

An Ecofeminist Perspective Across the Boundaries of Cultures as Represented in Suheir Hammad's Poetry

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ABSTRACT:

As the existing incessant predicaments of the exiled Palestinian Muslims suffering the consequences of occupation, homelessness and racialism, in this article, we have selected a Palestinian-American poet, Suheir Hammad who portrays and reflects such crucial issues in her poetry. The select poems are classified into two main phases based on their content, context and purpose, namely, 'To be back' poems and ' Not to be black' poems. The discussion is carried out in two phases and it shows genuine manifestations of two crucial semiospheres which are bridged by the poet to form her collective Ecofeminist orientation across the boundaries of culture. She presents herself as a pendulum that swings between the two extremes of the dual semiospheres of the homeland and the host land of her current locality. On the one hand, from a distance, she focuses on the ecology of the homeland she has left behind and reveals a distinctive sense of consciousness for her Palestinianness, family's Muslim beliefs & Qur'anic teachings, ecological rootedness, cultural and social commitments along with a zeal to come back. On the other hand, she also spotlights on the current active social pandemic of blackness and the racial discrimination faced in the society of Brooklyn that she lives in. The condition of being doubly oppressed – oppression in her original homeland and harassment in her adopted host land –is reflected in Hammad's use of nature in her poetry.

Keywords: Racialism; Culture; Ecofeminism; Poetry ; Suheir Hammad

INTRODUCTION

Many Arab female diasporic writers throughout the last four decades are concerned with cultural Ecofeminist issues and ideas. One of them is Suheir Hammad, a Palestinian-American poet whose parents were refugees from their homeland of Palestine. They immigrated to Brooklyn when she was five years old. Hammad is the eldest of five children. Her parents placed the central responsibility for her upbringing on the precepts of the Holy Qur'an, so her upbringing was conservative. Hammad emphasizes that the Qur'an is the perfect speech in the world. She draws from the Holy Book materials for her poetry, she uses it to understand the relationship between human beings and between humans and nature. The Quran talks about the equality of people from many nations (Chapter 49:13) – *O Mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another*” – this is the essence of cross cultural relationship emphasized in the Holy Qur'an.

Hammad's poetry depicts her struggle and self-realization of being a Muslim Palestinian and being American. Being a young Muslim female with a Palestinian background and a second generation American poet gave her a chance to vocalize her poetry between the two cultures. Recognized as a poet in the American literary tradition, her poems reveal her way of thinking and reflect her consciousness about her homeland and host land. She was proud of her religion and her culture. In her poems, she presented her parents' culture in a way that was different from other Palestinian poets. In fact, her writings reflect her concerns, so she repeatedly tended to espouse her native culture and rejected some aspects of the American Society culture. *Born Palestinian* and *Born Black* is her first book that clearly reflects her attitudes and experience cross the two cultures: homeland of Palestine and host land of America. This study intended to explore Suheir Hammad's select poems from a cross-cultural

Ecofeminist perspective. The selected poems exhibit Hammad's consciousness of her homeland's dilemma and spotlight the crisis of the racial discrimination towards black people in American Society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the last few years, Suheir Hammad and her works have caught the attention of some scholarly interest and research. Though she produces several literary works that can be read from different perspectives, only a few recent critical studies have been achieved on Hammad's work. One of those critical studies was Kenza Oumlil (2013) "*Talking Back*": *The poetry of Suheir Hammad*" which concentrated on the ability of Suheir Hammad's poetry "talks back" to control discourses of Arab and Middle Eastern women. She states that the most prominent poetry of Hammad is considered an influential component of resistance's discourse. She assumed that resistance's role is to eliminate hegemony, redistribute the symbolic power and re-reform the identity. She said "On the basis of a textual analysis of Hammad's poetry, supplemented with an individual interview with the artist involved, some discursive tactics emerge as interventions"(p. 850). Through her interventions, she has established a feminist multi-media archive of missing stories. Her counter-hegemonic works present institutional obstructions to gender equality and admit the role of marginalized communities in supporting structures of domination. That means, this study analyzes Hammad's poetry from two angles; as resistance's discourses and as dominant gendered discourses and lacks the Ecofeminist and cultural link like the current study focuses.

