

Providing the Voiceless with Voice: Cultural Dualisms, Objectification, Oppression, and Resistance in Three Selected Short Stories by Salwa Bakr

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Abstract:

Focusing on the subordination of the female protagonists, and the exploitation of non-human creatures, respectively, this paper attempts to read Salwa Bakr's three short stories, "Thirty-one Beautiful Green Trees", "Such a Beautiful Voice", and "The Monkey Trainer" from an ecofeminist perspective. The paper also explores the course of events of the three short stories which render a general sense of social disharmony resulting from the oppression of both women and non-human creatures by patriarchal monopoly. Also, the ecofeminist tenet of the interconnectedness of all life forms and the parallelism between women and nature as victims of the cultural dualisms underlying patriarchal ideology is spotlighted in "Thirty-One Beautiful Trees" and "The Monkey Trainer".

The direct outcome of gender inequality, social injustice, oppression of women and non-human beings, and the various forms of resistance of such oppression, is ultimately social disharmony. Evidently, the protagonists' attempt to attain emancipation is not realized at the end of the three short stories. None the less, providing women and non-human beings with a voice of their own, and representing them as whole and complex beings is Salwa Bakr's method of resolving the issues of social marginalization and oppression, a method which dismantles the cultural dualisms inherent in the anthropocentric domination of women, nature, and literary writing. Most importantly, they represent a textual manifestation of resistance, and a means of emancipating women, and nature as well as a realization of justice in the literary text that could become viable in reality.

Received: 07/04/2020

Accepted: 09/05/2020

Available online: 30/09/2023

Introduction

Focusing on the subordination of the female protagonists, and the exploitation of non-human creatures, respectively, this paper attempts to read Salwa Bakr's three short stories, "Thirty-one Beautiful Green Trees", "Such a Beautiful Voice", and "The Monkey Trainer" from an ecofeminist perspective. The paper also explores the course of events and the ending of the three short stories which render a general sense of social disharmony resulting from the oppression of both women and non-human creatures by patriarchal monopoly although the three protagonists opt for resistance of such oppression. In addition, the ecofeminist tenet of the interconnectedness of all life forms and the parallelism between women and nature as victims of the cultural dualisms underlying patriarchal ideology is spotlighted in "Thirty-One Beautiful Trees" and "The Monkey Trainer". Salwa Bakr (1949-) is an Egyptian critic, novelist, and short story writer. She began writing in the mid-1970s, and her work has been met with much critical acclaim. An important preoccupation of Salwa Baker's writing is her disapproval of the Egyptian patriarchal socio-political structure which restricts the role of women to the procurement of children or the creation of life and the procurement of children, and ostracizes women who deviate from the norm (Masoud 4). Nevertheless, both underprivileged, powerless women and men, according to Bakr, can be liberated and given voice through women's writings which, according to her, is a male-dominated profession (Jaquette). Writing in the postcolonial era of Sadat's "Open Door" policy, and its political, socio-economic consequences on Mubarak's era, as well as (*al-infitah*), Bakr's works also deal with the capitalist economic repercussions of these policies on nature, and on society at large (Al Bayoumy 57).

According to Bakr, "The dilemma" of women "is the old idea that restricts their role to pregnancy, childbirth, and the family while assigning to men the role of creating culture and history. Bakr contends that there is a gap between women's position in society and society's expectations of them, although, today, women are active participants in politics and work in more professional fields than ever before (Jaquette). Thence, it is socially unacceptable for a writer to portray them in any role other than mother, sister, wife or daughter- roles in which women are dependent, incomplete persons who merely acquire an identity through their association to patriarchal figures.

1. The Subordination of Women and the exploitation of Non-human Creatures

Rosemary Radford Reuther defines ecofeminism as follows:

This socio-economic form of ecofeminist analysis, then, [which] sees the cultural-symbolic patterns by which both women and nature are interiorized and identified with each other as an ideological superstructure by which the system of economic and legal domination of women, land, and animals is justified and made to appear "natural" and inevitable within a total patriarchal cosmovision (34, 35).

