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SILENT LOVE IN IRISH AND YEMENI SELECTED SHORT STORIES

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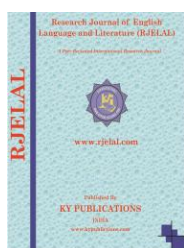
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Abstract

The study aims to demonstrate the silent love in Irish and Yemeni selected short stories, particularly in James Joyce's *Araby* (1914) and Zayd Mutee Dammaj's *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven* (1995). Even though the two short stories belong to different eras, cultures and languages—English and Arabic, the present study confirms that the depictions of silent love in the two selected short stories are convergent in general though there are some divergences. However, the similarities between the two selected texts can be seen in the two protagonists' portrayals of their beloved ones as well as in their unconscious behavior which are results of their adoration. Since the study emphasizes on the behavior and psyche of the protagonists and their thoughts about the women whom they adore in silence, psychoanalytic criticism has been applied to frame the analysis. Based on the comparative analysis between the two stories, the study concludes that both texts expose the issue of silent love and highlight its effect on the psyche and behavior of the protagonists. This is mirrored in the behavior of the two protagonists as being hesitated to express their feelings and simultaneously cannot control their emotions. This paradoxical situation drives both protagonists to be absent-minded and obsessed by their beloved ones all the time. However, the two protagonists' portrayals of their beloved women are elsewhere different. The boy's love in *Araby* is innocent and his description diverges the bodily and erotic portrayal in *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven*. This can be seen through the different use of words utilized by the narrators. In brief, the description in *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven* is more bodily while in *Araby* it is more acquitted, probably because the protagonist in the Yemeni story is elder than the protagonist in the Irish story who is approximately eighteen-year old.

Key words: Joyce's *Araby*, Dammaj's *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven*, psychoanalytic criticism, silent love, psyche, behavior.

1. Introduction

The study aims to demonstrate the silent love in Irish and Yemeni selected short stories,

particularly in James Joyce's *Araby* (1914) and Zayd Mutee Dammaj's *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven* (1995). Even though the two short stories belong to different eras and nations and written in two

different languages—English and Arabic, the present paper confirms that the depictions of silent love in the two texts are convergent in general though there are some divergences. The similarities in the two texts can be seen in the protagonists' portrayals of their beloved ones as well as in their unconscious behavior which are results of their adoration. Since the study emphasizes on the behavior and psyche of the heroes and their thoughts about the women whom they adore in silence, psychoanalytic criticism has been selected to frame the analysis. In addition to that, since the Yemeni story has been written in Arabic, the quotations discussed in the current research have been translated into English by the researchers themselves and, for the reliability of the paper, the original Arabic quotations have been written attached to the translations.

2. Literature review

As stated earlier, the current research deals with two short stories written by two different authors. Consequently this section covers the previous scholarly studies done on both works—Joyces' *Araby* and Dammaj's *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven*.

James Joyce (1882-1941) is an Irish writer born in Dublin. He wrote novels, short stories essays and also poems. He is considered as one of the most prominent writers of the twentieth century. His short stories collection *Dubliners* (1914) is one of the best works he produced. The story in question, *Araby*, is one of this collection. It is about an orphan boy who lives with his uncle and aunt and he secretly loves a girl from the neighborhood as will be explained in detail in the forthcoming sections. This story has been discussed by some scholars. For instance, Ms. Rokeya & A.K. Zunayet Ahammed (2017:140) investigate the “adolescent boy's continuing process of self-realisation through his disillusionment with the bleak reality of Dublin in the early twentieth century in the short story 'Araby' by James Joyce.” Rokeya & Ahammed conclude that the boy “discovers that the bazaar is beset by difficulties of the adult world where he finds no way to dream. There he is exposed to a new odious situation

which he never thought before”(2017:140). Rokeya & Ahammed (2017:140) add that this situation shocks the boy and “results in realisation and maturation. Indeed, here Joyce keenly evinces how a young boy gains sharp insights into life and reality.” In other words, the protagonist realizes “that life is not what he has dreamt of” (Rokeya & Ahammed 2017:143).

