The Manifestation of Woman as a Ṣūfī Motif in Modern Arabic Poetry: Abdul Wahāb al-Bayyātī as an Example

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Abstract: The contemporary Arab poets have used the motif of women in their works to convey a variety of messages. Indeed, in many poetical works, the woman has played the role of an objective formula through which the modern Arab poet conveyed his idea, as if the woman were a mask. In fact, the woman is shown as a wide-ranging icon that helps the poet attain great ambitions and change the world around him. This image of the woman is influenced by the female character as depicted by medieval Sufi writers who regarded the woman as one of the major foundations of their writing. Consequently, they would select their female characters, give them glamorous names, and make them target of their writings. The content of the Sufi practices centered on love and craving. They considered that created woman their earthly mistress who aided them to reach their supreme lover, God. These Sufi rituals have profoundly impacted modern-day Arab poets. For purposes of focus, our work will discuss the echo of women in two poetical works of Abdul Wahāb al-Bayyātī. We seek to examine why this poet who is believed to represent modern writers, is magnetized to the Sufi image of woman. We assume that the Sufi treatment of women in modern Arabic poetry offers new insights into the dynamic potential of the motif and suggests a new critical approach.

Keywords: Woman as a Ṣūfī Motif, Modern Arabic Poetry, Abdul Wahāb al-Bayyātī, Rūmī and Iben-`Arabī

1. Introduction

The modern Arab poets have employed the motif of woman in their poetry to tell about various inferences. The woman is cast in the role of a neutral prescription through which the modern Arab poet sought to present the woman as a mask that serves his goals. As a matter of fact, the woman is portrayed as an all-embracing representation that aids the poet to attain his enormous aspirations and to transform the domain around him. This icon of the woman is inspired by the woman as painted by medieval Ṣūfī authors, figures and philosophers who viewed the woman as a key footing of their writing. The medieval Ṣūfī writers' belief is well formulated in an astounding utterance attributed to the medieval Ṣūfī thinker, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī who says, "In order for a man to reach the absolute, that is, God, he must go through femininity" [9]. Accordingly, Ṣūfī poets would pick out their female characters, grant them dazzling names, and turn them into the goal of their literatures. The content of the Ṣūfī traditions concentrated on love and passion. They regard their created woman as their worldly lover who assisted them to attain their absolute lover, God. Consider 'Aisha shaped by `Umar al-Khayyām (1048-1131) and 'Ayn ash-Shams, Nazzām, to whom Iben Arabī devoted his poetry [9].

These Ṣūfī rituals have profoundly impacted modern-day Arab novelists and poets who employed the same notion about femininity in their literary works. The list of novelists is long. Within its folds one finds the novels of Naguib Mahfouz (1911–2006) the famous Egyptian writer and Nobel Prize laureate, which are packed with Ṣūfī themes, motifs and symbols. Compatibly, Gamal al-Ghitani (1945–2015), the Egyptian author famed for political and historical novels and social and political comments and observations, has resorted to the Ṣūfī domain to express his ideas and notes. The list also includes the Saudi novelist Mohammed Hassan `Alwan (born 1979), Elif Shafak (1971) the Turkish-British writer, and women's rights activist, and Ibrāhīm al-Kōnī (1948).

The list of modern poets who made use of Ṣūfī practices including women as Ṣūfī motifs is lengthened and includes notable figures like the Iraqi poet Abdul Wahāb al-Bayyātī, the Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwīsh and the Egyptian free verse poet, editor, playwright and essayist Salāḥ Abdel Sabūr (1931-1981).

For purposes of focus, our work will discuss the echo of women in two poetical works of Abdul Wahāb al-Bayyātī (1926-1999): *The Kingdom of the Spike* (*Mamlakat As-Sunbulah*) and *'Aisha's Orchard*. In choosing al-Bayyātī, we seek to offer him as a case study to answer why modern Arab poets are attracted to the Ṣūfī image of woman. We believe that the Ṣūfī handling of women in modern Arabic poetry advances new-fangled visions into the vibrant potential of the motif and offers a new critical approach.

