

**Poetry as a means of revolt against the tribe: The experience
of poet Suhaym as a model**

Abdul Khaliq Esa

Dean of the Faculty of Humanities
An-Najah National University, Nablus, Palestine

Oqab Jabali

Director of Language Center
An-Najah National University, Nablus, Palestine

Kamel Yaseen

Ministry of Education and Higher Education
Ramallah, Palestine

Abstract

This study traces and identifies the psychological crisis of the veteran, old hand poet, Suhaym, the slave of Bani Al-Hashaas as exposed through his poems. This personality disorder results basically from the poet's inability to socialize and merge into his local society which denies him both his masculinity and recognition as a poet. The study also deals with the repercussions of the poet's psychosis which reduces him to sadism, narcissism, and perversion. As a result, the poet is resolved to get revenge on the tribe through tarnishing the chastity of its women and depicting sexual savagery towards them in his poems. The study results find that these poems are nothing but mere delusions and Suhaym has to pay the price eventually by being burned to death.

Key words: flirting-poetry, perversion, psychosis, revolt, Suhaym, tribe.

Cite as: Esa, A., Jabali, O., & Yaseen, K. (2017). Poetry as a means of revolt against the tribe: The experience of poet Suhaym as a model. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies*, 1(3). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol1no3.14>

Introduction

Freedom is the most crucial element and the greatest thing in one's life because without it s/he can never feel satisfied nor can have supreme value before himself/herself and the world around him/her once it is lost. Consequently, the true proponents of humanity and human dignity including the first Muslim Khalif, Spartacus, and Abraham Lincoln have fought slavery in all its manifestations and forms since the early stages of human existence.

Slavery dates back to the old ages; it is deep-rooted in history and inherent in almost all nations whether in the age of their progress or even the age of decline. It is remarkable that this phenomenon is not the result of moral or social savagery in any nation; it is a tangible and clear-cut proof of nation prosperity and development over ages which, later on, contributed to the creation of the system of strata in the civil state and placed the human values at the lowest level of the social hierarchy. Moreover, slavery has contributed much to modern civilizations since the very beginnings of history.

It has always been present in the teachings and practices of heavenly religions. Judaism, for instance, states that only non-Jews can be drawn to slavery; a Hebrew could not become a slave unless by order of the court or by giving himself voluntarily into bondage. Other slaves were always brought from outside the Jewish nation (Al-Termanini, 1979).

Christianity is different in the way it looks at people and the issue of slavery that is not compatible with Christian ideas of justice and charity. Some people argue against all forms of servitude and slavery; for them, all human beings are equal. While others, i.e. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, argue for slavery which is subject to certain limitations and restrictions. They believe that God has destined some people to be slaves and be ruled. Lewis (1992) argues that:

Both the Old and New Testaments recognize and accept the institution of slavery...The Jews are frequently reminded, in both Bible and Talmud, that they too were slaves in Egypt and should therefore treat their slaves decently...there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (p. 17).

Islam acknowledges slavery and accepts it implicitly, yet it does not express any kind of prejudice; it also expresses no discrimination based on ethnicity, color, wealth or any other factor to the extent that the Holy Quran "does not even reveal any awareness of such prejudice" (Lewis, 1992, p.22). However, Islam could not abolish the slavery system which was rampant during the Pre-Islam era. Lewis (1992) states that:

The abolition of slavery itself would hardly have been possible. From a Muslim point of view, to forbid what God permits, is almost as great an offense as to permit what God forbids- and slavery was authorized and regulated by the holy law. More specifically, it formed part of the central core of social usage (p. 78).

Islam has started to gradually offer moral and ethical remedies in order to limit the phenomenon and, regulate the practice of it. Al-Termanini (1979) argues that among the remedies provided by Islam is the possibility of liberating necks (slaves) by offering an expiatory sacrifice

to repent sins and show sorrow for bad behaviors. Furthermore, Muslim "showed compassion for the wretched of the earth, and protested against injustice." (Clarence-Smith, 2006).

Alwan (2004) maintains that the reason why Islam has not been able to abolish slavery is pure political. Islam has emerged while the phenomenon is completely recognized by all religions and civilizations. On the other hand, there have been social practices and tendencies which made it impossible for Islam to uproot slavery from the society. From a pure Islamic perspective, slavery helps clean the society from adultery and pornography which were linked to servants, slaves, and bond men.

