Challenging Social Boundaries in the Poetry of Thuraya Al Arrayed

This study highlights Thuraya Al Arrayed's unconventional portrayal of women in selected revolutionary poems that address the concept of women's rights. It explores how Al Arrayed's representation of women challenged the restrictions imposed on Saudi women before King Salman Al Saud's reign and his Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Thus, this research adds to the existing body of knowledge by offering a new approach to Al Arrayed's poetry concerning the aspects of women's rights in contemporary Saudi Arabia. By considering Al Arrayed's radical choice of metaphors and images, I aim to establish Al Arrayed as a significant female poet whose poetry embraces a literary tradition that questions negative gendered attitudes biased against passionate women. In my approach to Al Arrayed's poetry, I consult selected poems from her published and unpublished volumes, in addition to biographical notes based on personal interviews. Additionally, I examine sociological research conducted on the changing role of women, which coincides with the transitional phase in contemporary Saudi Arabia. To my knowledge, the thematic focus offered in this article is absent from contemporary literature. Therefore, the significance of this research lies in its contribution to advancing the discourse on Al Arrayed, addressing aspects that have not been previously considered.

Keywords: *Thuraya Al Arrayed, Women's Rights, Poetry, Saudi Arabia.*

Introduction

This study sheds light on Thuraya Al Arrayed's unconventional portrayal of women in selected revolutionary poems that engage with the notion of women's rights. It explores how Al Arrayed's representation of women challenged the restrictions imposed on Saudi women before King Salman Al Saud's reign and his Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Thus, this research adds to the existing body of knowledge by offering a new approach to Al Arrayed's poetry in relation to aspects of women's rights in contemporary Saudi Arabia. By considering Al Arrayed's radical choice of metaphors and images, I aim to establish Al Arrayed as a significant female poet whose poetry embraces a literary tradition that questions negative gendered attitudes biased against passionate women.

Methodology

In my approach to Al Arrayed's poetry, I consult selected poems from her published and unpublished volumes, along with biographical notes based on personal interviews. Furthermore, I consider sociological research conducted on the changing role of women, which coincides with the transitional phase in contemporary Saudi Arabia. The thematic focus offered in this article is absent from contemporary literature. Therefore, the significance of this research lies in

the way it moves the debate on Al Arrayed forward to address aspects to be considered for the first time.

Literature Review

In *Desert Voices: Bedouin Women's Poetry in Saudi Arabia* (2009), Moneera Al Ghadeer begins her study by highlighting the lack of extant information about the life and poetry of Arab women: "In recent scholarship on Arabic literature the poetry of Arab women has been given insignificant consideration and continues to be unappreciated, unlike other genres" (Al Ghadeer, 2009, p. 1). Although Al Arrayed's name is increasingly acknowledged in anthologies and studies by contemporary scholars, she is one of the women poets whose names are worthy of attention. Majdi Al Ahmadi's *Thuraya Al Arrayed's Poetry: An Objective and Artistic Study* (2016) considers Al Arrayed's use of poetic language, techniques, and portrayal of themes such as home affairs and immigration. Al Ahmadi's book is an expanded study and continuation of his MA thesis "Thuraya Al Arrayed: A Poet" (2006).[1] In addition, a selection of Al Arrayed's poems, including "Desert Dreams," "The Doors; The Game of Times," "Moments of Silence," and "The Stillborn," are included in *Gathering the Tide: An Anthology of Contemporary Arabian Gulf Poetry* (2011). *Beyond the Dunes: An Anthology of Modern Saudi Literature* (2006) is another book that addresses Al Arrayed's name and two of her poems, "Questions" and "Name it What You Like." A decade earlier, her poem "Thirst: In the Stealth of the Stillness" is included in *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology* (2001). In her PhD thesis, "The Literary Movement in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia Emergence and Development 1930s-1990s" (2000), Nedhal Al Nassir dedicates an entire section to Al Arrayed as a modernist Saudi poet. In 2008, Mohammed Ali Al Khalfan's *Thuraya Al Arrayed and Poetry*[2] included several critical essays and articles written in response to Al Arrayed's published volumes.

