

Toward a Revolutionary Emirati Poetics: Ghabesh's *Beman Ya Buthayn Taluthin*?

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Abstract

This paper critically investigates the dialectics of myth and tradition in *Beman ya Buthayn Taluthin ? / Who Will Secure a Safe Haven for Buthayn?* (2002) by the female Emirati poet Saleha Obeid Ghabesh in order to locate this poetic collection in its appropriate place within the context of the Arabic literary canon . Utilizing contemporary literary theory as analytical framework, the paper explores the poet's reconstruction of myth and tradition as aesthetic dynamics to articulate significant topics integral to the UAE community and the Arab world in an era of enormous transformations. In an attempt to interrupt the cultural mythology of a patriarchal society and encounter a world battered by humiliating defeats, the poet resurrects the Arabo-Islamic history in Andalusia to navigate contemporary issues rooted in the collective memory of the Arab nation. Confronting a web of decadent traditions which draw the Arab world backward and subverting politics of oppression which aim to silence Arab women during the era of gender consciousness, the poet engages intertextuality as a sophisticated technique linking the past with the present in a subtle poetic context.

Introduction

Though she is not yet a popular poet in the sense that great numbers of people read her works, one could praise Saleha Obeid Ghabesh for the thematic diversity of her poetry , her brilliant use of language, her structural inventiveness and subtle depiction of Arab dreams and frustrations as well as her exploration of revolutionary feminist issues. In addition to its feminist perspective, the poetry of the female Emirati poet is imbued with lyricism and textual complexity that resist generic categorization. Besides an engagement with social and political issues, Ghabesh's poetry is characterized by its existential concerns and universal motifs which make it appealing to those interested in promulgating historical and universal pursuits. Since she is largely unknown in the Arabic literary canon, her poetry, particularly her anthology *Beman Ya Buthayn Taluthin* (2002) requires critical explication and analysis. Capturing the catastrophic history of the Arab world at present, the poet reconstructs episodes from the history of Islamic Andalusia engaging into intertextual dialogues with feminist Andalusian poetry in which narratives of exile, defeat and subordination occupy the foreground.

As a whole, Ghabesh's poetry examines reconsiderations of contemporary problems of domination and hegemony playing a conspicuously prominent role in the formation and dissemination of notions of reform on the political and feminist paradigms. Serving as a potential signpost in Emirati cultural criticism, her poetry attempts to abolish all distinctions

between men and women in the Arab world as well as other binarisms that constitute a legacy of patriarchal ways of thinking. Incorporating feminist and social issues rooted in the collective consciousness of the Arab people, Ghabesh attempts to place contemporary Emirati poetry in the context of current transformations in global relationships linking local cultural discourses with the intellectual concerns and orientations originating at the central sites of western literary canons.

Therefore, one of the central features of Ghabesh's poetry is an extensive use of myth and legend adapted and recycled to incorporate themes of contemporary significance in modern Arab contexts. In her preface to *Beman Ya Buthayn Taluthin? / Who will Secure a Safe Haven for Buthayn?*, she establishes an analogy between herself and the Andalusian princess, Buthayna bint al-Mutamed, the central female voice in the anthology. The links between the Emirati poet and her Andalusian counterpart are intertwined to the extent that "they become one personality, one woman" (Ghabesh 2002: 5). Apparently, the Emirati poet is interested in the eventful life of her predecessor, Buthayna, because "her biography includes myth and tradition" according to Ghabesh. The life story of Buthayna, the Andalusian princess and the daughter of al-Mutamed ben Abbad, the king of Seville, a city located in Southwestern Spain, is the central inspiration for *Beman Ya Buthayn Taluthin?*

During the Muslim occupation of Southern Spain (Andalusia) which lasted more than seven hundred years (755-1492), Arabo-Muslim rulers established several kingdoms which were subsequently dismantled after the restoration of Spain. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Muslim empire and the loss of Andalusia, Buthayna's parents were exiled to Morocco, however, the princess and the harem in her father's palace were sold into slavery. Unaware of Buthayna's royal origin, a slave merchant from Seville bought her as a present for his son but Buthayna refused to surrender her body to him. After the revelation of her identity and noble descent, Buthayna gained the admiration of her captor who, taken with her beauty and virtues, proposed to her. Falling in love with him because of his kindness and respect for her, Buthayna accepted the engagement but refused to consummate their marriage until she could get the consent of her father, the exiled king. But since Buthayna's decision to marry the young Spaniard was considered as an enormous transgression which goes counter to the dictates of an Islamic patriarchal society, she decided to negotiate with her domineering father rather than to clash with him. Using her feminine powers of negotiation, she was able to gain the sympathy of her father who inevitably accepted her marriage to someone who belonged to the enemy camp.

