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**THE PORTRAYAL OF TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES  
AND STEREOTYPES IN AL-FAYTURI'S POETRY**

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**Abstract**

Gender, a category of sexually reproducing organisms, is categorised into males denoting colonial masters or females denoting colonial subjects, as represented in Al-Faytûri's poetry. Extant studies of Al-Fayturi's poetry focused largely on political, cultural, social, and religious feelings and experiences from colonial perspectives, with scant attention paid to the representation of gender issues in selected Al-Fayturi's poetry. This study adopted the qualitative method of analysis; black feminist theory collaborated with Zayati's theory, while textual analysis was employed. A poem was purposefully selected based on its thematic relevance: *Ila Wajhin Abyad* and its data were subjected to literary analysis. Gender concerns the sufferings and abuse of dark-skinned men, aiming to rise with dignity against white tyranny (IWA). Violence involves how African people are humiliated by colonizers and how they live as foreigners in their homeland. Sexuality is depicted as challenging feminist criticism, racial discrimination, slavery, and gender inequality. Social conflict is portrayed in Africa's struggle for existence and survival in the face of hardships, torments, and ill-treatments meted out to them by their colonial masters. The research work was given a solid theoretical foundation with a review of relevant theory, such as black feminism, liberal feminism, social and Marxist feminist and radical feminist theory, and crucial concepts such as the concept of gender, sex and gender, gender roles, gender division of labour, gender inequality and stratification, gender-based violence, gender parity index, and gender blindness and sensitivity. The selected poem by Al-Fayturi depicts gender themes that encapsulate black and liberal feminism, including social and Marxist feminists.

**Keywords:** Al-Faytûri, Arabic poetry, Violence and Gender inequality, Black feminism.

**Introduction**

Arabic poetry is one of the earliest forms of Arabic literature. Present knowledge of written poetry in Arabic dates from the 5th Century. Arabic poetry is categorized into two main types: Rhymed / Measure and Prose. Al-Khalil ibn



Ahmad al-Farahīdī (711- 786 A.D) was the first Arab Scholar to subject the prosody of Arabic poetry to a detailed phonological study. He failed to produce a coherent, integrated theory which satisfies the requirements of generality, adequacy and simplicity. Instead, he merely listed and categorized the primary data, thus producing a meticulously detailed incredibly complex formulation which very few indeed are able to master and utilize. Researchers and critics of Arabic poetry usually classify it in two categories: Classical and Modern poetry. Classical poetry was written before the Arabic renaissance (An-Nahdah) (Allen,2012: 78). Thus, all poetry that was written in the classical style is called classical/ traditional/vertical poetry. It has more attention given to the eloquence and the wording of the verse than the poem as whole, it would often start by romantic/ nostalgic prelude. In these preludes, a thematic unit called "nasīb". Modern poetry, on the other hand, deviated from classical poetry in its content, style, structure, rhyme and topics. Poetry in Arabic is traditionally grouped in a diwan/collection of poems. These can be arranged by poet, tribe, topic or the name of the compiler such as the Asma'iyat of al-Asm(Allen,2012: 79).

Three events in African history could be instantiated as having provided the impetus for al-Fayturi's poetry. These include slavery, colonization and the struggle for independence. Al-Fayturi's perception of race and racial difference probably derives from his status as an 'Arab-al-Sud /Arab-African or an Afrabian, a hyphenated subject within the Sudanese socio-cultural landscape reading (Abdulhamid, 2021:219).

Al-Fayturi wrote his first poem in 1948 and by the time his anthology was printed in 1967 even before the emergence of Tayyib Sālih's novel, *Season of Migration to the North*, he had composed nothing less than 73 different titles covering three hundred and nineteen pages. Full of "feelings, emotions and thought". His work could be described, in the manner of the Palestinian writer and critic, "Isa Al-Na'uri" as "resistant poetry. Here resistant poetry references the decision of the colonized to engage the colonizer in his own terms; the preparedness of the colonized subjects in Sudan to unmask the shallow epistemological foundation of imperialism and all other systems of oppression through a recourse to imagination and intellectualism (Abdulhamid, 2021:220). Thus al-Fayturi's poetry is kaleidoscopic of his political, cultural, social and religious feelings and experience. It is one in which Africa becomes an ocean into which the streams of his inquiries, contemplations and questions are emptied. Gender crisis is a principal problem that the colonized people, who are divided between two worlds and two cultures, face and suffer from. Those who suffer from gender crises almost end as aliens in both worlds although they do their best to adapt to their environments. They are considered the "Other" even if they are living in their homelands. Proclaiming one's identity is, thus, a difficult task because colonialism and colonial forces deprive an individual of their rights to do so. Victims of gender crises are marginalized in their societies. They cannot feel freedom in society because they face threats of colonial forces,

which dominate and oppress them. (Abdulhamid, 2021:229) Gender crisis victims face absolute discrimination and violence whether in their own countries or outside as have been analyzed in Fayturi's Songs of Africa. Al-Faytūrī's poetics figure the continent as the subject, the victim and indeed the witness to age-long injustices in the hands of, in Ayi Kwei Armah's mode, the "predators and the destroyers". Africa, in al-Fayturi's poetic schema, also appears as a battleground between freedom and slavery, between oppression and justice, between colonization and independence.