Although none of the existing literature pays attention to the notion of the New Woman, neither in Al Arrayed's poems nor in modern Saudi Arabia, it is worth noting that contemporary scholars acknowledge Al Arrayed as a defender of women's rights. Referring to her poem "They are all me,"[3] Al Ahmadi points out, "[Al Arrayed] refuses the persecution faced by women […] and she found an opportunity to talk about women's rights which are lost in the Arab world" (Al

[1]Both Al Ahmadi's book and MA thesis are published in Arabic, and the titles included here are my translations.

[2]Al Khalfan's book is published in Arabic, and the title included above is my translation.

[3]The poem is included in Al Arrayed's volume, *A Woman with No Name* (1998), which is published in Arabic. The title included above is my translation. It is worth to note that the poem is inspired by a scene witnessed by one of Al Arrayed's visits to the hospital. While she was in the waiting room, Al Arrayed saw a young boy beating his ill mother, and suddenly the faces of other women changed, condemning the boy's behaviour. Thus, the title of the poem identifies the speaker as a representative of the suffering experienced by all women (Al Ahmadi, 2016, p. 47). The same story is also included in Abdullah Al Guthami's "Thuraya" which is published in Arabic (Al Guthami, 2008, p. 121-122).

Ahmadi, 2016, p. 47). Despite this claim, Al Arrayed's engagement with women's rights is included in a short subsection of Al Ahmadi's book. Similarly, Abdullah Al Guthami identifies the same poem as "Thuraya's uprising" against patriarchal conventions (Al Guthami, 2008, p. 125). Building on previous arguments, this study offers an insightful account of the subversive meanings of Al Arrayed's poems, which have not yet been considered by contemporary critics.

In addition, this study is inspired by Louay Bahry's article titled "The New Saudi Woman: Modernizing in Islamic Framework," which sheds light on the increasing opportunities for Saudi women. Bahry argues:

> The emergence of Saudi women as a social force is one of the most dynamic changes that have reshaped Saudi Arabia. […] Saudi women are clearly on the move, asking for and taking an increased role in the social and economic life of their country. […] The new Saudi woman has become more aware of her personality, circumstances, and environment. (Bahry, 1982, p. 502-503)

Although Bahry preceded me in applying the term "New" to Saudi women, I am advancing his argument forward and providing a more in-depth insight to the term "New Woman" in Al Arrayed's poetry.

Recent research on sociology finds that the revolutionary amendments in Saudi women's rights coincide with the dynamic changes Saudi Arabia is undergoing during King Salman's reign. In his study on the rapid changes in Saudi Arabia, Arak Pashayan lists the following amendments:

> Women's appointment to various political posts has increased in recent times. A number of key appointments have been made on political levels, such as Princess Reema Bint Bandar as President of the Saudi Federation for Community Sports, making her the first woman to lead a sports federation in the Kingdom, and Fatimah Baeshen, spokesperson for the Saudi embassy in Washington DC, USA, the Kingdom's first female spokeswoman abroad. (Pashayan, 2019, p. 34-35)

Most recently, Mai Al Harbi highlighted the empowerment of women through the Saudi Vision 2030, arguing that this vision "proposed prospects for Saudi women, enabling them to actively participate in practical life" (Al Harbi, 2022, p. 63). Al Harbi continues, stating "women have come a long way in obtaining the rights and freedoms they dream of, through culture, education, work and employment, and the elimination of all kinds of women's dependence and subordination socially, economically, and politically" (Al Harbi, 2022, p. 63).

