear at first glance. The reader thus realizes that the other is just the persona itself, which 'rises' through more than one stage. The first is liberation: 'I leave my prison behind', the second is renewal: '(I) prune the spirit's vineyards' and the third is the creation of an identity: 'my mirror'. The 'desire' is thus aimed at the self rather than at something external. Indeed, the verbs 'prune', 'pacify' and 'know' all go back to the self as well. The reader will no doubt understand the use of the oxymorons 'joy of grief' and 'rejoicing of weeping', which serve to express emotions that are multifaceted and contradictory.

3.6 Sex and Mysticism as Devices for the Expression of Inner Freedom and Meta-Poetic Liberation

I flee from the virtue of pain and take refuge
In a scream in your innards
Because I want to sharpen my hearing
And pant in dark secrecy
There is nothing more beautiful than the clarity of an hour
In which you are
I am saved from myself
And stop one minute under the sun

These lines are filled with allusions to the spatial spectrum, for example 'I flee', '(I) take refuge', 'your innards'. The reader will notice the sexual associations used to indicate rebirth: 'scream', 'virtue', 'pain', 'your innards', 'I want', 'I pant', 'dark secrecy'. Nor will he be able to ignore the fact that in these lines there are frequent phrases based on contradictory semantic fields, as in 'virtue of pain', 'I flee/I take refuge', 'dark secrecy/clarity', 'I am saved from myself'.

At the end of the poem, we find that the sun highlights the meaning of desiccation due to the containment of the sea, that is, the end of the experience. This desiccation points to truth, revelation, exposure, life, bearing fruit, fertility and freedom. The reader here focuses with two questions: 1) What does stopping for 'one minute' mean? Is it in mourning for the self, is it stop to welcome the birth of the self through writing, or

is it a minute in which one enjoys one's freedom after being liberated from the jail of one's self, one's body and one's past? and 2) Who is 'you' in line 19? Is it the self, or writing, or a man?

In reply we may say that the persona's experience may be compared to the experience of consummated sex, or the mystics' experience of oneness with God. However, these comparisons are merely aides for the expression of something else. In fact, although the various possibilities do exist, the first line of the text points the reader in the direction of meta-writing, through the word 'alphabet', so that we are left with the conclusion that the persona's experience is steeped in the act of writing as a means to attain a minute of freedom under the sun (Cixous, 1983).

4 THE THIRD MIRROR

The third poem by Maysūn Ṣaqr's poem "I'm Alone the Cat Here" (Ṣaqr, 2007) presents the act of writing From weakness to the power of disrupting, using familiar language in order to create an original discourse.

4.1 The Title

From a semantic perspective, the title presents a focus on the self, through the pronouns it contains. Furthermore, one can understand the word '(I) alone' (*waḥdī*) in contradictory senses, of presence, strength and weakness. The choice of 'cat' too presents the reader with contradictory connotations of femininity versus ferocity, of weakness versus strength, of laziness versus action, of the ability to enjoy oneself versus the ability to defend oneself. The spatiotemporal expression 'here' makes the reader wonder who 'I' is and where 'here' is.

4.2 Feminization of the Objectives

I am she who mews her poem
At the feet of the poem
I'm alone the cat here
That licks its wound
Without complaint
At a time when the coffee boils over
In the tent
I sit and color my eyelids with antimony

The text makes it very clear already in the first line that the speaker is a woman[20] ('I am she')[21] and also highlights the objective correlative at the meta-poetic level through 'mews her poem' and 'at the feet of the poem' in the following line. For the relationship between the cat (speaker) and the poem is one of dependence, need, inferiority, servility, service, master, subservient, tamer and tamed (Taha, 2006). The cat appears as an objective correlative to the poetess. It 'licks its wound', whose cause remains unknown, perhaps inflicted by the poem. That is, it treats itself, and the enjambment 'without complaint' strengthens the meaning of self-sufficiency and the speaker's ability to overcome her pain 'alone'. These lines present a prominent oriental aspects by way of the definite words: 'the coffee', 'the tent' and '(the) antimony'. Three distinct intertwined elements are: coffee is served to guests, helps one concentrate when writing or staying up at night, and is used to disinfect wounds, and for painting and writing. Antimony is used as a cosmetic and for treating the eyes. It has been used also on children to strengthen their eyes and protect them from jealousy and the evil eye[22] and the tent implies simultaneously simplicity and seclusion, and may also be associated with adherence to reactionary customs, or with human instinct. Note that the definite nouns 'the coffee' and 'the tent' have no possessive pronoun connected to them, and are thus open to various interpretations: Do the coffee and the tent belong to the speaker, or does what happen take place in another tent, the tent of society, of a man, of the establishment?

