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The Stages of Pain and the Paths of Knowledge in the Collection Wounded by Absence by Mohammed Obaidallah

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Abstract: Poetry is a search for the lost self, if Sufism is a reflection on the alienated self. The poet goes through this difficult quest—looking for his essence in the field of creativity, trying to find solutions to the confusion that plagues him to the point of obsession. Will the poet return defeated and lose his tablets, or will he actually discover these answers? Will his mysterious universe ever be free of the veils of confusion? What does the poem gain from the Sufi dimension?.

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Keywords : Poetry, Sufism, Poem, Stages, Self.

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Introduction:

"I write in two languages so that things may pass from this room to that..." — Sartre

Many poets have been drawn into the worlds of Sufism by the poetic experience. Since the Sufi symbol acts as a mediator between the worlds of matter and spirit, its enigmatic symbolism is arguably the most unique feature that has added to its brilliance.

1. The Sufi Symbol and the Reasons for Inclining toward Its Use:

Similar to Sufism as a mirror of a spiritual condition and a revelation of knowledge, the poetry state, with its language branches and chronological diversity, does not depart from the human concept of transcendence. Poetry's constant renewal and mutation, which reflects Sufism's restless state—"if stillness occurs, there is no Sufism" (Hadara, 1981, p. 107)—is one of its purest qualities.

Poetry is filled with the same intense feelings that Sufis experience, such as those between closeness and serenity, longing and love, and fear and hope. "*Contemplation through feeling and heart is an essential means for both poet and mystic alike."* (Hadara, 1981, p. 107)

Additionally, there is a close relationship between the poetic and Sufi states: the poet's intuition or inspiration is similar to the Sufi's experience of annihilation (fanā'), in which all sensory perception of existence vanishes.

Additionally, Sufism "offers the opportunity to release hidden desires, instincts, and inner emotions that can be expressed." (Hadara, 1981, p. 121) According to Coleridge, the synthesis of these two domains—Sufism and poetry—thus results in a reconciliation of spirit and body, establishing a balance between the temporal and eternal components of the human person.

He discovered a haven in the Sufi vision for both increasing intellectual reflection in search of truth and transcending reality towards a balanced horizon. He realised that "the philosophy of Sufism granted him the opportunity to freely express his inner, closed-off world." (Qasim, p. 239) In this instance, the symbol stands for one of the phenomena that exposes the underlying Sufi inclination, which has

come to be recognised as a defining characteristic of modern Arabic poetry. By aggressively shaking language to achieve meanings that go well beyond words, the poet aims to make his poetry a comprehensive interior experience. As a result, he is engulfed in ambiguity and obscurity, and the reader perceives the overall mood of the poet's experience without completely understanding the larger idea of the ideas and images it inspires. (Hadara, 1981, p. 121)

Thus, the Sufi tendency has permeated modern Arabic poetry, attracting writers with its dimensions—dimensions that constitute the core of Arab poetic modernity—and enhancing their experiences. This trend, which aims for freedom and rebirth, is infused with the Arab nation's civilizational consciousness and its engagement with historical logic. Therefore, the modern poet *"does not adhere to mystical Sufism intoxicated by the opium of illusion, turning away from reality, but rather to a national Sufism—one that saves the people from their ordeal and restores to them the dignity of life.*" (Elia, 1980, p. 188)

Sufism thus represents the poet's return to the vitality of history rather than his destruction in the divine absolute. To put it another way, the truth that the Arab poet discovers—as well as the road he perceives—represents the intellectual and spiritual core of the contemporary person and is the way to deliverance from his alienated and distorted civilizational reality.

In this way, the reality that the modern poet has uncovered is a historical fact: the existence of an Arab Palestinian person facing a corrupt Arab society.

2. Stages and Manifestations of Pain in the Poetry Collection *"Wounded by Absence"* by Muhammad Ubaidallah

The poet has taken words from the Sufi lexicon and used them to convey his inner feelings, such as desire, longing, and spiritual bliss. The Sufi body becomes a vehicle for poetic revelation as the poetic language extends along its length. As a result, the poem's words have a magnificent resonance—as it is said, "In every word, a thousand lights shine"—because the structure is Sufi and the pulse is poetic. (Miftah, 1950, p. 91).

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Beginning with the title "Raqīm al-Khalāṣ" (The Inscription of Salvation), the poet's spiritual dimension—, which is both religious and even transcendent—becomes apparent: it is the realm of Sufism. We come across Sufi vocabulary throughout the entire poem.

In the linguistic vocabulary, a tablet or slab of stone used for writing is referred to as "Raqīm". According to Surat al-Kahf, al-Raqīm is linked to the People of the Cave (Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm), who took sanctuary in the cave to escape the oppression of an unfair ruler.

Pain is evident from the collection's opening window because the term "stabbed" in the title itself conveys a sense of betrayal.