This article situates Al Arrayed's poetry within the transitional phase in Saudi Arabia and highlights the predominant sense of anxiety present in many of her poems, bridging older conventions and aspiring for the "new."[4] This link between past and future was considered by Nathalie Handal in her introduction to *The*

[4]See also *Beyond the Dunes: An Anthology of Modern Saudi Literature* (2006) which includes Al Arrayed's name among modern Saudi poets whose poetry reflects an era of radical changes: "The modernization period (1970-2000) is the richest and most complex in the Kingdom's history because it was in this era that the pace of social change exploded, mainly as a result of the oil boom in the 1970s" (Al Hazimi and Khattab, 2006, p. 8).

Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology. Handal notes that "Arab women poets have struggled for freedom, for an enlightened Arab world, for universal recognition, peace, and equality. Arab women poets have encouraged a look toward the future rather than the past, while still holding onto the richness of past literary manifestations" (Handal, 2001, p. 60). Handal includes Al Arrayed's name in her annotated anthology, providing further evidence for my argument.

Thuraya Al Arrayed: A Short Biography

Thuraya Ebrahim Al Arrayed is a distinguished Bahraini/Saudi thinker and poet who held prestigious political and social positions during her lifetime. The Arrayed family in Bahrain is a branch of an extended family that originated on the Arabian Peninsula north of Madinah. Born in Al Manama, Bahrain, as the sixth daughter of Ebrahim Al Arrayed, Al Arrayed was greatly influenced by her independent-minded father, who was a social agent and poet:

> My father took care of my genetic and creative details. […] I can never forget the way he respected my views of life since I was a child. My beliefs, attitudes, and expectation of others were all inspired by him. I remember his anticipation of all the success I have reached today. He always believed in me and in my opinion. He accompanied me in a world wider than the world of childhood without denying my naivety. I grew up in a house full of thousands of books in different languages. We were visited by politicians and artists from Bahrain and other countries. All of them were men. There was one Lebanese woman scholar among them. She wanted to collect some information for her research on my father. I remember how weird it was when this woman smoked a cigarette. Since then, I took the decision to enter the world of scholarship and knowledge without adopting males' behaviours.[5]

Al Arrayed's words reflect her unconventional childhood, which seemed to have played a major role in shaping her career. In *A Most Masculine State: Gender, Politics and Religion in Saudi Arabia* (2013), Al-Rasheed explored the cultural and religious factors influencing opportunities for Saudi women. Regarding education and authorship, Al-Rasheed observed:

> It must be noted that girls' mass education started as late as 1960, thus delaying the development of awareness and articulation of the 'woman question'. […] A handful of early female literary figures benefiting from education in neighbouring Arab countries spoke as women, but their voices failed to reach a mass audience. […] Their awareness of their subordination and reflection on their own marginalisation failed to reach the rest of the female population. (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 2)

Although Al Arrayed did not receive her education in Saudi Arabia, she was aware of the ideologies that dominated the Gulf during the 1960s, which is evident in her reference to the only female scholar they visited. Owing to her supportive

[5]This quote has been translated from an interview with Al Arrayed dated July 2008 by Mirza Al Khuwaildi in *Asharq Al 'Awasat* (archive.aawsat. Retrieved March 10, 2018).

father, who was a believer in the education of women and had developed all their capabilities, Al Arrayed had the advantage of pioneering education. She describes herself as "lucky for being raised by a liberate father who came to the Arabian Gulf carrying international knowledge about the position of women in the family." In doing so, Al Arrayed confirmed her awareness of women's questions since she was young.

