Original Article-Open Access

International Review of Literary Studies
ISSN: (P) 2709-7013, (E) 2709-7021 Vol. 6, Issue 1 January-June 2024, pp. 30-38

Sahrawi Women Dwell: *Tebra'* Poetry as an Expression of Cultural, Social, and Gender Awareness

Erragab Eljanhaoui[1]

Abstract

The role of women in the Sahrawi society is significant. In an early Bedouin context, women produced, built, and moved a tremendous symbol of the Sahara Desert: the hair tent. In other words, the Sahrawi woman could be considered the sole responsible for creating a private sphere, in which she dwells and acts as the head. Furthermore, around that private sphere comes a public one, where women gather for Twiza Day *(the day of making a hair tent). In such ceremonies, these women flirt, mock, and compose poetic expressions to call for the attention of men who are passing by. This paper investigates a collection of poetic productions – Tebra' – in which women project a clear sense of agency and awareness towards a "semi-patriarchal" system. This type of composition mirrors what the Egyptian ethnographer Lila Abu-Lughod classifies as the fourth category of resisting patriarchy among the Bedouin women of Awlad 'Ali in Egypt. This paper uses Abu-Lughod's study to draw a comparative study between the two Bedouin contexts. Overall, this paper puts under scrutiny an overlooked body of writing – Tebra' – to comprehend the degree of cultural, social, and gender awareness among the women of the Great Sahara Desert, thereby contributing to our understanding of the role of literature in shaping societal norms and values.*

Keywords: Tebra', Sahrawi Women Poetry, Agency, Cultural, Social, and Gender Awareness.

[1] CHALS Lab, Université Ibn Zohr, Agadir, Morocco
Email: erragab.eljanhaoui.16@edu.uiz.ac.ma

Publication Details:
Article Received: February 25, 2024
Article Revised: May 11, 2024
Article Published: May 22, 2024

Recommended citation:

Eljanhaoui, E. (2024). "Sahrawi Women Dwell: Tebra' Poetry as an Expression of Cultural, Social, and Gender Awareness. *International Review of Literary Studies*, 6(1): pp. 30-38. https://irlsjournal.com/index.php/Irls

Introduction

In the Sahrawi context – from Wednoon to Laguira – the *Biddani*[1] Society has featured women in various folktales and poetic compositions. It is worth mentioning that women played a significant part in the early Bedouin lifestyle. Women were the producers, builders, and movers of the most significant symbol in Bedouins' life: the tent. In a sense, women were the sole owners of the tent – home –without them, the whole process of inhabitance would have diminished and collapsed. So, the Sahrawi woman could be considered responsible for creating a private sphere where she dwelt and acted as the head. Furthermore, around that private sphere came a public one, where women gathered for *Twiza* Day (the day of making a hair tent). In this context, the Moroccan anthropologist, Rahal Boubrik, writes:

> After collecting the hair of goats and camels provided by the herd owned by the family, women start the process of weaving and knitting. This operation requires extensive and collective work from these women (*Twiza*) in which they clean the hair from all impurities – *tcha'achia'a* – and then divide it to become softer by using '*Aghrchal'* – '*Tgharchil'* – […] These women take care of the whole stages of making the tent '*Twiza*' collectively. The sewing – both '*Al Shal'* and '*Aljabr'* – is conducted in groups because it requires significant effort. For this process, experienced women are called for a mission of a day or two, if needed, which is called 'the day of sewing.' Additionally, women use various tools along with each stage of making the hair tent.[2] (Boubrik 2021, p. 14-15)

These women flirt, mock, and compose poetic expressions in such ceremonies.[3] Additionally, this social consciousness needed to produce not only poetry but also tales that celebrate the major part played by women (Imran & Chen, 2023). In these tales, women usually play the protagonist, who is tricky, witty, and seductive of their enemies. These early stories convey great awareness of a "semi-patriarchal."[4] A system that situated the Sahrawi women within their society. Tales like *Aicha Oum-Nwajer*[5] Showcase the degree to which the women of the Sahara could challenge, even further, the status quo of a society that celebrates women and their roles.