Reuther further explains the cultural dualisms that separate men from women and nature, and the aim of ecofeminism to deconstruct such dualisms as follows:

Ecofeminists see the separation of women from men by patterns of cultural dualism of mind-body, dominant-subordinate, thinking-feeling, and the identification of the lower half of these dualisms with both women and nature, as a victimology. The dualisms falsify who women and men (and also nature) really are in their wholeness and complexity, and justify the treatment of both women and nature as property of men to be used as they wish. Ecofeminism is about deconstructing these dualisms, both in regard to women and in regard to nature (36,37).

Moving the discussion to the Egyptian context, Bakr's above-mentioned three short stories highlight the dualistic beliefs of man/woman, humans/non-humans besides other binaries that seem to mark the patriarchal Egyptian social structure. The two female protagonists in "Thirty-One Beautiful Trees" and "Such a Beautiful Voice" are subordinated by a dualistic patriarchal framework of oppression and domination resulting in social disharmony. Likewise, the three monkeys in "The Monkey Trainer" are exploited and commodified by the same dualistic framework of oppression. Centering around the duality of humans/non-humans, "The Monkey Trainer" also deals with the monkeys' objectification and exploitation by their trainer/human exploiter. Although poor, and uneducated, Sharshar, the trainer represents a complete patriarchal figure (albeit a socially marginalized and oppressed one himself).

2. Ecofeminism and the Deconstruction of Cultural Dualisms

Ecofeminism aims at the deconstruction of such cultural dualisms which disrupt the interconnectedness of all life forms, and generate social disharmony. Salwa Bakr's writing embraces these ecofeminist tenets. In the three works under discussion, Bakr discloses patriarchal oppression of women and nature in the Egyptian society with the aim of effecting

social transformation through the subversion of these patriarchal dualisms. (“Salwa Bakr and Arabic Literature” Mende)

As Greta Gaard notes, “ecofeminism, which asserts the fundamental interconnectedness of all life, offers an appropriate foundation for an ecological ethical theory for women and men who do not operate on the basis of a self/other disjunction”, a disjunction forming the core of patriarchal ideology in its conception of the self as separate, atomistic, and mainly competing for rights rather than duties (2-4). Gaard also writes that in ecofeminism “no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature” (1). The environment is also a “feminist issue” in ecofeminism which forms a connection between the “oppressions of nature and women” (Gaard 4). Conversely, feminist issues can be treated as environmental ones. Besides, the degradation and disintegration of the environment has drastic and harmful effects on both animals and women in particular. Instead of being a “single-issue” movement, ecofeminism rests on the notion that the liberation of all oppressed groups must be addressed simultaneously” including groups of race, colour, class and women of the third world (Gaard 5).

Karren J. Warren, on her part, establishes a connection between ecofeminism and ecology. She claims that there is a conceptual framework of oppression that functions to explain, maintain, and justify institutions, relationships and practices of unjustified domination and subordination of both women and non-human nature. Sexism, racism, and classism are concepts that exemplify such framework of oppression and domination. Warren also stresses the interconnectedness of women and nature in an attempt to replace the patriarchal oppressive framework of domination which proposes dualisms and an exclusion of the “other” with a more justified conceptual framework that eliminates such oppressive practices (57).

As Barbara Harlow writes in her introduction to *The Wiles of Men* (1993), Bakr's writings emphasize “the status of women's rights as human rights within a collective political struggle” (xiii). Consequently, many of Bakr's short stories, such as “Thirty-one Beautiful Green Trees,” attempt to explore links and boundaries vis-à-vis politics, and the liberation of women. In other words, the public and the private are merged, and suppression of talent, or self-expression is a means of marginalizing women which is a common theme of many of Bakr's work. For instance, “The Beautiful Undiscovered Voice” deals with the theme of female suppressed

creativity(Fouad. 6). Additionally, the same framework of patriarchal domination and oppression is evident in the relationship between the monkeys and their trainer in the “The Monkey Trainer” demonstrating the ecofeminist identification between women and non-human nature as objects of oppression and subjugation in Bakr’s works.

