



Manifestations Of Romanticism In The Whispered Poetry Of Hanin Omar

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Abstract:

This research paper focuses on examining the extent to which the themes and manifestations of the Romantic movement are reflected in the poetry of Hanin Omar, which is considered a form of whispered poetry, as discussed by Mohamed Mandour, who described it as sincere literature, free from rhetoric. It was essential for this research to explore the themes addressed by the Romantic school, as well as to define the conceptual boundaries of whispered poetry and how Romantic themes such as nature, humanism, sorrow, and love are manifested, acknowledging that there are other themes like alienation, poetic music, and imagery.

Keywords: Romanticism, whisper, humanism, sorrow, love, poetry.

Introduction:

Through this article, we aim to shed light on the extent to which Romantic themes are manifested in the whispered poetry of Hanin Omar, as whispered poetry represents one of the outcomes produced by the Romantic movement. The manifestations of Romanticism are reflected in her poetry due to her strong connection with literary figures, despite being a doctor, as well as her exposure to Western literature, her expertise in literature and translation, and her openness to both Western and Arab poetic modernity. This study has prompted us to explore several questions, such as: What is Romanticism? What were the motives behind its establishment in the Western and Arab worlds? What are its key themes? What is whispered poetry, and how is it related to Romanticism?

Did the poet manage to incorporate romantic themes in her poetry?

1. The Western Romantic School:

The Romantic school is considered the wellspring and source from which whispered literature emerged, as it represents a revolution and a renewal tendency in the world of literary creativity. Even the word "romantic" itself is derived from the term "romance," which was used to refer to a type of story focused on adventures in medieval Europe. It leans towards an imaginary world that escapes reality and reason, inclined toward emotional tendencies. **(Khalil, 2012)**

We will attempt to examine romantic literature in terms of its origins and content, aiming to determine that it represents a new intellectual movement that contributed to shaping new concepts, perhaps the most important of which is poetic whispering.

2. The Emergence of Western Romanticism:

There is no doubt that the first and actual signs of this romantic school emerged with the rise of the bourgeoisie, which significantly contributed to the groundwork for this school (movement). This class was more advanced and more prepared to embrace change and renewal, unlike the aristocratic class, which often questioned the humanity of non-aristocratic poets and individuals. **(Al-Hawi, 1984)**

As for the French Revolution, it branched out from literature and made it its nourishment, which transformed it into a fully mature movement. It was able to distance humanity from old, decaying values and contribute to the emergence of new values that called for a new humanity, in which a person feels their humanity and freedom and senses their existence as a free, rebellious human being. This was in opposition to the aristocratic mentality that sought to enslave and exploit people. Perhaps this last element, the humanitarian tendency, is one of the elements of whispering that Mandour addressed when discussing Mikhail Naimy's poem titled "My Brother." **(Hilal, 1981).**

The French Revolution and the bourgeoisie class are considered the most important reasons for the emergence of the Romantic school and its introduction to the world.

The Arab Romantic School:

3.1 The Emergence of the Arab Romantic School:

The emergence of Arab Romanticism was preceded by several factors that contributed to its appearance and prominence. One of the most important of these factors in the literary scene was the state of literature at that time. The Revival Movement, also known as the Neo-Classical school, dominated the field of literary creativity. This school was associated with the Arab literary renaissance and sought to revive the ancient Arab glories. However, it was merely a movement sympathetic to heritage and resembled Western Classicism, as one critic observed, considering it an extension of that tradition. In this regard, he stated: "This movement, like the European Renaissance, represents a kind of return to the past." **(Ismail, 2007)**

What was also observed in the creative work of that time was that it had returned to or ended up in a state of stagnation, dominated by silence and emotional coldness. Poetry could not transcend the traditional poetic structure **(Naima, 1978)**, and thus literature of that period became like a lifeless entity, emptied of spiritual, intellectual, and emotional content.

The state of literature during that period left some creators and intellectuals frustrated with the current literary conditions. They felt as if they were trapped in a state of servitude and unfair allegiance, which caused the Arab mind to be held captive by the past. This also created a psychological state that sought renewal and change.