A cursory look at the anthology invites the suggestion that, in engaging history and politics and in interrogating the ideological template upon which colonialism is premised, the poet situates himself in a trialectic; he locates himself at the intersection of racism, colonialism and imagination; he figures himself as a black subject, a victim of the inhumanity of the British hegemony in the Nile-Valley and a poet with an irresistible urge to mirror and mediate his reality. Here, in line with Muhsin al-Musawi, "recollection, knowledge and actual experience" hold sway. Perhaps this explains why he personifies and invests Africa with feeling. Each time he breathes he feels the breath of Africa; each time he is happy or sad he experiences, in the postmodernist fashion, the "re-presence" of happiness and sadness of Africa and Africans. This becomes evident in the collections of his poems which come under such titles as *Aghānīlifrīqīya* (Songs of Africa), *ʿAshiqun min Ifrīqīya* (A Lover from Africa) and *UdhkurīnīyāIfrīqīya* (Remember me O! Africa). But the presence of Africa as a poetic schema of some sort in al-Fayturi's work should not lead to the conclusion that the "continental" in the title excludes the "global" in content. In other words, apart from the representation of race, slavery and colonization that we have alluded to as being central motives in al-Fayturi's politics and poetics, his poems are picaresque of those elements that are constitutive of the intellectual world of the ordinary Sudanese during the 20th century. They mediate and image how, in-between 1898 and 1956, the ordinary Sudanese writer became "worlded" by the world he lived in; by the world in or outside Sudan. The poems track the persona of the poet as it interacts with Don Quixote and Paul Robinson even as they reclaim interred memories and experiences of the poet during the Second World War and his journey to Paris. Thus al-Faytūrī's poetry can be said to have been deliberately composed in a way that would assist the poet to engage not only the Self and the Other of the Sudanese but, in the manner of Homi Bhabha, "the otherness of the self" of African subjects as a whole. This Otherness is not only the human subject-the male/female, male/male, female/female or colonizer/colonized rubric Sotunsa, M. 2021:90.

#### **Statement of the problem**

The investigation on Muhammad Al-Faytūrī's poems by several Arabic scholars have found his poetic work as unveiling the tragic consequences of slavery and

colonization on the psyche of African people. The works, among others, identity crisis as post-colonial problematic in Muhammad Al-Faytūrī's *Songs of Africa* by Abdulhamid Aly Muhammad Alansary, who discussed issue of race, class and colonialism, The dialectics of homeland and Identity. *Reconstruction Africa in the poetry of Langston Hughes and Muhammed Al-fayturi* by Saddik M. Gohar, who taught the tragic consequences of slavery and colonization in Muhammad Al-Faytūrī's poetry. *Qadiyah-al-ist'ibādi* in Muhammad Al-fayturi's poetry by Zamribn Arifin, view on manifestation of the issue of slavery. *Is it Because my face is Black* by Oladosu Afis.A, pinpoint the race and racial subjectivities. *Slavery and Colonization in the poetry of Muhammad Al-Faytūrī and Langston Hughes* by Saddik Mohammed Gohar, *Tragedy in Muhammad Al-Faytūrī's poetry* by Oladosu Afis, who divided Al-Faytūrī's poetry into four kinds of capillary; African poems, Generic poems, Global/Cultural poems, Emotional poems. They have omitted the major issues at stake; the far reaching circumstance of gender issues. This study comes to focus on gender as it affects the identities of colonial subjects and the African people to ill treatment, violence and sexual abuse. This study raises an alarm purposely on what gender is all about.

1. What are the gender issues in Muhammad Al-Fayturi's poetry?
2. How do gender issues affect Africans in Al-fayturi's poetry?

The main objective of this work is to examine portrayal of traditional gender roles in Muhammad Al-Faytūrī's poetry while the specific objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the gender issues in Muhammad Al-Fayturi's poetry
2. To assess the effects of gender problems on African in Al-fayturi's poetry.