Also note the oxymoron between the verbs 'boil over' and 'sit', whose simultaneity is expressed by 'at a time when'. Because of the enjambment the reader can interpret the oxymoron in two ways. Either the boiling coffee causes the action hinted at by 'I sit' and '(I) color my eyelids', or the coffee boils in another tent at the same time that she concentrates on coloring her eyes, without paying any attention to the boiling coffee. In either case, the boiling of the coffee is simultaneous with the act of coloring the eyes. Does the boiling emanate from rage? Affection? Pain? Sexual passion? The writer's thoughts? The reader will also ask why she colors her eyelids: Is it an act of adornment? Of Treatment? An attempt to improve her eyesight? Or is it all of these?

4.3 Meta-Writing as a Rite of Black magic: Sign, Monolog and Shift

I say to myself:
That I will be a widow
Thus when I pierce the page
With the tip of the pen
I hone the kohl stick in my eye
With antimony. I say to myself:

These lines contain a monolog that describes a private rite ('I say to myself'). There is a clear connection between the act of writing and rites of black magic: 'Thus', 'I pierce the page', 'the tip of the pen'. There is also a shift in meaning in 'that I will be a widow', which implies a conscious desire on her part that her spouse die[23]. Is her husband this man? Or does the meaning shift completely away from the conventional meaning of 'widow'? Does it refer to social and intellectual liberation? or poetic liberation from conventional writing? Note also the parallelism between 'with the tip (*sinn*) of the pen' and 'I hone (*asunnu*) the kohl stick'. The act of writing in a novel and different way pierces the page and the lines, in parallel with the new sharp vision and the beautification the written text. But the achievement of this beauty in writing involves effort, pain and danger. Piercing the page requires an effort, just as does honing the kohl stick. Here the meaning of the act of coloring the eyelids is taken out of its normal context of highlighting the eyes' beauty. It is shifted to

refer to new esthetics in poetry and the effectuation of a more profound insight into it.

4.4 Revenge Through Writing

> The dagger will enter his heart
> His blood will burst out in my face
> I will drink it in pure vengeance
> I will open my painted eyes and say
> I will learn evil
> I will learn how I can be the widow of a highway robber (*qāṭiʿ al-ṭarīq*; literally: "blocker of the road")[24]

The future marker *sa* at the beginning of lines 15-17 takes us back again to the amulets of black magic, since the acts depicted there have not been executed, but are only wishes for the future. The possessive pronouns in 'his heart' and 'his blood' place a third person into the text. Is this the man implied through 'widow'? Is it the 'pen', or is it poetry? The act of plunging a dagger into the heart is less one of killing that it is of plunging into the deep, and drinking the blood refers to the sweetness of revenge[25], evoking the figure of the strongest woman mentioned in Arab and Islamic history, Hind daughter of Utba (Muqābala, 1999).

This takes us back inevitably to line 4, where the cat 'licks its wound'. Vengeance thus comes in the wake of previous suffering. If this is taken to be in reference to writing, then for the poetess the production of a text is an act comparable to killing: 'I pierce the page with the tip of the pen'. Opening the eyes in line 18 ends the magical rite, the rite of writing, albeit with a change that the speaker undergoes. She now appears with painted eyes, whose associations (sharp eyesight, greater beauty, evil dimension) are closely connected to the 'evil' mentioned in the following line. The sound of the word 'evil' (*sharr*) is reminiscent of the sound of the word 'poetry' (*shiʿr*), which dominated the poem's beginning. Are they equivalent? Evil here receives a new meaning: it is poetry that breaks the norms, that enters the realm of the experimental, that examines the depths. And this can only happen if the poetess becomes the 'widow of a highway robber'.

Evil (poetry) is associated here with the future form of the verb 'I will learn' (*sa-ataallam*), that is, it will come about through experience, sometimes with a very high price tag (blood). It is neither final nor continuous, just as the paths of liberation and writing are neither final nor continuous. The 'highway robber' at the end of the poem thus may have a number of meanings. It does not of necessity refer to a man, but may be anything, which can block the way to liberation and writing.

5 DISSCUSSION

The Algerian poetess Aḥlām Mustaghānimī used traditional devices such as intertextuality, allusion, enjambment and functional rhyme in order to build up her ideological views on the idea of liberation. Although she does not move beyond traditional devices used in free-verse poems, we find that a direct discursive voice can be clearly discerned inside the text, based on filling and repetition of the idea, which allows the poetess to dwarf maleness and to depict it as negative, violent and deceptive, reflecting the ideology of open struggle between society and the male viewpoint.