The nature of life, which does not accept stagnation and demands continuity, made literature a living entity seeking a life that requires renewal. The old values and principles were no longer

the same, and the passionate leadership of the poetic campaign was no longer the goal or purpose. This push towards the past led to literature dominated by uniformity, linearity, and craftsmanship, which reduced poetic texts to mere rhetoric. **(Haykal, 1993)**

This revolutionary state in the minds of the creators, which called for liberation and renewal, led them to lean towards or rather, to immerse themselves in romantic creativity. They carried the banner of the Romantic school, whose emergence was influenced by a number of factors, including:

3.2 Influence of the West:

In the second half of the 18th century, scientific missions to Europe began with the goal of acquiring and learning new knowledge and sciences. Arab creators were directly influenced by Western creativity, which led to a transformation in their poetic concepts and values. This influence was further facilitated by the flourishing of translation, especially the translation of Western Romantic works into Arabic. **(Othman, 2017)**

3.3 Magazines and Newspapers:

Literary magazines and newspapers played a significant and important role in shaping the awareness of renewal and in transmitting the features of this renewal to the audience through some new literary works. Among the most prominent magazines was Al-Samir, founded in 1929, which became one of the key sources of Mahjar literature. Also notable was Al-Funun, founded by Abd al-Masih Haddad in 1913. Other important magazines included Al-Usba al-Andalusiyya and Al-Hadith. In Egypt, Apollo magazine emerged, carrying within it a collection of poems with a renewal tendency. In Lebanon, Al-Ma'rad newspaper promoted the spirit of renewal in the Arab world. **(Nashawi, 1984)**

3.4 New Literary Gatherings:

These were gatherings and literary schools that contributed to shaping Romantic thought. However, we will address them as elements without delving into the details. **(Nashawi, 1984, p. 180)**

- The Iskandar al-Baz Circle, 1855-1916.
- The Diwan School, founded by Al-Aqqad and Al-Mazini.
- The Pen League.
- The Apollo School.
- The Al-Ushera Group.
- The Romantic Trinity Group.

4- The Themes of the Arabic Romantic School:

There is no doubt that Arabic Romanticism was merely an extension of Western Romanticism. This is due to the influence that Arab creators had from it, whether directly or through academic missions and the direct reading of works by Western Romantics, or through translation **(Khalil, 2012)**.

However, we can say that the renewal in Arabic creativity, in addition to what Western Romanticism brought, introduced elements that were reflected in the following: **(Nashawi, 1984, p. 163)**

- **Poetic imagery:** Reliance on imagination and emotion.
- **Poetic language:** Moving away from artificiality and pretension, and relying on familiar language close to people's lives, based on emotion and imagination.
- **Poetic music:** They dismantled the old structure of the poem. The classical prosody was not the only governing factor in the making of the poem; rather, they turned to a new type of poetry governed by meter, poetic lines, and internal rhythm.
- **Poetic vision:** The romantic vision was a mixture of two elements: one governed by pessimism, lamentation, mourning, and alienation; and a positive element governed by revolution, rebellion, and the dream of a better tomorrow.

These themes and visions adopted by the Romantic school, characterized by an emotional tendency and a human dimension, made tones of sadness, pain, and complaint predominant. Even the features of alienation, nostalgia, and invocation became prominent characteristics in this romantic literature **(Halil, 2005)**, which would give rise to a new artistic phenomenon known as whispering or whispered literature, as Mandour called it.

The renewal movement represented by Romanticism, particularly the Mahjar (diaspora) movement, was one of the main factors that contributed to shaping the artistic frameworks of the "whisper" phenomenon in Arabic poetry. This is due to the renewal tendency that the Mahjar poets achieved in their poetry, where they contributed to giving a new concept to poetry. They were able to distance themselves from rhetorical and didactic tendencies by conveying their experience to the audience through simple language, far from pretentiousness and artificiality. This made their poetry a whispered poetry filled with emotion and humanity, with a touch of contemplation that made the audience interact with it **(Bardawi, 2008)**.

The Mahjar school was able to renew poetry by creating new themes through which they expressed the pain of migration and alienation, and their longing for their homelands, conveying these feelings in a humanistic way rooted in freedom. They described life, the universe, nature, and the anxiety and confusion of man, allowing the whisper to rise in moments of nostalgia and longing **(Nashawi, 1984, p. 179)**.