Al Arrayed leaves behind the prevailing expectations of women's passivity and pursues passion. By the age of 12, she was well-known in Bahrain, having achieved the top rank scholastically among her peers and winning prizes in literary contests for adults. Her stories were then read on the radio. She continued her education in Lebanon after studying in Bahrain until the age of sixteen, as there were no universities in Bahrain at the time. After graduation, she worked for a year as an English teacher in a secondary school before returning to Beirut to obtain her MA in Education in 1969. Upon returning home, she was appointed to the Office of Educational Planning, Ministry of Education, where she worked directly with the Minister. Remarkably, she was the only female in the building. Reflecting on her experience there, Al Arrayed says, "I never felt out of place with my colleagues or paid any attention to the fact that they were males and I was a female. They liked me and I liked them."[6] This shows that even early in her career, Al Arrayed was able to excel by accommodating herself in male-centered institutions. In her article on sociocultural identity among Arab men and women, Manal Ismail observes: "The social fabric of the Arab cultural system is primarily patriarchal. Arab societies typically associate men with the public sphere and women with the private domain" (Ismail, 2012, p. 262). Although Ismail's study was conducted from a linguistic perspective, it highlights cultural prejudice against women's passion for entering the workforce.

In Beirut, Al Arrayed meets her husband, a Saudi student at the American University of Beirut. Later, both obtained their PhDs from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After graduation, they returned to Saudi Arabia in 1976. Al Arrayed was granted citizenship and appointed the head of the newly opened Girls' Section at King Faisal University in Dammam. However, she preferred to work at Aramco because it was close to the University of Petroleum and Minerals, where her husband worked. Later, she moved to Government Affairs, where she was in charge of reviewing all publications and was appointed as a member of the Advisory Group to Aramco Management.

Al Arrayed was among the first generations of Saudi women to be employed as members of the Shura Council, thereby participating in one of the momentous changes in the history of Saudi Arabia. In his argument about new opportunities for Saudi women, Sian argues: "A key part of the development plan [of the Saudi Vision 2030] is the utilization of local talent, particularly women" (Sian, 2020, p. 6). Although published earlier, Al Arrayed's poems, which are included in this article, anticipate recent research on sociology and Saudi women's engagement in the public sphere as enforced by the Saudi Vision 2030.

[6]I am eternally grateful for Dr Al Arrayed, who granted me the honor to interview her and allowed me to quote her in this research. All unreferenced quotes in this article are from this interview.

Occupying a series of respected positions during her youth, Al Arrayed was ahead of her time, a fact which, as she asserts, is mirrored in her poetry: "My poetry in Bahrain and Beirut was mostly reflecting growing self-awareness of a sheltered Gulf girl totally different in her sense of self from the other girls, vaguely aware of herself not only as a full-fledged human being, but as uniquely individual and gifted one." Al Arrayed's description of her self-awareness as "vague" is not striking, for, as mentioned earlier, it was uncommon for young women in the Gulf to have dreams beyond the walls of the private sector.

Al Arrayed's reflections on her poetic experience took a different path when asked about the poems she wrote in Saudi Arabia. As she notes, "In KSA my poems developed a politicized edge, as a pan Arab on the one hand, and resisting the social pressure surrounding females on the other." Although the "politicized edge" will be the focus of future research, it is worth noting that part of Al Arrayed's political views hold significance for this research. According to Al Arrayed, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is passing through a transformational phase, reminding us of European revolutions." As it is evident in her poem "The Joy of Making Friends" (2006), she is familiar with major English literary figures:

> At nine
> I discovered the world had a key
> The Word
> I read a Thousand and One Night in Arabic
> And Shakespeare in English (54-58)

These lines show that Al Arrayed developed an interest in both the Arabic and English literary canons at a young age, reminding us of her comments on the liberating education she received as a child. Born to a father in the literary domain, the capitalization in the "Word" indicates how valuable literature is to her. This value is further emphasized when interpreted in relation to her remark which reveals that her own "Word"—in another word— poetry, was initially written for personal use: "I did not write poetry to publish it but to express feelings." As will be shown later, Al Arrayed's hesitation to publish may be read as a result of censorship regulations that confront subversive meanings in her poems.