By the same token, Pedram Maniee & Shahriyar Mansouri (2017:201) argue that “*Araby* is one of those short stories in which traces of the colonization of Ireland by the Great Britain in the nineteenth century can be found.” Consequently, their research “investigates the way Joyce has portrayed the cultural, political, economic and social domination of Britain over Ireland, specifically Dublin” (Maniee & Mansouri 2017:201). The paper concludes that Joyce employed *Araby* “to show the colonized nation of Ireland by the British Empire through the narrative voice of the story which is first person narration and also through the rich imagery and symbolism of the story, the conversation among the characters, naming of the characters and the description of the setting and atmosphere that is simultaneously realistic and symbolic” (Maniee & Mansouri 2017:208). Unlike the research written by Rokeya and Ahammed that has been discussed in this paragraph and also unlike the study written by Maniee and Mansouri which was discussed in the previous paragraphs, the present study focuses on the issue of silent love and its impact on the behavior of the protagonist of *Araby* in comparison with the one of *The Beautiful widow of the Oven*.

Zayd Mutee Dammaj (1943-2000) was born in Yemen and brought up at the Imam Yahya's Rule in North Yemen. His father struggled to provide a good education for him. According to, Rashad Mohammed Moqbel Al Areqi (2015:102), his father “brought many books from Aden in history, politics and literature which open the gate before the son to read and develop his reading skills and educate him the real sense of life.” In 1957, Zayed got his primary School certificate in Taiz and after that “he moved to Egypt to accomplish his secondary school” and bachelor degree (Al-Areqi 2015:102). Then he came back to Yemen to participate in the

political life where he was elected as a parliament member, then ambassador to Kuwait. He died at the age of fifty-seven in London. He is considered as "one of the most well-known writers in the Arab world and his novel *The Hostage*, 1984, was chosen as one of the best Arabic novels of the 20th century" (Al-Subari 2017:10262). Confirming that, Abdulrahman Mokbel Mahyoub Hezam (2018:134) adds that Zayd Mutee Dammaj "wrote a number of short stories and fictional works including best known short novel *The Hostage* which was selected by the Arab Writers Union as one of the top 100 Arabic novels of the 20th century." This novel "had been translated to many languages including English, German, Russian, French, and Hindi" (Hezam 2018:134). However, Dammaj's *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven* has not been studied by scholars. Consequently, the present paper seems to be innovative for it sheds light on a story which has not been covered enough by earlier scholarly studies.

3. Psychoanalytic Criticism

The psychological approach was used by Aristotle in the fourth century B.C. in setting forth his classic definition of tragedy as combining the emotions of pity and terror. In the English Renaissance era, Sir Philip Sidney psychologized literature with his statements about the moral effects of poetry, "as were such Romantic poets as Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley with their theories of imagination" (Guerin et al. 2005:153). This shows the connection between psychoanalysis and literary criticism.

In the twentieth century, the psychological criticism has become "associated with a particular school of thought, the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud (1856-1936) and his followers" (Guerin et al. 2005:153). Jacques Lacan is the most famous follower of Sigmund Freud, although he may not agree with some parts of this school. In his book, *Beginning Theory*, Peter Barry (2002) illustrates the relationship between the psychoanalytic literary criticism and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. He elaborates that "psychoanalytic criticism is a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of

psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature" (Barry 2002:96). In psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud divides the psyche into three parts; the *id*, *superego* and the *ego*. In fact, these parts or levels of the psyche can in other words be corresponded to the unconscious, conscience and the consciousness. Each one of the human psyche has a certain goal. For instance:

The *id* is for Freud the site of natural drives; it is a dark area of seething passion that knows only desire and has no sense of moderation or limitation. The *superego* is an internalized representation of the authority of the father and of society, authority that establishes strict limitations on the fulfillment of the unrestrained desires residing in the *id*. The *ego* moderates between the authoritarian demands of the *superego* and the unmitigated desires of the *id*. Essentially equivalent to the conscious, thinking mind, the *ego* is also the principal interface between the psyche and the outside world. (Booker 1996:29).

This division of the human psyche "has been directly applied to literature by critics who have sought analogies to the relationship among *id*, *ego*, and *superego* in workings of various aspects of the literary text" (Booker 1996:29). On the other hand, Freudian psychoanalytic critics, in their literary interpretation, "distinguish between the conscious and unconscious mind. They associate the literary work's 'overt' content with the former, and the 'covert' content with the latter, privileging the latter as being what the work is really about, and aiming to disentangle the two" (Barry 2002:105).

