

The Evolution of the Aesthetic Vision in Kabbani's Poetic Discourse

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ABSTRACT

If poetry is the verbal art of beauty, and *beauty is truth*, then, poetry has its own truth which is universal by nature since the poetic patterns embody a particular vision of the universe. This universal truth is encoded in poetic image. The poet who creatively used the poetic image to express his aesthetic vision is Nizar Kabbani (1923- 1998). The study aims at exploring the development of the notion of beauty as structured in the modern Arab poetic works. It aims at investigating Kabbani's poetic imagery in its amorous-erotic aspects. The study proceeds with the hypothesis that the modern love poet's synesthetic imagery is an impressive representation of Kant's *aesthetic axioms* as encoded in his *Critique of the Aesthetic Judgment*. The scope of the inquiry focuses upon the love lyrics and songs of the modern Arabic love poet regardless his political writings. Kabbani's poetics is investigated in terms of *Aesthetic Cultural Approach (ACA)*, a critical orientation that links the cultural patterns of meaning to the aesthetic structures of the poem. Of the seminal findings of the study is that Kabbani's love poems are pleasurable moments in which the body of the beloved becomes the source of the poet's ecstasy and joyfulness.

INTRODUCTION

The study purports to investigate the evolution of the aesthetic vision in the poetic works of Nizar Kabbani (1923- 1998). In defense of beauty, Kabbani composed a big bulk of poems which stress the immortality of beauty in poetry. So the study aims at exploring the poetic image by and through which Kabbani expresses his aesthetic, cultural and spiritual experience. The poetic image, in this sense, is an expressive and impressive power in modern poetic discourse and not an embellishment or extra beauty as the classical poets, critics and rhetoricians assume to be. The study aims at investigating Kabbani's poetic imagery in its amorous-erotic aspects. It proceeds with the hypothesis that Kabbani's synesthetic imagery is an impressive representation of Kant's *aesthetic axioms* as structured in his *Critique of the Aesthetic Judgment*. The range of the inquiry focuses upon the love lyrics and songs of the modern Arabic love poet regardless his political writings. Kabbani's poetics is investigated in terms of *Aesthetic Cultural Approach (ACA)*, a critical orientation that links the cultural patterns of meaning to the aesthetic structures of the poem.

In the history of ideas, modern Arabic poetics has witnessed dramatic changes in visions, techniques and worldviews. This is so, not because of cross-cultural factors only,

but also because of the socio-political changes after the Second World War, in addition to the dramatic changes in the socio – cultural sensibility. The Arab Avant-grade poets mostly broke ways from the rigidness of the conventional patterns whether in form or worldview, looking for more freedom on the level of verification, imagery and concept. Modern verse simply means life in words; the verse that penetrates the complexity of human nature, manifests the cares and joys of man, and denotes the vicissitudes of world situations. It is the task of the poet to portray the discordant rhythm of the age. This true to the poetry of all human nations and the modern Arabic verse is not exception (Al-Sheikh, 2012:4- 12).

A close reading of the Arabic verse in its par excellent modes reveals two patterns of poetic thinking, i.e. the intuitional and the intellectual. Influenced partially by western aestheticians like Kant, Croce' and the romantic axioms and symbolic visions, the intuitional trend in modern Arab poetry tends to be lyrical in tone, spontaneous in imagery and simple in structure. The trend in a way brings verse to the brink of everyday ordinary language. The most revealing exponent of this transparent poetic vein with its crystalized imagery is Kabbani. Kabbani is the modern love poet whose experience is wholly aesthetic. Aesthetics may have two senses- either the distortion of the norms of the standard

language, or the image (physical or cognitive) that creates a universal ecstasy in one's psyche. The intellectual mode, on the other hand, is the one which is philosophical in thinking, oblique in imagery, and complex in semantic- syntactic kernels. The amalgam of Arabic- Islamic sophism and the western rational philosophy are evidently realized in such poetics. Adunis (b. 1929), the Syrian Arabic poet, is the most significant representative of this intellectual trend in modern Arabic verse (ibid).