3. Bakr’s writing as an Act of Social Justice

In her introduction to a collection of short stories by Salwa Bakr which she translated into English in 1992, HuddaAl-sadda describes Bakr as “a talented and original writer, a woman writer with a voice of her own”(7). In *Salwa Bakr: Such A Beautiful Voice*, Al-sadda contends that even though Bakr’s works represent oppressed, destitute, and marginalized Egyptian women,her works are not confined to the male/female conflict; Bakr’s writing “supersedes the limits of binary thought in her search for alternative structures, images, and relations that will ultimately prove to be more liberating and more fulfilling for women and men”(13). In fact,Bakr believes both men and women are victims of an oppressive political regime, and an in-egalitarian social order.Nonetheless, it is “the oppression of women that occupies thecenter of attentionin her fictional world, and it is through female consciousness that the narrative is told” (El-Enany377).Bakr focuses on womencharacters who“remain unobtrusive" (Mende).Thus,Kareema andSayyida are given a voiceto express themselves in the first two short stories. The monkey, Maatouq is also provided with a voice in the face of exploitation and commodification.Thereupon, the anthropocentric dualisms inherent in society, nature, and literary writing are dismantled in Bakr’s writing.

By exposing patriarchal dualisms, Bakr’s writing is ultimately an act of social justice which expresses the dilemmas of women during the days of the women’s political movement, and especially to express the concerns of women living in poverty in poor countries like Egypt .Furthermore, Bakr is always keen on distinguishing her work from a male brand of literature that through its patriarchal lens perceives women first and foremost as wives or lovers: "I write about widows or rejected women who are lonely, but who nevertheless have desires," says Bakr(Mende). Rather than opting for complacency and silence, Bakr not only grants a voice to the female protagonists, Kareema, Saayda, but also to the non-human being, Maatouq,the monkey. Overall, “Both Salwa Bakr and her characters speak a new language that heralds the

emergence and dissemination of the discerning eye of the silenced Egyptian woman, not so silenced any more” (Al-Sadda “Women’s Writing in Egypt”24).

Like Sakina Fuad and Mona Ragab, two contemporary Egyptian women writers and journalists, Bakr empowers women protagonists by foregrounding them in her narratives. To empower women in an anthropocentric society, Bakr represents women protagonists as “heroes who occupy center stage, whereas men are demoted to the background and presented in a negative light. Personal experiences are interpreted perceptively and life realities are presented authentically” (Nasser). This is discerned in the two short stories under discussion. In “Thirty-One Beautiful Trees”, Kareema is foregrounded as the outspoken, lively female protagonist in the narrative while other characters including her boss, her brother are demoted to the background. Bakr employs a first-person narrative mode from an objective stance. (Marroum167) On similar grounds, the non-human being, Maatouq is foregrounded as the main character in “The Monkey Trainer”, and the narrative is partly told from its viewpoint.

In “The Beautiful Undiscovered Voice” Sayyida is foregrounded as the protagonist of the narrative. However, the narrative voice in this work alternates between the third-person narrative, and a minimal use of both the first-person and the second-person narrative voices. Bakr employs the third-person limited narrative viewpoint to lead the reader into the unexpected ending of the story when Sayyida is diagnosed with depression and in a rebellious reaction, flushes the medicine prescribed for her down the toilet. In addition, it displays Abdul Hamid’s callous reaction to his wife’s wishes and needs. As for the second-person narrative, which is employed very minimally (along with the first person narrative point of view), it offers the reader a closer look into Sayyida’s psychological state as she is shocked by her husband’s violent, repressive reaction to her newly-found creativity. The first-person narrative voice also gives vent to Sayyida’s opinions, moods, and fears.