Al-Bayyāti (1926-1999) had made a profuse use of the female mask in two complete poetic collections: *The Kingdom of the Spike* and *'Aisha's Orchard*. In the latter volume, al-Bayyātī tries to lay down the characteristics of the "virtuous republic," where he endows 'Aisha's character with various functions and indications that verge on myth. It is very thinkable that 'Aisha is the poet's lover, but she is granted a fictitious name. It is also possible that 'Aisha alludes to Ishtār, the goddess of love in the Babylon mythology. Regardless of the true identity or representation of 'Aisha, the poet has coined the name and surrounded its holder with distinguished features derived from the Ṣūfī world. Al-Bayyātī's 'Aisha is certainly reminiscent of Omar al-Khayyām's 'Aisha portrayed sometimes as a real earthly mistress and at others as a symbol of the Divine entity. Moreover, 'Aisha has acquired meta-poetic connotations in Al-Bayyātī's poetry, as 'Aisha becomes a symbol of the poem with which the poet is united.

2. Jalāl ad-Dīn Ar-Rūmī as a Mask

In his "Reading in the Volume of Shams Tabrīz for Jalāl ad-Dīn Ar-Rūmī" in *The Kingdom of the Spike* (*Mamlakat As-Sunbulah*) [3], al-Bayyātī says,

I
'Aisha said to the weeping flute: Who kills this poet or
Frees him from the fire of eternal love? Here he has gone deep into intoxication,
He has become crazy at me so have I... too,
We are both crazy and intoxicated,
5 Looking for each other's faces in the tavern,
Crashing like the full porcelain vase,
They haven't yet stripped off us the veil of the thirsty person before the rooster's screams,
Here is Shams Ed-Dīn (sun of religion)
Rising from Tabrīz,
10 Giving me the blessings of the lover and the beloved
And both of us are intoxicated and crazy,
The beloved is the all-living, while the lover is a veil, and he is the dead,
With the ashes of a fire I cover myself and with the tattered clothes of the poor,

15 I hold my drinking cup with one hand and with the other my lover's hair,
I dance across the field,
And in my bowels there is an unfading fire, so why doesn't the fire burn me?
Here I place the white burial garment and the sword in front of you,
Let's strike my neck while I am intoxicated.
II
20 You snatched my heart from me,
You took myself away from me,
You took the world from me.
She escaped from me,
She left nothing to me save the flaming craving and my thirsty heart.
III
25 A castrated rooster in the costume of the system
Butting the rock of copulated poetry's rhymes and covering his nakedness with meters.
He said to the servant of his master, the sultan,
"I shall bring you this poet's head, even if he were praying in
the mosque or intoxicated in the tavern."
IV
30 A legendary rook that accompanied the journeys of the unknown man
to the regions of the world ravishes my chest. Sīnāʿī and
Al-ʿAṭṭār
were the two companions of his first trip; he ravishes my 35 chest and I hear 'Aisha crying
in her childhood's orchard.
She to the crazy anonymous man coming from the seven cities of love
was saying sadly:
40 It was a bitter farewell, so do what you please but this!
He is intoxicated and you are fool,
And I see her pale jumping off from wall to the orchard,
In the violets of her eyes a woman, a fire and smoke hide,
And lovers
45 come and go,
And I am fool, intoxicated
I hear her and see her in the dress of violet
A glowing woman
fading in the foam of light and is born.
V
50 You snatched my heart from me,
You took myself away from me,
You took the world from me,
She escaped from me,
She left nothing to me save the flaming craving and my 55 thirsty heart.
VI
When a woman enters Khufu's chamber, she is not accessed by old age
and death, and despite the passage of years, she remains capable of love
60 and 'Aisha was that woman or she has become now

when Shams Ed-Dīn crowned her his banner and embraced her, when he said to her: Be

    Lara or Leila or Hind!

    Be what you please and be the last bead of the necklace,
65 'Aisha was in my lips a weeping flute

    And I talk about the pain of love.[1]

This poem, which represents a new stage of al-Bayyātī poetic development, reflects a model of poetry that speaks about itself. The general content of the poem gears towards the dealing with the tortures of writing poetry, the undergoing of the experience of writing poetry as well as the poet's revolution [10].

