Desire for Freedom in Modern Women's Poetry from the Arabian Gulf Area

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Abstract

According to feminist viewpoints, women globally suffer from social injustice and cultural discrimination; however, this perceived inequality between the sexes varies by era and location. Based on this perspective, this paper investigates Arabic women's poetry from the pre-Islamic era to the modern age with an emphasis on modern women’s poetry from the Arabian Gulf area to analyze manifestations of the desire for freedom (the poets’ expressed feelings and experiences regarding a freer cultural space) and the extent to which it is expressed in such poetry. This study also shows the principal issues on which women’s poetry has focused, particularly regarding women’s identity. Though the few female poets who broke through into the field of poetry in previous ages adopted masculine viewpoints and language, many female poets in the modern era have openly addressed women’s issues to create a feminist perspective and intensify the female struggle. Furthermore, these intellectuals explicitly and symbolically express how marginalized they are in their societies, believing that the feelings of alienation they articulate are an integral part of the global feminist movement.

Keywords

Desire for freedom; Women’s poetry; Arabic poetry; Feminism; Women’s rights; Alienation

The Arabian Gulf area includes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman—all members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). These countries have common social, economic, and cultural characteristics, and their societies are generally conservative.

This paper considers Arabic women's poetry since the pre-Islamic period to outline the main features of the yearning for freedom in that poetry, given that "poetry is a reflection of the women's inner feelings and is the culmination of the cultural expressions of their daily lives" (Strachan, 28). I will analyze the evolution of the concept of the desire for freedom over time and investigate some of the factors and influences that have contributed to this development. I will then investigate the features of the image of freedom to which women aspire by analyzing two texts that were written by two female poets from GCC countries. I will adopt a feminist perspective in considering these texts.

In this study, I have addressed the following questions. What are the main issues emphasized by Arabic women's poetry in previous eras? When did women's literature emerge in the modern period in the Arab world? What are the main factors that have contributed to Arabic women's understanding of their rights? Has Arabic women's poetry expressed issues of feminism? How have female poets in the Arabian Gulf area expressed their desire for freedom?

This study responds particularly to the narrow perception of women's poetry in Arabic literature, and it explores the potential of this poetry—both in reflecting Arab women's experiences and in describing and inspiring cultural change toward a freer society.

Desire for freedom

Feminism is a social concept that has been adopted by movements and intellectuals to define, establish, and protect equal political, economic, and social rights for women. This generally means liberating women from political and social injustices; it also means reevaluating laws, customs, and traditions with respect to women's rights. Feminism asks fundamental questions about the position of women in society and about how to improve their status in the belief that such improvements will benefit society in general. The field of feminism has become very diverse, and it includes activists from the disciplines of sociology, philosophy, literature, and politics. In addition, "What feminism liberates in women is also their desire for freedom, lightness, justice, and self-accomplishment. These values are not only rational political beliefs, they are also objects of intense desire" (Eagleton 1996, 419). Therefore, from the standpoint of feminism, the desire for freedom is a concept that aims to break the restrictions from which women suffer and enable them to enjoy equal rights with men in all aspects of life. For example, the Belgian feminist Luce Irigaray described in her books "how a single subject, traditionally the masculine subject, had constructed the world and interpreted the world according to a single perspective" (Qtd. In Hirch 97). The present paper adopts a feminist perspective in considering how female poets expressed and perceived their suffering through social justice.

Poetry of Arabian women

In general, "as elsewhere in the world, language is quite clearly involved in questions of identity, ideas about the nation, hierarchy, and authority" (Haeri 2000: 78). However, the relationship between Arab humanity and poetry is ancient and very intimate. `Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb (the second caliph in Islam) said, "Arabic poetry is a science for the people who do not have better knowledge" (Al-Jumaḥī: 1/24), which implies that in the caliph's time poetry was the major source of cultural knowledge and belief. The high status assigned to poetry led to the spread of poems and the large number of poets in both the pre-Islamic period and in the centuries after the birth of Islam. In addition, Arab literary criticism used the term *Al-fuḥūlah* (virility) to describe the poetry written by males; thus, the outstanding poet was described as *faḥl* (virile). In reality, there was a division of roles between men and women in cultural life: it was men who versified the odes, which invariably included *al-ghazal* (describing a woman's charms or expressing feelings of passion toward her) as a prominent part; it was women who critiqued the poetry and evaluated poetry and poets. As such, the feminine perspective provided a clear direction and influence on Arabic poetry (Al-Saif 2008, 113-121). Although some female poets gained wide recognition in Arabic literature, for example *Alkhans*ā' and *Layla Alakhilīyah*, Arabian women did not have access to the same opportunities as men in the field of poetry. Because of social traditions, women poets were severely restricted in being able to write poetry about certain subjects. For instance, most feminine poetry was concerned with *al-rethā'* (bemoaning), *al-taḥrīḍ* (incitement to revenge or war), and *al-fakhr* (pride), and it was considered socially shameful for a woman to express her emotions toward a man.