In addition to these two seminal trends, the modern Arabic verse witnessed the blooming of the *prose poem*. The *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (1974:664-666) elaborates on the stylistic nature of term by marinating that prose poem is "a composition able to have any or all features of the lyric, except that it is put on the page- though not conceived of- as prose." Compared to other poetic and prose forms the prose poem differs from poetic prose in that it is short and compact, from free verse in that it has no line breaks, from a short prose passage in that it has, usually, more pronounced rhythm, sonorous effects, imagery, and density of expression. It may contain even inner rhyme and metrical runs. The exponents of the prose poem in modern Arabic verses are Unsi Al- Haj and Muhamad Al-Maghut. Between the intuitional and intellectual poles of poetic experimentation lies a set of poetic mainstream activities, of which is that of Mahmud Darwish. Viewed from the lyrical standpoint, lyricism is still the salient stylistic feature of modern Arabic verse. Moreover, the poetic worldview becomes more preoccupied with mankind. Man in his ecstasy and melancholy becomes the central vision of the poetic experience. The modern verse, being an odyssey of cultural signs, is charged with perplexities that shake the reader's awareness. Of these perplexities are the cross-cultural patterns and the ontological allusions that modern poets have recourse to to express their ideas, feelings and aspirations.

This brief excursion may lead to decide that the modern poet is not the uttered instrument of the divine inspiration; s/he is the cultural identity that formulates the human situation by and through poetic creation. Creativity, hence, is the most significant feature of the poet's craftsmanship. Though these modern experimentations are important in the development of the modern Arabic verse, the study will scrutinize Kabbani's poetics in terms of aesthetic theory, more specifically Kant's perspectives as encoded in his *Critique of Pure Mind* and Croce' in his *Aesthetics*. The so-called Aesthetic- Cultural Approach (ACA) is a critical orientation that links the cultural patterns of meaning to the aesthetic structures of the poem. One aspect to be stressed before going a step further in the aesthetic cultural analysis is that the theoretic grid may go alongside with the critical interpretation, a process may add cohesion to the texture of the text. So far translation is concerned; the Kabbani's poems and prose texts are mostly translated by Al-Sheikh.

Kabbani in His Vision: A Critical – Aesthetic Approach

It is well to start with the concept that Nizar Kabbani (1923-1998), is an aesthetic poet, in the sense that he stresses the axiom of *beauty* in all his poetic works and critical perspectives. In his treatise, *My Story with Poetry* (1970:246), the

modern Arab poet admits that *the only case he still pleads is Beauty*. Art is the human activity which craves for creating and appreciating beauty. With Kabbani a new aesthetic – cultural sensibility was born. With the publication of *The Brunette Said to Me*, his first poetic volume in 1944, the spell of the feminine body has been broken, and the territory of the feminine physicality has been transgressed. The liberation of the body from the traditional constraints of community and religion has become the slogan of the new revolution of thought clearly realized in Kabbani's poetics. The new poetics is presumably based on three dimensions: the lyrical intuition, the erotic beauty, and the art of simplicity (Al-Sheikh, 2012: 25-53). Intuition may refer to the immediate awareness of the subject of aesthetic judgment; it is the underlying system of our prior knowledge. In his preface to *Childhood of a Breast* (1948) Nizar is on the assumption that art, in general, and poetry, in particular, is a purely lyrical intuition. Though not philosophical in trend, Kabbani has called his method in writing poetry *the philosophy of spontaneous singing*. That intuitionism is not without relevance to the philosophical though as found in Kant and Croce'. For Kant, there are two faculties that lead to understanding: intuitions and concepts. Intuitions are representations in an individual's mind left by sense perceptions. Intuition takes place only in so far as the object is given to us. The capacity (receptivity) for receiving representations through the mode in which we are affected by objects is entitled *sensibility* (Bantas, 2011). For Kant, intuitions are representations in our minds left by the evidence of the senses. Intuitions come in two forms: they are either pure (*a priori*) or empirical. Empirical intuitions coincide with the human senses and they are color, sound, taste, smell, and feeling. Pure intuitions are time and space and they are *a priori* in that they are logically independent of experience, but are informative in that they give us knowledge of our environment. Croce' in his *Aesthetics* speculates than poetry must be called neither feeling, nor image, nor yet the two, but contemplation of feeling or [lyrical intuition] which is the same thing [pure intuition] - pure, that is of all historical and critical reference to the reality or unreality of the image of which it is woven and apprehending the pure of life in its identity)file://A/Notebook.htm).