Unlike the women of Awlad 'Ali, it is rare to find tales and stories that put women as seduction or purely sexual symbols. In an Islamic environment, it was not common to produce purely sexual narratives due to how Islam – The Maliki Doctrine – fulfills a big part of the lives of the Sahrawis. Women, however, would often speak sexually to each other in the absence of men (Imran & Ismail, 2022). Lila Abu-Lughod provides a significant ethnographic study of the Bedouin women of Egypt – Awlad Ali. Abu-Lughod's critique is unique in the way it reframes Foucault's notion of power analysis by focusing on resistance examination instead (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 41). Looking into Abu-Lughod's interesting ethnographic study of the "Awlad 'Ali" Bedouin women in Egypt, One seems to understand that the Sahrawi women share a similar position. In this paper, I put some of the *Tabri'at* composed by the Sahrawi women in contrast to those produced by the women of Awlad 'Ali. Additionally, this comparison seeks to understand the differences and resemblances that touch on the two contexts. By grounding this study on a comparative basis, this paper builds momentum and envisages how two significantly separated contexts –geographically and culturally – share various similarities. This paper seeks to enrich the Sahrawi context, which is tremendously overlooked despite its complex, rich, and significant role in the region. Various tribes, clans, and nations have stepped

[1] *Maure* (French), Moor (English), or *Bidanni* (Arabic), a mixture of *Sanhaja* Amazigh tribes and *Bani Hassan* tribes, who emigrated from the Arabic Peninsula to the Great Sahara Desert in the early 15th Century. More illustration in Dr. Rahal Boubrik's book, *Sahrawi Studies: Society, Power and Religion.*

[2] I am using my unpublished translation.

[3] Various scholars who studied the *Tabra'a* genre found it difficult to contextualize the specific date of its emergence. Most of them (Ahmed Baba Miské & Voisset and Page) argue that the 1700s marked the beginning of this poetic production.

[4] I use "semi" as the early Sahrawi Bedouin society did not show complete neglect and ignorance of the role played by women to be called a "fully" patriarchal society.

[5] Aicha Oum-Nwajer is known for her fooling others, especially her husband to get what she always wants.

into that context, producing an environment worth investigating. Hence, due to the lack of studies examining women's poetry in relation to other contexts – like Awlad ‘Ali’s – the writer of this paper sensed the necessity to draw a comparison by mirroring various poems produced by women from different contexts.

Review of Literature

Various studies have been conducted to analyze this neglected genre either by diminishing its significance in comparison to male-composed poetry or due to its lack of a clear metric and prosodic assembly. Hence, they left room for further discussion, especially when referring to the social, cultural, and gender awareness of the Sahrawi women. Additionally, these studies (Ahmedou, 1982; Cowell, 1984, 1985, 1989; Gouffate, 1989; Imran et al., 2023) have extensively dwelt on the form and social emergence of this genre while overlooking the awareness raised by these women. For instance, Voisset and Page write:

> Women have often been tempted, especially during difficult periods, to compose poetry in the abundant political and social vein. This constitutes the other principal area of literary activity in the modern period when ancestral aristocratic values are being seriously eroded. (Voisset & Page 1993, p. 79)

A blatant gap is noticed when One reads the criticism intended to understand the genre of *Tebra’*. Most of these researchers seem to have located the emergence of this body of writing to Mauritania without paying attention to the local specificities of the region. Surely known, the *Biddani* society – as explained in an earlier footnote – extends from the northern area of Wed Noon to the shores of the Senegal River; therefore, tracking the specific source of such compositions is difficult and open to interpretative attempts. However, this paper does not aim to inspect such matters; relating it to the overall Biddani society is mandatory in comprehensively understanding the genre.