It is not surprising, therefore, that Al-Bayyātī opens his poem with the word "flute," which has a clear Ṣūfī meaning, and the first sentence of this part reminds us of the opening of Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī's book, *al-Mathnawī*, which was translated into Arabic [11, 15]. In the poem we encounter very vibrant Ṣūfī terms like: "the weeping flute," "intoxication," and "the tattered clothes of the poor," which are all mystical symbols frequently employed by Rūmī in his Ṣūfī writings.

Rūmī's Ṣūfī mask emerges in this poem in its highest point of divine craving. The poet is a lover who is so intoxicated by divine wine that he wishes death so that he can be extinguished as a result of his longing for the one heavenly beloved "God." So, Al-Bayyāti talks about love that ties the Ṣūfī follower to his God. It is also about the love that occurs between the poet and 'Aisha. These two types of love are eventually united to make up one love which is confirmed by the term "both of us" [18].

'Aisha, who appears in the first lines, dominates a great space in the poem. Al-Bayyātī sometimes refers to her with various symbols and at different mythical levels, and at other times she is associated with mystical and existential symbols. This overlap in Aisha's personality is discussed by Mansour, who maintains that her character is a place, "Where the concrete overlaps with the unlimited spirituality and the absolute with the proportional [11]. Hence, in the poetry of Al-Bayyātī 'Aisha is either a symbol of a real or mythical woman, though in most cases the two symbols often intersect.

In this poem readers are simultaneously exposed to a diversified types of crying, unbridled lust, and agony. These types help readers to a great extent understand the depth of the Ṣūfī sense of love and inebriation. Furthermore, the poet introduces a few terms which create a musical soul that fits the meanings of drunkenness, triumph, elevation and unrestrained desire, such as: "intoxicated," "tunes," "thirsty," and "full" [18].

But by a terrible paradox, it is 'Aisha's personality that created al-Bayyātī himself, and perhaps it is this character that acquires an artistic dimension in the poems of al-Bayyātī. She is probably an emblem of that girl that al-Bayyātī loved in his childhood. What supports this hypothesis is the fact that the beloved woman of Omar al-Khayyām, to whom al-

Bayyātī wrote his poems, is called 'Aisha. It seems al-Bayyātī benefited from the symbol of 'Aisha created by al-Khayyām, and from his Ṣūfī ideas too. Perhaps 'Aisha is a symbol of women who lived in different times, real and places and times or even different mythical places and times [10].

The deeds described in this poem belong to a semantic field that is often well-matched. 'Aisha has an agreement with the poet, and Shams Ed-Dīn Tabrīz rotates in the same orbit as 'Aisha. It must be indicated that Tabrīz is originally a title, not a realistic name. After he attained the sun of truth, he was given that name. The term "shams," therefore, is not only a reference to the master, Tibrīzī. Rather, it is likely to have many interpretations. Mystic masters use it extensively to embrace all Ṣūfī crowds. For them, it is the way which every Ṣūfī walks and the destination where every Ṣūfī ends up. They believe that the "sun" is a metaphor for God; or it is the eye of God, the eye of the world and it is a reference to the perfect man. The concept of "Al-Insān al-kāmil," or the perfect human being, was first profoundly studied in written form by Iben 'Arabī [21]. Depending on common notions within Ṣūfī culture, Iben al-'Arabī developed his explanation of the perfect being by discussing the question of oneness helped by the metaphor of the mirror [23]. He claims that just as an object is reflected in innumerable mirrors so God is seen in his countless creatures. Put differently, God is the object and humans being are the mirrors. So, God's quintessence is witnessed in the existing human being and there can be no difference or parting between the two. Once a creature understands this reality, he treads the path of ultimate oneness. In manner of Ṣūfī philosophers notably and Iben 'Arabī and Rūmī, who refers to Tibrīzī as the sun through which he reaches the great truth, al-Bayyātī compares his beloved to a sun shining on him. He sees 'Aisha as the symbol of eternal love, just as Shams al-Dīn Tabrīz is a symbol of Ṣūfī love [6]. This implies that al-Bayyātī employs the Ṣūfī love to show his intense passion for 'Aisha, and Shams al-Dīn Tabrīz becomes a channel or a medium for attaining the desired beloved.