In theory, Kabbani's *Preface* has become the poetic manifesto based on Croce's philosophical paradigm. The modern Arab bard argues that poetry is but *the fair electricity that does not last long, by and through which the Psyche, with all its elements of emotion, imagination, memory, and instinct, is wholly overwhelmed with music. Then, when the poetic moment gets the melodic feather; so be it poetry. In brief, poetry is the tuned Psyche* (*Childhood of a Breast*, 1948). Poetically, the modern love poet asserts the merits of spontaneity, sensation and imagination in poetic creation, more specifically, the creation of womanly beauty. So, in *A Leaf for the Reader*, the first poem of his first volume, *The Brunette Said to Me* (1944), the poetic addresser outcries:

جمالک منی.. فلولاي لم تک
شبیئاً.. ولولاي لن توجدا
ولولاي ما انفتحت وردة
ولا فقع الثدي أو عربدا

Your beauty is of me. Without me
 You are nothing. Without me you never exist,
 And without me neither a rose blossoms
 Nor swells or revels a breast (p.28).

The poetic creation in the Nizarian experiment treads the path of *Synesthesia* or the cross-sensory metaphor where two or more senses are stimulated to penetrate the degree of feeling. Synesthesia is the prerogative of the metaphorical language, the language which witnesses meaning transfer on the syntactic- semantic level. In *Her Olive Eyes* the poem reads:

شباكي الصغير. يفضي إلى
 فسقية. يفضي إلى المشرق
 إلى نوافير رمادية
 تبكي بصوت أزرق.. أزرق.
 My small window goes to
 A fountain, to the East,
 To grey fountains
 Weeping in a blue, blue voice (ibid.)

Let us consider the mixture of colors and sounds in the metaphorical phrases, *grey fountains* and *blue voice*. Moreover, let us consider the repetition of the color epithet, *blue*, which serves to overdo the tone of melancholy. It is noteworthy to point out that Kabbani's poetics is marked with the simplicity of linguistic structures. In his, *Maritime Poem*, the image is about a blue-eyed lady:

في مرفأ عينيك الأزرق
 شباك بحري مفتوح
 وطيور في الأبعاد تلوح
 تبحث عن جزر لم تُخلق.
 In the harbor of your eyes
 Is an open window,
 And birds appear in the distance
 Searching for islands still unborn (Jayyusi et al, 1995:8-9).

In the Nizarian quatrain, the predominant syntactic pattern is the nominal group. The compound sentence construes two independent clauses. The first clause consists of two nominal groups, *the harbor of your eyes* and *an open window*, while the second clause implies *the distance*. These dominant nominal groups in the four lines of verse may serve to show the transparency of the blue color and the wideness of the feminine eyes. The physical motif (the lady's blue eyes), as one aspect of beauty, conjures all that powerful flow of imagery. It is crucial to point out here that the poet's phraseology is but one extended metaphorical mode of expressivity. The language of the poet violates the norms of the standard language. This aesthetic violation is one of the revealing characteristics of Kabbani's poetic creation.

Taken as one whole unit of meaning, the most revealing characteristic of Kabbani's *Maritime Poem* is color, more specifically is the *blue*. The prepositional phrase *in the blue harbor of your eyes* is repeated six times; it becomes the salient stylistic feature and the refrain of the whole poetic discourse. Most importantly is the *blue* as a *value of perception* which is fundamentally *aesthetic*. Therefore, as Santyana (2007:47) has put, we expect to find beauty derived mainly from the pleasures of sight. And, in fact, form, which is al-

most a synonym of beauty, is for us usually something visible: it is a synthesis of the seen." The blue, being a source of beauty, is central to that visibility, but this is not the whole story. Seeing wide blue eyes gives the poet the free consciousness to fly to the realm of poetic creativity on the golden wings of imagination. In other phraseology, "in the contemplation of beauty we are raised above ourselves, the passions are silenced and we are happy in the recognition aesthetic object" (ibid); the aesthetic object (i.e. the blue eyes) is the powerful motive to create a sequence of stretches of synesthetic metaphors. The absolute ecstasy results in a set of foregrounded images, so:

في مرفأ عينيك الأزرق
 يتساقط ثلج في تموز
 و مراكب حبلى بالفيروز
 أغرقت البحر ولم تغرق
 In the harbor of your eyes
 Snow falls in July,
 Ships laden with turquoise
 Spill over the sea and are not drowned (ibid).