The Austrian psychoanalyst Otto Rank believed that “to create it is necessary to destroy. Woman cannot destroy…that may be why she has rarely been a great artist” (Killoh 1972: 31). Ellen Peck Killoh also comments, “The argument in these quotations is very simple: a woman and an artist are two mutually exclusive categories because women are by definition preservers while artists must be able to destroy” (31). Therefore, artistic women, from Rank’s point of view, are less creative than men because women are more committed to social values, whereas art requires a breaking of societal restrictions. Nonetheless, Rank believed that “every artist (male) needed a muse (female) to act as ideal audience and helpful critic—to be a projection of the best part of him and as such to guide him to the highest reaches of self-knowledge” (Killoh: 33). This means that the woman’s function is to open the man’s eyes and to act as his mirror. In my view, the Arabian female poet was not just a mirror but also a guide of Arabic poetry through her critical views of poems; thus, she acted as a judge of poetry and male poets.[1]

Female poets could not express their real feelings because of social taboos, and they had to follow the style of male poets, which was considered the standard form of poetry. For example, the Andalusian poet *Nazhūn Al-ghurnaṭīyah* wrote:

Though my nature is female, my poetry is masculine (Al-Meqrī 1967:187)

1 I wrote a study entitled “A femininity of poetry’s reception,” which included evidence confirming that from the pre-Islamic era until the year 200 AH, women were the critics who explicitly or implicitly directed Arabic poetry (Al-Saif: 113-121).

This means that to become a distinguished poet, *Nazhūn Al-ghurnaṭīyah* had to hide her feminine nature, because there was no place for a woman's nature or the feelings of women in the world of poetry.[2] In other words, as Al-Gadhāmī demonstrated, femininity was a fall, as compared with *Al-fuḥūlah* which was a rise (2005: 74). In addition, most poetry by women focused on men as the subject; thus, female poets composed poems in *al-reth*ā', *al- al-taḥrīḍ, al-fakhr*, and *al-ghazal* styles, where the protagonist was always a man—except in the *al-hij*ā' (satire) style.

From the end of the Umayyad period (661–750), female slaves of different origins and ethnicities changed the features of women's poetry. Because they did not belong to Arabian tribes, the social constraints on them were much less than on free Arabian women, and they could express their emotions openly. Therefore, the social paradox was that captive women were actually more liberated than free women (Al-saif: 173). For instance, 'Anan, who was an odalisque, said explicitly: (Al-Aṣfahanī, Slave women poets 1984: 45)

O lovers, how bad is love when the lover has a weak penis!

2 Alfarazdaq (a famous poet) said, "If a chicken crows like a cock, butcher it" (Al-Midanī 1977: 1/67). "Crowing" here refers to creating poetry. Furthermore, critics described Layla Alakhilīyah's entry to the male poetic domain as the "trespass of Lila Alakhialiiah: (AL-Sajdi 2000: 141).

Indeed, shamelessness and boldness became favorite attitudes of female slaves (Ibn ‘Abd Rabbuh: 6/423), who could express their emotions explicitly without social or tribal restrictions.

In general, classical women’s poetry did not include cultural complaints about the social status of women or expressions of their yearning for freedom. On the contrary, the female poet defended the values of her society. Evidence for this is provided by women’s poetry about inciting revenge; for example, the sister of ‘Amr ibn Ma‘dīKareb (a famous knight in the pre-Islamic period) urged one of her brothers to kill their brother’s killer because social traditions required such an act (Al-Aṣfahanī 1998: 15/230).