The opening lines expose the readers to the great love that tortures the poet who puts on the Ṣūfī mask so congenially that he cannot flee it. And after the first section, the poet employs several terms of love, that love which is coupled with suffering and anguish. Al-Bayyātī's exhausting passion in this poem reminds us of a certain torturing love story that appears in Rūmī's *al-Mathnawī*. It is said that that Rūmī's tortured lover came one night to the room of his adored woman in the hope of fulfilling the promise given by his beloved [12]. Instead, he talked about his agony and anguish. Clearly, al-Bayyātī's poem is influenced by this lover's torment.

    With the ashes of a fire I cover myself and with the tattered clothes of the poor, (I, xiv)

    And in my bowels there is an unfading fire, so why doesn't the fire burn me? (I, xvi)

    In the violets of her eyes a woman, a fire and smoke hide, (IV, x).

    'Aisha was in my lips a weeping flute And I talk about the

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1. All quotations from Arabic texts including poetry and titles of books were translated by the authors.

pain of love. (VI, vii-viii)

Against this exhausting love, the poet cannot do anything but stand while deprived of will, robbed of power and full of pain yet he at the same time undergoes moments of pleasure. Put differently, 'Aisha stole his heart, his self and his world and left him coping with bitterness of love. Contrary to him, 'Aisha becomes a myth unaffected by dearth. Even when she is in Khufu's chamber, she is immune to death so that she can always be in the sphere of love.

This cruel love from which the poet cannot escape, however, aims first and foremost at supporting the voice of the poet and poetry and moves him closer to light and God. This is exactly what Jalāl ad-Dīn Ar-Rūmī hinted at when he defines such type of love. He says,

For the sake of love, I hated the word imposition because the forced lover has no love. Love, whose goal is to be close to the Righteousness contains no enforcement. It is a bright sunlight, not a shadow of a gloomy cloud [2],

What gives the poet some relief is that his love of 'Aisha is mutual and that she undergoes the same conditions of anguish as the poet.

He has become crazy at me so have I... too, We are both crazy and intoxicated, Looking for each other's faces in the tavern, Crashing like the full porcelain vase, (I iii-vi)

And both of us are intoxicated and crazy (I xi).

Undoubtedly, this type of love is purely mystic and is, of course, reminiscent of the union of the true lover with his beloved, i.e. "God" and His solutions in him thus creating a state of perfect union. The poet implies that just as the Ṣūfī figure unites with God through love [20]), so the poet unites with 'Aisha.

In the subsequent passages of the poem, there are signs indicating that al-Bayyātī refers to the subject of poetry and writing or what is academically called "meta-poetry." Al-Bayyātī is eager to freely write that type of poetry associated with sufferings and hardships. This suggests that 'Aisha, whom he longs for, stands not only for love and God but for poetry as well. She is the target and the embodiment of his poetry. In other words, 'Aisha is the source of his inspiration, the major concern of his poetry, his ultimate craving, his divine love and the path leading to a third adoration: the poem [14].

In this poem, Rūmī is called upon to be a mask, rather than to merely convey the Ṣūfī experience or to speak out about the Ṣūfī idea. So, his summoning imported with it a great deal of Ṣūfī love terms, symbols, images and situations. In so doing, al-Bayyātī intends to say that his love for poetry is equal to the love of a devout mystic figure of God and to his eternal love to 'Aisha, the lover who speaks on behalf of all the famed adored women such as Hind, Lara and Laila. Likewise, al-Bayyātī's poem - his mistress – contains within its folds all the experiences of poets. His poem has conveyed to current readers the history of the experiences of the love of Lara, Hind and Laila. Hence, the third implication accomplished by 'Aisha is reconfirmed. She is a symbol of meta-poetry [7].

So, in his poem, al-Bayyātī made the mask confined to the owner of the mask, i. e. Rūmī, whose mystic philosophy, as emphasized in his *Mathnawī,* consecrated man's right to freedom and independence and confirmed man's commitment to moral conduct [11]. Like him, al-Bayyātī reconfirmed Rūmī's Ṣūfī ideas and condemned all practices that express tyranny, oppression and exploitation.