The Iraqi poetess Wafā Abd al-Razzāq in her poem 'Stops' takes symbols out of their ordinary context and deprives them of their suggestive power in the readers' minds, in order to use them to paint the scenes of her own views on poetic writing, based contradictorily on the 'whisper' and the imperfect verb to create a poetic form. She does not deal with the 'other' from a negative perspective, rather finding herself in the other, and digging inside herself in order to attain liberation.

The Emirate poetess Maysūn Ṣaqr uses a variety of different esthetic structures, such as shifts, intertextuality and enjambment in order to shatter expectations and meanings. She also uses the Arab literary heritage to evoke the figure of a woman who is both weak and strong, sharp of vision and capable of healing herself, in a mixture of death and life, killing and generation, through feminine and meta-poetic associations. This is reflected very well in what she did in the poem discussed above, with its well-developed esthetic devices, presented to the reader in a condensed manner, with multiple effective readings.

Despite the different poetic devices used by these poetesses, the feminine voice which can be heard in all three poems gives an intimation of their unique experience, which led them to produce accomplished texts despite social, cultural and political obstacles. However, each one of these poetesses represents a different poetic, intellectual and ideological approach to the issue of liberation and influence, in the shadow of an intellectual establishment that dominated Arab poetesses in centuries past.

6 CONCLUSION

The three poems represent an attack by women on the male poetic system, whose foundations were 'anchored' by critics and poets since pre-Islamic times. The poetesses here shatter the customary usage in the literary system. While all three poems use devices that are similar to those used by male Arab poets in modern times, the poetesses have succeeded in giving these devices a feminine coat unique to them. The difference lies in the mode of their use: clearly hearing the feminine first person; allusions to children's voices, masks and stories; and biographical tales whose protagonists are women, all of which are rarely to be found in the writings of male poets. In addition, they have a feminine meta-linguistic focus, such as the use a 'poem' (feminine in Arabic) instead of a 'poetry' (male in Arabic), in order to highlight the specifically feminine nature of the poetic experience, as well as taking inspiration from images from the world of women, such as giving birth and use of words from nature. In all three poems the poetesses attempt to free themselves, not socially, intellectually or politically, but rather from forms of writing dictated by men and placed at the center of literature, while presenting a feminine style of writing that maintains a dialogue with tradition, the

personal and the public at one-and-the-same time. For this reason, the three examples may be deemed to serve as mirrors that reflect liberation not only at the individual or collective levels but also and foremost as mirrors to influencing the literary system and attacking the genre of Arabic poetry in such a way that its center is shifted with respect to the treatment of feminine topics and with respect to playing at the margins of the literary system and the use of the given poetic devices in a new way, which transform these writings into a minor literature in the Deleuzean sense[26] within the major literature.