The word "absence", which declares the rule of absence and increases the anguish, is the culmination of this agony. As a result, the slash is marked by betrayal, and the phrase "separation" appears to linger behind the statement, acting as the suggested counterpart of the stab whose images appear throughout the literary world.

Muhammad Ubaidallah states in the dedication itself:

> ***To M.A.***
> *My perfect likeness,*
> *and my friend when sins committed me.* (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 4)

As a result, the dedication turns into a gesture towards the poet's own creative self—that person that leaves him when the poetry moment is over and parts ways with his steady, everyday self. Thus, the dedication is directed to the insane, alienated self that is vital to the act of creation.

He then focuses the devotion on Ghāda, the beloved, whose separation goes all the way to death, annihilation, and disappearance, but not to nihility, as she becomes these poems' ink. Thus, death in this context is a rebirth, a change into a new life—a life in the creative world. The poetry absorbs Ghāda's energy, and the beloved and the poem become one. As the poet infuses Ghāda into verse throughout the anthology, it becomes the lover's sleep and his journey through the stages of the beloved.

All his lines exhale **longing and anguish** — *"separation / pain"* — a wound that runs from *"The Inscription of Salvation"* (*Raqīm al-Khalāṣ*) to *"The Illumination of Delusion",* where despair takes hold in

"No longer possible", then unfolds through *"Scenes of Me, Wounded by Absence",* ending with *"The Chapter of Disappointment".*

Until the veils of annihilation and nothingness are lifted and the creative self-radiates, waking the poet to the face of the poem, each of these titles is a lamentation for a self in anguish, a self-devastated by absence, separation, and death. There, the poet cries out in anguish, seeking salvation through his poem "The Inscription of Salvation", and suffering forms its own presence in a hallowed realm (ḥaḍra) where the creator and the beloved writhe together.

The poet reaches the boundaries of constriction at this height of longing, where expression becomes more limited:

> *"For writing is torment and exhaustion, and beginning it is to embark upon a journey of suffering and pain."* (Al-Yousufi, 1992, p. 262)

Thus, when the poet tries to reveal its secret, the poem opens with murmurs and feverish whispers:

> *"Expression grew too tight for my sorrows, and my soul flung itself*
> *into the arms of change.*
> *At what time shall I seek refuge in its emptiness?*
> *I circle around the hidden places of the ancient secret.*
> *To violate a white space and fill it with my captive complaint."* (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 5)

This poem's beginning was written in the form of prose poetry, possibly in an attempt to seduce and gently trick the reader by slowly bringing them into the world of suffering—a slow initiation intended to let the reader join in the creator's own "writing and creation" problem. Before the moment of revelation—the poetic moment, the instant of rapture—arrives, it is a plunge into the depths of the incomprehensible and the illogical.

According to the poet, it is a sort of retreat that comes before creation:

> *"I rest in my solitude until rapture comes,*
> *Then I restrain absence—*

They wait for my soul to tremble with illumination." (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 5)

Waiting so turns into waiting for illumination, for that moment of revelation when the secret is exposed—only to run headlong into absence. However, is the poet aware that he has already "ventured into a state of danger" by disclosing this? (Youssef, 2002, p. 63)

The poet freely admits this anguish through his visions since he is acutely aware of it. The moment of revelation turns into an act of bringing back the "Ghāda", the beloved whose memory he cannot shake; she is the cause of suffering and the poem's inspiration. He travels back in time, to memory, through her.

He starts in delirium, and this time, agony disguises itself as memories, creating illusionary flashes and pieces that fill the poet's consciousness:

"I kept their old promise kindly,
preserved it in the wound of my memory,
and prepared my waiting to remain unmeasured like the sky,
so that the spring might fly, drunken,
scattering its passion through the worlds of my being." (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 6)

In this state, he wanders through the space of memory, tormented by pain that occasionally manifests as confusion, the confusion of the self; at other times, it manifests as rapturous longing, a fascination so strong that it opens into the world of the imagined, the space of writing itself, refined by isolation and estrangement.

My space is pure.

for bewilderment and wretched longing.

The universe is made of questions. —

Am I the only one to answer? (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 6)

Pain increases in this passage because the lover is rejected; the beloved has pulled the curtains, leaving him to wander in the orbit of questions that lead to pathways that open the gates of dream, where the

self descends into the misery of unreachable knowledge that refuses to be revealed.

"And those to whom knowledge was granted
fled their names to another." (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 7)

In an attempt to recover from his diversion, the artist turns inward—toward himself—in a dream that is an illusion, a self-deception in which he makes promises to himself about a better "tomorrow". However, when the veil of prophecy is lifted, it becomes a disaster; therefore, suffering threatens that very hope with its lashes:

"His features, once spoken of… vanish."