So far the language of the poetic text is concerned; the formal constituents are simple in construction. We are rarely encountered with complex sentences. The diction the poet uses is that of ordinary life. The simplicity of the poetic structures is linked to the poet's viewpoint of language itself. The bard describes poetry as *dancing with language*. He believes that *the art of clarity* is meant to *get the meaning out of its deep well and make it common on earth*. The simplicity of the Nizarian poetic style is due to his art of construction. By and through the art of simplicity the poet has proven that he is the master of words and the best maker of poetic image. Syntactically, Kabbani's poetic language construes a big bulk of simple and compound sentence structures, with diction taken from every day linguistic treasury. The imagery is mostly transparent, with no complexity in word-formation. From a purely aesthetic standpoint, the physical organ (the woman's eyes) is a source of pleasure which inspires all these powerful images. In Santyana's words (2007: 25-6) aesthetic pleasures have physical conditions, they depend on the activity of the eye or the ear, of the memory and the other ideational functions of the brain." He goes on to say that "the pleasures we call physical. are those which call our attention to some part of our own body, and which make no conspicuous to us as the organ in which they arise" (ibid). But here is a point, this aesthetic revelry in the physicality of the body does not bring merely mean sexual pleasure; "the soul is glad, as it were, to forget its connection with the body and to fancy that it can travel over the world with the liberty which it changes the object of its thought" (p.26).

Throughout his poetic creation, Kabbani introduces the amorous-erotic imagery. The *language of the body* is aesthetic in proper. The feminine body becomes the source of earthly pleasures In *Cashmere Down*, the speaker appeals to the bodily treasures:

عارية أنت. كنصل السيف..
 ونهدك يحملني. ويطير..
 وأنا أقلب فوق الريش..
 وأغرق في وبر الكشمير..

Your body's naked as a sword blade
And your breasts set me afire
So that I fly to marvelous heights
Of fancy and desire (ibid: 35-6).

The Nizarian erotic verses celebrate the *breast* as the most glorified feminine element. It is given various descriptive images. So, the mistress's breasts in *Your Breasts*, in his *The Brunette Said to Me* (p.69) are *two springs of red pleasure, two beautiful paintings on the wall of the studio and two balls of north snow*. Not only the breasts, the nipple and the bra are described in a *picturesque, exotic and luxurious style*. In less degree, the womanly legs are aesthetically imaged. So, in *to a she-Recliner* (p.143) we read:

ويقال عن ساقيك إنهما
في العري. مزرعتان من للفل
ويقال: أشرطة الحرير هُما
ويقال: أنبوبان من طُل
ويقال: شلالان من ذهب
في جورب كالصبح مبتل
And it is said that your legs
In nakedness are two farms of jasmine,
And it is said they are silk ribbons,
And it is said they two tubes of dew,
And it is said they are two gold waterfalls
In stockings as the wet morning.

The portraiture of the feminine form is essentially aesthetic; it is still *painting in words* arousing, however, the aesthetic sensation rather than the physical lust. The poetic experience is fundamentally modern. It breaks away from the traditional poetic images of feminine beauty which are mostly erected on analogy between the beloved and the gazelle, for instance, or the feminine cheeks and teeth to the roses and lilies. This unique experience is encoded into a language which is seminally new. The character's acts of speech and behaviors unravel his/her modernity. Here, poetry encodes the rhythm of modern life. If we view the term *culture* as that complex network system of beliefs, behaviors and pattern of cognitive thinking, then the speaker expresses modern worldviews. Culturally, Kabbani has exploited the *Arabian nights*, not as merely corpus of fairy tales, but as cultural particles to express modern human situations. In *Shahryiar's Tears*, in his volume *Painting in Words* (1966), the poet delineates the topic of boredom in modern times:

لا أحد يفهمني..
لا أحد يفهم مأساة شهريار
حين يصير الجنس في حياتنا
نوعاً من الفرار..
Nobody understands me,
Nobody understands the Shahryiar's tragedy
When sex becomes in our lives
A kind of flight.