#### **Significance of the study**

The significance of this present study comes from its attempt to examine gender and how it affects the identities of colonial subjects. This work concludes that colonialism impacted greatly on the identity of colonial subjects especially in Sudan. The research study is for the benefit of the entire public of the society whose task is to maintain sanity of individuals, protect mankind from all forms of abuse, violence or exploitations. This study will be beneficial to the human rights commission and other relevant stakeholders committed to safeguarding individuals especially women and children from gender-based violence, sexual abuse, slavery, human trafficking and gender inequality. It will serve as a powerful instrument to achieve their objectives for the establishment of a peaceful and harmonious society.

This study is specifically focused on the examination of *Al-fayturi's* Ilawajhin Abyad (To a white face) to unveil the gender themes contained. Gender is a sex or a category, either male or female, into which sexually-reproducing organisms

are divided on the basis of their reproductive roles in their species<sup>1</sup>. The Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines gender as "Identification as a man, a woman, or something else, and association with a (social) role or set of behavioral and cultural traits, clothing, etc; a category to which a person belongs on this basis". This means that gender is a quality of either a male or female.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

Oladosu, A. A. 2008. *Is it because my face is Black?* This article focuses on three poems written by one of the late 20th century writers in Sudan, Muhammad Miftāh al-Faytūrī (b.1930), in order to show how the Sudanese have thought about race and racial subjectivities. It situates "al-Ṭūfān al-Aswad", "IlāWajhinAbyad" and "Ṭhawrat Qaryah" against the postcolonial theories of Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Edward Said and the uncelebrated Sudanese critic, Mu'āwiyah Muhammad Nūr (1909-1941). The article re-engages postcolonial discourse in and on Africa, retrieves Arabs' perspective on Black politics and identities and tries to show how al-Faytūrī, using Sudan's Afro-Arabic cultural heritage as a reference point, has tried to give agency to Africans even under the unfavourable atmosphere of colonialism in Africa.

Zamri, A. 2017. *Qadiyah-al-ist'ibādīfil shi'r Muhammad Al-Faytūrī*. This study is aimed at presenting the efforts of the scholars of this issue in the poetry of this poet. The study revealed the intersections of the poetry with the components and manifestations of the issue of (slavery) and the different poetic stages, as demonstrated by the poet's poetry. The research concluded that the literary and monetary field lacked a systematic study of this issue, revealing its motives and artistic manifestations, and the various aspects of it emerged according to a modern scientific method.

Abdulhamid, A. A. 2021. *Identity Crisis as postcolonial problematic in Muhammad Al-fayturi's Songs of Africa and Sahar khalifeh's the inheritance*. He argued how colonialism affected the identities of colonial subjects in Al-Faytūrī's Songs of Africa and Sahar Khalifeh's the inheritance. While the harshness of colonialism is exposed in Al-Faytūrī's poetry, the suffering of Palestinians and their hybrid figure, Zayna, is exposed in Khalifeh's novel. The investigation highlights the terrible effects of slavery and Colonization by concluding that colonialism had a substantial impact on the identities of colonial subjects in Sudan and Palestine.

Muhammad, W. 2022. *Azmatul Uwiyyat fil Shi'r Al-Faytūrī*. This study deals with the crisis of identity, in Muhammad Al-Fayturi's poetry, that accompanied him during his poetic span. His followers find that the poet could not accomplish his identity fulfillment neither in the Arab homeland, nor in the Sudanese national. In this case, he decided to seek this Identity in a more spacious space; it is "Africa", making Negritude an idiosyncratic trait of this identity. Besides, the Negritude appropriateness was ubiquitous in the poet's experience. The

defeat of 1967 constrained him to return to his Arab homeland to struggle for his Arab identity. However, the poet's identity went on metamorphosis, because he sometimes endeavoured to assign a universal dimension to the character. Hence, the poet appealed for the humanity of man wherever and whenever he is<sup>12</sup>.

Saddiq, M. G. 2008. *Slavery and Colonisation in the Poetry of M. Al-Fayturi and Langston Hughes*. This article investigates the dialectics between homeland and identity in the poetry of the Sudanese poet, Mohamed Al-Fayturi and his literary master, Langston Hughes in order to undermine their attitudes toward crucial issues integral to the African and African-American experience such as identity, racism, enslavement and colonization. The article argues that Hughes's early poetry. Africa is depicted as the land of ancient civilizations in order to strengthen African-American feelings of ethnic pride during the Harlem Renaissance. This idealistic image of a pre-slavery, a pre-colonial Africa, argues the paper, disappears from the poetry of Hughes, after the Harlem Renaissance, to be replaced with a more realistic image of Africa under colonization. The article also demonstrates that unlike Hughes, who attempts to romanticize Africa, Al-Fayturi rejects a romantic confrontation with the roots.