Being aware of her father's fascination with eloquent poetry and being a poet herself, she sent him a captivating poem explaining her predicament and persuaded him to bless her marriage:

Do not deny my ordeal
I was sold out into slavery
it is God's will that the great
king has lost his throne
in the era of corruption
we were separated to taste
the flavor of distress
when the forces of hypocrisy
deprived my father of his kingdom
we were forced to leave each other
I attempted to escape
but I fell into captivity (cited in Ghabesh 2002: 8).¹

The references to "the era of corruption" and "the forces of hypocrisy" allude not only to catastrophic events leading to the fall of the Arabo-Muslim dynasty in Andalusia but also to contemporary and similar circumstances threatening to disintegrate the Arab nation. After an exploration of her own ordeal resulting from the collapse of her father's kingdom in Seville, Buthayna appeals to her parents to accept her marriage from the son of the Spanish slave merchant because she fell in love with him due to his sense of morality and good manners: "Dear father, I hope you bless our marriage / since he adores me / Dear royal mother, the descendant of kings / I hope you wish us happiness and good luck" (cited in Ghabesh 2002 : 9). According to the Emirati poet, Buthayna, who was sold out into slavery, "was able to win the battle for freedom and life" (Ghabesh 2002: 9). Moreover, Ghabesh reveals her personal admiration of Buthayna because she insisted on marrying the man she loved without violating the moral codes of her family and society.

The encounter with Buthayna's story, particularly her strength to convince her parents of her marriage from someone who belongs to the hostile tribe or the enemy state makes a clear shift in Ghabesh's poetic orientation. In other words, the crux of *Beman Ya Bathayn Taluthin?* centers around a climatic incident – the Emirati poet's identification with Buthayna's narrative which had a profound impact upon her inner transformation. Functioning as a kind of metonymy for Ghabesh, Buthayna's story forced her to confront the repressive constructions of a contemporary male-oriented society with narcissus and hostile attitudes toward women. In her attempt to transcend the intersecting sites of oppression that

¹ All translations from Arabic sources including *Beman Ya Buthayn Taluthin ?* are done by the author of the article.

Arab women experience, she challenges politics of sexual subjugation and discrimination based on race and class. Regardless of her condemnation of a patriarchal and phallogocentric system, her attempt to change reality seems to be dedicated by an ever-respectful, non-violent feminine desire for a dialogue with the other which does not seek to appropriate or obliterate him. However, her preoccupation with the complexities of power relations in contemporary Arab contexts makes her poetry rich and challenging. Therefore, an appropriation of western feminist theories carried over into analysis of Arabic literature may lead to enormous evaluation of Ghabesh's poetics.

For example, the critic, Debra Castillo, in her discussion of feminist literature, argues: "as far as I'm concerned, a work is feminist insofar as it attempts to explain the mechanics of cruelty, oppression and violence through a story that is developed in a world in which men and women exist" (Castillo 1992: 189). Obviously, the story of Buthayna with her parents and her experience of slavery constitutes a point of departure for the Emirati poet, preoccupied with a construction of feminist poetics able to confront current domestic challenges and international transformations sweeping the Arab world. In spite of belonging to different backgrounds and histories, Ghabesh and Buthayna share common experiences which undoubtedly yield a more grounded, more incisive feminine implications and signifiers. In other words, there are common ties, which bind Buthayna and the Emirati poet together in relation to their feminine heritage, but they also have in common the shared history of subordination. Exploring the power of Buthayna as a symbol of female rebellion against patriarchal authority, Ghabesh, in a parallel process, probes a culture that seeks to mute her banishing her outside human history.