In the same poem, Al Arrayed addresses the question of "Gender" which is at the heart of this paper:

> At twelve I discovered Gender
> I was told I am a female
> Hence I must cover and not play in the street
> Thus I discovered that Freedom is dearer for female. (69-72)

Al Arrayed's realization of the gendered conventions began when she was twelve; she learned that, as a female, she is not allowed to "play in the street;" that is, governed by the walls of the private sphere. Given the fact that this poem was written when Al Arrayed is already a mature woman recalling her childhood, "play[ing] in the street" may hint at meanings beyond the literal, implying a feminist account against social attitudes which confront women's involvement in

the public sphere. Reading this stanza in relation to the previous one, I argue that Al Arrayed's literary interest and her belief in the power of the "Word" goes hand in hand with her feminist motives which are implied in her assertion that "Freedom is dearer for female," thereby hinting at the confines of male-dominated societies.

The (New) Woman Question in Al Arrayed's Poetry

In my feminist perception of Al Arrayed's poetry, I highlight her mocking tone, which is used to describe some of the conventions surrounding women in a patriarchal society: "When I speak to a man, I show him that I am fully capable and that there is no reason to underestimate me. I always wonder why we shall always identify a woman as a dependent (she is either the mother or daughter of a male)." In this statement, Al Arrayed conveys her refusal of the expectations of women as dependent entities who were identified by their relationships with male figures in their lives, implying an attack on the Saudi law of guardianship, which had denied women their freedom for decades. Al Arrayed also touches on the widespread custom of calling women nicknames rather than using their first names. This issue of naming was also addressed in Al Arrayed's published volume, *A Woman with No Name* (1998), which appealed to many critics. In "The Argument of Naming and the Argument of Being: A Reading of the poem 'Without Name'," [7] Fatima Al Wahaibi concludes, "After all this denial is a form of proof; the poet is proving herself through her attempt to deny, and she seeks to enforce a new different perception" (Al Wahaibi, 2008, p. 158). Supporting Al Wahaibi's assumptions, I argue that in her account of women, Al Arrayed reflects on and simultaneously challenges the double social standards that are enforced and inspired by culturally inherited gendered prejudice.

Al Arrayed's belief in women's independence is evident and occasionally implied in many of her published poems, including "Desert Dreams" (2011) which addresses a passionate speaker who resists male dominance. From the very beginning of the poem, the speaker asserts: "I came into your world/ Wrapped in my inherited desert shawls" (1-2). The choice of the word "wrapped" indicates the speaker's restricted freedom; thus, the "desert shawl" may be read as a metaphor for the eastern social and cultural conventions. Also, as the speaker suggests, wearing the "shawls" is an "inherited" tradition rather than a choice of her own. Despite the imposed conventions, the speaker is represented as determined and refuses to be passive: "Don't dream that you will rule my ever-moving dunes/ Or that you will ever own the keys to my mysterious tunes" (27-28). If the speaker is a female addressing a male lover, she would be challenging the gendered perception of the man as a ruler in the private sphere, a reading endorsed by the speaker's use of the possessive pronoun "my." She is in control of the "dunes" which reflect and simultaneously challenge the fixity of the eastern culture, for these "dunes" are "moving," possibly searching for social reform. On the other

[7] Al Wahaibi's article is published in Arabic in Al Khalfan's *Thuraya Al Arrayed and Poetry* and the included quote is my translation.

hand, the previous lines may be read in relation to male dominance in the public sphere, for the speaker refuses the addressee's authority over her songs and "tunes" unchaining herself from the confines of censorship and the gendered attitudes biased against women's writing. Both readings are inspired by Al Arrayed's observation which demonstrates her motives: "The aim is to put the right person, male or female, in the right position. Let the qualified person use his/her specialty without imposing gendered ideologies." Al Arrayed's claims are manifested in her subversive feminist thoughts that shun misogynistic ideas.