Interrogating western colonial narratives about Africa, Al-Fayturi reconstructs pre-colonial African history in order to reveal the tragic consequences of colonization and slavery upon the psyche of the African people. The article also points out that in their attempts to confront the oppressive powers which aim to erase the identity of their peoples, Hughes and Al-Fayturi explore areas of overlap drama between the turbulent experience of African-Americans and the catastrophic history of black Africans dismantling colonial narratives and erecting their own cultural mythology.<sup>13</sup>

Akewula, A. O. 2016. *Gender, Women and Word in Fawziyyah Al-Bakri's Hayātu min waraqin*. This study focused on the emergence of gender in Arabic literary writing in the contemporary period that is partly traceable to the popularity of women's movement all around the world. This does not, however, mean that before today the Arab literary landscape had neglected issues which border on women's rights, the girl-child, women's sexuality, and marital obligation among others. In fact, Arabic literary writing since the classical period exemplifies an extremely strong patronage, by poets and prose writers of men and women subjects. This paper investigates the concept of gender in general and gender in Arab land and Saudi Arabia in particular. The researcher adopts the gender critical approach which relies on Virginia Woolf.

Mopelola, R. O. 2021. *Conflict and Gendered roles reversal in Gorettikyomuhendo secret no more and Moses Isagawa's Abyssinian chronicles*. She highlights how violent conflict can reinforce biological stereotypes leading to deconstruction and reversals in Ugandan literary representations. The study

adopts aspects of radical feminism and post structuralism to explore the determinations of victim and positions of perpetrators of this evil.

### **Concept of Gender**

According to Shannon, M. C. 2021, Reeves and Baden (2002) viewed gender as Howa person's biology is culturally valued and interpreted into totally accepted ideas of what it is to be a woman or man. In one word of West and Zimmerman (1987), "Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something we do. Shannon, M. C. (2021), says it is something we perform. From the definitions provided above, gender is therefore defined as a social and cultural constructed roles and relationships, personality's traits, attitudes, behaviours, values and relative influence that society attributes to the two sexes on a differential basis. It is the hierarchical power relations between women and men that are socially constructed and not derived directly from biology. This means that gender is a matter of social-cultural construction. It is not innate or in-born. It is defined or assigned within the socio-cultural domain.

### **Sex and Gender**

Sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential whereas gender is the social definition of what it means to be female or male in a socio-cultural context. For instance, why women should mince and men should be swagger or why women should have red toenails and men should not. According to Shannon, there should be no single objective biological criterion for male or female sex as labeling someone to be a man or woman is a mere social decision irrespective of the scientific knowledge available to help make such a decision our beliefs about gender should still define truly our sex.

Patricia, H. C. (2004) says that gender study is an interdisciplinary academic field devoted to analyzing gender identity and gendered representation. Gender studies originated in the field of women's studies, concerning women, feminism, gender and politics. The field now overlaps with queer studies and men's studies. Its rise to prominence, especially in Western University 1790, coincided with the rise of deconstruction. According to Boxer (1998) It is noteworthy to say here they women's studies come into existence out of a realization of the absence of women in academia, the lack of empirical knowledge about women's lives, the absence of concepts that women could use to understand their own experiences, the lack of importance given to women's economic, social and political lives. Women's studies become an important way of doing away with this invisibility and bringing the lives and experiences of women to the forefront in academia. It provided a wealth of new data about women and also challenged the theories, concepts and methods of existing disciplines. Graining and analyzing new knowledge about women is an important part of women's studies. Many contributions continue to be made to existing disciplines. At the same time, the academic study of women itself has also changed, incorporating new perspectives and positions. Gender studies appeared, for the first time in the



1970, in American Universities, in a time when the simple fact of saying that women can be an object of study was conceived as a radical act. Initially, the field was called “Female studies”, but this name was soon abandoned for the more comprehensive “Women studies' ", which highlighted the fact that the field contained studies conceived by women, concerning women and belonging to women. For the first time, women were actively creating and owning knowledge based on their own personal and political experiences. Women's studies were born out of the protest that women in the Universities directed against the way academic knowledge was silent about women and their scientific contribution and ignored the power relations in academia and society. From its very inception, women's studies had a very clear purpose and that was to transform the University, so that knowledge about women was no longer invisible, marginalized or mothers “other”.