Freudian criticism is mainly based on two major premises. The first premise is that most of the individual's mental processes are unconscious. The second one "is all human behaviour is motivated ultimately by what we would call sexuality" (Guerin et al. 2005:155). Sigmund Freud uses the word, *libido*, to symbolize the sexual energy. However, Freud's second premise, which tells that sexuality motivates all the human behaviour, has been rejected by many professional

psychologists including Carl Gustav Jung and Alfred Adler. For instance, Gustav Jung “developed the idea that the unconscious mind is not merely a place of individual fantasies and desires but includes a collective unconscious or a repository of shared primordial desires and impressions common to the entire race” (Booker 1996:34).

Emphasizing the significance of the sexuality on the human psyche, Sigmund Freud tells that the boy infant hates his father because he takes the mother from him. According to Freud, the father may become for the boy infant a rival. “Freud himself turned to examples from literature to illustrate his ideas. The most famous instance of this phenomenon was Freud’s use of the Greek myth of Oedipus to illustrate what psychoanalysis regards as the most crucial formative experience in the development of the human psyche” (Booker 1996:27). In fact, Oedipal drama tells about a young child who is in conflict between his desires and the external authority. By the same token, Ernest Jones’s *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1910) is considered to be one of the significant early texts in the development of the psychoanalytic criticism. “Jones sees the predicament of Hamlet as a classic case of an unreserved Oedipal crisis in which the young prince is still beset by desires to possess his mother ... and resentment at one being able to do so because of the presence first of his father, then of his uncle Claudius” (Booker 1996:28-9). Hamlet’s exaggerated love towards his mother can be referred to as the id or unconsciousness. On the other hand, the authority of the father and uncle can be identified as the superego or the conscience.

Like some critics who analyze the psyche of the author from his/her text, Ernest Jones “tries to draw certain conclusion about the psychological makeup of Shakespeare himself by suggesting that Hamlet’s psychological problems may be projections of Shakespeare’s own” (Booker 1996:29). In fact, there are some critics who have used the psychoanalysis to understand and interpret literary texts. For instance, M. Keith Booker (1996) provides an example of using the id, superego and ego in analyzing literature.

A good example of this approach is Henry A. Murray’s famous essay on *Moby Dick*, “In Nomine Diaboli.” Murray argues that Moby Dick himself is a symbol of repressive conscience of New England Puritanism and as such can be seen as a projection of Melville’s superego. Meanwhile Captain Ahab, in his uncontrolled compulsion to destroy the whale, is analogous to the unrestrained drives of the id. Murray sees the reliable first mate Starbuck, who attempts to mediate between reality and Ahab’s driving passion, as analogous to the ego (Booker 1996:29).

Furthermore, the psychoanalytic criticism can be utilized to explore the psyche of the authors themselves. In fact, writers may consciously or unconsciously flourish their texts with some elements that to some extent help the critics to analyze their psyches. For instance, in her book, *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, Marie Bonaparte studies the psyche of Edgar Allan Poe from his stories. Illustrating this point, Bonaparte reveals;

Works of art or literature reveal their creator’s psychology and, as Freud has shown, their construction resembles that of our dreams. The same mechanisms which, in dreams and nightmares, govern the manner in which our strongest, though most carefully concealed desires are elaborated, desires which often are the most repugnant to consciousness, also govern the elaborations of a work of art. (Bonaparte 1949:209).

To sum up, psychoanalytic criticism analyzes the literary text by studying the psyche of the characters inside the work and the author outside the work. Thus, this approach depends basically on Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis. For instance, by paying attention to the unconscious dreams and desires of the characters, we can understand their conscious behaviour. In other words, the internal feelings, desires, and problems of the author can unconsciously be reflected in the text. Therefore, exploring these elements require a deep understanding of the ambiguous parts in the text.

Indeed, in this study, one story for each author has been selected to reveal the facts mentioned above.