One of the unique aspects of *Tebra’s* poetry is the discreetness of its composers. This poetry, according to Ould Mohamed Baba, is “composed exclusively by anonymous Ḥassāni women to express their amorous feelings towards men whose identity is hidden because social norms require it,” and the “two lovers remain anonymous” (Baba, 2020, p. 188). Secretness and confidentiality cover most of *Tebra’s* poetry. However, some questions concerning this high sense of discreteness arise: Why is all this secretness present in this genre? Is this genre special and unique in its confidentiality, as the dangerous lust entertains humans?

In the collection arranged by Dr. Catherine Taine-Cheikh[6]In Tebra, sponsored by the Academia of the Kingdom of Morocco, a general answer to these questions is provided. Part of the discreetness that follows such productions is the sense of shame that haunts the poetess. This sense is caused by the nature of the poetry composed by these artists, which consists of what Sahrawis might consider taboo. In this regard, Taine-Cheikh writes:

> Thus,, throughout my research on women’s poetry, an old woman from the region of Tagant did not accept transmitting her poetic collection (Tebra) without her daughter’s oral channeling. This story is significant and shows the need for a third party—mediation—considering it the only way to reduce the “debauchery” that constitutes Tebra, which grows as these poetesses age.[7] (Taine-Cheikh 2021, p. 19)

One could understand that the “low” reputation of *Tebra’* makes it difficult for women to associate their names with any of the produced poetry. Such “debauchery” would haunt the “honor” of the woman – especially since *Tebra’* was produced by unmarried women – her whole life. That also explains why various poetic expressions were lost, and only a few were recollected from old cassettes and CDs, decades if not centuries after their first appearance.[8]

[6] Dr. Catherine Taine-Cheikh is the honorary head of CNRS, France.

[7] I am using my unpublished translation.

[8] Baba notes that such poetic expressions were sung by the griots of Bani Hassan who accompanied the Hassani warriors across the landscapes of the Great Sahara. I quote him: “īggāwən (singular: īggīw; feminine forms, singular tīggiwīt and plural tīggawātən) are known as griots in French and English. They are a class of travelling poets, musicians, and singing storytellers who have created and developed the Ḥassāni music called aẓawān. See Ould Mohamed Baba (2015: 433)” (Baba 2020, p. 189).

Voisset and Page confirm that this poetry has offered women a "brutal emancipation as well as a proliferation of opportunities and spaces in which their voices can be heard" (Voisset & Page, 1993, p. 80). However, this type of emancipation is not similar in any way to the way some women were categorized in other contexts; the Egyptian Bedouin women, for instance. Voisset and Page coin this emancipation with the "new context" that appeared simultaneously with the citing and reciting of this genre of poetry. This new position, in which women hold the exclusive part, is both "privileged" and "threatened" (Voisset & Page, 1993, p. 80). Part of the threat that looms around the privacy of women's poetry is related to the constantly developed society, especially since the Biddani society has witnessed a crucial change in its structures. Boubrik confirms that since the 1950s, the Sahrawi society has begun to lose the tide with the pastoralist and nomadic values, constituting the core of its identity. With famine and lack of water, the Sahrawi society began to move towards the city – from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, which is when Spanish colonization marked its existence. Because of that, new opportunities and hopes were sparked in the new cities in contrast with the gloomy landscapes of the dry Sahara, which urged many Sahrawis to relocate their life within the realm of the city (Boubrik, 2021, p. 183). In parallel, women have also noticed that the fine line between their private and public spheres, which was the privilege of a moving nomadic lifestyle, has begun to be clearer. The city walls, unlike the transparency of the tents (tents are literally with no doors), have finally marked the separation between the private and the public. Yet, the privileged aspect that Voisset and Page stress collapsed amidst the loss of a sphere controlled and owned by women, confirming their idea of "threat" as well.