In opposition to the patriarchal tendency to silence and marginalize women, Bakr creates a special language she calls “a feminist text” expressing “the eye, spirit, and feeling of a woman” in her works (161 Seymour). Furthermore, Bakr creates a different language which is a mixture of colloquial and classical Arabic because she believes that it is “the common, the familiar, the taken for granted” that is the main cause of the of women’s unhappiness (Al-Sadda “Women’s Writing in Egypt” 133). For instance, in Sayyid’s imploration “I take my refuge in God from

the accursed Devil”, the language of the Quran is employed to reveal her doubt about her newly discovered beautiful voice as well as her fear of the unexpected reaction of her entourage toward this discovery (*TWM* 60).¹

4. Empowering the Non-Human Protagonist, Maatouq

In “The Monkey Trainer, the third person narrative method is employed throughout only with a few instances in which the first- person narrative is used. The first person narrative is employed in the few instances where Maatouq engages in conversations with the other two monkeys, and discloses its intent on how to confront Sharshar’s coercion toward them. Providing women and animals equally with voices of their own, Bakr highlights the ecofeminist idea that both women, nature, and non-human beings represent the “other” in patriarchal societies. Thence, Bakr provides her protagonists, whether they are female or non human beings., with the first -person narrative viewpoint. In a male-dominated society, women and nature’s worth rests only in being objects to be exploited by the dominant few. The predicament awaiting Maatouq and the other two monkeys is one of objectification and commodification.. Nonetheless, Bakr ‘s description of Maatouq as “a slightly complicated character” that “would take nothing as it came, unlike his two companions” singles it out as a troublesome, single-minded animal who resists exploitation and oppression notwithstanding the cost of its actions. (*TWM* 84).

5. The Rebellion of the Female Protagonists

On the other hand, women in Salwa Bakr’s works not only feel alienated and estranged from their society, but they are also accused of madness when they revolt against oppression and marginalization. Dinah Manisty claims that Bakr, like Radwa Ashour and Sakina Fouad, sets “the madwoman in a central, narrating role” enabling “the protagonist to resist marginalization of voice and space and to question the validity of binary logic in which women in patriarchal society are defined in terms of lack, irrationality and silence”(154).

Kareema ‘s rebellious attempt to cut off her tongue leads to the questioning of her sanity. Sayyida’s disclosure of the secret about her newly discovered beautiful voice to her husband, makes him doubt her sanity.. Manisty holds that the appropriation of “the label of madness against women , inverts “ its function to expose the ‘real madness’ inherent in the prevalent social conditions and show the irrationality of patriarchal binary thought which erects

false truths and ‘false madness’. The alternative knowledge which the women articulate” deconstructs “the patriarchal premise which links woman’s voice to madness by positing an alternative premise which equates woman's voice with truth”. (Manisty 154-55) In addition, the label of madness attached to both Sayyida, and Kareema is a device Bakr employs to reveal the absurdity underlying patriarchal social domination which silences women, and treats nature and non human beings unjustly and violently rendering social and environmental disruptions by conceiving of the “self” as separate from the “other” and the exclusion of duties in favour of rights.

Indeed, the injustices inflicted upon women generate their eccentric reactions as in the case of Kareema. Above all, such acts of resistance link both Kareema and Sayyida to their creator, Bakr, who resists female oppression and raises social consciousness of gender inequality by means of writing. Thereupon, the “female artist’s resistance to marginalization cannot be understood as separate from their resistance to” all forms of suppression and to all oppressive authorities and institutions” (Fouad 1).

All the same, the conflicts involving the human and nonhuman characters in Bakr’s three short stories create social disharmony. For instance, Kareema is unable to form meaningful and harmonious friendships with other women in the female community at the water company; Sayyida suffers from a weak sense of self. Attempting to give expression to their desires, Kareema’s endeavour to make her work place in the Water Company beautiful, and colourful is rejected by her boss and her co-workers while Sayyida’s desire to sing is rejected by her husband and her community on the ground that they oppose women’s socially expected roles as subservient caretakers. These female figures lack independence because their potential to resist, and overcome the social and cultural restrictions imposed on them is limited. Each, in her own way, refuses to conform to such restrictions. Kareema reacts in an eccentric manner to the restriction which prohibit her from voicing her political views or her desires. On the other hand, Sayyida strives for a degree of self-worth by disclosing the secret of her beautiful voice to her entourage (Johnson-Davies ix). Opting for different forms of resistance of this repressive framework, Kareema is eventually confined to a mental asylum, and Sayeeda is compelled to give up her creativity and her dream to sing.