NOTES

1. Quoted from Egyptian poetess Hiba ʿIṣām al-Dīn's poem "Mā huwa lī" ("What He Is to Me"): Hiba ʿIṣām al-Dīn, *Ḥulla ḥamrāʾ wa-ʿankabūt*, Cairo: Dār sharqiyyāt.
2. Literary critics have focused more on prose produced by Arab women than by poetry, perhaps because poetry has today been marginalized in literary and literary-critical circles, or perhaps because poetic texts require of the reviewer to focus more on a text's esthetic qualities than on its contents. Women who have reviewed literary texts have tended to pay more attention to feminine themes associated with social contexts than to the literary devices used in the text.
3. The present article examines the linguistic and poetic devices used by women poets in order to express the idea of liberation. We shall avoid going into the various names used for the texts produced by Arab women, nor shall we discuss the pros and cons of terms such as "women's literature" or "feminine literature" rather, we intend to examine the linguistic and poetic devices used by contemporary women poets in order to express the ideas of liberation and influence, without trying to categorize the poems under any specific name, thus avoiding the terminological debate. See, for example, Ṣafūrī, *Shahrzād tastaridd ṣawtahā*, 9-13; Q. al-Maḥbashī, "al-Usus al-falsafiyya li-mafhūm al-junūsiyya", *Majallat al-nawʿ al-ijtimāʿī wal-tanmiya* 4 (2011), 115-143.
4. On the marginalization of Arab women writers and their poetry throughout history and its causes, see: Rajā Samrīn, *Shiʿr al-marʾa al-ʿarabiyya al-muʿāṣir 1945-1970*, 39-43.
5. One of many possible examples of such a device is the use of the title in various ways, not only as an esthetic structure with a semiotic histrionic dimension, but also as a marketing device that attracts the reader through its shocking or seductive message, as is the case of the UAE poet Maysūn Ṣaqr's collection of poems *Armalat qāṭi ṭarīq* (*A Highway Robber's Widow*, 2007), whose paradoxical title introduces an enticing dimension. Another example of the Syrian poet Khālidiyya al-Muayjil's (2017) collection *al-Fāyrūs al-jamīl* (*Beautiful Virus*; 2017), whose title contains an oxymoron. Another title that engendered considerable controversy is the Tunisian poet Yusr Bin Juma's (2007) *Laytanī ʿāhira* (*I Wish I Were a Whore*; 2007); the Tunisian Ministry of Culture refused to subsidize the collection's publication because of its title, but the poet, who considered the ministry's position an attack on her freedom of expression, published it at her own expense. See an interview with her, *al-Wafd*, 20.1.2018. For more on the esthetics of titles which aim at enticing the reader by presenting an entertaining aspect of the text by highlighting a deviance or by the use of contradictions and paradoxes.
6. A number of serious studies have addressed the question of whether or not literature composed by Arab women have an esthetic of their own, and if so, to what extent is it unique to women's literature.
7. Egyptian poet ʿAbīr ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz provides a good example Her published collection of poems *Mishnaqa fī fīlm kārtūn* (*Gallows in a Cartoon Movie*; 2009) contained pictures from a movie or made by a cartoonist; she also conducted a campaign under the title of "Support Poetry" under the auspices of the German Goethe Institute, where she promoted the idea of presenting free verse poems to deaf-mutes using sign language, and the use of postage stamps to circulate poems. See an interview with her: *al-Dustūr*, 2017, URL: https://www.dostor.org/2003879
8. Mustaghānimī, 3-4. Many critics have maintained that the fact that her poetry collection was published in the eastern part of the Arab world contributed to her popularity. See: Ḥarrār (2018), *Mubdiʿū l-tisʿīniyyāt al-akthar khuṭwatan bil-dirāsāt al-jāmiʿiyya*, 84.
9. There is also an autobiographical element here, since the author at the beginning of her career was accused of having plagiarized her first novel *Dhākirat al-jasad* (*The Body's Memory*). She replied to these accusations at the "Seminar on Women and Writing at the International Fair of Rabat, June 2000": "Had this writer realized that the word 'miracle' can refer to anything out of the ordinary that does not obey the laws of nature, he would have made it known that what he wanted to say was that Arab women writing original literature was a species of supernatural phenomena, because women are cripples where creative writing is concerned. He thinks that the only creativity allowed to women is the biological kind, which produces a demographic bomb. The issue is thus neither *Dhākirat al-jasad* nor Aḥlām Mustaghānimī, but rather the fact that we belong to a male-dominated Arab society, which rejects and despises women, so that every time when an Arab woman appears who does write poetry or prose, someone will rise and say that she must have had a man writing it for her, something which has never so far been claimed about a male writer, nor has it ever been said of women writers in any society except Arab society. And when Arabs say that behind every great man there is a woman, what they paradoxically mean is that before every woman, however great, there is a man. The sick mentality which causes two top-notch poets such as Nizār Qabbānī and Saʿdī Yūsuf to compete unknowingly over a novel which the press each time ascribes to one of them is a mentality that is too pitiful to cause us even to complain For her full response, see *al-Ufq*, URL: http://www.alhayat.com/article/1049294
10. By mentioning Shahriyār the poet alludes also to Scheherazade, although she is not mentioned explicitly.
11. The significance of a literary or intellectual accomplishment is enhanced when the reader attaches a "pearl" to it, an allusion to the famous line by the poet Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1872-1932): "I am the sea in whose entrails the peals are hidden, have they asked the diver about my sea shells?" See Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm, *al-Dīwān*, 104.
12. Mustaghānimī makes use of dwarfs in a number of her poems, but in a way that is not consistent with their actions in Snow White. See, for example, the poem "Masīrat al-aqzām" ("March of the Dwarfs") in the same collection: "How trivial is life / when the living bear the dead … greater than the surface of the world! / for the thousand-and-twentieth time / I am crucified at noon / the dwarfs come out in my city / bearing on their heads / a braid .. a braid / they call out at my funeral / let the small poet be buried / let the last braid be cut for the thousand-and-twentieth time / I shall die before my death / in the land of the great burial grounds." See: Mustaghānimī, 20.