Engaging into dialogues with Buthayna, the Emirati poet is able to hear her voice, speak to her and the voice answers in return. The moment of epiphany in *Beman Ya Buthayn Taluthin?* is Ghabesh's realization that Arab women will inevitably be able to gain their freedom if they follow the example of Buthayna: refusing to become part of the historical ghetto – the harem mentality perpetuated by a patriarchal culture. In this context, Buthayna's voice becomes the voice of the oppressed women in the Arab world functioning as a trope, a refuge and creating a tone of familiarity and intimacy which gives Ghabesh the authority to link her own history with the ancient / feminist Andalusian tradition. Like Buthayna, Ghabesh's existential anguish is originated in the dialectics between her desire to be released from a patriarchal culture and her fear from the consequences of revolt against a tribal tradition which subjugates the female for a long time. Encouraged by Buthayna's treatment of her ordeal, Ghabesh questions the patriarchal / tribal assumptions which shaped

her life penetrating into the core of a tradition that seeks to banish the female subaltern outside the realm of humanity.

Intertextuality, Tradition and Trans-Cultural Literature

The use of the Andalusian heritage and mythology in Ghabesh's poetry brings to the forefront the issue of intertextuality as an aspect of a transcultural literature that transgresses linguistic and cultural boundaries and disciplinary barriers. Explicitly, the term intertextuality was introduced for the first time in 1929 by Mikhael Bakhtin, in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, which contains a collection of essays. The concept was developed in 1981 in Bakhtin's study *The Dialogic Imagination* where he argues that the functional text is a hybrid entity, not a single whole, it is a composite amalgamation of a variety of formulae (Bakhtin 1981: 76). Bakhtin's argument in *The Dialogic Imagination* advances the theory of intertextuality underlying the existence of a dialogue between the writer and early writers not just between texts as subsequent theorists such as Roland Barthes seemed to think. At the core of Bakhtin's theory lies an equation between a writer and other writers, a text and other texts in addition to a kind of human participation integral to the dialogues taking place between writers.

Historically, it is relevant to argue that T.S. Eliot was a precursor of the theory of intertextuality. As an advocate of allusiveness and intertextuality, Eliot, in "Tradition and Individual Talent", underlines the temporal relationship of one writer with other writers and of one text with others. Eliot argues that the literary heritage of nations forms an organic whole and no single poet is able to make a complete meaning alone because his / her genius is the result of other works: "the most individual parts of work may be those in which the dead poets, his [her] ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously" (Eliot 1972: 71). Therefore, poets should work within tradition described by Eliot in "The Function of Criticism" as paradigms or "systems in relation to which, individual works of individual artists have their significance" (Eliot 1972: 77).

From a theoretical perspective, intertextuality designates vast and undefined discursive spaces and it is a way to "dissipate the many ambiguities and errors such as those brought alone in the wake of the notion of influence" (Guillen 1993: 244). In the same context, Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein point out that in modern critical canons, the premise of influence contingent upon the author or authorial intentions and background is substituted by the concept of intertextuality (Clayton & Rothstein 1991: 3). In addition to the aforementioned argument, intertextuality is a two-sided issue and the intertextual

explication of a contemporary text with references to an old one should illuminate both texts because the knowledge of the old text supplements the understanding of its contemporary counterpart. Thus, prior knowledge of both texts is central for the reader in order to create analogies and to bring into focus parallel connections and common issues. Therefore, it is convenient to compare a text, for explicatory purposes, with other texts by the same author or other authors from the present or the past taking into consideration inherent affinities and intertextual comparabilities. On this basis, Jonathan Culler identifies intertextuality as a literary technique dealing with specific analogies and establishing linkages between texts:

Intertextuality is less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture. Study of intertextuality is not the investigation of sources and influences as traditionally conceived, it casts its net wider to include anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost, that make possible the signifying practice of later texts" (Culler 1981: 103).

In a related context, Roland Barthes identifies the literary text as network of "multiple writings" which come from a variety of sources and discourses already in circulation in some form or other. To him, the writer is a synthesizer who deliberately reworks and echoes other texts because "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture" (Barthes 1977: 146). Moreover, an intertextual study of two texts or more in terms of their allusive connections may not always lead to a full understanding. Thus, the domain of intertextuality extends beyond the limits of time, place, acquaintance, allusions and influence. The intertextual closeness between a text and another may be determined by their exploration of similar issues, projection of identical motifs, portrayal of similar characters, depiction of parallel situations and treatment of common problems. As expression of resembling themes, the texts, approached from an intertextual perspective, may be close or remote in time and place and the authors may or may not have alluded to or influenced by or even heard about each other. According to Paul Ricour,

each text is free to enter into relation with all the other texts which come to take the place of circumstantial reality referred to by living speech. This relation of text to text engenders the quasi-world of texts of literature (Ricour 1981: 149).