### **Growth and Development of gender and Feminism in world literature**

A keen focus shall be made on gender concepts and its conceptualization literary productivity. Gender and Feminism will be examined as they are viewed and expressed by contemporary writers in their works. Gender has been defined as a social and cultural constructed role and relationship, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values and relative influence that society attributes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Gender is different from sex. Sex refers to the biological aspects of being male and female. On the other hand, feminism according to Ginsberg, A. E. (2008), “is a label for a commitment or movement to achieve equality for women”. Ginsberg, A. E. (2008) also defines feminism as an “attempt to describe and interpret (or reinterpret) women's experiences as depicted in various kinds of literature”. Feminism is a theory which seeks that men and women be equal politically, economically and socially. This is the core of all feminism theories. The following are notable contemporary feminist writers and their canonical works that express their views, thoughts and reactions to gender and Feminism. The content of Feminist literary works are summarized in quotes, thereby providing brief and relevant information about the writers and their literary works.

### **Feminist views and Gender Theory**

Feminist theory refers to that system of general ideas designed to describe and explain human social experiences from a woman-centered vantage point. It is one of the contemporary theories that is organised around feminism, most basic questions about women's situation in relation to men. Feminism represents conscious efforts made to create awareness about women's oppression and exploitation in the society and the conscious action taken by men and women to change this situation. This is largely carried out through the advocacy of social equality for men and women. Despite the growing literature on feminism, neat categorisation of the works of many feminist theorists has become difficult, as there is little agreement among the various strands of feminism as to the causes

of gender difference, discrimination, subordination, oppression and inequality. Also, it is important to say here that what unites them is that they all view the personal experiences of women and men through the lens of gender. Writing on literary themes that are based on gender issues means violating privacy, and in Saudi Arabia precisely where private life, family life, inner feelings and thoughts are sacrosanct, this is a risky undertaking particularly for women writers. In Saudi Arabia, the public space is man's domain, i.e. 'male', whereas the inner, private space is assigned to women and therefore defined as 'female'. Ideally men's and women's worlds are totally separated, but nevertheless constitute a unit, as a man's 'honour' depends on the absolute 'non-existence' of his female relations in public. A woman's face must neither be 'visible, nor her voice be audible in public. Her name must not even be mentioned outside the house. Nowadays, in literary writing, the most significant expressions of this spatial gender division, harem and veil, have been abolished but in some Arabian peninsula they are emerging again. However, in Islamic societies one can still find invisible harem walls and sensitivity or the borders of privacy, which, if transgressed, will be avenged immediately. In the literary world, social control and pressure upon an author through society is often much more effective than the censorship of some of the regimes of the region. Women's mobility outside the house is traditionally regulated by rituals which clearly define how and to what degree she is permitted to enter the street, the market or the mosque. One of these rituals, for example, is to lower her veil as soon as she crosses the borders of the inner, female space. Akewula, A. O. (2016). Halirova, M. (2016) Socialist feminism focuses on a dual system theory in which women's position in society is believed to be jointly determined by the twin systems of production and reproduction by capitalism and patriarchy. Marxist and socialist feminism consist of essential components of socialist and marxist feminist theories. The socialist and Marxist feminist group does not attribute women's exploitation entirely to men; they see capitalism rather than patriarchy as being the principal source of women's oppression and capitalists as the main beneficiaries. Unlike Marx, this group identifies three collectivities of actors in the process of social production. The workers and women whose historic and distinctive position in the relations of production constitutes them as a stand point group. Socialist and Marxist feminist theories explained the Marx concept of social production that is the production of social life, including the organisation of housework, sexuality, intimacy, politics, mass communication etc. They contend that all intergroup relations in the process of social production are based on an exploitative arrangement of masters and servants where men dominate, dictate and profit from the productive circumstances of women in all spheres of life. Women are confined at home with the responsibility of taking care of the children and without economic independence. Further, love is also believed to be the pivot of women's oppression today because the unequal relationship between men and women corrupts love. Men need women for

emotional support but are unable to give it back. This form of arrangement represents a form of oppression.

### **Black Feminism Theory**

The black Feminist theory focuses on a shared critique advanced within the work of black feminists in respect of the arguments and strategies adopted by mainstream white dominating feminism. Black feminist such as Halirova, M. (2016) argues that other feminists, as well as male activities, have not addressed the particular problems faced by black women. She maintained that black women had joined in the fight for civil rights (not black women's rights) but the organisation were dominated by men and women's issues which requires no consideration. Moreso, the white feminist's concentration on the family as a source of women's oppression requiring redress through state intervention is questionable to the black Feminists. Mopelola, R. O. (2021). To them, they do not completely disagree with the idea, but they point to the significance of state as often the perpetrators. It has become apparent that it is important to maintain a sphere of life in which state, country or authority is limited.