The elite, in all societies, used to own slaves who were constantly subjected to castration and emasculation fearing for their women. Such practices have had negative consequences on the lives of these slaves, the way they think, and their reactions to the society as a whole including the formation of specific psychological structures, for these slaves, which, by their turn, are manifested in their behaviors as well as their speeches. Melamed (2010, p. 123) argues that the Holy Quran and Arabic literature "were to a large extent indifferent to racial differences and judgmental distinctions on the basis of skin color."

This research aims to study a veteran poet, Suhaym, who was a slave himself and analyze the way he employs the language to react to the society that has rejected him and denied his masculinity. The researchers have collected a corpus of verses that cover the most significant phases of the poet's life focusing on those related to rejection and sexual attitudes towards the elite's or the masters' women. For him, poetry exposes a corrupt society which denies the essence of life for slaves. The study aims also to prove how rebellious poets (e.g. Suhaym) perform significant tasks in disclosing many secrets related to their life.

Theoretical background

It is taken for granted that language is a means of communication; people normally communicate feeling, attitudes, like and dislike and many other senses. Poetry has always been a means of expressing deepest emotions, passions and feelings; it tends to articulate the innermost experience of humans. Maguire (2012) postulates that poetry is "about capturing impressions and expressing feelings. The goal of poetry is not to *describe* the world." Poetry is not meant to tell facts and describe things; it is employed to "use language in a creative and imaginative way to express thoughts, feelings, and impressions." (para.1).

The main task of a poet is to rebuild, via words, an image of the universe as a place for mutual relationships between its constituents and components. These relationships might be real or imaginary. As Abu Athera (1995) puts it, poetry is a mirror which exactly portrays and reflects what is happening in a given place; it also portrays clearly the real status of a given tribe, society or, to a larger extent, a nation. The main focus of poets like these is the social life in the society or the tribe. In most cases, they tend to criticize habits and customs mainly those which discriminate between the various spectrums of the society; it also touches upon very sensitive relations that hold between the various groups of the society including bondage, slavery, marriage, dress and, above all, the relationships between men and women.

Lewis (1992) maintains that Arabic poetry includes instances of distinction between Arabs and the other based on normal feelings which exist in people such as identity, but there are no clear instances that discriminate between people based on racial sentiments. "We do not, however, find any clear indication that this (awareness of difference) was felt in racial terms or went beyond the normal feeling of distinctness which all human groups have about themselves in relation to others" (Lewis, 1992, p 22).

Arabic poetry has always been used to document other instances of distinction among the Arabian society itself. There is evidence for the growth of hatred of and prejudice to certain sectors of the society including, the rich, women, and, most importantly, slaves. The majority of slaves are black of mixed Arab and African origins; for most of non-Arab slaves their skin color is an affliction and used to cause them a lot of troubles and "suffering from insults and discrimination, as showing resentment at this, and yet in some way as accepting the inferior status resulting from their African ancestry" (Lewis, 1992, p 28).

Arabic poetry tackles many themes and black poets, including *Antara Bin Shadad*, *Suhaym*, and many others, have constantly stressed blackness and slavery in their poems in an attempt to define their identity as a significant sector of the society. Such poets were excluded and away from the spotlight as they used to live for people rather than with people (Badawi, 1973). This has resulted in feeling a sense disconnection or, put simply, outcast. They tend to feel as if they are split into two worlds: their own black community, on the one hand, and country natives or citizen, on the other. Consequently, some of them tend to imitate and, sometimes, plagiarize notable pure Arab poets such as *Omar Bin Abi Rabea'a*, *Abu Tammam*, *Al-Mutanabbi*, *Al-Buhtori*, etc. (Badawi, 1973). The poet under scrutiny followed *Omar Bin Abi Rabea'a*.

Suhaym (سُحَيْم), the slave of Banu al-Hashaas (بنو الحساس)

Suhaym, who died in 660, was born and lived a slave. His full name is Suhaym bin Hind bin Sufyan bin Khuzaymah. His name is a diminutive noun of (asham: أَسْحَم) which means "black" and his real name is (Habba: حَبَّة). He was black; he used to be alone, without friends or company (Al-Safadi, 2000). He was nicknamed as Abu Abdullah. Literary critics and historians depicted him as "the slave of Banu al-Hashas" because he was owned by this family. His owner, Abdullah Bin Abi Rabea'a, once decided to give him, as a present, to the third Muslim caliph, Othman Bin Affan. Yet, the caliph rejected him knowing that he was a slave poet. Othamn refused to have the slave "remarking that he did not need a slave who treated his owners as did Suhaym: "When he is sated he directs love-verses at their women, and when he is hungry he directs satires at them"" (Lewis, 1985, p. 94). After his rejection by the caliph, Suhaym is captured by a small clan called Bau al-Hashas which is part of a larger tribe called Asad.