3. Muḥyī ed-Dīn Iben-`Arabī as a Mask

Through his *'Aisha's Orchard,* al-Bayyātī has managed to discuss a variety of complex subjects at different levels. He mixes the real with the imaginary, the actual with the mythological and the physical with spiritual. His deep passion for a real 'Aisha contains within its fold his longing for a non-existent mystic woman, his love for God and eventually his adoration of poetry. All these types of love accompanied by amazing senses of fine feelings, sacrifice, and commitment to virtue combine to help al-Bayyātī establish his "virtuous kingdom," thus following the tracks of great philosophers like Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fārābī, known in the West as Alpharabius (872 – between 950-951) [5], whose humanistic principles were recorded in his concept of the "Virtuous City."

The poem selected from al-Bayyātī's *'Aisha's Orchard* to be discussed is called "`Ayn Ash-Shams *Aw Taḥwulāt* Muḥyī ed-Dīn Iben-`Arabī *fī Turjumān al-Ashwāq*" (`Ayn Ash-Shams or the Changes of Muḥyī ed-Dīn Iben-`Arabī in *the Desires' Interpreter*) (Al-Bayyātī, 1979 33). Al-Bayyātī says,

I carry *Qāsiyūn,*
A deer runs after the green moon in the dark tunnel,
And a flower I sip from it the horse of the beloved,
And a lamb bleats and an alphabet code,
5 I mould *Qāsiyūn* into a poem and so Damascus throws itself into *its* arms as a necklace of light.
I carry *Qāsiyūn*
An apple I bite
And a picture I hug
Under the shirt of wool
10 I talk to the bird
And the enchanted *Bardā*
Every name I remember or happens to I give to her, I give metonymies but her name I mean
And every house at dawn I cry, her house I mean
The One united in the all
15 And the shade in the shade
And the world was born after me and before me.
*****
The Master, the lover and the *mamlúk²* talked to me
And the thunder and the lightning
And "*Al-Qutb,*" and "*Al-Murīd*"
20 And His Majesty
After His revelation to me He gave me a deer
But I released her to run after the light in the cities of the lost home
They skinned her before she was slaughtered or before she

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2. It means a white slave.

died
   And made of her skin a *rabābah*[3] and a string for a lute
25 And here I tightened it and so the trees grow leaves at
night and the nightingale of the wind weeps
   And the (she-) lovers of the enchanted *Bardā*
   And the Master crucified above the wall.
*****
   `Ayn Ash-Shams* leads me blind to my exile.
*****
   She possessed me just as I possess her under the sky of the
East,
30 I gave her and she gave me a flower while praying in the
   Lord's kingdom and awaiting thelightning,
   But she returned to Damascus
   Together with the birds and the light of dawn
   Leaving her *mamlúk* in the exile
   A pleased slave, a fugitive and ready for sale
35 Dead and alive
   Drawing in the notebooks of water and above the sand
   Her child-forehead and her eyes, the flash of lightning
through the night
   And a world which dies or gets born before the cry of
death or birth.
   *****
   I returned to Damascus after the death
40 Carrying *Qāsiyūn*
   I return it to her
   Kissing her hands
   For the dead of this land which is limited by the sky and
the desert
   And the sea and the sky
45 Pursued me and locked the door of the grave behind me
   And besieged Damascus
   And instigated his Majesty's chest
   After His Revelation to me and the slaughtering of the deer
   But I escaped their blockade and returned.
50 I carry *Qāsiyūn*
   An apple I bite
   And a picture I hug
   Under the shirt of wool
   Who will stop the bleeding?
55 And all what we love departs or dies
   Oh! Ships of silence and oh notebooks of water and the
hold of wind!
   Our appointment is another delivery and a new coming era
   In which a shade and a mask from my face and yours fall
off
   And the vices fall off.
   The poem deals with Iben-`Arabī's love experience as
portrayed in his book *Turjumān al-Ashwāq*, where he hints at
his beloved, *An- Naẓẓām,* who is nicknamed `*Ayn Ash-Shams*.
She is a symbol of the Great Truth, God, while love stands
for Ṣūfī yearning. As already mentioned, at that time, it was
the habit of most Ṣūfī love poets to write poetry for a beloved
that was mostly imaginary with names such as *Salmā, Lailā*

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3. A musical instrument.