Challenging male-authority was born with Al Arrayed's early poems, including "The Stillborn" (1965) which questions the marginalization of passionate women writers. Both anger and grief dominate the poem which opens and closes with a poet yearning for her voice to be heard:

I want to burst, to shout
Speak up with all my force
With all my might
Open my swollen heart
Cry out
Until the word is heard
Until the word pierces the sky
I suffocate
I'm heavy with the word
I'm pregnant with the word
Enclosed within my soul
Unknown….unheard (1-12)

The poem depicts a marginalized speaker whose gender is unspecified. Therefore, the poem can be read at two levels. If the speaker is male, he might be a working-class poet seeking fame in an established literary canon. Also, he might be a social reformer hoping for unity between diverse social classes, shunning racial distinctions by calling "any stranger" as a "brother":

I'd turn to any passerby
To any stranger
Any sullen face
And call:
"Here brother, look at me;
look deep into my eyes
Into my heart
Brother, companion
We are free!
Why do we separate?
Why think in terms of you and me?
Think of the Whole
Of every human soul
Break down the wall
And reach your hand to me. (13-27)

The speaker's rejection to social segregation reflects Al Arrayed's personal belief that "racial and intellectual conflicts participated in damaging future generation which became a prey to religious and political extremism." Thus, the call for unity becomes a common theme in many of Al Arrayed's poems, including "The Agony of Sounds" in which the speaker identifies her/himself with members from different social classes and groups:

> I see myself:
> Yearnings carried by poets laureates
> Yearnings scribbled by little kids
> Yearnings guarded by prisoners
> Yearnings denied by guards that wait (22-26)

As in "The Stillborn," the gender of the speaker in "The Agony of Sounds" is unspecified; however, it is more plausible to argue that the speaker is a female reflecting on Al Arrayed's own personal experience. Regarding her poetic career, Al Arrayed points out: "My poetry is written from and for the commune. As a poet, I speak for all women and sympathize with their suffering." On the one hand, this comment echoes the lines quoted from "The Agony of Sounds" in which the speaker identifies with the suffering of different social groups. On the other hand, it sheds light on women's rights as one of Al Arrayed's primary concerns.

Therefore, if the speaker in "The Stillborn" is a female, regardless of her class, the expressed agony may be linked to the double disadvantage of being a woman and a writer in a patriarchal society. Although the speaker is portrayed as suffering and "suffocat[ing]," she refuses to remain silent "[u]ntil the word is heard," a representation which confronts the prevailing expectations of women's passivity. My reading of the poem in relation to the woman question is inspired by the fact that this poem was written when Al Arrayed aged nineteen, and as previously mentioned in the discussion of her poem "The Joy of Making Friends," she became aware of issues concerning gender at the age of twelve (69). Additionally, as evident in the lines above, the speaker addresses the male as a "companion" rather than a superior asking him "[w]hy do we separate?" thereby challenging male hierarchy and social boundaries which are symbolized in the word "wall." This reading aligns with Al Arrayed's poetic interest which as she comments, "is centered on the long-distance future. My poems address bitter political conditions which are mixed with issues concerning women." Thus, it is plausible to argue that Al Arrayed's questioning of separate spheres anticipates recent research on sociology, such as Pashayan's, which explores contemporary women's challenges of gender segregation in Saudi Arabia.

Despite the revolutionary notion of "The Stillborn" and the speaker's continuous attempt to "[b]reak down the wall" and to "bring the struggling message out" (40), she is finally left in despair with her dead word:

> And then the word
> The struggling word
> Silently dies
> Within my boiling breast. (56-59)

Unlike the determined female speakers in many of Al Arrayed's poems, such as "Desert Dreams," the pessimistic ending of "The Stillborn" may be read in relation to the time it was published in 1965 when Al Arrayed herself was relatively young and women had even less inferior positions. This reading echoes Al Arrayed's comment on the sense of anxiety, which is common in many of her poems. According to Al Arrayed, this anxiety "stems from this feeling of harboring that could get me chastised for non-conformance." She continues, "you can see and take actions, but because you are a woman, you can't say it and you're not allowed." In so doing, Al Arrayed highlights the marginalization of women writers, locating it as an outcome of cultural prejudice that denies women equal opportunities.