When looking into studies that define *Tebra'* poetry in relation to its form, One finds various theorists who have dwelt on that aspect. The mention could be made of Baba, who gave a great definition of what *Tebra'* is. He writes:

> "The təbṛāʿ (singular: təbṛīʿa; plural: təbṛīʿāt) is a specific and exclusive type of poetry of the Ḥassāni woman that is composed only of a verse with two hemistichs with the same rhyme and generally the same meter. These short poems are meant to be sung by several friends at an evening singing meeting that used to take place outside the Bedouin campment or the village." (Baba 2020, p. 191)

On the other hand, the Egyptian *ghinnāwas* are not only similar in the context of their emergence but also in the metric and formal construction. Abu-Lughod draws a comparison between the *ghinnāwas* and the "other genres" of Awlad 'Ali's poetry and song. In this regard, she writes:

> The *ghinnāwa* is clearly distinguishable in form, context, and content from other genres of Awlad 'Ali poetry and song. These other genres are usually composed of numerous rhythmic verses, are sometimes rhymed, and are recited or sung by specialists, mostly men, whereas, the *ghinnāwa* is composed of only one line of approximately fifteen syllables, divisible into two hemistiches, and can be sung or recited by anyone. (Abu-Lughod 1986, p. 178)

As clarified, the two genres – Sahrawi and Egyptian – share the aspect of shortness and concise form, which renders powerful images with fewer phrases and words. This shortness in form was a source of criticism from various Sahrawi critics, who saw in this genre lesser significance than other forms with their metric, prosodic, and lengthy figures of speeches and styles.

Regarding such criticisms, Catherine Taine-Cheikh argues that length was never a determination of the quality of poetry. The pivotal criticism that touched on the shortness of such poetry is of Ahmed Miské, who "does not see in *Tebra'* a 'significant poetic purpose' due to its small size" (Taine-Cheikh, 2021, p. 14). However, Taine-Cheikh stresses that another genre, like Eastern *Haiku,* is highly celebrated as a successful poetic form. Hence, shortness could never be mistaken for the low quality of poetic composition. No one could deny, for instance, the importance of lengthier metaphors, symbols, and conceits – Shakespearean conceit in "Sonnet 107" or John Donne's lengthy metaphor in "Death, be no Proud" – in rendering effective imagery and sensibility. Nevertheless, Western schools of criticism, along with the modern development of poetry, have sensed the significance of short forms in addressing ontological and social phenomena effectively. For example, the famous poem by the acclaimed poet Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro," carries within its two verses a tremendous baggage of natural, worldly, and universal images that cannot but move its

readers. So, shortness is not sufficient in determining the quality of poetry, whereas effectiveness in presenting a strong image with fewer words counts as quality (literally quality over quantity).

Methodology & Theoretical Framework

This article relies on the study conducted by Abu-Lughod when examining the genre of Awlad 'Ali's poetry. By basing this study comparatively on Abu-Lughod's, a clear similarity poses itself present. There are a few studies that invoke a possible similarity between the genre of Sahrawi women's poetry and Awlad Ali's, but they stop at the level of form without diving into the implications of this overlooked genre. So, this paper goes deeper into how the Sahrawi women produced poetry that is not only similar in form but, to some degree, also in content, which raises various questions of whether all women in Bedouin contexts share this epiphany or if it is a mere coincidence. Additionally, this study explores how women showcased high levels of awareness about their status in Bedouin societies, which was reflected in their poetic compositions, all by referring to Abu-Lughod's important ethnographic study.