The absence of Arabic women’s literature persisted until the nineteenth century, when calls for the liberation of women and their inclusion in cultural and social life were made by male intellectuals. Such intellectuals were described as enlightened through having been exposed to Western culture, for example, Rifā'a al-Ṭahṭāwī, Aḥmad Fāris Al-Shidyāq, Jamal Al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ‘Abdu, and Qasim Amīn. The West influenced some of their ways of thinking,[3] and then their views gradually influenced women’s literature. ‘Aishah Al-Timurīyah (1840–1902) was a famous female poet in the nineteenth century. Although her poetry included an appeal for women’s education (Altimurīyah 3), the general style and themes of her poetry were mere

3 For example, in his writing, Qasim Amīn criticized the status of Arabian women compared with their Western counterparts thus: “Look at the eastern countries; you will find that women are enslaved by men and men are enslaved by a governor. So, man is unjust inside his house, and oppressed when he comes out” (’Amārah 1988: 69).

extensions of female poetry of previous ages, and thus her poetry did not involve a call for liberation or objections about the status of women.

The twentieth century witnessed women's appearance on the cultural landscape. Nazik Al-malā'ikah (1922–2007) was one of the most influential names in modern Arabic poetry. Not only did she rise as an influential literary critic, but her pioneering contributions to new styles of poetry, especially free-style or prose poetry, caused many critics to consider her the innovator of this form of Arabic poetry *(*Al-Gadhāmī 13). In addition to Al-malā'ikah's poetry, her essays on social and literary criticism included modernist views on critical and feminist theory. There are many similarities between Almalā'ikah and Virginia Woolf: both wrote literary texts; both expressed critical opinions and held feminist views. For instance, Woolf felt that contemporary women writers were obliged to invent new forms of sentences since the sentences written by men were too ponderous to convey a woman's thoughts (Singer 2000: 312), and Almalā'ikah accused the Arabic language of being biased toward men (Almalā'ikah 1953).[4]

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4 Almalā'ikah retreated from many of her outspoken views and her natural yearning for change. For example, she inaugurated free verse in the 1940s; however, she considered the prose poem an intellectual setback because "Arab thought will go back many centuries" (Yaḥyāwī 2009). On the other hand, many Western critics wrote about this issue, especially Luce Irigaray, who "emphasizes the need for a different syntax of discourse and, importantly, of politics that expresses feminine sexuality and allows those previously 'muted' to speak" (Davidson 1976: 84). Irigaray wrote, "The articulation of the reality of my sex is impossible in discourse, and for a structural, eidetic reason. My sex is removed, at least as the property of a subject, from the predicative mechanism that assures discursive coherence" (Irigaray 1985:149). In fact, Irigaray's main thesis is about language because of "her belief that women do not, indeed could not, have equal access to language in its present form" (Davidson 83).

In the first half of the twentieth century, there were few female Arab poets compared with the number of male poets. Since then—and for various reasons—the number of female poets has increased, and many female poets in the Arab world now enjoy greater freedom in poetry, and they occasionally express a rejection of conservative values. For instance, the Syrian poet Fahmīyah NaṣrAllah wrote (Alsamaṭī 2009):

I am a slave

I am a slave my darling

I do not find anything except your hand

Extended to release me

But who will release you

From bondage yourself?

The shade is for you, my darling, because you are the master

And I am a slave

Who sits under the sun

NaṣrAllah describes the suffering of Arabian woman from her cultural perspective, and thus she concludes that the woman is just a slave, and her lover, who is a man, cannot emancipate her since he is also a slave (to himself). Moreover, the man has everything, and the woman has only what he gives her. In addition to NaṣrAllah, the Moroccan poet Rajā' Al-Idrīsī emphasized the meaning of the slavery that women felt when she wrote (Nadwah Web site):

I told him I am your odalisque in the mirror

In another poem, Al-Idrīsī criticized the position of women in her society, and she emphasized the same meaning:

I habituate myself seventy times per second

For a Sisyphean patience

To be a woman fitted for cooking and sex

This was the guidance from my mother

The guidance from my grandmother to my mother

Al-Idrīsī used the Hellenic myth of Sisyphus[5] to express the intensity of the inherited suffering of women in her society, which restricted the woman and made her a slave, there just for service and sex. This definition of slavery is far from simple because "to define slavery as a relation of domination—a relation defined by inequality, violence, and lack of freedom rather than a relation defined by property—makes a crucial difference" (Baccolini 2003: 210-211). Many Arabian female poets strongly expressed their suffering under slavery. Although Al-Idrīsī knows that for many women "over time, marriage becomes both desired and anticipated as a condition and a symbol of successful womanhood and the possibility of living happily ever after" (Rocco 2003: 459), she does not accept that position and considers it a kind of slavery.