In fact, Suhaym has been described differently; sometimes he is an Ethiopian who is brought from Africa; other times he is depicted as a Nubian and was stained with a mark on his face to distinguish him. Suhaym starts to serve his owners living miserably among them. He gradually begins to say verses most of which is plagiarized. Once he is discovered, the whole clan start to humiliate him and look at him with contempt and resentment. Al-Asfahani (1968)

and Nicholson (1941) state that Suhaym's sufferings begin when he is sent by the clan to find out something. He returns saying:

أَنْعَتْ غَيْثًا حَسَنًا نَبَاتُهُ كَالْحَبَشِيِّ حَوْلَهُ نَبَاتُهُ

I see nice rain and nice grass
As if it is a Habashi surrounded by his daughters

The clan men all agree that Suhaym is a good poet; consequently, he embarks on saying verse about different topics. Later, the whole clan start to undermine his potentials as a man and underestimate his merits as a poet. As a result, he begins to feel inferior because Arabs are famous for admiring many elements in their culture including poets, male born babies, and mares/horses which are considered as points of strength for any tribe. When he feels rejected, he says:

أَشْعَارُ عَبْدِ بَنِي الْحَسْحَاسِ فُئِنَ لَهُ عِنْدَ الْفَخَّارِ مَقَامَ الْأَصْلِ وَالْوَرَقِ
إِنْ كُنْتُ عَبْدًا فَنَفْسِي حُرَّةٌ كَرَمًا أَوْ أَسْوَدَ اللَّوْنِ إِنِّي أَبْيَضُ الْخُلُقِ

My verses serve me on the day of boasting
in place of birth and silver coin;
though I am a slave, my soul is nobly free;
though I am black of color, my nature is white

This kind of inferiority has pushed Suhaym to react and compensate for suffering such a negative feeling following two different approaches. Sometimes he tries to alleviate himself to the high standards of the tribe; in other situations, Suhaym is recorded flirting the women of the tribe using obscene and vulgar words. The women of the tribe also reject him for many reasons including his complexion, color, servitude, and above all, his gut to flirt them. The final result is really devastating for the poet; he ends burned to death in public by his owners. As Al-Asfahani (1968) puts it, his owners have dug a trench, filled it with burning wood, and eventually cast him into the ablaze.

Suhaym has never gained good reputation during his life; however, he has collected fame after death. The slight details of his life reveal how much suffering, agony, torture, and mental as well as psychological anxiety he has passed through and expressed in his poems. These poems reveal the repercussions of the poet's psychosis which reduced him to sadism, narcissism, and sexual perversion, let alone, sexual abuse.

The most striking feature in Suhaym's story is his reaction towards his burning by his owners. It is said that when a person is at the prim of death, s/he shows some remarks of anxiety, fear, or repentance and tries to deny all the charges directed to him/her. However, Suhaym shows no sign of this; on the contrary, he asks them to tie him securely so that he does not escape. This is a sign of acceptance because he has already retaliated for himself through tarnishing the chastity of the tribe's women and depicting sexual savagery towards these women in his poems. He says:

شُدُّوا وَثَاقَ الْعَبْدِ لَا يُفْلِتْكُمْ إِنَّ الْحَيَاةَ مِنَ الْمَمَاتِ قَرِيبٌ
فَلَقَدْ تَحَدَّرَ مِنْ جَبِينِ فَنَاتِكُمْ عَرَقٌ عَلَى جَنْبِ الْوَرَاثِ وَطَيْبٌ

Handcuff the slave securely so that he does not escape;
Indeed, life is so close to death.

Your maid's forehead has poured
too much sweat and perfume in my bed.

These lines tell about Suhaym's courage in defying the tribe and ridiculing them. He announces his rebellion in these words saying that I am no longer afraid of you; I have already tarnished your women's chastity and spoiled your reputation. I do not fear death and my life is eventually coming to its end.