The Use of Andalusian Narratives as Intertext in *Beman Ya Buthayn Taluthin?*

Since texts resist simple clear-cut interpretations, Ghabesh's poetic discourse in *Beman Ya Buthayn Taluthin?* is revelation of intersections of motifs, narratives and myths integral to the Islamic literary tradition in Andulasia (ancient Spain). In her anthology, Ghabesh aesthetically transforms Andalusian history into a contemporary poetic construct

incorporating Andalusian literature as intertext to explore political and social issues of great significance. An intertextual reading of Ghabesh's poetry provides an entry into her appropriation of Andalusian cultural heritage as a vehicle to express the dilemma of contemporary Arab history. Reflecting a range of trans-textual relationships with Andalusian culture and highlighting significant thematic parallels which link the past with the present, Ghabesh creates a hybridized poetics deeply rooted in classical traditions. In her attempt to reshape Andalusian historical narratives into a revolutionary dynamics, the Emirati poet attempts to develop a counter feminized mechanism to subvert a decadent patriarchal culture which drags the Arab world backward toward the Stone Age. In her feminist poetry, Ghabesh attributes contemporary deterioration and recurrent defeats integral to modern Arab history to the same hegemonic system which gives birth to the Arab patriarchal tradition.

In Ghabesh's opening poem "Do not deny that I was sold out into slavery / La tunkiro anny sobeit", the poet evokes the themes of female subordination and sexual slavery linking the past with the present in a unique poetic structure. The title is explicitly quoted from Buthayna's poem to her father, the ex-king of Seville when she appeals to him to approve her marriage from a man who descends from European origin. The analogy between Buthayna's story and the argument of the female persona, in Ghabesh's aforementioned poem, reveals common concerns about women's freedom and human rights. The Emirati poet's incorporation of the Andalusian narrative functions as a cry of anger in the face of a repressive tradition and a submissive society which attempt to marginalize the female subaltern. In this context, the Andalusian legend is reshaped to serve as a call for reform and social change in the Arab world. Subsequently, Ghabesh's poem becomes a cry within a cry against a decadent culture which robs women of their innocence and little dreams. Using myths and symbols acquired from Andalusian history, the poet enhances the central features of the poem by incorporating imagery and metaphors of anxiety and sorrow:

Taken as a captive
as if I were part of a language²
inconceivable to the passersby
whose statutes are formed
by the flames of an arid fire
and a storm dying on our distress
taken as a captive
as if I were a fading night
approaching sunrise but
my appearance is denied

² Historically there are controversial arguments which consider the Arabic language as anti-feminist and masculine.

by the rising morning
forcing me to regress into my cloak
scolding me:

“this morning is not for you” (Ghabesh 2002: 14).

Utilizing a complex pattern of legends and symbols borrowed from Andalusian history, Ghabesh expresses her vision of female enslavement and displacement through allusive references which enrich the thematic range of the poem. The recurring references to aridity, death, distress, captivity and enslavement motifs in addition to themes of denial and regression underline the extreme pain and suffering inflicted on women in repressive societies :

Here I buried the tears
of my patience dispersing
the leaves of promises
that scorn my fidelity
I was gradually turned into
an ice statute, colonized
by the frost of my naïve expectations (14).