Viewing the feminine body in such aesthetic ideology is in reality a way of thinking realized organically in verse. Hence, poetry is *culture in imagery*. An interpretation as such may form the core of our thinking and our approach. Kabbani's aesthetic – cultural experience is different from that of, say, Imru'u L-qays, the pre-Islamic poet. Kabbani does not copy the classical aesthetic awareness of the Arab verse; he is very far from Arabic classical model and modeling. The

variations in the aesthetic-cultural experience fundamentally result in various metaphorical modes of expression. While Imru'u L-qays describes the beloved's hair as *cropped bunch of dates* (كفتو النخلة المتعكل), Kabbani images it as a *water fall of black light* (شلال ضوء أسود). Most importantly, the experience of the sexual temptation is basically different. In Imru'u L-qays' Mu'alakat (The suspended Poem), the setting is as follows:

فجئت وقد نضت للنوم ثيابها
لدى الستر الاليسة المتفضل
فقالتم يمين الله ما لك حيلة
وما أن أرى عنك الغواية تنجلي
خرجت بها أمشي تجر وراءنا
على أثرنا ذيل مرطٍ مُرحل
فلما أجزنا ساحة الحي و انتحي
بنا بطن خبت ذي حفافٍ عتقل
حصرت بفودي رأسها فتمايلت
على هضيم الكشح ربا المخلخل.

I entered. By the curtain there stood she,
Clad lightly as for sleep, and looked on me.
'By God, she cried, 'What recks thee of the cost?
I see thine ancient madness is not lost.'
I led her forth- she trailing as we go
Her brodered skirt, lest any footprint show-
Until beyond the tents the valley sank
With curving dunes and many a piled bank
Then with both hands I drew her head to mine
And lovingly the damsel did incline (Nicholson, pp.105-6).
However, the setting in Kabbani's *With a Woman* (pp. 169-173) is urban. The she-seducer is erotically modern in her night gown, perfumes and accessories:

وساقها من عتمة
الغطاء. أفعى تشرد
وجسمها تحت اللهب
مرعب. مُورد
والعقد فوق ناهديها
سابع. مُغرد
وفي صميمي غيمة
تيكي. وتلج أسود.
And her leg underneath the darkness
Of the cover is a run-away serpent,
And her body underneath the flame
Is awesome] and]rosy,
And the necklace on her breasts
Is swimming and singing
And in my innermost weeps
A cloud and black snow.

What is characteristic about the poem is the set of sequential strings of images which build up the imaginative world of reality. It is of interest here is to refer to the *serpent* in divine cultures; it may refer to the lust and sin; in other cultures to cure and good health. The repetition of the syntactic tie *and* throughout the lines may add the rhetoric of cohesion to the texture of the poetic discourse. Kabbani is the poet the modern world; he is the poet of the new cultural vision. An overall view of the semantic field of his poetics shows that his diction is mostly derived from the modern world. So, it is no surprise to find out words and phrases which refer to the things of beauty in the female universe

such as, *Christian Dior, lipstick, manicure*, and so on. With Kabbani we experience that sort of life style:

كان في صدرك حقلان من القطن..
وكان البرنس الأحمر مفتوحاً من النصف..
وجرحي كان مفتوحاً من النصف..
وكان المرمر الأخضر في الحمام..
مذبوحاً من الشوق..

In your breast there were two fields of cotton
And the red burnoose was half-open
And my wound was half-open
And the green marble was slain
Of desire (The Outlaw Poems, 1972 87 – 92)

The Nizarian poetic images, as the extracts clearly show, carry neither ideological nor ethical realizations. In the arts, as Mukarovsky (1970: 40-56) has put it, *aesthetic valuation necessarily stands highest in the hierarchy of values contained in the work, whereas outside of art its position vacillates and usually subordinate*. With Muakrovsky's functional aesthetic paradigm, we are within the boundaries of Aestheticism where *the standard language is the background against which is reflected the esthetically intentional distortion of the linguistic components of the work, in other words, the intentional violation of the norm of the standard* (ibid: 42). Theoretically, while *Aestheticism* is the linguistic discipline which deals with the parameters underlying the *intentional violation of the norm of the standard*, Aesthetics is that *branch of philosophy that explores the nature of art, beauty and taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty* (Wikipedia, 1). Here, modern linguistics comes closer to philosophy of beauty.