This kind of sexual defying or, put simply, sexual delirium or hallucination has changed into an act of revenge and a matter of compensation. It has also changed Suhaym, the feeble, humble black slave, into an enemy who looks at himself as a strong opponent or rival to the whole tribe in an attempt to regain what he has lost, i.e. humanity, dignity, and natural instincts which he has been deprived of again and again. In sum, his vengeance, i.e. pornographic, poetic deliriums, is equal to the punishment he has previously received, i.e. castration, from his owners.

Suhaym's signs of shortage

The biological and existential tasks of a human being on this earth are determined, to a large extent, by the community with which he lives; he is civil by nature, and any confusion over his relationship with the society will create a great dilemma for him to reach a real and clear meaning of life. The German psychologist Alfred Adler has emphasized that the meaning of life is determined by three compelling conditions: finding a job that enables him to live under restrictions/constraints, cooperating with the rest of the group, and understanding the relationship between men and women. Adler (1931) states:

The first question pertains to the social side of life: the relationship between you and me. The second question is the relationship of the individual to work: how can I be useful: how can I contribute to the well-being of all? The third question is the question of love. To be interested in a person of the other sex who is physically attractive, to have more interest in that person than in oneself, to strive to make life easier and more pleasant for the other is inseparably connected with progeny (para. 21).

It is worth noting that any failure to represent these conditions will necessarily lead to misunderstanding the meaning of life and will negatively affect the peaceful coexistence with members of society. Suhaym belongs to a class that prevents him from defining his function as an active member of a specific human group; he is also depicted as a slave and that his slavery does not allow him to integrate with the tribe. This, in turn, will create a psychological disorder that pertains to the meaning of life and may have dire consequences and serious repercussions.

Finding a job that helps to live under restrictions

The tasks of slaves are closely related to the tribe that enslaves them; their personalities dissolve and correspond to or identify with the personalities of their masters. As a result, the slave becomes a machine that is not allowed to think, and perhaps the person starts to be characterized with his role to the extent that he accepts his role and does not dare to think or do anything beyond serving. The question of functionality, career, or feasibility hurts Suhaym who is a poet and a slave at the same time; he gets recognized by the tribe as a slave only but not a

poet. Instead of considering moving to a different place to find himself elsewhere, Suhaym prefers to stay with the tribe so that he convinces them to accept him and, eventually, integrates with the society. When his owners have decided to sell him as a reaction to flirting their women, he says:

أشوقاً ولما تمض بي غير ليلة
وما كنت أخشى مالكا أن يبييعني
أخوكم ومولى مالكم وحليفكم
فكيف إذا سار المطي بنا عشرا
بشيء ولو أمست أنامله صفرا
ومن قد ثوى فيكم وعاصركم دهرا

I miss the women though I left for a night
How would the case be after a month?
I have never feared my master to sell me
For anything even when he has nothing in hand.
I am your brother, money defender, and ally
Who has dwelt among you for long.

In these verses, the tone of sadness, entreaty and supplication rises inside Suhaym; he pleases his masters and the tribe to keep him among them by stressing the fact that he is their brother, money defender, ally, etc.

Cooperation with tribe members

The relative verification of the first condition, i.e. finding a suitable job, has never been adequate to qualify Suhaym to achieve the second condition, i.e. cooperating with the tribe and integrating with them due to his social status and social role as a slave. He mingles with the society members just as a slave, nothing more. He is mere a slave like all other slaves except for being a poet which has never been recognized by the tribe, though.

Here, the Suhaym starts to feel the huge gap between him and the free poets who are extremely ahead of him. As a reaction, Suhaym used to arbitrarily inculcate himself into the tribe and lead a role of a free poet who is entitled to commemorate the exploits as well as the advantages of the tribe and describe or portray the courage and guts of its knights in wars. He says:

بني أسد سيروا جميعاً فقاتلوا
أرى أسداً والحمد لله أصبحت
ونحن جلبنا الخيل من جانب الغضى
معداً إذا اربدت بشر جلودها
على خير حال وإله يزيدها
إلى أن تلاقت بالرشاء جنودها

Sons of Asad go together and fight
Ma'd when their skins mix with evil.
I see Asad (the tribe), thanks to God,
Getting better and stronger, and God gives it more.
We brought the horses from the side of the gardener
Until they joined by Al-Rasha'a its soldiers.