The Mahjar poet was able to draw from the principles of Romanticism and make the themes of his poetry revolve around confession, expressing sorrow and complaint, nostalgia and longing, and alienation, as well as feeling nature. This is what makes the poet a whisperer when he speaks to life in a lyrical glimpse with intense emotion that affects the souls **(Nashawi, 1984, p. 179)**. He does this through a simple, calm, and delicate style with strong suggestive and symbolic power.

The relationship between the Romantic school and whispered poetry is evident in the renewal concept that the former adopted, which involved giving a new dimension and concept to literature in general and poetry in particular. This aligns with the views of the English critic and poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1796-1834), who believed that the language of poetry is a refined language of feelings, connected to emotions and human nature, making poetry free from affectation and artificiality. In his opinion, poetry is a spontaneous overflow of emotions, arising from a calm excitement **(Khalil, 2012, p. 27)**.

If we delve into this concept through the lens of the English critic, we will find that it aligns or resembles what Mandour stated regarding whispered poetry. To clarify further, let's explore the concept of whispering and whispered poetry.

5- The Essence of Whispering:

The elusive nature of this term compels us to seek out its linguistic root, which defines its meaning and outlines its characteristics to dispel any confusion.

Perhaps the phenomenon of whispering, or whispered poetry as a literary phenomenon, has not yet received enough study and critical analysis. It remains a fertile ground for research. From this perspective, we have decided to first address the concept of the whisper phenomenon from both linguistic and terminological perspectives.

5.1 Whispering in Language:

The term "whisper" is mentioned in Ibn Faris's *Maqayis al-Lugha* under the root (h-m-s): "The letters h, m, and s indicate a hidden sound." So, whispering is that hidden sound, as in "the whisper of footsteps," referring to the quietness of the steps **(Zakaria, 1979)**.

In *Al-Ayn* by Al-Farahidi, whispering is also described as indicating concealment. Whispering involves holding the sound in the mouth without any vocalization from the chest, with no loudness in speech. It is a soft-spoken or whispered conversation, like a secret or something hidden **(Al-Farahidi, 1988)**.

In *Lisan al-Arab* by Ibn Manzur, the meaning of whispering is explained under the root (h-m-s) as a quiet sound, as well as treading and eating softly. The term "ahmas" means to walk quietly, or to remain silent. It is also said, "We whispered to each other," meaning speaking so quietly that the conversation is barely understood **(Al-Afriki, 1999)**.

5.2 Whispering in Terminology:

If whispering in the linguistic sense refers to quietness, the term in a specialized context takes on a different meaning. It refers to the faintness of a letter due to its softness, and the flow of breath with it when pronounced. There are ten letters in the Arabic alphabet characterized by whispering, collectively referred to in the phrase: "Fa-hathahu shakhsun fasakata" **(Al-Masri, 2004)**.

Whispering is the flow and release of breath when pronouncing a letter. In other words, whispering involves weak articulation of the sound at its point of origin, meaning that these letters do not require the vocal cords for their pronunciation, but rely on the entry of air into the mouth **(Ibrahim, 2004)**.

Contemplating this collection of linguistic and terminological concepts reveals that whispering has not surpassed the idea of concealment or the auditory aspect of pronouncing sounds (letters). Whispering, in its entirety, is a phonetic phenomenon related to pronunciation. Whispered literature is a style through which the poet expresses their feelings, emotions, and innermost thoughts with sincerity, relying on nature, mythology, and history, giving themselves the freedom to express the poetic flow they are experiencing.

5.3 Whispered Poetry According to Muhammad Mandour:

We have chosen to consider Mandour's perspective on whispered poetry, which he regarded as an independent literary phenomenon that transcends the prevailing concepts, terms, and creative norms of the time.

Mandour began his attempt to establish the foundational principles of this phenomenon by comparing modern poetry to ancient poetry, describing the latter as rhetorical and confined to traditional forms that did not go beyond the classical structure of poetry. We will explore Mandour's views alongside other critical opinions to provide a comprehensive analytical perspective on this literary term.