Taking Kabbani's songs and lyrics as verbal works of imagination, we discern that the poems are portrayed as pleasurable moments; they are verbal images of beauty. In his poems, the modern love poet rejoices the woman's body as an object of Beauty. In return, the image has become the aesthetic-cultural correlative to the finite object. That rejoice or ecstasy is structured in picturesque, gorgeous style which is infinite in proper. Beauty, in other words, is celebrated in verses which are everlasting. In Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1799), *the aesthetic judgment is free or pure of any such interests* (file/A/Kant%20Immanuel%20Aesthetics%20Internet%20Encyclopeida%20. From the Kantian perspectives, *'the judgment of taste is aesthetic,'* so in Kant's words (cited in Greene, 1957:75) *in order to decide whether anything is beautiful or not, we refer the representation, not by the Understanding to the Object for cognition but, the Imagination (perhaps in conjunction with the Understanding) to the subject, and its feeling of pleasure or pain*. The representations of beautiful objects such as *rose, sunset, and nightingale* are fundamentally aesthetic. They might have symbolic or psychological shades in the literary text(s) but still the value of these signs is organically aesthetic. Here, Kant confirms the priority of *imagination to reason* in aesthetic judgment. Kant, in more than one stance, stresses the *disinterestedness* of aesthetic judgment, so *the satisfaction which determines the judgment of Taste is disinterested* (p. 76), but what are really *Taste and Beauty*?

To Kant, taste is *the faculty of judging an object or a method of representing it by an entirely disinterested satis-*

faction or dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called beautiful (p. 82). Now, we are in position to delineate the notion of *the beautiful* in the Kantian paradigm; *the beautiful is that which pleases universally, without a concept* (p.392). The explanation of *the beautiful* can be derived from the preceding explanation of it as the object of an entirely disinterested satisfaction (p. 82). In Kant, the objectivity of satisfaction does not oblique the sense of subjectivity. Hence, *a universality which does not rest on concepts of Objects (not even on empirical ones) is not logical but aesthetical, i.e. it involves no objective quantity of the judgment but only that which is subjective* (p. 384). It is worth noting that the term *criticism* is related to the central term of Kant's monograph, i.e. *aesthetics*. Santyana, in his *The sense of Beauty* (2007:13) makes distinction between two terms. Many writers of the last century called the philosophy of beauty *Criticism*, and the word is still retained as the title of reasoned appreciation the work of art. So if criticism is too narrow a word pointing exclusively to our more artificial judgment, aesthetics seems to be too broad and to include within its sphere all pleasures and pains, If not all perceptions whatsoever (ibid). However, if combine the two terms, we shall combine two essential qualities of the theory of beauty. Criticism implies judgment and aesthetics perception (pp.13-14). On the whole, aesthetics is mainly concerned with perception of values (ibid)

Let us return to Kabbani's poetics. Being objects of pleasure, the Nizarian poetic images imply the sense of universality. What gives the images their universality is that they carry their own aesthetic value. The sense of Beauty has gained priority in Kabbani's aesthetic and spiritual experience. The other milestone of the Kantian philosophy is the principle of *purposiveness*. The German philosopher argues that *beauty is equivalent neither to utility nor perfection, but is still purposive* (ibid). He concedes to say that *Beauty in nature will appear as purposive with respect to our faculty of judgment, but its beauty will have no ascertainable purpose* (ibid). This is *why beauty is pleasurable since pleasure is defined as a feeling that arises on the achievement of a purpose or at least, the recognition of purposiveness* (ibid.). In Kabbani's poetics, the images are portrayed to serve nothing but the ends of their own, i.e. *the beauty of the beautiful*. The modern Arab poet builds up the imaginative world by a series of aesthetic and synaesthetic images. The priori principle of our taste, according to Kant, is *the necessity of judgment which is grounded upon common sense* (ibid.). The Arab bard's feelings for the beautiful are fundamentally illustrated in his poems. His responses are basically sensual and not cognitive; they are inherited in his individual experience. As variations of poetic creation, Kabbani's poems please universally, since *Beauty* is the form of the purposiveness of an object. The poems, in other words, are perceived as pleasurable objects of beauty without any representation of purpose.