In another poem, Suhaym tries to mingle with the tribe during fighting and wars. He stresses a false tone of ego while he is getting involved with the tribe and showing solidarity for the defense of it. He is also entrusted to commemorate its exploits and political relations with other tribes. This false sense of ego manifests a form of compensation for the group sense which is ignored by everyone in the tribe:

نَ مشي الوعول تَوَّمُ الكهافا
فُ يُثرن العجاجة دوني صفافا
يلوك اللجام إذا ما استهافا

وخيل تكدس بالدار عي
ضوامر قد شفهن الوجيب
تقدمهن على مرجلي

And horses step forward carrying armed soldiers
Walking likes ibexes towards caves.
They become thin due to swift running;
They arise dust haze in front of me.
I walked boiling past them while they were
Chewing the rein out of thirst.

In the midst of this turmoil, Suhaym makes use of his strength as a warrior and appreciates or glorifies his poetic potentials by saying:

My verses serve me on the day of boasting
In place of birth and silver coin;
Though I am a slave, my soul is nobly free;
Though I am black of color, my nature is white.

Suhaym goes further in boasting and glorifying his manners and his blackness. He tends to introduce the black slave who hides lonely in the darkness of slavery and blackness in a different way. He constantly draws attention to his high morals to which none of his tribe members pays attention:

بِ ولا بالفتى اللبيب الأديب
فبياض الأخلاق منه نصيب

ليس يُزري السواد بذى اللد
إن يكن للسواد في نصيب

Blackness does not degrade a whole man
Nor a young man of discernment and breeding
If blackness has fallen to me as my lot
So has the whiteness of my character.

The attempt to assimilate, integrate, and adapt to the tribe members has failed, and Suhaym remains, in the eyes of the tribe members, the black slave who copies poetry, not the black, fighter, slave knight. At this point, Suhaym loses control of himself and he becomes unable to restrain his psychic shocks that start to appear and lead him and his tribe, as well, to abyss.

Understanding the relationship between men and women

The third significant condition necessary to understand the meaning of life, according to Adler taxonomy, is the necessity to understand the type of relationships that hold between men and women. This is the last straw that broke the back of the camel. It has contributed, in one way or another, to the elimination of Suhaim who could not understand the relationship between men and women, or rather was unable to establish a normal relationship with women because of his social status within the tribe. Here paradoxes and confusion which is, in fact, similar to delirium, emerge inside Suhaym. The reason is to fully verify the oppression of blackness and slavery that are the towering wall, and the great obstacles that prevent him from reaching the woman who occupies his mentality and is manifested so much in his poetry. These two same elements, i.e.

servitude and blackness, have previously prevented him from establishing a foothold among the people of the tribe; consequently, he, now, loses both worlds: the world of man and the world of women; he says:

وذاك هوانٌ ظاهرٌ قد بدا ليا
ولكنَّ ربي شانني بسواديا
تصُرُّ وتبري باللقاح التواديا

يُرْجَلْنَ أقواماً ويتركن لمتي
فلو كنتُ ورداً لونه لعشقتني
فما ضرني أن كانت امي وليدةً

The girls excite other men and turn away from me
Despising me as I can clearly see.
If I were pink of color,
These women would love me,
But my God has shamed me with blackness.
Yet it does not diminish me that my mother was a slave woman
Who tended the udders of female camels.

In such a situation, malice and hatred accumulate inside the poet and the gap between him and the tribe gets larger and larger to pave the way towards revenge; therefore, Suhaym says:

وواحدةٍ حتى كملن ثمانيا
نواهد لا يعرفن خلقاً سوانيا
ألا إنما بعض العوائد دائيا

تَجْمَعْنَ من شتى ثلاثٍ وأربع
وأقبلن من أقصى البلاد يعدنني
يعدن مريضاً هنَّ هيجن داه

They gathered around me in threes, fours
And ones until they make a whole eight.
They approached me from the far side of the country promising
Breasts that were never seen except by me.
They promised a patient agitated by them
Indeed, some of them caused my sickness.

Here Suhaym's narcissism unfolds when he depicts the women of the tribe thronging only around him and seeking his company but not anybody else's. His sexual perversion is also manifested in the emergence of his unbridled desire to bring together eight women at the same time.