Arunabha Ghosh (2014) in his research entitled *Energy behind Words, History behind Labels: Poetry as Resistance in Suheir Hammad's Born Palestinian, Born Black* argues that Hammad in her first collection of poems, *Born Palestinian, Born Black*, spotlights the issues of race, class, and gender. By using the hip-hop style in Hammad's poems, she is critical of and calls

attention to one of the most marginalized people in the world, i. e. Palestinians. His study is focused on the use of Hammad of poetry as a form of resistance. He explains how Hammad looks at the 'history behind labels'; such as, how she employs " *the term 'black' not only as an ethnic marker but a political position in relation to a dominant power structure*" (p. 521). Moreover, he tries to look at the similarities between the experience of Palestinians and that of African-Americans by means of the technique of hip-hop. Thus, it seems that he does not pay any attention to the Ecofeminist and the cultural implications of Hammad in his study as the current article is intended to address.

Similarly, Denijal Jelic (2015) takes up Hammad's work from different angle. In his article " Breaking Dichotomies: Counter-Narratives in the Spoken Word Poetry of Suheir Hammad", he examines the spoken word poetry of Hammad. He states that Hammad tries to deconstruct dichotomies between Arabs and Americans and form a bridge by means of the concept of transnational humanness. He says:

Through cultural criticism, Hammad reverses the process of Othering when she humanizes Palestinians and detaches suffering from national belonging. Her creative resistance represents a renegotiation of Americanness and its relation to Islam and Arabs (p. 1).

He asserts that she opens the gate for non-nationalized comparisons. Unlike the current article, his study does not seem to be focused on the elements of ecofeminism and culture.

Hamoud Mohsen, Ruzy Hashim and Zeen Asqalan (2016) in their article entitled *Moving towards Home: An Ecofeminist Reading of Suheir Hammad's Born Palestinian, Born Black* use an Ecofeminist lens for reading some selected poems of her collection. They concentrate on what they called "investigating the representations of Hammad's double consciousness of Palestinianness and blackness and displaying the dual domination of women

and nature embedded in the society of the homeland she left behind” (p.33). However, they neglected the elements of culture and the influence of the dual semiospheres of the displaced poet in their framework used for reading Hammad's selected poems leaving the gap for the current study to be fulfilled.

Further, Gibreel Sadeq (2018) is also another researcher attracted by Hammad's work. In his paper entitled *Construction of Identity in Suheir Hammad's What I will*, he focuses on the conceptualization of identity in poetry. He explores how Suheir presents her textual identity in the poem *What I will*. To achieve the aim of his study, he looks at the way that textual identity is done by linguistic choices at the lexical, lexico-grammatical (phrase / sentence) and discourse levels. He concludes his article by saying that “ Her identity is constructed in terms of her collective ethnic background and resistance to the oppression of her aggressor” (p. 1). Thus, his study seems to approach Hammad's work from a completely different perspective from that of the current study.

The most recent of all is the study of Dashiell Moore (2020). He discusses Hammad's work in his article entitled *Breaking language: performance and community in Suheir Hammad's poetry that Hammad's strategies of “breaking languages” from two modes ; from literary and performative modes*. He concentrates on the community structures that Hammad builds among her audiences and her readers. He demonstrated that “her poetry – especially in its online remediation – challenges reactionary, nationalistic appeals to identity in the wake of public crisis by incorporating the disruptive action of” breaking” as a literary and performative mode” (p.110). Further, he states that focusing on the relation between performativity and community in Hammad's work is crucial to comprehending her contribution to present-day American poetry and the extensive literary landscape of

postcolonial diaspora. Therefore, his study discusses Hammad's work in a totally different way from what the current study is involved in.

Based on the above mentioned brief review of the previous critical studies, there seems to be a lacuna in the Ecofeminist inquiry on Hammad's work in terms of a missing across cultural link with ecofeminism as presented in her poetry. Therefore, it is clear that the current study is attempt to fill up the lacuna and bridge that gap by selecting some poems and using the lens of ecofeminism across the boundaries of culture to read and discuss.