Reflecting on Mandour's views, one notices that he started from the idea of diction and repetition in his call for renewal or for writing whispered literature. This is perhaps best exemplified in his statement: "I think the time has come to clarify what we mean by those general words we have repeatedly used, asking our poets and writers to adopt them if they want to touch our souls. We want a whispered, intimate, human literature" **(Mandour, 2004)**.

It seems that Mandour revealed his vision for literature from a renewal perspective, considering diction as a means of elevating the soul. He believed that the poet is not obligated to adhere to a specific lexicon, but rather that the poet's true lexicon is their ability to influence the reader.

This influence is what builds the relationship between the text and its audience a close relationship with no disconnection, where the literary text is familiar, reflecting the reality of the reader. This inclination aligns with the idea that the writer is a product of their environment.

Mandour asserted that the condition for whispered literature is that it should be intimate and human, avoiding rhetoric, weakness, and improvisation, and steering clear of pretentiousness and artificiality. Its essence should be natural, with whispering being the powerful effect of language on the reader, while the poet remains absent. This means that the poet releases their language and self in their poetic experience.

Mandour's concept of whispering does not imply weakness, nor does it mean that literature should be limited to personal feelings. Rather, it should be human-centered literature, governed by a humanitarian spirit, with the power to influence **(Mandour, 2004)**.

5.4 Whispered Poetry According to Sayyid Qutb:

Sayyid Qutb defines whispered poetry as nostalgic literature, which can embody both truth and falsehood, reflecting a particular emotional state. He considers this style or genre of poetry as just one among many, which raises the question: if this is the prevailing and most appropriate model, where are the other poetic styles and forms?

Sayyid Qutb believes that Mandour's pursuit of this literary style is driven by a mood influenced by the past, even if Mandour himself is unaware of it. Qutb argues that Mandour's critical and intellectual opinions are not dictated by artistic taste, as evidenced by Mandour's discussion of

whispered literature. Qutb does not reject this style, nor does he oppose it; rather, he sees it as one literary genre that cannot be ranked above others (Qutb, 1943).

The ongoing conflict between Mandour and Sayyid Qutb, along with the presented concepts, suggests that the disagreement had become personal. Qutb did not accept the idea that the ideal literature is that of the Mahjar (diaspora), and he believed that Mandour had hastily passed judgment and taken an adversarial stance toward the old literary heritage.

Reflecting on the above, one can see that the Romantic school was founded on a principle of renewal, calling for a return to nature and freedom, and for reviving the human spirit rooted in honesty, within a society that rejects injustice, hatred, and animosity. This is what Romanticism embodied in its literature, manifesting in themes such as love for one's homeland, nostalgia, longing, and freedom (Al-Issa, 2006). These are among the key elements of whispering, characterized by a humanitarian tendency and deep feelings of longing and yearning.

6. Romantic Features in Whispered Poetry by Hanin Omar:

Hanin Omar successfully drew upon Romantic principles in her poetic experience, allowing Romantic elements to rise to the surface in her poetry, particularly in the form of whispered poetry. This is evident in her works, which are rich in Romantic themes and artistic and thematic elements. Her poetry stands as a testament to the highest moments of whispering, where she expresses her innermost feelings toward others.

Through her poetry collections *The Secret of the Gypsies* and *The Gate of Paradise*, Omar conveys her feelings of nostalgia, pain, alienation, fascination with nature, and a retreat into imagination. Her work also highlights the emotional charges that are evident in her expressions of love. To explore the Romantic elements in her poetry, we will examine and interpret poetic examples, illustrating the manifestations of Romanticism in her work and the extent to which whispering is present.

6.1 Whispering Nature:

The poet's relationship with nature is not just one of fascination and admiration but is deeply intertwined with the idea of nature being her refuge. Through nature, she expresses her psyche and emotions, often turning to it to lament and share her sorrows. At other times, nature becomes a symbol of hope and dreams, cloaked in an imaginative aura dominated by suggestiveness, carrying multiple connotations. This is vividly portrayed in her poem "You Are the Memory" (Omar, 2003).

There remained...

Of words (a drop)

Sliding between the eyelid and sorrow, I burn!

And I gift the ashes to the northern wind

The one that...

Carried the fragrance of fingertips from the depths of memory

What remains of its fevered sweetness upon my fingers

When we accidentally intertwined—night of passion—in the corner

And there was...