Based on the three basic preconditions of understanding the meaning of life, Suhaym is said to fail in his endeavors in comprehending the exact meaning of life. He has experienced a rebellious rift and lived a kind of estrangement. He constantly tries to break down and overcome the various obstacles he has been facing while he is trying to integrate with tribe. Still, he has also been erecting some others unconsciously inside him; these internal barriers have contributed to the intensification of internal conflict with the self as well as the external one with the tribe.

Unknowingly, Suhaym resorts to compensate for every single precondition in his own way; however, he eventually fails but relatively. At this point, Suhaym reaches the stage of counter-compensation which is a form of revenge against his tribe: men or women.

Dreams as compensating tools

There is no doubt that dreams constitute a refuge for the individual to escape from his/her reality. Brett and Adler (2014) maintain that dreams can be seen as a direct way toward

your true thoughts, emotions and actions. In dreams, one clearly sees aggressive impulses and desires. Dreams are also a way of compensation for the shortcomings in one's life. Undoubtedly, the feelings of lack of power and inferiority of the individual in his real life lead, in one way or another, to compensation, whether it positive or negative, not to restore balance between the conflicting aspects of his/her experience but to tip the scale to one's advantage in order to deal with and succeed in his/her life. Therefore, it is easy to see clearly that the realization of desire is often reflected in wild dreams (Freud, 1913).

Ibn al-Jawzi (1998) argues that Suhaym fell in love with Omayrah, the daughter of his owner named Abu Ma'bad. Once, the father was preparing to go for fighting and before he left he decided to bid farewell to his beloved daughter saying:

عُمَيْرَةٌ وَدَعِ إِنَّ تَجَهَّزْتَ غَازِيَا

"Bid farewell to Umayrah when you prepare to go fighting"

but he could not continue; he asked Suhaym, who got agitated, for help and started a long flirting poem that included wild pictures of sexual perversion. The first line of the poem reads:

عُمَيْرَةٌ وَدَعِ إِنَّ تَجَهَّزْتَ غَازِيَا كَفَى الشَّيْبُ وَالْإِسْلَامُ لِلْمَرْءِ نَاهِيَا

Bid farewell to Umayrah when you prepare to go fighting.

Sufficient are Islam and old age for people to abstain.

As a reaction to this wild flirting poem, the owners decided to sell Suhaym; Jandal, the son of Abu Ma'bad, took him to the city and sold him.

It is worth mentioning that in this poem, Suhaym resorts to illusions and daydreaming in an attempt to compensate for lack of power and the sense of inferiority inherent in his relation with the tribe so that he frees himself from the oppression he is suffering (Freud, 1913).

If we acknowledge the story of Ibn al-Jawzi and accept that the adventures included in the poem are pure deliriums and illusions invented by Suhyam, we can assert that his love affair with Umayrah represents the first oppressed topic inside his mind. Therefore, he proceeds to digress in the psychological discharge of negative feelings mainly blackness and servitude, on the one hand, and of portraying women coming up to him from all over the country, on the other hand.

The poem consists of ninety-one lines; it starts with typical flirting verses that are acceptable and forgivable to the lay reader due to the fact that most of these verses are recurrent and used by other poets. What is unforgivable in this poem is the pure pornographic scenes that portray Suhaym together with women:

وَبِئْسَ وَسَادَانَا إِلَى عَلْجَانَةٍ وَجَقَفَ تَهَادَاهُ الرِّيحُ تَهَادِيَا
تَوَسَّدَنِي كَفَاً وَتَتَنِي بِمَعْصِمٍ عَلِيٍّ وَتَحْوِي رِجْلَهَا مِنْ وِرَائِيَا
وَهَبَّتْ لَنَا رِيحَ الشَّمَالِ بِقَرَّةٍ وَلَا تُؤَبِّ إِلَّا بُرْدَهَا وَرِدَائِيَا
فَمَا زَالَ بُرْدِي طَيِّباً مِنْ ثِيَابِهَا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ حَتَّى أَنْهَجَ الْبُرْدُ بَالِيَا
وَأَشْهَدُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ قَدْ رَأَيْتَهَا وَعَشْرِينَ مِنْهَا إِصْبَعاً مِنْ وِرَائِيَا
أَقْبَلَهَا لِلْجَانِبِينَ وَأَتَّقِي بِهَا الرِّيحَ وَالشَّفَانَ مِنْ عَن شَمَالِيَا

We stayed together leaning to a tree

And a curved rope of sand moving here and there.
 She pillows me in a hand and holds me tight by a wrest
 While her legs are circulating me.
 The wind of the north brought us cold breeze
 No dress did we have save her dress and my garment.
 My garment remained sound because of hers
 For a whole year until it is worn out.
 I swear by God I have seen her
 And her twenty fingers behind me.
 I kiss her from the two sides and shield
 By her myself from the cold wind.