In her article, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women," Abu-Lughod uses a distinctive critique that contrasts the conventional Western theoretical body of power analysis. The issue with the discourse of many critical studies of power, according to Abu-Lughod, is that it romanticizes the notion of power and neglects the significance of analyzing the different forms of resistance (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 41). She also highlights that imposing a single framework on all kinds of resistance – as Foucault's notion of: "where there is power, there is resistance"[9] (Foucault 1978, p. 95) – holds the danger of effacing the complexity of each context. These contexts vary from political and cultural to economic and religious. It is worth mentioning that Abu-Lughod aligns this thought with the way the Bedouin women of Egypt resist in their way the patriarchal society in which they live. Additionally, Abu-Lughod thinks that the Western discourse analysis of power overlooks the daily life tasks that women undertake as part of their unique resistance. For instance, later in her analysis, she asserts that women's involvement in a conservative Islamic lifestyle is part of a crucially developed form of resistance to a constantly changing course of power (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 52).

Additionally, Abu-Lughod highlights four types of everyday life resistance that Bedouin women adopt to resist men's power. The first one is how women "use secrets and silences to their advantage. They often collude to hide knowledge from men; they cover for each other in minor matters, like secret trips to healers or visits to friends and relatives" (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 43). The second, according to Abu-Lughod, is how the Bedouin women resist the marriages imposed on them, which is "a widespread form of resistance [among] Bedouin girls" (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 43). The third form of resistance is "what could be called sexually irreverent discourse." Abu-Lughod refers to how women, in this context, "make fun of men and manhood, even though official ideology glorifies and women respect, veil for, and sometimes fear them" (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 45). Finally, the fourth form of resistance is the way the Bedouin women produce different "folktales, songs, and jokes" and how they "express through them sentiments that differ radically from those they express in their ordinary-language conversations, sentiments of vulnerability and love" (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 46). In a sense, tales and songs are considered, by Abu-Lughod, as a crucially unique form of resistance, which also parallels the unique poetic compositions of the Sahrawi women.

Hence, by scoping through Abu-Lughod's study, One sees a clear and obvious similarity between the women of Awlad 'Ali and Sahrawi women in the way they use folktales, songs, poetry, and proverbs to showcase their awareness and assert their value in moving-Bedouin society. The next section puts various *Tebra'* poems in parallel with compositions of the women of Awlad 'Ali to underscore the similarity between the two genres in the level of form and content.

***Tebra'* & Powerful Imagery/ *Ghinnāwas* & Gloomy Mood**

In her collection (2021, p. 17), Catherine Taine-Cheikh includes one of the collected poems which goes like the following:

'*Andu Tabsima … Bani fiha Ibliss Akhwaima*
He has a smile … in which *Ibliss* (devil) built his tent

[9] She asserts that "where there is resistance, there is power" (Abu-Lughod 1990, p. 42).

'Andu Tabsima … Thyii la'dam irramima
He has a smile … that revives the decayed bones
'Andu Tabsima … Taswa Tabkha w talqima
He has a smile … that equals tea dregs and the refill[10]

In this *Tabri'a,* it is clear to which degree women feel free in their poetic composition, aware that such crossing of taboo is prohibited. Seduction is rare, as mentioned above, in the Sahrawi written and oral literature; however, this aspect is finely articulated when present.[11] The seductive is confirmed by a superb use of anaphora: "He has a smile." Her dwelling on the man's smile is a clear indication of a liberty degree that was present in the Sahrawi woman's consciousness. Additionally, the presence of local specificities is always noticed in such compositions. The fact that *Ibliss* built his tent – a major symbol in the Sahrawi life – in her lover's smile indicates how she longs for what she considers "home." This use of hyperbole parallels the way Sahrawi women dream of the day when they create their tent and depart toward their new space. Boubrik describes:

> As soon as the woman gets her tent, she becomes the lady of the place and holds a newly regarded position. More importantly, her ownership of the tent makes us feel as if the husband is a strange person or as if he is a mere guest. For the man is always out in the day due to his daily missions and tasks, he does not stay in the tent unless he is sick or has grown older. Therefore, the adult men depart from the tent early in the morning, leaving this sphere to complete feminine domination. […] The woman is the tent's beating heart, and without her, there would be no tent. Further, the curse words often revolve around the tent: "*Allah* empty your tent," which means to become empty; an empty tent is a tent without a woman. (Boubrik 2021, p. 35-36)