The lover gives in to stillness—to the creative quiet, the stop of the self as it reaches the knowledge of knowledge itself, the lover's understanding of his own being—and the dream fades as expression is lost. "Art often disappears by the power of art itself," according to Ovid. (Ovid, 2002)

The loving self now rises into the depths of the creative universe. The act of transcendence becomes an essential step in the journey to the beloved's domain. From there, the dreamlike reverie of inquiry blossoms into a torrent of wonder:

"My captive joy questioned me at the sight of a woman…" (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 8)

In this instance, the self-breaks away from the poet and becomes the maker of its own existence, existing in parallel to the poet:

"I saw him in her, arranging her hair—
He did not tell her of me.
He did not pass from me into her." (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 8)

The poet's struggle against static being and what "remains latent within her" is symbolised in this moment, even if he is the one who

"All worlds are his face." (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 8)

As a result, the self-separates from the creative cosmos. The poet is completely alone in front of this transforming self.

"And I, the orphan,"

- a current orphan, seeking redemption by following the path of that lost self:

> *"Will he lend me his hands so I may bring back Ghāda?"* (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 8)

Only he has the power to bring the self—Ghāda—back from the shadows of erasure so that it opens up to the limitless and reaches the horizon. The ego slips away, seeking more ascension along the steps of sanctity, until the suffering is so great that it is on the verge of obliteration.

Here, the unconscious self—that part that tries to escape—is exposed, and the power of erasing destroys the exact barrier that once separated it from the creator/lover in this made-up cosmos. It is a self that escapes the boundaries of belonging and dives further into the creative self, which might be described as:

> *"You were my mirror, and I became the mirror."* (Badawī, 1978, p. 101)

As a result, the self is destroyed in itself—fanāüge—becoming a listening self, revealed upon a warped certainty, and plunging into the mazes of an early, unfulfilled love (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 9).

It conceals itself beneath the mist of vision, a vision shattered by the eruption of transformational worries brought on by the act of gossip that hindered the poet's climb. The prospect of mystical fulfilment is destroyed by this betrayal—the revelation of the secret, which prevents the lover from continuing his ascent:

> *"I could not bear his splendour—*
> *Then came their whispers, and he vanished into a presence I could not comprehend…"* (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 9)

After failing in his spiritual climb, the lover awakens to a self thirsting for the wine of knowledge—the beloved's gaze—and plunges into a maelstrom of agony. The knowing self starts to confess, making a quiet admission (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 9). This confession transcends the material world, where language itself becomes muted, labouring under the weight of what it cannot articulate.

This is how the creative language expresses its anguish, the anguish of separation that, in reality, comes from the channels of the creative self, labouring under the agony of disclosure—this outpouring leading to annihilation.

It begs the question: is this destruction a way to be saved, or is it just another type of suffering that keeps coming back to haunt us in different forms? In this instance, the self-turns into a curtain that prevents knowledge from being completed during the process of becoming (k–n). (Ubaidallah, 1993, p. 9).

In fact, k–n (being/creation) denotes emergence, birth, and starting. The poetry itself is an act of revelation, and revelation occurs when the secret is revealed. This revelation is a moment of revelation, insight, and invention that also subtly avoids the spirit. Sighs, mazes, and agony give birth to the poetry.

According to this viewpoint, letters and sounds take on independent existence, causing being to erupt and reveal its essence as they merge into the poem, which only exists by piercing the veil of present time towards the future, enabling the poem to fulfil its prophetic role within its own era. These are the poet's spiritual state's Sufi undulations, entwined with transcendent correspondences that lead to the infinite.

In conclusion, Sufism is the exploration of the deepest self, and the spiritual ascent (miʿrāj) is realised through the severe ordeals, the tortuous and hidden routes, and the agonies of the soul. Words and poetry open the doors of secrets and the boundaries of the unknown in this journey of the self in search of its destiny and the pursuit of the ultimate. Salvation takes place here, in this transitional area, and knowledge and the poetry are born out of it.

This masterfully presents poetry as a metaphysical act of creation as well as a Sufi journey, where transcendence, suffering, and revelation come together to create knowledge and the poem itself.

Conclusion

- The poem opens up to contemporary vistas of regeneration because it is based on a Sufi vision.

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- The poem changes from one state to another, introducing a new formal architecture.
- The poet's ambiguous language, which combines Sufi and lyrical elements, gives rise to the semantic density.
- The poem is related to the Sufi passages' psychological description of the inner beat, where vision rises in conversation with language.
- The Sufi and poetic states are similar in that they rely more on allusion, symbolism, and suggestion than on overt statement.
- The poet makes use of both the linguistic diversity of Sufi poets and the Sufi lexicon.
- The poet's work is dominated by the estrangement phenomenon, which is akin to Sufi thinking.
- The poet expresses this separation from the mundane world and desire for the absolute in a surrealistic way, whereas the Sufi expresses it mystically.
- The poet's experience is similar to the Sufi state in terms of how they view life and strive for revelation and union with the cosmos.
- The poem creates a new language based on transcendence by going beyond everyday words.
- In an effort to expose the visionary poetic state, shape the poem, and free the creative self, the poetry experience echoes mystical chants while challenging the stages of sorrow and longing.

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