13. For example, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (1926-1999) in "Marthiya ilā Khālīl Ḥāwī" ("Elegy for Khalīl Ḥāwī, in: 'A.W. Bayātī, *Bustān ʿĀʾisha*, 7-9) and Fadwā Tūqān (1917-2003) in "Ḥayāt" ("Life", in: F. Ṭūqān, *Waḥdī maʿa l-ayyām*, 46-52).
14. Q 21:68-70: "They said, "Burn him and support your gods- if you are to act; Allah said, "O fire, be coolness and safety upon Abraham; And they intended for him harm, but We made them the greatest losers".
15. This poem under the title "Stops" ("Waqfāt") was published in the collection *lil-Marāyā shams mablūlat al-ahdāb* (*The Mirrors Have a Sun with Moist Eyelashes*; 2001). We chose to discuss the first part of this poem, called "(1), "that is, the first of the poem's three "stops".
16. Q 12:15: "So when they took him [out] and agreed to put him into the bottom of the well... But We inspired to him, "You will surely inform them [someday] about this affair of theirs while they do not perceive [your identity."
17. Note also that the poet manages from the very beginning to make the reader aware of a functional linguistic duality that of necessity leads to a duality in meaning: The word "flower" (*zahratan*) in the accusative case can be interpreted as either the direct object of the transitive verb "enter", in which case the verb "dances" is part of a relative clause describing the flower, or it can be interpreted as an adverbial of state (*ḥāl*) which describes the state of the subject ("shining, blossoming"), in which case the clause with the verb "dance" is also an adverbial of state.
18. The idea of dance as an expression of pain can also be found in folk culture, as embodied, for example in the following line by al-Mutanabbī (915-965 CE): "Do not think that my dance among you is a sign of joy / for a bird dances in pain when slaughtered." Here dance expresses the idea of physical pain, or as an expressive mask for negative emotions.
19. For more on the spiritual and emotional meanings of Ṣūfī dancing see Erzen, https://contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=514
20. For more on the feminine narrator's voice in prose texts, see Taha, "Beware Men, They Are All Wild Animals', Arabic Feminist Literature: Challenge, Fight and Repudiation", 200-204.
21. This opening reminds the reader of the famous line of boasting by Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī (915-965), which also has a meta-poetic meaning: "I am he whose writing the blind have seen, and whose words the deaf have heard". See al-Mutanabbī, 332.
22. There is an allusion here to the figure of the pre-Islamic poetess Zarqāʾ al-Yamāma, of whom it is related that she used antimony and became fabled for her eyesight, which was so good that she was able to warn her tribe of an impending raid against it three days before it happened. However, one time her tribe did not believe her. As a result, many were killed. The raiders tore out her eyes and she died a few days later. After her death her eyes were found to have been full of antimony. See: al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 154.
23. The desire to become a widow reminds the reader of the sculpture *Maman* (1999) by Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010), which is a perfect example of classical oxymoron. The sculpture depicts a black widow spider, a frightening creature which kills the victims that get caught in its web, and yet the pocket of eggs that she carries proves that she is also willing to give life. She is thus a predator and a giver of birth at the same time, a powerful nucleus above very thin legs, embodying simultaneously both strength and fragility. She feeds on the male after copulation in order to produce her eggs, and the poem expresses a similar idea, of rejection of marriage by some women. In fact, a number of works of literature composed by women reject the institution of marriage because it restricts their independence and places them under their husband's control. For more on the rejection of marriage in works of literature, see Taha, "Beware Men, They Are All Wild Animals', Arabic Feminist Literature: Challenge, Fight and Repudiation", 53.
24. This is the collection's title.
25. The reader will certainly recognize the associations with the prominent Arab and Muslim figure Hind daughter of ʿUtba (d. 34 or 35 AH), a venerable poet and one of the most powerful women in Arab history. She is known for her strength and for standing up to her first husband, who accused her of adultery (see Muqābala, "Sīrat Hind bint ʿUtba wa-shiʿruhā: Jamʿ wa-dirāsa wa-taḥqīq," 131-132). She mutilated the corpse of Ḥamza b. ʿAbd al-Muṭallib in revenge for her beloved ones who had been killed at the Battle of Badr (see Muqābala, 335-336), and also played a significant role after she converted to Islam, when she continued to demonstrate her powerful personality and engaged in discourse with the Prophet (Muqābala, 338-340).
26. "What Is a Minor Literature?", Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Robert Brinkley. Mississippi Review, 11(3), Essays Literary Criticism.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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