Another aspect is the importance of tea making and associating it with the lover's qualities. The Bedouin Sahrawi women stress the role of tea in a way that gathers "*Jmaa'a*" to discuss various topics, including the composition of the new poetic *Tabri'at.* Finally, the "*talqima"* is nothing but an extension of the ceremony and atmosphere of "*Jmaa'a."* When the tea leaves are no longer able to produce a strong taste and color, the tea maker adds more tea leaves – usually after pouring the second cup of tea to the guests – to make the "*Jmaa'a"* a little bit longer. However, for the adoration lover, the smile of her beloved is far more gorgeous than all these specificities.

Another *Tabri'a* (Catherine Taine-Cheikh, 2021, p. 17) with a special marriage of the religious and lusty goes like the following:

Cheftou Yatwada … Ghharacht anu khatem fada
I saw him make *"Wodoe"*[12] … I made sure that it was a silver ring
Takayto Ahdaya … Chakayt 'An sanaih amraya
I made him lay next to me … I thought his teeth were a mirror
Ag'adt w tayayt … W 'Araft 'anni ab hubo btlait
I sat and made tea … And I knew that I was plagued by his love

The association of religious acts with a "debaucherous" attitude seems like a way to remedy the intensity of taboo crossing noticed in the genre of *Tebra'.* It is a reminder to those would hear the reciting of the poem that despite the woman's free will and agency to "think" and "feel," the presence of social and religious guidelines is mandatory. The woman in this *Tabri'a* is not ashamed of inviting her lover to have some tea with her, even though the act of "lay next to me" is questionable. In the Hassani culture, the act of "laying" is meant to describe the position of laying on a half side (always men do that, but the woman should sit and cover among strangers), especially when waiting for a cup of tea. Usually, women are the ones who welcome strangers to the *frig*[13] by providing them with milk or making them tea (Riley, 1850). Hence, this sensitivity toward the stranger is effaced when the *frig*

[10] Sahrawi people call the tea leaves "*lwarga*;" "*Tabkha"* is the tea dregs; and "*Talqima*" refers to when the tea leaves are worn out, which necessitates the person who is making tea to add more tea leaves to strengthen the taste and color of tea.
[11] I am preparing a reading of the famous Moroccan/Hassani folktale: *Asmaimee Enda,* in which the aspect of seduction is thoroughly inspected.
[12] This is the ritual of washing One's self before undertaking an Islamic prayer.
[13] The Hassani term describes the collection of various tents in one location in the desert. It is derived from the Arabic term: *fariq,* which means team or group.

itself is built in a way that includes only families who are genealogically related. The description of teeth continues when the woman asserts the whiteness of her beloved teeth. Nevertheless, similar to Awlad ‘Ali’s intense and sad *ghinnāwas,* the lover stresses that she is plagued by her beloved’s love. Such fear is perhaps drawn out of the anxiety that follows an irregulated love relationship. This anxiety is erased when the lover finally makes her way to her beloved’s heart and marries him, resulting in another dwelling – more earthly in the Heideggerian sense – which is to make and create her tent.

When comparing Hassani women's poetry with Awlad ‘Ali’s, it is noticed that the intensity utterly differs. The same observation is entertained by Abu-Lughod when she poses the question to one of the women who compose sad *ghinnāwas.* She writes:

> The sentiments of poetry tend to be negative or dysphoric. Even the poems of love and passion, described in metaphors of fires and flames, usually dwell on the painful aspects of the experience. I once asked an old woman why so many of the poems seemed to be about sadness. She laughed and said, “She who gets what she wants is happy and shuts up.” (Abu-Loghod 1986, p. 183)

On the other hand, the Hassni *Tebra’,* even if the lover is plagued or succumbed to her love experience, inverts the scene less intensively. One of the *Tabri’at* (Taine-Cheikh, 2021, p. 17) goes like this:

> *Dal saqmo katalni … ‘ayani wa akhbat w aktalni*
> He whose sickness is killing me … made me tired, hit me, and killed me
> *Bali marr ab’id … man ‘azzat Wald Amhaimid*[14]
> My mind went far … from the love of Wald Amhaimid
> *‘Ali da mas … man galbi ablad ma gat amtas*
> Ali touched … an untouched place in my heart
> *Elgalb mahmoom … w ljesm akhbar fih antom*
> The heart is shivery … and you know about the body

The imagery in these *Tabri’at* projects a powerful sense of longing and need for love, sensation, and care. This strong linkage to the beloved makes the woman suffer from the burden of waiting for the big day; a day that maybe would never come. Taine-Cheikh confirms that these poems are intended to reach the beloved’s ear, hoping that he might address the whining lover (Taine-Cheikh, 2021, p. 17). Using diction like: “*galb/*heart” is tremendously significant. Abu-Lughod notices that the Bedouin women of Awlad ‘Ali might utilize the term “*‘agl/*mind or psyche,” which corresponds to the “*galb*/heart” (Abu-Lughod, 1986, p. 181). She writes:

> Bedouins explain that the *‘agl* is in the heart – one woman pointed to her heart as she said something about her *‘agl.* The Libyan folklorist Qādirbūh actually glosses *‘agl* as *qalb,* the Arabic word for heart, in his exegeses of *ghinnāwas.* A comment one Bedouin made to me about singing confirms that poetry is linked to feelings of the self. She explained, “Those who sing feel something strongly in their hearts [*‘agl*]. (Abu-Lughod 1986, p. 181-2)

Therefore, the marriage of the two terms corresponds with Taine-Cheikh’s idea of how the Sahrawi women rely on the connection of mind/heart to move the lover’s senses. Such a relatively condensed style finds its way to a lofty and mesmerizing mood in contrast to the gloomy and obscure atmosphere created by the *ghinnāwas* of Awlad ‘Ali Bedouin women. For instance, one of the *ghinnāwas* goes like this:

> God damn the uncle’s son
> Lord don't lead me near no blood relative
> *yikhrib bet wlad il-'amm*
> *rabbi ma ygarrib la dam* (Abu-Lughod 1986, p. 44)

The diction, hence, used by these women carries a blatant refusal of any social or cultural norms that might be imposed on them. The tense tone of these women contrasts the amusing and gentle language

[14] Usually in this genre, women do not disclose their lover’s name. *Wald Amhaimid, Wald Lmahjoob, Sayd, or Mawla lkhaima* are some of the repetitive names given to the poet’s lover; all connoting: husband or lover.

used by the Sahrawi women, who, despite refusing the social norms, go along with declaring other ways. Whether by flirting, presenting powerful poetic imagery, or signaling the need for different circumstances, these women are mostly imagining their fate to be in the hands of a handsome lover. Such contrast in the intensity of the discourse used by the Egyptian women is explained by Abu-Lughod, who stresses:

> This use of the term *discourse* as a shorthand for a complex of statements made by numerous people in different social contexts is justified by the existence of a pattern in the sentiments expressed in the two media. People often turn to poetry when faced with personal difficulties, but the constellations of sentiments they communicate in response to these difficulties in their poems and in their ordinary verbal and nonverbal statements overlap very little. (Abu-Lughod 1986, p. 186-7)

Therefore, the clearness of the "discourse" used by the Awlad 'Ali women showcases their social and economic situation, which is expressed through a strong medium—poetry—their hope for a better life. Yet, the "soft" power of resistance among the Hassani women demonstrates an easier situation, where women flirt, mock, and resist the social and conventional formalities of their society in their unique ways.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed various instances to showcase the similarity between the genre of *Tebra'* and the *ghinawas*. While *ghinawas* articulated a gloomy atmosphere experienced by the Bedouin women of Egypt, *Tebra'*, and through this examination, has confirmed the high awareness these women accumulated. As also proven by various studies conducted on this overlooked genre, it is noticed that both genres have a similar form with slight differences in the tone and mood of their productions. This paper concludes that the two contexts, separated by a massive Great Sahara, intersect in how these women voice their agency through well-composed and articulated poetry.