4. Silent Love in *Araby* and *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven*

Focusing on their portrayal of the silent love, these two short stories are going to be analyzed comparatively. Joyce's *Araby* is about an orphan boy who lives with his uncle and aunt. The boy secretly loves a girl from the neighborhood. Although he is reluctant and cannot express his feelings, he always enjoys the moments when the girl comes to the front of his house. He stays in the front room and secretly looking at her. She is always in his thoughts. He thinks about her whenever he goes for shopping and also when he sits alone in the back room of his house. One day he decides to go to a bazaar called Araby to buy something for the girl he loves. Yet the majority of the stalls of the bazaar were closed because he came late. Simultaneously, he encountered a woman speaking with two men. When he interrupted them, the woman responded to him indignantly. This experience shocked the boy and made him realize the real life of adolescence. In contrast, Dammaj's *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven* is about a man who lives alone and loves a woman at the neighborhood. That woman works owns a bakery shop. The name of the shop is Bab-al-Sabh. The man secretly loves the widow who owns Bab-al-Sabh and enjoys the moments when he comes to her shop to buy some bread. Yet, he is unable to express his love towards her until the end of the story.

So, it is observable that the protagonists of the two stories have been presented as unable to express their feelings to their sweethearts. For instance, while the boy in *Araby* thinks about Mangan's sister he narrates: "I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words" (*Araby*, p.27-28). This behavior uncovers the boy's personality as reluctant who fails to express his love to his sweetheart. Instead of showing his love and admiration, he keeps it covert attempting to watch his beloved indirectly. He said: "Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlor watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the

sash so that I could not be seen" (*Araby*, p.26). While he always spies on her and sometimes attempts to attract her attention, his shyness seems to be humorous as shown in the excerpt below:

When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. (*Araby*, p.26).

The description above invites the reader to expect that the boy was waiting for his beloved to appear in order to join her and talk together while walking. In contrast, the boy "followed" her but instead of catching a chance to speak with her, he "quickened" his "pace and passed her". This happened respectively "morning after morning". This is probably because the boy lacks experience due to his shyness.

By the same token, even though the protagonist of *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven* is a man i.e. elder than the protagonist of *Araby*, he is similarly reluctant. He loves the widow of the oven but impotent to express his love. His confusion and coyness is very obvious as he declares: "She looked at me for a longer while. She suddenly dropped my very hot loaf towards me smilingly. I was confused and unconsciously dropped the loaf on the earth and then I lifted it" [original text: نظرت إلي وأطالت النظر .. قذفت برغيفي الساخن جداً إلي فجأة وهي تبسم وارتيكت عندما حاولت التحكم بالرغيف بين يدي ... وسقط على الأرض [وأخذته يارتباك أيضاً] (*The Beautiful Widow of the Oven*, p.91). This wariness develops into a kind of taciturnity for he does not even speak with his colleagues at work about his love. For instance, he narrates:

All my colleagues as well as the manager himself knew my adoration for Bab-al-Sabh and the delicious meals it offers ... and drinks ... also various types of sweets ... They knew my love for all this but they did not know my adoration for that widow who was much more delicious than all the food and drinks.

كان جميع الزملاء في الإدارة، والمدير نفسه، يعرفون ولعي ومشروبات ... (بباب السبح) بما يقدمه من وجبات لذيذة ومختلف أنواع الحلويات ... يعرفون كم أنا مغرم بذلك كله ولكنهم لم يعرفوا حتى الآن بهيامي بأرملة الفرن الجميلة التي كانت الذ من تلك الأكلات والمشروبات والحلويات.

(*The Beautiful Widow of the Oven*, p.94)

As indicated above, the man has a strong "adoration" for the woman. He considers her as "much more delicious than all the food and drinks". Yet, all these feelings exist merely in his mind. He did not even tell his close friends at work about his feelings towards the widow he admires. They think he goes to the oven (Bab-al-Sobh) for the delicious food and drinks, but in reality he goes to see the woman whom he considers as better than everything. Based on the previous discussions, both stories show similar versions of silent love. Both protagonists love in secret and unable to reveal their inner feelings towards each other.

In addition to that, the protagonists of these stories have been exposed as dominated by the id, following their desires and cannot control their behavior. For instance, the boy in Joyce's *Araby* hither and thither highpoints his enjoyment while watching Mangan's sister. Describing her, he said: "her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed, and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body, and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side" (*Araby*, p.26). The boy's adoration makes him focus on the details of the girl's behavior. He narrates that "while she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist" (*Araby*, p.28). He also continues describing her beauty admirably in the quotation below:

She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease. (*Araby*, p.28).