### **Biography of Al-Fayturi: Life and Works**

Al-Fayturi (1936) born in Al Geneina in Western Darfur, Sudan, and his paternal family belonged to the Masalit people. His father was a Sufi sheikh of Libyan descent, and his mother was Egyptian. He grew up in Alexandria, Egypt, and studied Islamic sciences, philosophy and history at Al-Azhar University until 1953, and then continued his studies in literature at Cairo University. After this, he joined the Institute of Political Science in Cairo. Al-Fayturi started writing classical Arabic poetry at the age of 13 and later became one of the major figures of contemporary Arabic poetry Muhammad, W. (2022).

Al-Fayturi worked as journalist, and later, editor for Sudanese or Egyptian newspapers at the age of 17. Moreover, he was an acclaimed poet, and also was appointed as diplomat, political and cultural counsellor, and then as ambassador of Libya in several countries, including Lebanon and Morocco. From 1968–1970, he was appointed as an expert for the Arab League. He also was a member of the Arab Writers Union. In 1953 he published his first collection of poems entitled 'AghāniAfriqiyah' ('Songs of Africa'). Al-Fayturi died in Rabat, Morocco, in 2015. In an obituary, the Lebanese newspaper The Daily Star wrote: "His work particularly draws upon his experience as an African living among Arabs, and thus addresses issues such as race, class and colonialism Muhammad, W. (2022)

AghāniAfriqiya (The Songs of Africa), poetry collection, published 1956. Āshiqun min Afriqiya (Lover from Africa), poetry collection, 1964. Udhkur'inniYaaAfriqiya (Remember Me O! Africa), poetry collection, 1965. SaqūtDabeshlim (Collapse of Doapashalim), poetry collection, 1968. Ma'zūffa lee DaraweeshMutajawal (The Lyric of Roaming Dervish), poetry collection

1969. *IlaWajhinAbyad* (To a white face). *ThawratQaryah* (A village Uprising). *Al-Tufan al- aswad* (The Black flood). *Laylat al-sabthazinah* (Sad Saturday night). *Ahzānu l-madinah al-sawdah* (Sorrows of the Black city). *L-aenayngarrima'rufayn* (To Two Unknown Eyes). *Solara*, drama, 1970. *Thawrat Umar Al-mukhtār* (The Revolution of Umar Al-Mukhtār), drama, 1974. *Allam Al-Sahafa al-arabiawa-al Ajnabiya* (The World of Arab and Foreign Journalism), Damascus, 1981. *Al-moojabwa-al s'alieb* (The Positive and Negative in Arabic Journalism), Damascus, 1986.

### **Traditional Gender Roles and Stereotypes in Al- Fayturi's Poetry**

Al-Fayturi's poetry is a comprehensive general human condition that addresses any person, anywhere at any time. They are all identical copies of the problems of the oppressed man and his sufferings wherever he is ranging from colonial slavery, to racism, discrimination, gender violence and feminism, Saddiq, M. G. (2008). Due to the hatred, enslavement, humiliation of his people, he dedicated all his literary works, on realities of death, struggle and life, raising the issues of the African man, his torment and falling prey to colonial pillaging, discrimination, racism, slavery and gender problems.

In Muhammad Al-Fayturi's poems, we see the deprivation of the dark-skinned man, his sufferings, torment and abuse. We also notice his aspiration towards rising and standing with dignity in the face of the white tyranny that enslaved the people of Africa, tampered with its history, stole its freedom, exploited its wealth and discriminated against African women and girls. He focused on gender problems of African subjects arising due to gender stereotypes, gender Stratification and a lot more which were purposely orchestrated to undermine the natural beauty and virtues of the African gender. He said in one of his poems which were written in 1948 and entitled *ila Wajhin Abyad* (To a white face), intervenes:

ألنن وجهي أسود؟

ألنن وجهك أبيض؟  
سميتني عبدا  
ووطنت إنسانيتي  
وحقرت روحانيتي  
فصنعت لي قيادا  
وشربت كرمي ظالما  
وأكلت بقلي ناقما  
وتركت لي الحقدا  
ولبست ما نسجت خيوط مغازلي  
وكسوتني التنهيد والكدا  
وسكنت جنات الفرديس  
التي بيدي نحت صخورها الصلدا  
وأنا.. كم استلقيت في كوخ الدجي  
اتلفح الكلمات والبرد

كالشاة. أجتر الكأبة  
 عاقدا حولي دخان تفاهتي عقدا  
 حتى إذا انطفأت مصابيح السما  
 وانساب نهر الفرات ممتدا  
 أيقظت ماشيتي الهزيلة  
 وانطلقت أقودها لمراجها قودا  
 فإذا سمن نعمت أنت بلحمها  
 ونبذت لي الأمعاء والجلدا !<sup>22</sup> ص ٨٦-  
 ٨٥

"? Is it because  
 my face is Black"  
 Al-Fayturi, M.  
 (1979).