Suhaym does not mean to express a blatant sexual scene; this scene is purely imagined and does not portray a typical sexual process. The poet shows a strange surreal scene where he fears the cold north wind and protects himself against it uniting with Umayrah; it is more than sexual connection. In pursuit of autism, he has realized the problematic nature of his relationship as a human being to a woman. Unintentionally, he tries to reveal the state of neurosis resulting from the castration, because the denial of proper sexual satisfaction can lead to the formation of neurosis that, in its turn, results in psychosis; consequently, the person tends to improper satisfaction of his desires (Hitschmann, 1913). And it comes to show his desire to transfer his sympathy to eight women at one time.

Counter compensation

Suhaym's failure in compensating for the sense of inferiority and bridging the gap between him and the tribe forces him to systematically seek revenge. He says:

وقد أتيتُ حراماً ما تظنوننا
 عدبٌ مُقبَّلها مما تصوننا

إن تقتلونني فقد أسخنتُ أعينكم
 وقد ضمنتُ إلى الأحشاء جاريةً

If you kill me, I cause you to cry
 As I committed something haram that you do not imagine.
 I have grabbed to my body a maid
 Who has tasty lips to kiss.

When they prepare him to be killed, he does not show fear nor does he feel sorry. On the contrary he goes on saying:

إنَّ الحياةَ من المماتِ قريبٌ
 عَرَقٌ على جنبِ الفراشِ وطيبٌ

شدوا وثاقَ العبدِ لا يفلتكم
 فلقد تحدر من جبين فتاتكم

Handcuff the slave securely so that he does not escape;
 life is so close to death.
 Your maid's forehead has poured
 too much sweat and perfume in my bed.

Here, life equals death for Suhaym who declares war against the tribe blatantly. The previous lines of verse do not portray a sexual scene, they rather express an act of revenge or a retaliation of the society. He is extremely sadist as he uses the maid to protect himself against the cold. When he unites with her, he tries to be very hard sexually leaving her almost motionless out of

exhaustion. In fact, this is a sign of perversion which occurs very often in his verse. He also seems notorious when he forces the women to tear their dresses and become completely naked:

ظباءً حَنَّتْ أعناقها في المكناس
يَكُنُّ في بناتِ القومِ إحدى الدهارس
ومن بُرِّقَ عن طفلةٍ غيرِ عانسٍ
دواليكَ حتى كلنا غيرُ لابسٍ

كأنَّ الصبيريَّاتِ يومَ لقيننا
وهنَّ بناتُ القومِ إن يشعروا بنا
فكم قد شققنا من رداءٍ مُنَيَّرٍ
إذا شقَّ بُردٌ شقَّ بالبردِ بُرِّقَ

The women of Sobayriyat when they meet us
Are like deer hiding their necks in the caves.
When their folk notice us,
One of them turns to be ingenious.
How often we tore woven dresses
And veils worn by virgins not old maids.
Once a veil is torn, another veil
Is torn too until we become completely naked.

According to Cashdan (1972), these verses show how abnormal Suhaym is when he tends to display his genital organs to the public as well as those of the women he accompanies. This abnormality is called exhibitionism.

The weapon that Suhyam uses against the tribe, i.e. flirting the women, to make up for his inferiority turns against him and results in dire consequences against him. He starts to suffer chronic psychosis just like sociopaths who have counter, hostile tendencies towards the society. Hence, Suhaym can be regarded as a sociopath who has a variety of legal and social irregularities. The common denominator among all sociopaths is the sense of indifference (Cashdan, 1972).

Conclusion

The general view of the slaves at the beginning of the human history is, somewhat, unclear because the shift made by Islam is, in fact, shocking to those who were used to the existence of slaves who are supposed to serve do everything for their masters and who are always viewed as a commodity whose value is determined depending on various factors.