A CROSS-CULTURAL ECOFEMINIST PERSPECTIVE AS A READING LENS

Bridging a gap between two cultures or two contexts, on one hand, results in a cross-cultural perception which is necessary to read and understand the diasporic writer's issues and ideas especially those who swing between contexts across the boundaries of cultures. According to Poston (1990) the inclusion of two cultures generally leads to the formation of a new semiosphere in which the attached person constructs his own views and identity. Such a semiosphere in this regard is momentous as it provides a margin between two cultures and becomes the merging zone where the attaching process takes place. However, attached individuals often experience challenges in distinguishing their identity (Areej, Ruzy Suliza & Raihanah, 2017) as a result of coming from two different cultures with different values and perspectives. The difficulties lie in how they label and classify themselves, in how they create their own semiosphere to link the two distinct environments, and in how the two cultures contribute to their self-identification (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Further, "the biculturals tend to swap between their dual social identities, embodying opposite traits and doubling the behavioral pattern,

leading to the creation of a binary personality" (Areej, Raihanah & Ruzy, 2019: 129). Commenting on the interrelationship between the cultural and Ecofeminist levels, Brittany Bloodhart and Janet K. Swim (2010) in their article *Equality, Harmony, and the Environment: An Ecofeminist Approach to Understanding the Role of Cultural Values on the Treatment of Women and Nature* argued that "consistent with Ecofeminist theory, domination of women and nature is related at a cultural level and that both are related to a larger hegemonic value system and which predict greater gender inequality and environmental exploitation"(p.194). However, further inquiry can illustrate how these processes may occur and possible involvements that may address both gender discrimination and environmental exploitation on a cultural level.

Ecofeminism, on the other hand, has been used as a tool to analyze literary works for the last four decades. In literary context, commenting on the function of ecofeminism in literature, Gretchen Legler (1997) points out that the Ecofeminist approach plays a stupendous role in the recent debates of literary studies field as it is "providing a vantage point from which canonical nature literature may be critiqued" (p. 227). She further asserts the importance of such literature as a setting in which the representations of gender, class and race and assumptions about the natural environment can be investigated and interrogated through the lens of ecofeminism. Earlier to Gretchen Legler, Derborah Janson (1996) in her article *In Search of Common Ground: An Ecofeminist Inquiry into Christa Wolf's Work* highlights the continuing relevance of the German writer Christa Wolf's work to ecofeminism by drawing parallels between her work and that of western ecofeminists. She concludes her study affirming that Wolf's work has suggested a strong connection between human health and the natural environment. Thomason (2000) presents another argument about the vivacity of ecofeminism as a practical means of analysis in literature. In her work *Women, Nature and Poetic Dwelling: Ecofeminism and the Poetries of Phillis Webb and Judith*

Wright, Thomason uses ecofeminism as a lens for reading the poetry of Phillis Webb and Judith Wright, highlighting the degradation and exploitation of the natural environment in relation to the domination of women in the human world.

However, there are other perceptions that related to biological facets of the relationship between women and nature. These facets indicate the similarities between women and nature in terms of the nature of being women and women of being nature. Kate Soper (2000) argued that nature is the "womb of all human production"(p.141). Similar to nature are women who also have the womb to produce human beings. Nature not merely produces natural resources but also nurtures all living creatures just like women when they become mothers. That means, women's biology and subjectivity as values imply an analogy or premise that stands up for the intrinsic value of nature. Likewise, Brandi Christine Clark (2004) applies the Ecofeminist approach for interpreting Thomas Hardy's tragic novels and illustrates that Hardy can be regarded as an Ecofeminist writer in the sense that his work reveals some insights into the intersections between ecology and ecofeminism. Clark concludes his study remarking that the ecofeminist approach as necessary for developing human-nature relations in the current environmental crisis-ridden world.

Matthew Toerey (2004) in the article entitled *William Wordsworth and Leslie Marmon Silko Toward an Ecofeminist Future* anticipates some outlines of ecofeminism future in literary studies. Toerey even concludes that both Wordsworth's and Silko's writing counter patriarchal attitudes and institution by "advocating Ecofeministic, symbiotic relationships that value harmonious coexistence, caring cooperation and reciprocal respect among humans and humanity and the natural world" (p.53). Barbara Bennett (2005) states that using the Ecofeminist concepts in analysing literary texts seems to be natural, then, because literature is defined as the medium that makes theoretical practical, to transform complex philosophy into concrete experience through

the imagination. She argues that "since ecofeminism proposes to be a way of life more than a theory, literature seems a natural medium for disseminating its ideas and practices" (p.64).