Is it because your face is White?  
 You named me as a slave  
 You trampled on my humanity  
 You demeaned my spirit  
 You made a chain for me  
 You unjustly consumed my honour  
 You are my grocery in anger  
 You bequeathed hatred unto me  
 You wore what my spinning mill weaved  
 You robbed me with signs and labour  
 You lived in gardens of paradise  
 Whose hard rocks were cleft asunder by my hands  
 And I...how many times have I laid in the darkness  
 hut  
 Burning under darkness and cold  
 Like a goat.... mulling my grief/sorrow  
 Knitting the smoke of my significance around myself  
 Until the light of the heavens are extinguished  
 And the stream of the dawn (begin) to flow  
 I woke my skinny cattle up And I began to drive it  
 towards it's pasture  
 When it became fat you enjoyed its flesh  
 You abandoned the intestine and the skin for me.  
 (Oladosu, A. A. 2008)

Al-Faytūrī is thus positioned in the poem as a person with a past that needs to be reconciled and made "legitimate"; he has a debt to the British. He seems to be a subject who is fighting against history, memory, and an unending reality. In a different poem, Al-Faytūrī poses as the colonizer and asks, "Is it because my face is Black/Is it because your face is White?" to start a conversation. The Hegelian dialectic that self-consciousness "exists in itself and for itself, in that and by the fact that it exists for itself" is highlighted in these lines as another self

consciousness; that is to say, fulfillment for the self can only come from being acknowledged or recognized" by the Other. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the colonized subject is seeking agency through poetry; he wants to assert his identity and selfhood in opposition to the colonizer's body. More precisely, though, the lyrics address the broad issue of what it meant to be White or Black in early modern Africa, how it affected the status of "Blacks" in relation to "Whites," and how that led to the formation of colonization on the continent. Put another way, when the "Black" man in the colony interacts with the "White," each of the individuals is drawn to and diverted by the Other; there is an instantaneous awareness of what may be called the poetics of color by the two subjects, as though driven by an unknown power. In this case, the poetics of color refers to the meanings and codes that the colors red, white, black, dark, and green as well as the hegemonic reading that color has endured throughout history and culture have been assigned to throughout civilizations. The White man's presence in the colony, as would occur if a Black man ventured into the city, serves to transform the colony into a setting where both White and Black people would participate in color politics. As a result, when he finally meets the colonized the Black subject whom he had previously created and imagined. When confronted directly by the colonizer, the Black man, conversely, attempts to navigate his subjectivity Oladosu, A. A. (2008). The Black person feels as though his true nature is obscured when he sees the colonist on his territory. With specific reference to the fallacy of using Blackness as a reason behind slavery and, consequently, colonialism. All of these actions are taken by the colonizer in an effort to subjugate the colonized and distinguish himself from them. To put it another way, the colonizer makes sure his residence is distinct from the original one even though he now resides in Africa. "Gardens of Paradise / Whose hard rocks were cleft asunder by my hands" round this one. According to Fanon, the colonizer's dwelling is "a sector built to last, all stone and steel." It's an area with paved roads and lighting, where the trash cans are always overflowing with odd and potent waste and unimagined leftovers. It's also an area that is perpetually full of wonderful things. On the other side, thatched roofs and mud homes are associated with the colonized. These are homes that are frequently destroyed by typhoons, relentless storms, and the deadly cold. There is no room on this planet, and people are stacked on top of one another Oladosu, A. A. (2008). This area is starving, in need of bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light. Stated differently, prior to the colonizers' arrival in Sudan and other areas. The continent of Africa was derogatorily called "a land of slaves." But as soon as the colonizer sets foot on the continent, he finds that it truly has everything that could make it either a paradise or a hell, nothing that would make slavery a natural trait of its people. However, the development of a number of tax regimes to be paid by the colonized became a categorical imperative in order to turn colonial Africa into a paradise for the colonizer and a hell for the colonized, respectively. According to Nelson Mandela:

We regarded the struggle in a prison as a microcosm of the struggle as a whole. We would fight inside as we had fought outside. The racism and repression were the same; I would simply have to fight on different terms.

The absence of political rights under Colonizer segregation and the use of police state powers against African Americans in urban ghettos have meant that black people could be subjugated, often with little recourse. Routine practices such as strip searches, verbal abuse, restricting basic privileges, and ignoring physical and sexual assault among inmates aim to control prisoners by dehumanizing them. Author John Wiseman describes this disciplinary process:

The visitor is forced to become an inmate. Subjected to the same sorts of humiliation and depersonalization. Made to feel powerless, intimidated by the might of the state. Visitors are treated like both children and ancient, incorrigible sinners. We experience a crash course that teaches us in a dramatic, unforgettable fashion just how low a prisoner is in the institution's estimation. We also learn how rapidly we can descend to the same depth . . . We suffer the keepers' prying eyes, prying machines, prying hands. We let them lock us in without any guarantee the doors will open when we wish to leave. We are in fact their prisoners until they release us. That was the idea. To transform the visitor into something he despised and feared.