The figurative language employed by the poet has given the elements of nature a deeper symbolic dimension. The word "drop," which typically signifies rain, "water," representing life, is imbued with a tone of sadness and pain born from the fear of extinction. Ash symbolizes the final image of burning, or what remains of the extinguished fire.

However, the poet seeks hope through the winds that carry change and renewal, drawing upon the philosophy of life and death.

In another poem titled "The Distant Boats," the poet evokes nature in the form of the night, the waves, and the sea. She writes: (Omar, 2003, pp. 69-70).

Your voice

And the distant boats

And the light in the darkness of the sorrowful night

And the harbors...

Search for me, that I may leave them—will you meet me beyond a wave???

I travel toward the sky

And return to the sea at times

To ask about lips that kissed me

And ended in their sadness, the fountain of the soul that...

Poured its flood into the darkness of my despair...

All the flocks of doves drank from it.

Then... they flew

And vanished into the dark.

The evocation of natural elements in this poem is rich with connotations of sorrow and burdens. The poet expresses this sadness through the image of the dark, sorrowful night, symbolizing loneliness and alienation, which awaken hidden and buried emotions within the soul.

However, "**Hanin**" attempts to escape, to search for hope in the image of the sky, which she perceives as an alternative world to the reality she wishes to flee. But she finds nothing but the sea, which becomes her refuge and confidant, to whom she pours out her worries, sorrows, and pains.

The poet successfully infused her emotions grief, pain, longing, and nostalgia into the elements of nature, making them her sanctuary to express what lies within her heart and mind.

6-2 Humanism and the Resonance of Poetic Whispers

Those who contemplate the causes and motivations that contributed to the emergence of Romantic literature will find that it was preceded by a period during which people suffered on

many levels. This suffering was compounded by the dominance of classical literature, in which writers often distanced themselves from the masses. However, Romantic literature contributed to the rise of writers who embraced humanistic values based on brotherhood, without distinctions of race, religion, or color.

In the Arab world, these values were carried by the poets of the Mahjar (Diaspora) literature, particularly the members of the Pen League, who expressed and celebrated these sentiments of revolution and liberation in their poetry. **(Al-Issa, Humanism in the Poetry of the Pen League, 2006).**

Those who reflect on Hanin Omar's poetry will find that it does not lack this humanistic inclination. The poet managed to dedicate an entire section in her collection *The Gate of Paradise*, consisting of 11 poems, titled *The Gate of the City*.

In this section, the poet expresses her humanistic tendency through her holistic view of the Arab world as one united homeland. She also reveals her nostalgia for Algeria in the poem *The Iliad of Longing*, where she writes: **(Omar, *The Gate of Paradise*, 2010).**

Algeria, O dawn of miracles,
 And God's proof among creation,
Why are those beautiful eyes in tears,
 And why does your sorrow play across your
features?
Why do I see death filling your mouth,
 While within you, the soil is a source of life?
This sacred soil is hallowed,
 This bloodshed has flowed like the Euphrates.
Algeria, gather the tears in my eyelids,
 Algeria, you are among the immortals.
No matter how long time may pass,
 And no matter the calamities that befall us.

The poet embodies the features of humanistic inclinations through this poem by depicting the image of suffering specifically, the suffering of the Algerian people and the sorrow that is reflected on Algeria itself. The image of suffering that stirred the poet's emotions was drawn from the crises Algeria experienced during the "Black Decade," which reignited the spirit of revolution within the people: **(Omar, *The Gate of Paradise*, 2010, pp. 72-73).**

And from you, a people cleansed themselves in glory,
 And prepared their dreams for prayer.
They went on, greeted by victory with praise,
 Reciting for us the Chapter of the Chargers.

The poet's vision, which springs from the idea of the self's search for the other, is derived from evoking a place not merely in its geographical dimensions but by giving it a human dimension through dialogue and invocation. This is evident in her poems that involve invoking and conversing with places like Algeria, Iraq, Oman, Frankfurt, and others.

The tone of humanism grows stronger in her poetry, particularly in the poem *Memories of the Beirut Bombing*, where she channels her deep emotions.