The female persona in the above-cited lines describes an experience of great agony in which the female body is colonized by a masculine structure and her humanity is violated by a patriarchal tradition until she is transformed into a statute of ice. In a poem comprising allusions and references to Andalusian narratives of oppression and revolt and standing as a testimony of contemporary patriarchal hegemony, the poet transforms history into a feminist construct interrelated with other tales of female persecution:

The Andalusian nights are making a confession
but there is no one to hear
all the maids and servants are gone
departing the kingdom of al-Mutamed
accompanying him to his Moroccan exile
surrounding his defeated throne
setting it in order
and filling his Diaspora palace
with wounded songs which
turn into tears in Buthayna's eyes (15)

Engaging themes of defeat, exile and exodus, the poet apparently points out that the Arab rulers did not draw moral lessons from their ancient history in Spain or elsewhere : " the Andalusian nights are making a confession / but there is no one to hear". The fall of the Muslim dynasty in Andalusia, accelerated by Arab-Arab wars and conspiracies, is considered as a turning point in Arabo-Islamic history. Therefore, the explicit references to “the Andalusian nights”, the “defeated throne”, the “Diaspora palace” and “the wounded songs” not only recall the collapse of the Muslim empire in Andalusia but also hint at further

losses at present : ‘All hearts turn into wooden soldiers /safeguarding the palace of al-Mutamed / the Andalusian nights make a confession / in languages written with hybrid letters /and glorified by the advocates of treason’ (15).

Evoking the loss of Andalusia and the exodus of the Arabs from Spain in the fifteenth century , the Emirati poet predicts the emergence of more catastrophes at present as long as the Arab region is dominated by a repressive / patriarchal tradition which ignores the female subaltern traditionally considered as a second class citizen . Using images of humiliation and defeat as a metaphoric equivalence of contemporary Arab history, the poet links the tragic consequences of female oppression and subordination in the Arab world with other aspects of backwardness and defeat on the political paradigm. For example , the recurrent allusions to the political corruption associated with the Arab kingdoms in Andalusia bring to the forefront the dictatorial / oppressive policies advocated by contemporary Arab regimes. While the Arab-Arab conflicts in ancient Spain brought about the fall of the Arab dynasties in Andalusia , contemporary Arab policies of oppression and the rising dictatorial regimes , in the era of post-colonization, were responsible for Arab defeats and the loss of Palestinian territories. Apparently, Ghabesh incorporates Andalusian history to invoke new assumptions using a poetic language which cuts across myth and history.

Nevertheless, the strength of her poetry lies in the way in which she manages to push aside unnecessary details removing the arbitrary and the accidental. Confronted by a society battered by humiliation and defeats and a culture mutilated by patriarchal constructs, she attempts to restore a world out of ruins. Castigating a world at odds with the modern concepts of equality, freedom and democracy, the poet wants the current way of life radically charged, if not completely destroyed. This process of destruction of male-oriented traditions which marginalize the female subaltern involves the use of poetry as a weapon of resistance, a premise which dominates the poetic text of Ghabesh’s anthology. In this context, the Emirati poet emerges as a politico-feminist poet whose textual polemic, outlined in the paper, is an analogy of her creative appropriation of Andalusian history. Unlike parasitic appropriations, performed by other poets, her literary project offers insights into the present and the future of a feminist poetics in UAE, the Gulf region and the Arab world.

Incorporating Andalusian heritage, Ghabesh takes the title of her poem “What you Might do my Father / Fa-asak ya Abati” from Buthayna’s verses of appeal to her father in which she begs him to bless her marriage to the man she loves. In the poem, Ghabesh’s female persona, twice marginalized on account of her sex and her social status, grapples with concepts and constructs implicated in the patriarchal and hegemonic power relations

denouncing a tradition which seeks to mute her in the era of gender and race consciousness. Confronting hegemonic structures which attempt to isolate Arab women by assigning them conventional feminine traits such as silence and weakness, she purports to explore the limitations and dangers of a reactionary culture which aims to obliterate the female identity. Identifying herself with Buthayna, the Emirati poet (or her female persona) says :

The tears of Buthayna recognized me
when I entered the door
the tears reveal the secrets of my silence
like Buthayna I am scared
of the well-dressed people
who set the trap for me
I am scared of the necklace of illusion
you put around my neck
scared of the sudden interest in me
when you gave me as a gift
to a very old man
whose body is ploughed
by coldness and frost
Father, I thought you have known me ! (17)

Obviously 'the tears of Buthayna' and the persona in the poem become the tears of all oppressed women in societies which obliterate female identities. The references to the female persona's fear of 'the necklace of illusion' and the indications implied in 'the sudden interest in me' are testimonies of a marriage bargain in which the father accepts to give his young daughter 'as a gift / to a very old man / whose body is ploughed / by coldness and frost'. Lamenting the unjust treatment of girls in conservative Arab communities, the poet castigates conventional marriage traditions which totally ignore the female. Describing marriage as a kind of trap and denouncing a society which forces girls to marry against their will giving them as gifts to old men or sacrificing them as scapegoats on the altar of a decadent tradition, Ghabesh contrasts the tale of female oppression in the Arab world with the narrative of resistance and revolt embedded in Buthayna's story.