In the Arabian Gulf area, the sense of injustice is an important theme in modern women's poetry. The Kuwaiti poetess `A̱liah Shu`aīb wrote:

When his mustache and my breasts appeared

I was given the walls

5 Sisyphus "is condemned to suffer everlasting anguish. Eternally, he rolls a huge rock up the steep side of a mountain only to have it roll down again just as he reaches the top" (Lacourse 2003: 493).

And he was given the earth and skies

So our neighbors complained because of the injustice

Shu`aīb makes the comparison of her breasts with his mustache, which she sees not only as a biological difference between the two sexes but also a cultural sign, which leads to social injustice. She uses her feminine philosophical view and her poetic talent to express, from her own perspective, the suffering of her fellow women. However, some researchers think that "the ideological impact of the feminist movement and students' exposure to courses in women's studies may have encouraged some to engage in 'male bashing'" (Fiebert 1997: 409). Shu`aīb blamed the man in another poem:

I will look for a way

To recover my pride, which you crushed

And regain myself that you omitted

And my height which you reduced

As a woman, she demonstrates a woman's distress by showing her own affliction with her lover. She blames him because the nature of their relationship made her desperate. In my opinion, she does not blame her lover; nevertheless, she accuses mankind of not dealing with the issue of women's equality. This relationship between the genders urged the Emirati poet Ẓabiyah Khamīs to wish for an escape:

I want to flee to the ends of the earth

To be born again

With a heart that is not like a red apple

And a memory that is not the color of the sea

And a face that does not retain any kind of smell of this East

I want to be born as Jesus

Or as our father, Adam

And I do not want to be the Eve

Whom Adam created from his rib

His single rib.

This extract raises many questions: she wishes to run away to the ends of the earth, to be born again as Jesus or Adam—but why? In addition, why does she disown Eve? Perhaps Khamīs and many female poets suffer from alienation. But what is alienation?

Such thinkers as Georg Hegel, Karl Marx, and Erich Fromm have expressed the concept of alienation in different disciplines—philosophy, sociology, and psychology (Nettler 1957: 671-675).[6] However, for the purposes of the present study, alienation signifies "estrangement or emotional withdrawal from. It is a feeling of not belonging to or not having a fit place in a society and is often accompanied by anxiety and sometimes by resentment" (Roger 1989: 408). previous texts of modern women's poetry clearly reveal that they suffered from alienation in their societies.

6 Moreover, "Alienation may be a concept which should be taken into consideration when planning health interventions among adolescents" (Rayce 2008: 83). During "the 20th century, the concept of alienation has received substantial attention in the social sciences"; however, "research peaked during the 1970s and has received declining attention until recently" (Lacourse 639).

Subsequently, NaṣrAllah, Al-Idrīsī, and Shu`aīb are aggrieved by social injustice, which they perceive as operating against women in their communities. In the poem by Khamīs quoted above, the bitter feeling of alienation is more evident: she wants to distance herself completely from her community. However, she does not hate only her community; she has an extreme dislike for the whole Eastern region. She does not feel that her mind alone is in exile from her community; she also feels that her mind is alienated from her body and that she wants to be free from slavery. She has an aversion to her femininity, which is infused with the smell of the East and because she is a descendant of Eve, who was created from Adam's rib. In contrast, the French feminist Hélène Cixous is proud of Eve and claims that when Eve and Adam were in the Garden of Eden, she created "for herself and the world the opportunity for knowledge, innovation and uncensored choice" (Sellers 1996: 3). So, while Khamīs disapproves of Eve and her femininity, Cixous rereads the biblical story from a feminist perspective to resurrect Eve, who was blamed for the expulsion of Adam from Paradise. However, Cixous called for the liberation of the New Woman from the Old Woman in the same way as an arrow is released from a bow (Cixous 1976: 878); perhaps Khamīs went too far in her attempt to achieve that.