or *'Lowwah* because they believed that this virtuous love
could help them reach God [8]. Committed to this tradition,
Iben-`Arabī dedicated his poetry to `*Ayn Ash-Shams,*
supposedly his beloved, believing that she would guide him
to God [24]. The reader of this poem, therefore, feels he is
reading about Platonic love when in fact he is reading about
pure Ṣūfī craving [17].
   Al-Bayyātī's employment of the character of Muḥyī al-Dīn
ibn al-ʿArabī was not merely done as a casual commitment to
heritage. Iben ʿArabī's personality has occupied a
distinguished position in al-Bayyātī's attitudes and thinking.
Al-Bayyātī is quoted to have said,
   The key to my entry into the world of Iben al-ʿArabī was
   the love he was calling for, rather than from the aspect of
   death and martyrdom. Indeed, 'Iben ʿArabī's world is
   richer and more fertile than the al-Ḥallāj's. So, you see that
   I live in the depth of my poetic conditions. As a matter of
   fact, I live my poetry before and after its birth [1].
   This poem, which consists of eight untitled sections, is
spoken by Iben ʿArabī, the mask of the poem, whom the poet
hides behind. Put differently, the meanings given belong to
Iben ʿArabī, but through the mask they are referred to al-
Bayyātī. The poem is opened by Iben ʿArabī's description of
his love affair. He reveals to his audience that he carries his
beloved from Qāsiyūn, so that he can be united with her and
express his overwhelming passion for her [24]. Interestingly,
Qāsiyūn, which is a mountain in Damascus where he was
buried [22] has become a place full of symbolism. Adonis,
for example, refers a lot to this mountain, which reminds him
of the homeland of his childhood and youth [4].
   For Iben ʿArabī, Qāsiyūn is his beloved who will guide
him to God. His craving for her is conveyed through pure
mystic terms. She is a gazelle that goes beyond the green
moon in the darkness; she is also a rose sipped by the horse
of the lover, an apple bitten by him, and a picture he
embraces under the wool shirt. All these mystic images
disclose the speaker's intensity of his love for is lady, or ʿAyn
Shams, the symbol of the light of guidance, which naturally
refers him towards God.
   The meaning of the poem is based on one single
connection, which is love. When Iben al-ʿArabī presents his
relationship with his earthly woman, ʿAyn Shams, he talks
about a state of love but it is also the love that guides him
along the way to God. Behind these meanings there are other
unveiled threads that represent another layer of meanings that
are related to al-Bayyātī himself. In putting on the mask of
Iben al-ʿArabī, al-Bayyātī intends to say that his situation
with his poem should be seen within the context of love. It
seems that al-Bayyātī employs the imports of mystic love
through the mystic masks to talk about poetry and writing.
   As shown in his memoirs, al-Bayyātī wrote this poem at
Mount Qāsiyūn near Iben al-ʿArabī's tomb. In so doing, he
has evoked the past through the present place and expressed
his poetic state by returning to the heritage of the notable
mystic figure, Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī [1]. His purpose is
to show that his experience in this poem is parallel to the
experience of Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī in "`Ayn Ash-

Shams *Aw Taḥwulāt* Muḥyī ed-Dīn Iben-ʿArabī *fī Turjumān al-Ashwāq.*" In talking about Iben al-ʿArabī's relationship with God, al-Bayyātī not only speaks about his own relationship with God [1] but also indicates his relationship with poetry. To attain his goal, al-Bayyātī has used Ṣūfī ideas and terms endorsed by Ṣūfī figures who lived in the Middle Ages. See for example the idea of "the occurrence of the world by birth," "the solution of the one in all," and the study of god and man [1, 19].

These mystic ideas, employed by al-Bayyātī, verify the poet's love of his poetry and his driving desire to settle in it in the same manner that the Ṣūfī craves to united with God [13]. It is not surprising, therefore, that al-Bayyātī maintains,

> Therefore, my love will not perish and the woman whom I love will never disappear or perish. This is so because love, which is the essence of functioning existence, remains as it is. The images, however, change, but the beloved woman, if she dies, the spirit of her love settles in another woman who emerges from [the deceased woman's] ashes to connect the earthly love with the divine love. This is what we always miss in our lives, and this is the function of poetry that drives man to rebel against his reality and artificial practices coined by traditions and customs behind it in order to make life happier, fuller, and more trusting of man [16].