In "Memories of the First Reader,"[8] Mai Al Dabbagh, Al Arrayed's daughter, recalls her childhood days when she used to read her mother's poems and articles. As an observer of her mother's career development, Al Dabbagh seems to be aware of the conflict that Al Arrayed suffered as a female writer. She points out:

> In fact, it was obvious that the situation of a woman becomes more problematic if she wants to become a writer, for women were and are still expected to remain silent behind the scenes. Otherwise, if the woman writes, this indicates that she entered the public sphere and dominated a system which is normally reserved for men. (Al Dabbagh, 2008, p. 191)

Despite the prevailing conventions, Al Dabbagh shows that her mother strived to defend her feminist thoughts. She adds: "When we started receiving threatening phone calls, sometimes during late-night hours, and messages from groups which tried to frighten my mother urging her to cease writing, she did not pay attention" (Al Dabbagh, 2008, p. 195). Al Arrayed's refusal to submit to patriarchal norms, biased against women writers, is in line with the previously discussed point about her desire to "[b]reak down the wall" in "The Stillborn."

Notably, Al Arrayed's early poems anticipated the rapid changes occurring in contemporary Saudi Arabia. In October 2017, Al Arrayed was interviewed by the MBC channel to comment on King Salman's order that permitted women to drive. Al Arrayed expresses her gratitude to the order which, as she notes, "ought to have come earlier."[9] The constructive reforms concerning Saudi women are in line with the motives addressed in many of Al Arrayed's poems including "Simple Things." Despite the poem's brevity, it manifests the poet's radical thoughts: "The things I want are very simple/ I want security, peace and a place to grow blossoms and

[8]Like Al Wahaibi's article, Al Dabbagh's is cited and translated from Al Khalfan's *Thuraya Al Arrayed and Poetry.*

[9]A decade earlier, allowing bicycle rides for Saudi women was also considered as a breakthrough in women's rights. In 2013, encouraging Saudi women to ride bicycles in restricted places was a revolutionary step which informed the headlines of international newspapers and magazines, including *Time* and *The Guardian.* In April 2013, *Time* released the headline: "Saudi Women Can Now Ride Bicycles in Public (Kind of)" by Kristene Quan (World Time. Retrieved November 19, 2018). On the same day, Nabila Ramdani wrote in *The Guardian* "Saudi women are allowed to cycle – but only around in circles" (The Guardian. Retrieved November 05, 2018).

wings" (5-6). The speaker's search for "security" may be read at two levels, for this "security" might be financial or emotional. In both cases, the speaker engages with women's rights in private and public spheres. In addition, the speaker's desire "to grow blossoms and wings" indicates her eagerness to freedom. This reading is further emphasized in Al Arrayed's subversive use of the "wings" metaphor in many of her poems, such as "A Silky Lily."

In "A Silky Lily," the poem's title stands as a metaphor for the yearning speaker who is in conflict between her feminine and feminist values. While she compares herself to a colored butterfly, more value is given to the "wings" and the speaker's desire to unchain herself from the lover's confines, finally asserting "I want to fly" (50). Despite the speaker's continuous attempt to "[d]istance" herself from the lover (49), she remains with "[t]attered dreams/ Wings that cannot fly" suggesting conformity to heterosexual normativity (88-89).

Conclusion

The themes and findings presented herein, as revealed in Al Arrayed's poems, offer evidence that her name is worthy of greater attention than previously received. The article has shown Al Arrayed's engagement with the wider debate raised by her contemporaries concerning women and their roles in the private and public spheres. Despite being a married woman and mother, Al Arrayed, as her interview and poems convey, defied the confining social norms that deprived women of their rights before the Reign of King Salman Al Saud and his Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. By shedding light on previously overlooked poems by contemporary scholars, I aim to show how Al Arrayed's poetry challenges social boundaries and anticipates women's empowerment and engagement in the public sphere as endorsed by the Saudi Vision 2030.

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