6-3 Sadness

The phenomenon of sadness is one of the most prominent features in modern and contemporary Arabic poetry, arising from the poet's rejection and refusal to accept reality, as well as from their sensitivity to the tragedies that have befallen the world. The hardships humanity has endured have deeply affected the creator, giving rise to a profound sense of sadness born from the alignment of the self's perception with the grim realities of existence.

This phenomenon is clearly present in the poetry of Hanin Omar, and may even be a dominant theme throughout her work. This can be attributed to the existential stance the poet has adopted, leading to a sense of loss, as reflected in many of her poems, including *How Much the Sad Poems Resemble You*: (Omar, *The Secret of the Gypsies*, 2003, p. 29).

Do the sad poems resemble me??

Or do I resemble sorrow and resemble the poem???

I do not know...

Perhaps sorrow resembles me.

The poet's use of an interrogative form expresses the existential anxiety overshadowed by sorrow, reflecting a state of psychological disorientation. Through this, the self is not searching for itself but for someone who resembles it. This is not a search for union or completeness but rather a form of self-assertion and validation. It is as though she seeks the other to affirm her own existence. This is evident at the end of the poem when she says: (Omar, *The Secret of the Gypsies*, 2003, p. 32).

My sorrow... is me???

I do not resemble it...

My sorrow: (is me)

And (I) am: the poem!

The dominance of patriarchal authority in Arab and Eastern societies has given sorrow in her poetry a different dimension, serving as a second vision of life. In this way, the poetess gains control over her emotions.

6-4 Love

One of the greatest poetic experiences in Romantic poetry is the theme of love. Romantic poets held it in high esteem and gave it special attention because of its humanistic values and because the Romantic poet, with his heightened sensitivity, was able to express his suffering through it. Love is one of the most significant themes for the Romantics, as seen by Ilyas Al-Hawi, who said,

"The greatest expression of Romanticism is seen in the theme of love and the poet's suffering through it" (Al-Hawi, 1984, p. 159).

The Romantic poet was able to express his dreams, imagination, and innermost feelings through the theme of love as a means of escaping the painful and harsh reality into a world where they could embrace the beloved and hope. This is perhaps why the emotions of longing and nostalgia are ignited within them, and thus, the Romantics turned to women, making them a symbol of love (Saadeh, 2002).

If we look at our poetess, we find that she has embraced this theme in her poetry, with hardly a poem passing without some depiction of love. Here she ignites its flame in the poem The Land of Love, where she writes: (Omar, The Gate of Paradise, 2010, p. 94).

O Sea of love, do you remember me?

I am all wild longing,

Your waves surely know me

Like the sorrowful eyes of the sun.

The invocation with which the poet begins is an attempt to humanize the sea, likely stemming from her effort to converse with it to express the depth of her longing and nostalgia for the other. This is conveyed through the interrogative form and her use of the plural word "longings."

In the same context, filled with emotions of yearning and nostalgia, Hanin Omar continues to evoke her dreams and desires about love, as if she is searching for that lost part of herself. This is powerfully expressed in her statement: (Omar, The Gate of Paradise, 2010, p. 95).

Dreams of love tempt me,

And I tempt the sea's eyes,

A sea that has mixed with the salt of my blood,

And with feelings that were once buried.

The poems in which the poet expressed her romantic sensibility, particularly through the theme of love, are given special attention in her collection The Gate of Paradise, where she dedicates an entire section titled The Gate of Love. This section consists of fourteen poems, including Confessions of a Woman and The Breeze Blows. Upon reflection, one finds that she evokes the masculine voice, in contrast to the Romantics who often turned to the feminine. Through this, the poet expressed love as a fundamental value in existence (Saadeh, 2002).

Research Findings:

Through this research journey into the poetry of Hanin Omar, the following conclusions were reached:

- Poet Hanin Omar is one of the poets influenced by Romanticism and its principles.
- The influence of the Romantic school is clearly and prominently reflected in her poetry, especially in the emotions of love, the theme of sorrow, the human dimension, and her exceptional use of natural elements in a suggestive framework, such as the sea, rain, and water.
- The phenomenon of "whispering" is evident in her poetry, manifesting through elements such as suggestion, humanism, and emotional inclination.
- Her poetry is characterized by a dominance of sentimentalism and whispering tones.

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