Female poets in the Arabian Gulf area have written poems about women's issues and expressed their desire for freedom. They have broken taboos in their poems. In addition to poetry, women's novels also cover such previously undiscussed areas as sexual relations and homosexuality among women. Moreover, novels written by women contain criticism of conventional society in the Arabian Gulf region, which led Allen to suggest that at this time, "large number of women fiction writers throughout the Arab world are giving voice to their desire for change" (Allen 1995: 49). Critics sought reasons for the boldness in these women's writings; some believe

that the sense of difference and fear of masculine criticism urged women to create different egos (Zain Al‘abdīn). Modern feminist theories have focused on the relationship between the body and the text. Cixous wrote in her book *Laugh of the Medusa*, “Woman must write herself…women must write through their bodies” (Cixous 875) to "deconstruct the logocentrism and phallocentrism of male discourse" (Wenzel 1981:267). Specifically, Cixous and Irigaray believe that "if women are to discover and express who they are, to bring to the surface what masculine history has repressed in them, they must begin with their sexuality. And their sexuality begins with their bodies, with their genital and libidinal differences from men" (Jones 1981: 252). Feminists wanted to create a new language because some of them believed that the language used was masculine. Their bodies became their texts because they had to create their own identity by deconstructing the language to establish an alternative discourse. In reconsidering women's distinctive identity, feminists started by distinguishing feminine features. In *Men and Women*, Virginia Woolf quoted Bathsheba in Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd* as expressing her own dilemma: “I have the feelings of a woman, but I have only the language of men” (Caughie 1991: 3). To create a new language to express female emotions and desires, feminists focused on the main difference between males and females—the body. Feminist ideas have become more prevalent in women’s literature and discussions in the last 10 years. The greater freedoms available in the King Abdullah period, the media’s openness to the world, and educational scholarships to Western countries have enabled this to happen. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, women’s poetry in the Gulf area frequently used symbolic language to avoid confrontation with the conservative society. More recently, it has thrown caution away and adopted many of the liberal and feminist views of the West.

In the following sections, I will analyze two examples of modern women poems from the Arabian Gulf region to examine the cultural meanings with regard to the desire for freedom. These texts were written in Arabic, which I have translated into English; the full Arabic originals appear in the Appendix to this paper.

A Female 2000[7]

by Su‘ād Al-Sabāḥ[8]

I was able to do

—As women in the world do—

Engage the mirror

I was able to

7 (The World Encyclopedia of Arabic Poetry Web site)

8 Su‘ād Al-Sabāḥ is a famous poet, critic, and a princess in Kuwait. She is a descendant of the Al-Sabāḥ family, which governs Kuwait, and has written 15 collections of poems. In addition, she has established a publishing house and a prize for poetic creativity. Al-Sabāḥ has been recognized as a distinguished poet throughout the Arab world.

Drink my coffee

In my warm bed

And chatter on my phone

Without a sense of days and hours

I was able to

Put on makeup

Use eyeliner

Be coquettish

Get tanned in the sun

And dance over the waves like a nymph

I was able to

Wear turquoise and sapphire

I was able to

Twist my body like queens do

I was able to

Do nothing

Read nothing

Write nothing

Dedicate my time to lights, fashion, and trips

I was able to

Not reject

Not rage

Not shout in the face of tragedy

I was able to

Swallow the tears

Swallow the repression

And to adapt like all jailed women

I was able to

Avoid history's questions

And escape self-torture

Avoid the groans of all the afflicted

And the cries of all the downtrodden victims

And the revolt of all the killed

I betrayed the laws of the female

And chose to face the words

Analysis

Classical Arabic poetry is rhymed and metrical. However, under the influence of Western culture in the twentieth century, new styles of Arabic poetry began to be composed. One of these styles is free verse, which the female poet *Nazik Al-malā'ikah* introduced to Arabic poetry in 1947. This style abandons the traditional metric formulation of Arabic poetry. In the above poem, Al-Sabāḥ uses free verse because she believes that this form represents feminine poetry or represents emancipation in general, which she aspires to express. Since this kind of poetry represents a new world in poetry, it could be said that Al-Sabāḥ wanted the above poem to be a kind of freedom poem against the pervasive exploitation and marginalization that women have suffered.

In addition to the style, the title of her poem, "A Female 2000," is remarkable. This identifies not just when she wrote this poem, the sex of the writer and the subject, but "2000" indicates the beginning of a new century. The writer wants to initiate a new

period for women's rights, and she wants to reshape women culturally by the declaration of a female rebellion. She wrote "a female," which signifies any female in any place; it is as though she is declaring that the new century will be different for women, and she will paint in her poem the feminine features of the new century.