After her address to her father, in the aforementioned poem, Ghabesh "or her persona" engages herself into a one-sided dialogue with Buthayna: "I thought he knows me, Buthayna / like the birds which know you / when you walk on the Andalusian coast" (18). Apparently, a juxtaposition is established between the tolerant behavior of Buthayna's father³, in the Andalusian myth and the patriarchal / hegemonic attitude of contemporary Arab parents toward their daughters who are forced to marry against their will:

³ While the poet appreciates al-Mutamned's treatment of his daughter's marriage issue, she criticizes his policies which participate in the fall of his kingdom in Andalusia.

You lost your father, Buthayna
and he lost you, the notebook
which he reads to the city
you are the best word in his alphabet
until your features are lost in alien contexts
the pulpits of Seville are waiting anxiously
for the return of al-Mutamed
who may mention your name
in the coming sermon (19)

As a carrier of a repressive tradition and a symbol of rebellion against patriarchal hegemonic structures, Buthayna is resurrected from the past in order to enable the Emirati poet to probe contemporary female predicaments: “but he is unaware / that you were sold in auction / he does not know that you throw / your name inside the furnace of fear / He is still unaware that the girl has no genealogy (20).

In the preceding lines the ‘he’ apparently refers to a contemporary father figure haunted by a patriarchal / tribal tradition that aims to crush the soul and the body of the female. Here, the voice of Buthayna and that of Ghabesh (or her persona) merge together constructing a cry of anger against the subordination of their biological and literary femininity by hegemonic cultures.⁴ Since Buthayna’s story reproduces the same patriarchal hegemony that Ghabesh denounces in her poetry, the latter’s narrative of victimization becomes an extension of the former’s in a ritualistic manner reminiscent of Shehrazade’s stories in *A Thousand Nights and One Night*. Therefore, the space created by the coordinates of the textual relationship between Buthayna and Ghabesh, identified and analyzed above, provides more insight into Ghabesh’s exploration of the dynamic relation between self and other. This view is contingent upon the Emirati poet’s entanglement with the Islamic history in Andalusia within the praxis of Buthayna’s narrative.

Conclusion

The feminist French critic, H  l  n Cixous⁵ underlines the role of language and feminine writing as constructs for subverting patriarchal structures of domination in the areas of language, politics and society. In her feminist / critical studies, she attempts to introduce alternative discourses to patriarchal logo-centrism which reduces women to positions of subordination. Like Cixous, Ghabesh, through her poetry, attempts to dismantle an apparatus

⁴ It is relevant to argue that the term “feminine” in Ghabesh’s anthology does not always imply a biological determinism but it transcends it.

⁵ For further details see Helen Cixous . *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* , ed. Deborah Jenson , tr. Sarah Cornell, Debora Jenson , Anne Liddle, Susan Sellers. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1991.

of suppression rooted in patriarchal ideologies which aim to mute the female subaltern by assigning her a status of inferiority. In an attempt to undermine cultural and ideological hegemonies which seek to marginalize Arab women, the Emirati poet promulgates a feminine poetics perpetuating Andalusian heritage and subverting significant elements of local religious and cultural history.