The Hassani women portrayed a powerful imagery within the few hemistiches written in their *frigs.* These semantic images represent religious, cultural, gender, social, and local issues. These women enhanced their social prestige by challenging, even further, the "semi-patriarchal" system which has proven to celebrate women and their roles in the Sahara. So, by studying the genre of *Tebra'* in a broader context, this study has projected how women poetically dwell, confirming the notion of the universal poetic human condition. However, more studies need to examine the Tebra genre comparatively with other contexts to shed light on how they relate to the broader World Literature. Despite studies conducted by theorists like Voisset and Page, Baba, Miské, and others, the necessity to further explore the context of the Sahara, in general, presents itself as mandatory.

Conflict of Interest:

The author declared no conflict of interest.

References:

Abu-Lughod, L. (1990). The romance of resistance: Tracing transformations of power through Bedouin women. *American Ethnologist*, 17(1), 41-55.

Abu-Lughod, L. (1986). *Veiled sentiments: Honor and poetry in a Bedouin society*. University of California Press.

Ahmedou, E. K. O. (1980). *Soixante-cinq poèmes amoureux* [Sixty-five love poems]. Thesis. Ecole Normale Supérieure, Nouakchott.

Boubrik, R. (2021). *Al-mojtamā' Al-sāhrawi: Min 'Alāmi Al-khaimā ila Fādāe Al-mādinā* [The Sahrawi society: From the realm of the tent to the sphere of the city]. Afriquiā Achārq.

Cowell, D. (1984, November). Hassaniya Ghazal Poetry of Mauritania, collected from oral and written sources in 1978 [Handout]. Presentation at Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, San Francisco. University of Wisconsin-Madison. Rev. June 1990.

Heidegger, M. (1951). "Building Dwelling Thinking." In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter, Harper & Row.

Imran, M., & Chen, Y. (2023). Arab women's activism and socio-political transformation: unfinished gendered revolutions: edited by Sahar Khamis and Amel Mili. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 50(1), 203–205. https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2020.1723268

Imran, M., & Ismail, S. M. (2022). Khaled Hosseini's women as modern archetypes: A study of obedient, resistant and empowered Afghan women. *Frontiers in sociology*, 7, 1041435.

Imran, M., Tilwani, S. A., & Morve Roshan, K. (2023). An Answer to Spivak's Can the Subaltern Speak? A Study of Marginalized Women's Autobiographies. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, 2455328X231166999.

Miské, A. B. (1970). *Al Wasit, tableau de la Mauritanie au début du XXe siècle* [Al Wasit, tableau of Mauritania at the beginning of the 20th century]. Klincksieck.

Ould Mohamed Baba, A. S. (2020). Love poetry of Ḥassāni women: Lyric of three old songs [Doctoral dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid].

Pound, E. (1913). In a station of the metro. *Poetry*, 2(1), 12.

Riley, J. (1850). *An authentic narrative of the loss of the American Brig Commerce, wrecked on the western coast of Africa, in the month of August, 1815, with an account of the sufferings of the surviving officers and crew, who were enslaved by the wandering Arabs, on the African desert, or Zahahrah; and observation historical, geographical, &c. made during the travels of the author, while a slave to the Arabs, and in the empire of Morocco*. T. & W. Mercein.

Taine-Cheikh, C. (2021). *Tebra': The Hassani women's poetry*. The Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Voisset, G. M., & Page, A. (1993). The Tebra' of Moorish women from Mauritania: The limits (or essence) of the poetic act. *Research in African Literatures*, 24(2), 79–88. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3819887