On similar terms, Maatouq's violent rebellion against his trainer/ exploiter dismantles the patriarchal premise which commodifies nature as well as women. Social disharmony in Sayyida's marital relationship is evident as the outcome of her husband's domination; he is the one who prohibits her from pursuing her creativity. The issue of social disharmony is also obvious in the conflicts experienced by Kareema with both her co-workers and her family which eventually leaves her in a state of mental anguish. Even Maatouq, the monkey, and his trainer have conflicting interests leading the former to attack and injure the latter.

Another important connection which links Maatouq, the animal to Kareema in particular and to women in general is what Lori Gruen calls an "elaborate constructed narrative" of anthropologists which justifies male oppression of both animals and women through this linkage (60). According to "the Myth of Man the Hunter", man is not only different from animals, but he is also elevated because of his ability to systematically destroy animals (60). By creating a history of "human social evolution" in which man is separate from and superior to animals, theoreticians establish a mechanism in which a separation from woman can be grounded. In this account, "woman's body (being smaller, weaker, and reproductive) prevents her from participating in the hunt, and thus relegates her to the arena of non-culture" (60). This hierarchical framework of domination establishes the subservient status of both women and animals, and justifies their oppression.

Physical violence and carnal punishment are a manifestation of the atomistic androcentric "self" competing for its own rights and disregarding the rights of the "other", whether women or non-human beings. According to Egyptian cultural and social standards, carnal punishment is an accepted practice of patriarchal figures against female or animal disobedience of male orders. This becomes evident in the previously mentioned coercive attempt of Kareema's mother to cut off her tongue. Furthermore, Sharshar's slaughters the goat to intimidate the monkeys, and use its flesh for edible meat. In the same sense, he beats up the monkeys when they fail to obey his orders thwarting Sharshar's design to exploit these non-human beings. Gaard explains the tendency to feminize nature and naturalize, or animalize women as a means of justifying the domination of women, animals, and the earth (5).

Believing that her duty as a writer is to raise social consciousness and provoke change in the conditions of Egyptian women, she portrays the difficulties women face as they struggle

against social norms that devalue their needs, stifle their aspirations, and marginalize them (Seymour 159). Bakr's protagonists, Kareema and Sayyida are both equipped with intelligence and talent, yet, due to social injustice, their courage and creativity is ignored by a society that tends to silence, distance, and ostracize any woman who dares to cry out for freedom; both are silenced by patriarchal figures in order to preserve the status quo. Kareema is ostracized by her co-workers, her boss, and her family, and is subjected to mental anguish. In an eccentric act of rebellion and resistance, she attempts to cut off her own tongue, having experienced the adverse consequences of voicing her opinions.

On the other hand, Sayyida is depicted as an illiterate housewife crushed by the daily routine of housework. Nevertheless, she is a talented person; she suddenly discovers that her voice "has become extremely beautiful" (*TWM* 59). The discovery empowers her, lifting her spirits up from a status of repression and marginality to one of emancipation. To her the discovery of her beautiful voice is similar to "someone who has come across a wonderful treasure..." (*TWM* 63). Sayyida is a woman who lacks freedom as the song "I love The Life of Freedom" she sings indicates. (*TWM* 59) Being a means of self-expression and a sign of creativity, her talent is dismissed by her entourage, including her husband who patronizes her. She is also forced to go to a psychiatrist who diagnoses her with depression. Eventually, her weak sense of self gives way to rebellion against her role as a repressed caretaker, and she flushes the pills prescribed by the psychiatrist down the toilet. Indeed, both Kareema and Sayyida silently resist social marginalization and the suppression of their voices and desires at the end of the two short stories. Singing is Sayyida's only means of realizing her creative ability, and her emancipation whereas Kareema can only be emancipated by voicing her opinion and making her own life choices. Even if both women are unable to achieve emancipation, their acts of resistance are indications of their refusal to accept gender inequality, or yield to patriarchal social pressures which stifle the needs and desires of human beings at large.