The other aesthetic-cultural trend in Kabbani's poetic discourse is what we call *Songs of the City*. The city in Kabbani is personified; it is clad in human aspects, so the poetic image is charged with more vital dimensions. From a cultural standpoint, *Beirut* in the cosmic correlative consciousness

is the symbol of civilized lifestyle as Baghdad is the rose of history and civilization. Because of the civil war (1975-1990), that damsel-city was turned into a hind killed by the war-adventurers. In his *Mistress of the World*, the poet protests against the new sadists who destroyed the body of that green-eyed face:

يا ست الدنيا يا بيروت ..
من باع أساورك المشغولة بالياقوت؟
من صادر خاتمك السحري،
وقص صفاترك الذهبية؟
من ذبح الفرح النائم في عينيك الخضراوين؟
من شطب وجهك بالسكين،
وألقى ماء النار على شفثيك الرائعتين
من سمم ماء البحر، ورش الحقد على الشيطان
الوردي؟

Beirut, O, Mistress of the universe,
Who sold your ruby bracelets,
Confiscated your magic ring,
And cut your golden braids?
Who slaughtered the radiance
Sleeping in your green eyes?
Who scratches your face with a knife
And sprayed acid on your marvelous lips?
Who poisoned the sea
And spread hate on the rosy coast?

The tone is outrageous; the series of interrogative structures reveal a state of anxiety and detest to the horrible acts against that lady-city. Still, the images are picturesque and of beauty.

Being an aesthetic experience, it is seminal for this study to penetrate the poetic image on a comparative ground. In the Anglo-Saxon poetry, the experience which comes closer to Kabbani is that of Robert Herrick (1591-1674). Akin to Kabbani is Herrick in his aesthetic photography. In Herrick's *Hesperides*, the feminine body is erotically described and desired. The descriptive imagery is mainly derived from nature. The body of the mistress has become the *Garden of Eden*. In Herrick's *Upon the Nipple of Julia's Breast*, the nipple is covertly compared to a red rose, a cherry within a lily, a strawberry half drowned on a cream. The images mainly appeal to the sense of color (rose, lily, cherry, strawberry). Therefore, they are the responses of human pleasure and delight; however, they are descriptive rather than associative. Kabbani's *Nipple* in his *Childhood of a Breast* is of the same technique. The womanly nipple is given a set of figurative expressions. Her nipple is a seesaw of perfume, a whispered word written with light, a kernel of pomegranate. Moreover, the nipple is a kiss frozen on the breast. And if the woman's legs in Kabbani are compared to the fields of jasmine in brightness, whiteness, and fairness, the legs in Herrick are compared to eggs for the same features of beauty.

Herrick and Kabbani eroticize not only the corporeal form of feminism but also the parts of the woman's clothing and accessory, as evidently shown in Herrick's *Delight in disorder* and Kabbani's *To a Brassiere*. It is noteworthy to point out here, that both Herrick and Kabbani shape, by means of poetic creativity, language into an aesthetic-erotic experience; they add structure to the physical-spiritual experience. The experience is organically bound to the feminine world in body and surrounding. Still, the language encodes that patri-

archal worldview. That is to say, the poet's laden language reflects his manly perspectives to the *other*. The *other*, with her bodily *alluring and seductive quality* is the erotic stimulus to all of the speaker's sexual responses. Though they rejoice woman's body, as the poetic presentations have shown, both the English and the Arab bards feel that the feminine body is always in a process of mutability and decay. They, therefore, attempt to preserve that transcendental beauty by the power of art. Compared to the sixteenth and seventeenth English love poets, Kabbani's love poetry does not reject human sexuality to accept divine love instead. He rejoices the woman's body as the earthly paradise where all beauties grow. He hails all sexual delight including forbidden pleasure. The aesthetic desire of beauty is the locus of Kabbani's imagery when representing the feminine body.

In painting, there are certain affinities between Kabbani and Renoir. Pierre August Renoir (1841-1919), the French impressionistic painter, is mostly preoccupied with the nude forms. Still, Renoir is not the painter of mythological prototypes. Rather, he is, like Kabbani, the artist of ordinary life. Apart from their artistic quality, all the innate charm of a picture is faithful to modern life. Renoir *painted things we see every day; in these paintings which will certainly remain among the most vital and harmonious of our time, we find our life recorded* (Hayes, 1961:27). Both Renoir's paintings and Kabbani's poems are simply enjoyed because they celebrate life in its human vicissitudes. Both the expressionist painter and the aesthetic poet are great worshippers of the feminine form. The Nizarian naked feminine form has some affinities with Renoir's *La boulangère*, for instance. They have a great appeal to the light, color and freshness of the object. Both communicate the ecstasy they take in women, with great directness. By his poetic craftsmanship, revealing imagery and rhythmic variations Kabbani has created what is permanent in poetry, i.e. the poetic truth. The poetic truth, unlike the historical truth which is restricted to the bygone ages, opens its casements to the forthcoming times and generations.

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