At the same time, this view has always been a major obstacle to the integration of slaves in the new reality although it has worked blandly in some environments and failed in others. Thus, Suhaym, and many others like him, has failed to achieve social success, understand their job in life, and reach a real and clear meaning of it. This has contributed to the emergence of severe inferiority and deficiency complexes. As a result, he tries to compensate for all his losses following extreme, bizarre techniques.

The study aims to establish a link between all these aspects with the psychological state of the poet. Therefore, Suhaym is seen, sometimes, proud of his blackness which conceals a white character with white morals and ethics. In other instances, Suhaym describes the love of women to him and their appeal to him whether individually and in groups to the extent that he does present, in his poetry, scenes of sexual perversion and irregularities including the combination of eight women at the same time to play with

Among the other tools of compensation used by the poet is daydreaming in which he builds a world of illusion in order to achieve everything he aspires to. He also has established few relationships. However, when he has failed to integrate in the tribe, find a position worthy of a poet and knight, and understand the relationship between men and women, he resorts to counter-compensation or retaliation, by insulting the honor of the tribe. Eventually, Suhaym turns to a sociopath suffering psychosis before the tribe unanimously decide to burn him to death.

Note: The original article is written in Arabic: the translation is rendered by Oqab Jabali, the second author.

Authors' Profiles

Dr Abdul Khaliq Esa is currently the dean of Faculty of Humanities, An-Najah National University in Nablus, Palestine. He holds a PhD degree in Language philosophy from the University of Jordan in Amman; he teaches Abbasid Literature. His research affiliation includes Ancient Arabic Literature, Modern Literature, and Philology.

Dr Oqab Jabali is the director of the Language Center and instructor of English in the Department of English at An-Najah National University, Nablus, Palestine. Besides teaching translation and linguistic courses, he is a freelance translator and he teaches English for specific purpose in the language center. He holds a PhD in Cultural Studies and Political Sciences from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. His major publications include women studies and translation and linguistic studies.

Kamel Yaseen is a graduate student at An-Najah National University. Currently, he works for the Ministry of Education in Palestine teaching Arabic at school level. He is interested in Arabic literature and rhetorics.

References

- Abu Athera, S. S. (1995). *Tribal Poetry of the Tarabin and Huwaytat Tribes and its relationship to that of neighbouring tribes*. (Master thesis) Philosophy Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies Faculty of Arts University of Glasgow.
- Adler, A. (1931). *The Meaning of Life*. Originally published as "Der Sinn des Lebens" in the *Internationale Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie*, Vol. IX, 1931, pages 161-171, 1931. Translation by Sophia J. de Vries, 1994.
- Adler, A. & Brett, C. (2014). *Understanding Human Nature: The Psychology of Personality*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Al-Alwan, A. N. (2004). *Slavery System in Islam*. Cairo: Dar Al-Salam for Printing, Publication, and Translation.

- Al-Asfahani, A. (1868). *Kitab al-Aghani (Book of Songs)*. Beirut: Dar Ihya'a Turath Al-Arabi.
- Al-Safadi, S. K. (2000). *Al-Wafi Bil-Wafiyaat (The Sufficient in Deaths)*. Beirut: Dar Ihya'a Turath Al-Arabi.
- Al-Termanini, A. (1979). *Slavery: Its past and present*. Kuwait: National Council for Culture, Arts & Letters.
- Badawi, A. (1973). *Black poets and their characteristics in Arabic Poetry*. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization
- Cashdan, S. (1972). *Abnormal Psychology*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Clarence-Smith, W.G. (2006). *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Freud, S. (1913). *The Interpretation of Dreams*. (3rd edit), translated by A.A. Brill. New York: Macmillan Company.
- Hitschmann, E. (1913). *Freud's Theories of the Neurosis*. New York
- Ibn al-Jawzi, A. A. (1998). *Clearing the dusk in the value of Sudan and Habasha*. (ed.). Saudi Arabia: Dar al-Sharif for Publication and Distribution.
- Lewis, B. (1992). *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, B. (1985). "The Crows of the Arabs." *Critical Inquiry*, 12, (1), "Race," Writing, and Difference (Autumn, 1985), 88-97.
- Maguire, L. (2012). *Poetry as a Way of Knowing*. Retrieved from <https://www.philosophytalk.org/blog/poetry-way-knowing>
- Melamed, A. (2010). *The Image of the Black in Jewish Culture: A History of the Other*. Berkshire: Routledge.
- Nicholson, R. A. (1941). *A Literary history of the Arabs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.