When we examine this text, we find the suffering of a woman who is so absorbed by women's issues that she wants to rebel against her reality and criticize the status of women throughout the world. Al-Sabāḥ compares two situations of women in her world: the first kind is the woman who lives in a luxurious environment and gives all her attention to two things—putting on makeup to be beautiful (perhaps for her man) and luxury and comfort. However, she criticizes this kind of woman who does not read, write, or do anything. Al-Sabāḥ is the antithesis of this assimilated woman. Coming from the royal family of Kuwait and having all the amenities the "traditional" woman desires, she chooses to be the rebel: she refuses to comply, and she opposes the "natural" laws of the female. What are these laws of the female that Al-Sabāḥ exposes? Perhaps she thinks many women collude with one another to live a marginal life so as to make their lives easier. However, she may also feel that too many women stay silent to escape social criticism through female rebellion; therefore she "chose to face the words." Al-Sabāḥ thinks a woman is like a prisoner, who lives comfortably in a cage but decides to break the prison bars for all women by telling them that they are prisoners. She does not just criticize the reality of women's lives; she tries to judge her fellow history-burdened slaves, who, in her opinion, "avoid history's questions."

The critic Maha Khair explains that Al-Sabāḥ's poetry usually includes two main themes. One is a demolition of outdated traditions; the other is increasing manifestations of erroneous thinking on two issues—women and Arab nationalism

(Al-baḥr 2008: 7). This means that Al-Sabāḥ has cultural concerns, such as the position of women in her society, and she uses her poetry to present her views in unambiguous language. An investigation of Al-Sabāḥ's poetry reveals that women's issues are very important in her poems—whether about women's relations to men or in their political, cultural, and social demands—and "A Female 2000" is an example of her criticism of the women who agree to live life on the margins.

A Soaring[9]

by Ashjān Hindī[10]

Enchantresses have their talismans

Which I have likewise

Women have their speeches

9 ('Aīyāsh): Ashjān Hindī is a Saudi Arabian poet and literary critic. She has a PhD in literature from the University of London, UK. She now works as an assistant professor at King Abdul-Aziz University.

10 I obtained this text from the poet directly.

Which I have likewise

Coverings (cloaks) have pains

Which I have likewise

Butterflies have wings

Which I do not have

They are multicolored

Which I am not

They are diaphanous

Which I am not

The butterfly

Her kin trained her to fly

So she flew with the awakening of the saffron
And landed on the body of a rose

But my kin did not train me even to crawl
Except while my guards nap

on the frigidity of my chains
When the butterfly weaves her warm relations with flowers

I weave my chill

I made secret relationships

On the most fearful of night's suspicions

And I injured my cheek

The butterfly did not hide her secret

The butterfly has her friends

Which I do not have

And she has a pair of wings

That I wish I likewise had

Hey butterfly, I wish that

I were a butterfly

To fly above women's wounds

And teardrops

Women have their taboos

Which I likewise have.

Analysis

The title of any poem is considered a semiotic sign in understanding the nature of the text, and Hindī chose "A Soaring" as the title. She wishes to state at the beginning of her poem that she will go beyond reality to reach the imagination. In addition to the reality/imagination duality, Ahjan's text includes other contradictory dualities: Hindī/ the butterfly; her kin trained her to fly/my kin did not train me to crawl; crawl/flight; secret relationships/warm relationships; hide the secret/show the secret; the absence of

friends/having friends; and the absence of wings/having wings. These dualities are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Reality compared with imagination in "A Soaring"

Ashjan (reality)		The butterfly (imagination)
The ego (I)	⟺	The other (she)
My kin did not train me even to crawl	⟺	Her kin trained her to fly
Crawl	⟺	Flight
Secret relationships	⟺	Warm relationships
Hide the secret	⟺	Show the secret
The absence of friends	⟺	Having friends
The absence of wings	⟺	Having wings

This table presents the conflict from which this female intellectual suffers; the conflict occurs because of the wide chasm between her reality and her ambition. This distance makes the reader feel that this female rejects her actual reality and depicts an imagined reality. Though the butterfly can fly to any place, Hindī can fly only from her reality to her imagination. Thus, she chose "A Soaring" as the title.

In addition, Hindī chooses to provide a link with some symbols—enchantresses, women, coverings. However, she provides links with women twice—women's speeches and women's taboos—because she wishes to emphasize their issues.