6. The Separation of Culture from Nature and Women in the Patriarchal Social Framework

In "Ecofeminism and the Politics of Reality", Linda Vance contends that, "objective knowledge of the world" is not "objective at all" since it is solely a product of "privileged white men" (123). According to that knowledge, culture is separated from both women and nature although the same knowledge defines, controls, and objectifies them (124).

Vance writes that the “lives of women, of working-class people, of people of color, have thus been rendered invisible not by historical accident but by design. We are real only insofar as we are useful objects; our lives are inconsequential, our experiences uninteresting” (124). Thus, the dualistic patriarchal praxis treats women such as Kareema and Sayyida as “outsiders” to culture who do not have a say in its “design” yet they have a role and a duty to perform in its construction (Vance 124). Accordingly, Kareema is unable to defend her wish to replace the grey desks in the Water company with other colourful ones.

Like women, nature is separated from culture. The definition of both women and nature as separate from culture is for the benefit of a “privileged few”, mainly, men who were able to control, manipulate, and exploit the “inferior others” i.e., women and nature. (Vance 125). In “The Monkey Trainer”, Maatouq is considered an “other”, and “reduced to something to be controlled and used” by his trainer, Sharshar. (Vance 124) Socially conditioned by a patriarchal framework of oppression and exploitation, Sharshar manipulates and objectifies the goat and the monkeys as a means of earning his own living. As such, the anthropocentric society’s devaluation of both women and non-human beings is intertwined.

7. Ecofeminism’s Oppositional Conceptual Framework of Social and Ecological Justice

The object of ecofeminism is to give access to women into culture because women’s experiences are diverse and they can tell the history of the world (reality) from multiple perspectives. Linda Vance describes the “project” of ecofeminism as the “understanding, interpreting, describing, and envisioning a past, a present, and a future, all with an intentional consciousness of the ways in which the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature are intertwined” (126). Ynesta King also asserts that the ecofeminist “critique that links domination and hierarchy in human society to the despoilation of nonhuman nature” (19). She adds that feminism “grounds this critique of domination by identifying the prototype of other forms of domination: that of man over woman” (19). This renders social ecology inseparable from ecofeminism. In fact, both ecofeminism and ecology aim at dismantling dualistic beliefs of women and nature. (King 19)

The notion of a patriarchal and oppressive conceptual framework is as central to ecofeminism and ecofeminist ethics “as the notion of an observation set is to hierarchy theory in ecosystem ecology” to the extent that “one could not generate the observations and

conclusions of each without them” (Warren, Cheney 183) It is, thus, the aim of ecofeminism to replace such oppressive conceptual framework with an oppositional one of social and ecological justice.

With the rise of Western industrial civilization, nature has become something to be dominated, overcome and even made to serve the needs of men. Like women, nature is stripped of her magical powers and properties (bestowed upon both nature and women in ancient pagan religions) and is reduced to "natural resources" to be exploited to fulfill human needs and purposes. Both nature and women came to be perceived as “others”, or as different from the dominant to be subordinated and objectified. (King 20 21) By objectifying women and nature, the patriarchal structure of domination destroys the environment, oppresses, and marginalizes women and non-human creatures as “others”.