Iben ʿArabī's beloved woman, described as a gazelle, sets out from the cave of darkness, namely ignorance to the green fields, or affluence of meanings, the light and life. So, Iben al-ʿArabī's gazelle means everything to him. She is an apple he bites, a necklace of light, a symbol of the greenness of life, and an entity in which the one unites in all [18]. Just as the gazelle or ʿAyn Shams (the Eye of the Sun) leads Iben al-ʿArabī towards the light so the poem takes al-Bayyātī out of the current dark stage of literature towards the light. The tunnels of darkness pointed at by al-Bayyātī and through which the gazelle passes with Iben al-ʿArabī towards light stand for the difficult period that poetry undergoes during al-Bayyātī's life [24].

ʿAyn Shams in al-Bayyātī's poem draws on her parallel in Iben al-ʿArabī's volume and both comprise a combined symbol containing other symbols. The poet makes use of this comprehensive representation to unite with God by placing it as an image under the wool shirt often worn by the mystic figures [1, 19]. The poet points out that he lives in a black phase and in consequence wants the gazelle to remove the black layer from Damascus, the poem, and the Arab culture. All these three factors coexisted at Iben al-ʿArabī's era when the Ṣūfī thinking was strongly present and Damascus was at the acme of its prosperity [1]. Through his poem and mask, the poet hints at his great desire to get rid of the worries of the current stage in every respect.

Behind Iben al-ʿArabī's mask, al-Bayyātī declares his rejection of the fixed features of society, including poetry and writing, and calls for the return of freedom of expression in literature. This call for return is held as an act of "resurrection" through which all veils of falsity and hypocrisy are stripped and shadows transpire [11].

Based on this interpretation, al-Bayyātī's poem takes a multi-meaning path, which can be compressed in the following simplified reference: the Ṣūfī lover is parallel to al-Bayyātī, the poet; the Ṣūfī union with ʿAyn Shams, the beloved is analogous to the poet's amalgamation with his poem, al-Bayyātī's adored woman; and the goal of the Ṣūfī is reaching out to God while al-Bayyātī's end is the purification of the poem from all the obstructions and censorship that restraint free writing.

Indubitably, in this poem al-Bayyātī, has been able to get out of the lyrical experience of the traditional poem, especially since he employed the mystic mask through which he could express his new intricate vision towards poetry and human issues, reflected in the poem's ambiguity and weirdness of language and idea. In his poem, al-Bayyātī has made use of a whole bunch of mystic notions. The most distinguished one is the mystical idea of "unity of existence." Undoubtedly, this idea leads the reader to the mask Iben al-ʿArabī, who is considered the founder of this idea in the Ṣūfī philosophy. Although the idea of "unity of existence" was discussed by other mystics who preceded him, Iben al-ʿArab is still considered to have a special view of this notion. In parallel, al-Bayyātī's use of the notion of "the unity of existence" may indicate that he has a special view of poetry. When he talks about ibn al-ʿArabī, al-Bayyātī seems to refer to himself. Al-Bayyātī's awareness of this notion of Iben al-Arabī, and of the deep Ṣūfī thought.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, al-Bayyātī makes use of Ṣūfī heritage through the utilization of the Ṣūfī figure. Beyond doubt, al-Bayyātī's dependence on Ṣūfī legacy is not achieved through a speedy appraisal of Ṣūfī books and lexicons. Rather, the diverse thoughts offered, the combination of texts conveyed, the collection of characters depicted and the numerous historical and religious citations entirely and incompletely introduced in his poems show that al-Bayyātī must have navigated deep into the core of the Ṣūfī view point. Just as the Ṣūfist employed the character of the beautiful woman to fulfil his love of God, the absolute, so al-Bayyātī harnesses the woman figure to depict a strong craving between the two lovers. However, his meaning has a further consequence. He deals with the relationship between the poet, the lover and his beloved, the poem. A-Bayyātī's message is that his love affair experiencing a rough phase now will be revived and then the disguise he exhibits will drop and in consequence, he can voice himself more freely.

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