In general, wings are a symbol of freedom, and the yearning to possess wings is a symbol of the desire for freedom.[11] Moreover, the passage about wings is significant:

11 A female Libyan poet Faṭimah Maḥmūd says (Alsamaṭī):

Butterflies have wings

Which I do not have

They are multicolored

Which I am not

They are diaphanous

Which I am not

Hindī says that since she does not possess wings, how could they be multicolored or diaphanous? Why does she repeat the sentence, "Which I am not"? In the third line of this passage, Ashjan talks about the cloak ('Abaya) that is used to cover the female body in Saudi Arabia because Islam forbids women to appear in public without a veil. However, "for feminist studies in religion, the most essential question has been whether religion is an oppressive force that exploits women" (Wong 180). So does Ashjan adopt a revolt against religion, or does she embrace cultural feminist attitudes regardless of their compatibility or incompatibility with religion? Whatever her

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I want to comment this evening

On questions

Then leave

More of wings

More of light

More

Of freedom

More

More

Of me

view,[12] the ‘Abaya has to be worn in Saudi Arabia, and it usually has to be black so as not to attract attention. Rejection of the ‘Abaya or wanting to change its color or its chaste nature is a symbol of rebellion. In my view, Hindī wishes to display her female body, the expression of her stolen humanity, which she considers her physical identity; she wishes to do this just as she shows her cultural identity through her poetry and writing; in both respects, society tries to prevent her from doing so. In fact, she explicitly criticizes her society because it did not train her even to crawl—only when the guards took a nap. Her society did not help her to be independent, and it robbed her of her freedom. The desire for freedom is very clear in her poem.

Su‘ād Al-Sabāḥ repeated a line “I was able to” and Hindī repeated a line “which I have likewise”; the latter is changed in some sections to “which I am not.” However, there are important questions: why do these poets repeat the two lines throughout these poems? What is the significance of these repetitions?

This repetition is neither a female fashion nor a verbal accessory for the text. Instead, the repetition is semantic—linguistic, artistic, and cultural. From the cultural perspective of this paper, Al-Sabāḥ in her poem prides herself because she could have been a “hollow” woman, but she chose to be a thinking woman. Al-Sabāḥ has the freedom to choose what she wants to be. However, Hindī does not have that choice, and so she tells us what society allows her to be or do. It could be said that Al-Sabāḥ

12 Some groups tried to create harmony between religion and the values of the feminist movement. For example, “Women-church is a movement of autonomous groups seeking to actualize ‘a discipleship of equals.’ It is an example of how a feminist concept, coupled with religious commitment, animates a women’s movement” (Hunt 2009: 85). In addition, some Saudi Arabian liberal intellectuals have tried to reinterpret the Koran such that (in their view) it reflects the values of the modern era.

wants to use women's issues to be more culturally beautiful, and Hindī presents two ways in which women are oppressed in society. Finally, if Al-Sabāḥ "betrayed the laws of the female," in this text she betrayed them for her own sense of self.

Conclusion

In previous eras, Arabic women's poetry was unable to forge its own identity because female poets were forced to adopt the conventions of "masculine" poetry to be accepted in an Arabic cultural climate. Therefore, a feminist view could be described thus: the social injustices from which women throughout the world have suffered have been maintained by cultural injustices, which caused, among other things, the absence of women in the field of literature. This absence exacerbated women's alienation because they were unable either express to their sufferings or focus on women's issues, which were absent from literature—or were related by men.

Through the influence of the West, the position of Arab women became reevaluated in terms of two criteria—Islamic religion and Western standards. Some advocates of women's rights reread Islamic texts and removed cultural aspects that they found to be incorrect. However, some of these advocates tried to change the concepts of Islam to fit in with Western values. Women's literature in the Arabian Gulf area reflects the cultural climate with respect to the status of women. Given that most female poets have liberal opinions, many of them discussed taboo themes, such as the desire for freedom, thereby challenging their society and culture.

In conclusion, female poets express many opinions about feminism without fully examining the implications and whether these opinions are appropriate within the

Islamic community. It could be said that the theme of women's issues became a literary fashion, and it is therefore possible that this literature could be a harbinger of the female revolution in the Arab world. However, female poets from the Arabian Gulf area have long been able to express their feminine opinions confidently and to criticize frankly their communities, which they feel are overly masculine.

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Appendix

The poems in Arabic:

"أنثى 2000"

سعاد آل صباح

قد كان بُوسْعِي،
ـ مثلَ جميع نساء الأرضِ ـ
مُغازلةُ المرآةْ
قد كان بُوسعي،
أن أحتسِيَ القهوةَ في دفءِ فراشي

وأُمَارس ثرثرتي في الهاتفِ

دون شعورٍ بالأيامِ.. وبالساعاتْ

قد كان بوسعي أن أتجمَّلَ..