In “Thirty-One Beautiful Trees” and “The Monkey Trainer”, Bakr presents the degradation and the commodification of nature and animals, creating a culture of commodification where all living beings are deemed worthless unless they can be used. According to Greta Garrd,

...the way in which women and nature have been conceptualized historically in the Western intellectual tradition has resulted in devaluing whatever is associated with women, emotion, animals, nature, and the body, while simultaneously elevating in value those things associated with men, reason, humans, culture, and the mind. One task of ecofeminists has been to expose these dualisms and the ways in which feminizing nature and naturalizing or animalizing women has served as justification for the domination of women, animals, and the earth.(5)

Ynesta King points out the close relationship formed between women and nature in patriarchal thought. Women, therefore, should undertake the duty of “ending the domination of nature” and of “healing the alienation between human and nonhuman nature” (18). This “is also the ultimate goal of the ecology movement” although “the ecology movement is not necessarily feminist” (18). Because women and nature are negatively affected by male-disruptive actions of war, industrialization and capitalism, ecofeminism aims at the emancipation of nature from anthropocentric domination by maintaining the common values of nature and women such as nourishment and reproduction. (Mellor 52, 53)

8. Kareema's Sense of Interconnectedness with Nature

Kareema is imbued with an interconnected sense of self with nature and natural beings. Identifying herself with trees and birds, she only wishes to render her life greener and realize her own identity. This is evident in her attempt to prevent the sparrow from snatching "a small piece of the poisoned food" offered to Kareema in the mental asylum (*TWM* 13). She also feels threatened when she finds that a tree has been taken down in the street where she walks daily to work making the number of the trees there thirty instead of thirty one. Indeed, she perceives her existence as connected with that of nature; like the trees, Kareema is subjected to injustice and violence by the capitalist social system. The trees that are taken down would sustain a healthy natural environment. Similarly, Kareema's boss objects to the replacement of the grey desks with the new colourful ones she has bought although they could add vitality to the drab milieu of the water company. According to the Egyptian cultural values if the male boss yields to her wishes his male authority over the employees would be threatened.

-Kareema's gestures are in line with the ecofeminist aim to heal the alienation between humans and all other beings in nature. As a matter of fact, Kareema rejects the dualities inherent in patriarchy which marginalizes and ostracizes her, and dominates and disparages nature. Indeed, her failure to confront her family's masculine frame of thought in spite of revolting against the capitalist system which destroys and commodifies nature is considered a schizophrenic form of behaviour (Al Bayoumy 66). In the opening pages of the story, Kareema utters a very telling statement "Farewell, farewell, my beautiful city, the flood has once again swept you away" (*TWM* 14). In these words, Kareema identifies herself with nature; she clearly perceives that they are both subjected to the injustices of capitalism, and therefore, they share the same predicament. As such, Bakr creates a new language to express the original vision of women suffering from social subjugation and inequality (Al-saada "Egypt" 14). Furthermore, she displays a pro-active role toward the degradation of the environment when she notices the tree taken down the road leading to the Water Company (Masterson 49). Her reaction to such violation of rights toward nature is one of deep concern and dismay. In a moment of epiphany, Kareema realizes that both nature and herself are worthless in their society. She seeks to render her voice heard by others in an eccentric manner threatening to subvert patriarchal

monopoly. Consequently, she is subjected to mental anguish and violence, and , eventually, dragged to confinement in a mental asylum.

A similar sense of dismay is displayed by Maatouq, the animal, who is subjugated to Sharshar's aggressive, training methods. Sharing the same predicament with women, Maatouq, the non-human creature is considered an "other" situated outside culture. As such ,Maatouq's worth lies only in its potential dominated and exploited. Being part of the forest, his original habitat ,from which he was taken away to the zoo, the monkey yearns for his past life there, and speaks to other monkeys of "the vast sky", "the spacious area" and "the splendor and beauty of the forest". (*TWM* 84,96) the monkey, Maatouq, whose name is suggestive of its propensity toward emancipation, revolts against his trainer/owner who represents the patriarchal principle which objectifies and exploits animals, and all other natural forms of life. Preeminently, Maatouq's sense of interconnectedness with the forest persists until the end of the story although he does not return to his natural habitat.