This description is similar to the depiction of the protagonist in Dammaj's *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven*, who describes the widow as "a lady with beautiful hands covered with henna and a number of shining gold bracelets, softly well-arranged with the beauty of the wax-white hands and her eyes were wide looking through the face-cover silt that cover her lovely face and voice" [original text: امرأة يداها مخضبتان بالحناء ومزركشتان بالخضاب الأسود تزينهما عدة أساور ذهبية لامعة متناسقة بنعومة واضحة مع بياض تلك اليدين الشمعي اللون الجميل وعينان واسعتان تطلان من خلال اللثمة. (*The Beautiful Widow of the Oven*, p.91). By the course of time, the passion becomes stronger as the protagonist adds: "day by day I looked at her passionately" [original text: أصبحت مع الأيام أنظر إليها] (*The Beautiful Widow of the Oven*, p.93), and this passion becomes stronger as he adds: "I stared at her face and her eyelined eyes and parts of her charming body that appeared embossed silk dress that is adhesive to her body, showing her soft mature breast. I also looked at a gold necklace dangling from her neck and swinging between her two while she sold the loaves." [original text: أتمعن في وجهها وعينيها المكحلتي وأجزاء جسمها الفاتن .. تظهر مفاتنه من خلال زنتها الحريرية المزركشة اللاصقة بجسمها التي تبرز صدرها البيض ونعومة ثدييها الممتلئين وسلسلة من الذهب تتدلى فوق نحرها الواسع الممتلئ تتأرجح من ثدي إلى آخر عندما تقوم بتوزيع الأقراص للزبائن] (*The Beautiful Widow of the Oven*, p.93). Thus the strong passion that is shown in the Yemeni selected story is similar to the deep love exposed in the Irish story. For instance, the boy in *Araby* catches moments to look at the figure of his much-loved girl as he reveals:

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name

was like a summons to all my foolish blood.
(Araby, p.26-27).

However, while the narrator is obsessed by the girl and attempts to see her, there is a paradox. The boy loves her so much, yet he "never spoken to her, except for a few casual words". The deep love unconsciously led the boy to be separated from his world and obsessed by dreams and imagination. He narrates: "Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance" (Araby, p.27) his feeling is mingled with contradiction for he paradoxically links the places of hostile with places of romance. And by the place of hostile he alludes to his school for he cannot stop himself from thinking about Mangan's sister though he is sitting inside the class. The boy's emotional conflict becomes stronger and it drives him to be lost. He says: "Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand" (Araby, p.27). Similar feeling of loss mixed with love can also be seen in the quotation below:

My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. (Araby, p.27).

This becomes more obvious when he confesses that "All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: 'O love! O love!' many times" (Araby, p.28). He even does not know whether he has answered her or not when he is asked one day as shown in this excerpt: "At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to Araby. I forgot whether I answered yes or no" (Araby, p.27). While swinging between confusion and adoration, the boy decides: "But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires" (Araby, p.27). This portrayal shows the boy's love is very strong, concluding that he is

dominated by the id as reflected in his unconscious behavior.

5. Conclusion

Based on the comparative analysis of the two stories in this research, the paper concludes that even though the two short stories belong to two divergent eras, cultures and languages, both texts expose the issue of silent love and highlighted its effect on the psyche and behavior of the protagonists. This can be seen through the behavior of the two characters when they hesitate to express their feelings towards their beloved ones and at the same time unconsciously cannot control their emotions and behavior. This paradoxical situation drives the protagonists in the two stories to be absent-minded and obsessed by thinking about their beloved ones all the time. However, the two protagonists' description of their beloved seems to be different. The boy's love in *Araby* is innocent and his description diverges the bodily and erotic portrayal in *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven*. This can be seen through the different use of words utilized by the narrators. In brief, the description in *The Beautiful Widow of the Oven* is more bodily while in *Araby* it is more acquitted, probably because the protagonist in the Yemeni story is elder than the protagonist in the Irish story who is approximately eighteen-year old.

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