In “Prior to the Final Fall / Qabl al-suqut al-Akhir”, Ghabesh refers to her encounter with a man in the evening: “the evening will be under my disposal / and the meeting at the edge of fear is mine / I am another Buthayna / perfume springs from me / as well as love and Diaspora / at a time when the tribe gives up trembling / the river can never abandon a chaste body” (56). The references to anti-feminist tribal mentality, rooted in Arabic traditions, and the association of the poet with Buthayna underline a history of female oppression which extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf. Like Buthayna, the Emirati poet, through her female personas, expresses agony and fear as a result of being involved in a new experience in a patriarchal society: “I am scared of the captivity of my soul / I took the initiative of coming to his prison / on the doorstep I left my crown / I entered his house as a servant / trembling out of coldness / after my confession he liberated me / then he orders me / to recite his song” (58). The fearful experience of the Emirati poet’s persona and the allusions to prisons and captivity of the soul are indications of major social problems encountering women in the contemporary Arab society which forces them to surrender to an oppressive masculine tradition: ‘he orders me / to recite his song’. Living in an internal diaspora, the poet laments life in an alienated society where “stories are broken” and her hands are bleeding “in exile”. Witnessing “the fading lights of the candles / before the final fall” (67), the female subaltern has no option except to “set her tent in order / closing the door and remain there / waiting for the season of departure” (59).

In *A Map of Misreading*, Harold Bloom considers the attempt to evade earlier writing, produced by an author’s predecessors, as a basic motivation in literary production. In this context, Bloom illustrates that in order “to live, the poet must misinterpret the father by the crucial act of misprision, which is the rewriting of the father” (Bloom 1975: 19). In *Beman Ya Buthayn Taluthin?* Ghabesh, unlike male poets who reconstruct the texts of their forebears in order to dismantle them, rewrites her female predecessor integrating her poetic narrative into the contemporary literary canon. Ignoring Bloom’s call for contemporary poets to “differentiate themselves into strength by trooping or turning from the presence of other poets” (Bloom 1975: 80), Ghabesh reveals no sign of anxiety, toward her Andalusian forebear violating Bloom’s paradigm of literary influence. In addition to her adaptation of

the Andalusian narrative to explore contemporary socio-political issues, the Emirati poet does not perform a textual dismemberment of Buthayna, her female Andalusian predecessor, but she allows her to recur in the new contextual corpus.

In other words, Ghabesh, in *Beman Ya_Buthayn Taluthin?* does not imply a privileged position for her own poetic discourse simply because Buthayna, the Andalusian princess or the dead narrator, reads Ghabesh as much as Ghabesh reads her. Apparently, the major inspiration and the guiding light which come to the Emirati poet from the history of Andalusia in general and from the story of Butayna in particular form a poetic structure for her anthology linking the fall of Seville and Grenada with contemporary collapses and catastrophes on different fronts in the Arab world. Ghabesh, in her anthology, explicitly associates the loss of Arab glory in ancient Spain and in contemporary history to the domination of decadent patriarchal traditions which subjugate Arab women. Struggling to save an entire history from oblivion, Ghabesh resurrects Andalusian myth linking the miserable end of al-Mutamned, king of Seville, with the potential destiny of contemporary Arab rulers engaged in Arab-Arab conflicts and guided by a masculine mentality which breeds policies of oppression leading to recurrent defeats. In other words, Ghabesh courageously interrupts contemporary patriarchal practices which confiscate female freedom disseminating her attitudes toward current issues of great importance in the social and political arenas.

Due to her enthusiasm for Andalusian history, Ghabesh's poetry borders on exploiting or colonizing Buthayna's narrative to fulfill ideological purposes. In this sense, Ghabesh's modern alternative discourse becomes a story within a story and a new text is created and perpetuated as the Emirati poet deploys her feminist vision using another woman's narrative. Through her engagement with Buthayna's legend, a woman's voice come to the Emirati poet from remote destination giving her poetry renewed vigor and sparking in the readers an interest in Andalusian history. Entering the text of the Emirati poet in several guises, Buthayna and her story are transformed into significant indicators and signifiers at the disposal of Ghabesh's poetic neologism and creativity. Functioning ultimately as a guarantee of Ghabesh's own voice, the story of Buthayna is reproduced in intellectual and political terms to deal with local and contemporary matters. Thus, Ghabesh's experience of reading Andalusian literature becomes 'a catalyst', to use T.S. Eliot's term, prompting the Emirati poet to compose her own anthology in all its revolutionary and feminist implications and in its provocative and subversive treatment of a male-oriented tradition. In order to awaken the Arab people from "the long sleep of history", to use the words of Ali Ahmad Said (Adonis),

she created an anguished portrayal of a nation on the verge of catastrophe. In this context, *Beman Ya Buthayn Taluthin?* becomes an appeal or a call for social and political reform in an era of desolation and collapse.

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