Conclusion

Bakr's three short stories discussed in this paper deconstruct the dualisms inherent in the patriarchal social framework undermining the genuine worth of both women and men, commodifying animals, and disrupting social harmony. Exposing such dualisms, Bakr's writing is ultimately an act of social justice to both nature and women in the Egyptian patriarchal social set. Issues pertaining to women and nature are regarded as inconsequential and uninteresting when they are of no use to the patriarchal social structure. Feminizing nature, and animalizing women for the purposes of a privileged few is an act of discrimination and injustice which is harmful to the wellbeing of earth and humanity.

The direct outcome of gender inequality, social injustice, oppression of women and non-human beings, and the various forms of resistance of such oppression, is ultimately social disharmony. The conflicts arising between the trainer and Maatouq, Saayeda, and her husband, and among Kareema and her family members as well as her co-workers are representations of such social disruption. Men and women, in this manner, are separated by their private desires and needs rather than united by one common aim encapsulated in the ecofeminist tenet of the interconnectedness of all life forms; they become competitors each working for their own interests rather than partners working for the welfare of the whole cosmos. Evidently, Kareema

,Sayyida and Maatouq's attempt to attain emancipation is not realized at the end of the three short stories. None the less, providing women and non-human beings with a voice of their own, and representing them as whole and complex beings is Salwa Bakr's method of resolving the issues of social marginalization and oppression, a method which dismantles the cultural dualisms inherent in the anthropocentric domination of gender relations, women, nature, and literary writing. Most importantly, the three short studied in this paper represent a textual manifestation of resistance, an endeavour to change the status quo, and a means of emancipating women, and nature as well as a realization of justice in the literary text that could become viable in reality.

المستخلص

منح صوتاً لمن لا صوت لهم: الثنائيات الثقافية والتشبيء والقمع والمقاومة دراسة نسوية بيئية لثلاث قصص قصيرة للكاتبة سلوى بكر

ناهد عصام عيسى

. تناقش هذه الورقة البحثية ثلاث من قصص سلوى بكر القصيرة وهم: "أحدى وثلاثون شجرة جميلة" و " كل هذا الصوت الجميل" و " مدرس القرد" في ضوء النظرية النسوية البيئية، يتناول البحث أحداث القصص الثلاث من خلال تعرض الشخصيات الرئيسية كريمة وسيدة و القرد معتوق للقمع الناتج عن تسلط النظام الأبوي على المجتمع و مقاومة تلك الشخصيات له. كذلك يتم لقاء الضوء على مبدأ الترابط بين جميع أشكال الحياة في نظرية النسوية البيئية والذي يعبر عنه التماثل بين كل من المرأة والطبيعة في كونهما ضحيتان للثنائيات الثقافية التي تقوم عليها الأيديولوجية الأبوية والتي تفصل بين الرجال من ناحية وكل من النساء والطبيعة بكل مخلوقاتهما من ناحية أخرى على أساس ثنائيات الجسد والعقل والتفكير والعاطفة و المهيمن والتابع.

يخلص البحث الى أن النتيجة المباشرة لعدم المساواة بين الجنسين والظلم الاجتماعي واضطهاد كل من المرأة والمخلوقات الأخرى من قبل النظام الاجتماعي الأبوي يؤدي الى التنافر بين أفراد المجتمع ، يوءدي الصراع بين المرأة والرجل الى تنافس كل منهما على حقوقه بدلا من تعاونهما من أجل خير وصلاح الأرض . وعلى الرغم من عدم قدرة كل من كريمة وسيدة ومعتوق من نول حريتهم في القصص االثلاث الا أن فعل مقاومة القهر والظلم الواقع عليهم يمنحهم صوتا ويجعلهم يعبرون عن كونهم مخلوقات كاملة ومركبة . وأخير فان هذه القصص القصيرة تعد تعبيراً نصياً عن المقاومة ومحاولة لتحرير المرأة والطبيعة وتحقيقاً للعدالة في النص الأدبي يمكن أن يصبح قابلاً للتطبيق في الواقع.

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