أن أتكحَّل

أن أتدلَّل..

أن أتحمَّصَ تحت الشَّمس

وأرقُصَ فوق الموج ككُلِّ الحُوريَّاتْ

قد كان بوُسْعي أن أتشكَّلَ بالفيروز، وبالياقوتِ،

وأن أتثنَّى كالملكاتْ

قد كان بُوسعي أن لا أفعل شيئاً

أن لا أقرأ شيئًا

أن لا أكتُبَ شيئًا

أن أتفرّغَ للأضواءِ.. وللأزياِء .. وللرَحَلاتْ..

قد كان بوُسْعي

أن لا أرفُضَ

أن لا أغْضَبَ

أن لا أصرُخَ في وجه المأساةْ

قد كان بُوسْعي،

أن أبتلع الدَّمْعَ

وأن أبتلعَ القَمْعَ

وأن أتأقلمَ مثل جميع المَسْجُوناتْ

قد كان بُوسْعي

أن أتجنَّبَ أسئلةَ التَّاريخِ

وأهربَ من تعذيبِ الذَّاتْ

قد كان بُوسْعي

أن أتجنَّبَ آهة كلِّ المحزونينَ

وصرْخةَ كلّ المسحوقين

وثورةَ آلاف الأمواتْ..

لكنّي خنتُ قوانينَ الأنثى

واخترتُ مواجهةَ الكلماتْ..

======

<u>تحليق</u>

أشجان هندي

للساحرات تعاويذهن
وللنساء أحاديثهن
ولي مثلهن
للملاءات أوجاعهن
ولي مثلهن
للفراشات أجنحة
ليس لي مثلها
ملونة
ليس لي مثلها
شفافة
ليس لي مثلها
الفراشة
قد عوّدوها على الطيران
فطارت على صحوة الزعفران
وحطت على جسد الورد
وما عودوني على الحبو
إلا على غفوة الحرس النائمين
على ثلج قيدي
الفراشة تنسج دفء علاقاتها بالزهور
وأنسج بردي
العلاقات علقتها ـ في الخفاء ـ
على خوف ليل الظنون
فجرّحت خدي
الفراشة ما خبأت سرها
للفراشة أصحابها
ليس لي مثلها،
ولها زوج أجنحة
ليت لي مثلها
ليتني يا فراشة
كنت الفراشة
كيما أحلق فوق جراح النساء

ودمعاتهن

للنساء محاذيرهن

ولي مثلهنْ

====

<u>مقطوعات</u>

نزهون الغرناطيّة:

"إِنْ كُنْتُ فِي الخَلْقِ أُنْثَى فَإِنَّ شِعْرِي مُذَكَّر"

فهميّة نصر الله:

أنا عبدة

أنا عبدة يا حبيبي

ولا أجد غير يدك

تمدها لي فتعتقني

ولكن من يعتقك

من عبودية نفسك؟

لك الظل يا حبيبي لأنك السيد

وأنا عبدة

أجلس في الشمس

============

رجاء الإدريسي:

أنا جاريتك التي في المرآة

إني أروض نفسي سبعين مرة في الثانية

على الصبر السيزيفي

لكي أصير امرأة صالحة للطبخ والجنس

تلك هي وصية أمي لي

ووصية جدتي لأمي

===========

عالية شعيب:

فلما طلّ شاربه وثديي

صارت الجدران لي

والأرض والسموات له

واشتكى جيراننا من الظلم

سابحث عن طريقة

لأستعيد بها كبريائي الذي سحقته

ونفسي التي أهدرتها

و"عليائي" التي أهبطتها

=========

ظبية خميس:

أريدُ أن أفرّ، بعيدًا، إلى آخر الأرض

أن أولد من جديد

بقلب ليس كالتفاحة الحمراء

وذاكرة لا تحمل لون البحر

ووجه لا يحمل من هذا الشرق

.أية رائحة

أريد أن أولد كالسيد المسيح

..أو أبونا آدم

ولا أريد أن أكون حواء

.. التي أنجبها من ضلعه

. ضلعه الوحيد

=======

فاطمة محمود:

أريدُ لأعلق هذا المساء

على الأسئلة

..وأمضي

المزيد من الأجنحة

المزيد من الضوء

المزيد

من الحرية

المزيد

المزيد

مني