The legal classification of enslaved African people as Chattel (animal-like) under American slavery that produced controlling images of bucks, jezebels, and breeder women meaning from this broader interpretive framework. The ideology of black sexuality that pivoted on a black heterosexual promiscuity not only upheld racism but it did so in gender-specific ways. Strategies of control were harsh and enslaved African men who were born in Africa or who had access to their African past were deemed to be the most dangerous. In contrast the controlling image of the rapist appeared after emancipation because Southern Whites' feared that the unfettered promiscuity of black freedmen constituted a threat to the Southern way of life. In this way, the broad ethnic diversity among the people of continental Africa became reduced to more generic terms such as primitive, savage, and native. Within these categories, one could be an Ashanti or a Yoruba, but each was a savage, primitive native all the same. The resulting

primitivist discourse redefined African societies as inferior. Al-Fayturi marginalized his poem on gender as wisdom and culture. Zayaty says:

I think for people who may be thicker, you know, or people who may be darker, and people who may be Black, it's good to see someone like me in one of the magazines under "beautiful", so that a black person out there can say , "You know what? I'm beautiful. It's beautiful. That must make me beautiful"<sup>27</sup>.

I argued that, in this poem, Al-Fayturi sends a strong protest letter to the white man, affirming that the black man must resist in front of the white man, and basically, the black man is rejected for nothing but because he is black. He said that black people should not lose their freedom; that freedom was a natural gain.

### **Conclusion**

Gender needs to be understood as social structure, an approach that would render it recognizable in various dimensions of social life. Understanding gender as social structure would elevate it to the level of economic and political systems in its ability to influence and mold society. Social construction and postmodern feminisms have only begun to translate their theoretical and linguistic destabilization of the gender order into politics or praxis. It is clear that most of Al-Fayturi's work were based on struggling and agitation for Africans' independence and survival. His choice of words, imagery, signs and symbols depicts the sufferings of his people. He dedicated his passion and energy toward the growth, development and economic freedom of his country from the colonial exploits. It is high time citizens, human rights activists, political stakeholders as well as the government demonstrate patriotic values and uphold the essence of humanity as well as enhancing better life fellow individuals. This project work sets out to examine gender in the works of Muhammad Miftah Al-Fayturi's poetry. Gender issues are quite topical in many parts of the world, especially in Africa Over 80 million women. This is why Muhammad Al-Fayturi devoted most of his poems to demonstrating the level of racial discrimination, gender inequality, violence and slavery in his country home Sudan. Even here in Nigeria, girls have significantly worse life chances than men in other comparable societies. Violence, exclusion and marginalization are often some of the issues that confront women. Gender stereotyping makes the matter controversial in many societies. Just as Al-Fayturi dedicated his work to agitating equality for female gender and struggle for independence of the Sudanese, my honest contribution to this issues is to widely embrace gender equality. Nigeria, like several other countries should subscribe to the goal of promoting gender equality and liberty. Girls and women should not be hugely limited by traditional and cultural practices and are often relegated. Both women and men should possess equal rights and opportunities in the scheme of things



economically, societally and politically. In addition, the mass media as a socially-responsible arm of society, should set agenda for public discourse on gender equality, as well as frame and prime the news to promote gender equality at all levels of society, particularly in rural communities. The government must realize gender equality and removing structural barriers including those related to discrimination and that intersect with other inequalities must remain a priority, as a matter of basic human rights and long-term economic wellbeing and prosperity. Discriminatory laws and practices including unequal land, property and inheritance rights that prevent women and girls from accessing and controlling critical productive and financial resources globally and, though to a lesser degree should be abolished. Reviewing existing legislation and regulations to identify and remove any discriminatory provisions, followed by effective enforcement and compliance, is very crucial to the liberty of the female gender. Finally. Sexual exploitation abuse, harassment and gender-based violence (GBV) are among the most abhorrent forms of gender discrimination and violation of human rights, health, dignity, safety and well-being must be frowned upon. Human rights activists and relevant stakeholders must be ready to defend the rights of every individual especially where they are infringed upon. In conclusion, it is vividly believed that these would go a long way to improve the quality and standard of living of individual as well eradicating all forms of gender issues and problems facing the country and Africa at large.

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