Geng Zuo Zuo (2007) in his article *An Ecofeminist reading of William Wordsworth's poetry* states the importance to re-evaluate and re-appreciate Wordsworth's works by using ecofeminism as a lens for reading them. Due to Wordsworth's respect for nature and at the same time his concept of women was quite conservative and backward - as feminist literary critics said. Later, Carol. J. Adams and Lori Gruen (2014), in their book *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other Animals and the Earth* demonstrate that the Ecofeminist approach and its stress on human care, relations, emotions, affect and comparison have become more relevant than ever today.

Last but not least, the study is carried out by Hamoud Mohsen, Ruzy Hashim and Zean Asqlaan (2016) in their article entitled *Moving Towards Home: An ecofemist Reading of Suheir Hammad's Born Palestinian Born Black*. They apply ecofeminism as a lens reading some selected poems of *Born Palestinian, Born Black*. However, they neglected the cultural element and influences in their lens used for reading Hammad's selected poems. This article, therefore, is an attempt to fill up the lacuna and bridge that gap by using a cross-cultural perspective with ecofeminism to read the selected poems of Hammad.

To demonstrate the cross-cultural and Ecofeminist thread of inquiry, we classify the selected poems of Hammad into two main phases in accordance to their content, context and purpose, namely "to be Back" poems and "Not to be Black" poems as two main pathways through which we can illuminate her across -cultural Ecofeminist perspective. These two paths are used to track the two cultural contexts of the host land and the homeland as a two-way-semiosphere where the across -cultural Ecofeminist perspective of Hammad is formed and used as a reading lens of her selected poems of the present study.

DISCUSSION

The selected poems of Hammad are classified into two main phases in the current study in the light of their content, context and purpose, namely, 'To be back' poems and 'Not to be black' poems. Therefore, using the lens of ecofeminism across the boundaries of culture as a reading lens as mentioned previously, the analysis is carried out in the following two main phases:

PHASE 1: TO BE BACK-POEMS

This phase exposes Hammad's poems that present the displaced poet's total engagement with the ecology of homeland and the sense homeland attachment and rootedness along with her zeal and dream to come back. She is physically in Brooklyn but mentally and emotionally interconnected to the homeland of birth in Palestine. To illustrate the manifestations of her engagement with the semiosphere of the motherland , the poem entitled "Dedication" is the best examples to begin with. Hammad gazes and opines her observation of a displaced uncle saying:

*Standing on a mountaintop in Jordan
Looking over the vast sea
Saw the land his people had come from
Land of figs and olive trees
What should've been his phalesteen
It was close god it was
So close and
Forbidden to him
Him the son of the land (p. 21)*

These lines reflect a clear image of the Palestinian's affection for homeland felt by her displaced uncle and the suffering he feels as a result of being uprooted of living in it. What he can do is just to contemplate it from a distance and dream about seeing the land where his people live. Despite his proximity to it, it is forbidden to him. Hammad in these lines attempts to assert that the dislocated uncle is the deserved owner of the lost land he is gazing at. She continues describing the connectedness between the Palestinian in the exile and his homeland. The expression "*Land of figs and olive trees*" reveals the engagement with the concept of semiosphere of the poet's homeland environment. Meanwhile, the phrase of "Him the son of land" evokes the human-land interconnection as a child-mother relationship that characterizes the relationship between the man and the land. Nothing is called impossible and everything becomes easy to achieve what he wants:

*His love for phalesteen so fierce
He could've swam there
So light with such heavy longing
He could've flown there
Swore he could smell the ripe olives (p. 21)*

These lines reflect the extent of his eagerness to his homeland and his willingness to work miracles to reach it and live in it. He even confirms that he loves his homeland so much that he can smell it from a distance. "the ripe olives" is a cultural and the ecological semiosphere of the poet's mother country. It also evokes a sensuous aspect of the symbiotic connection of human-land in the mind of the poet. Then, Hammad switches the role with her uncle and makes a promise:

*She vows she'd return to phalesteen
Ib rohi ib demi*

With my life with my blood
I close my eyes
And smell the ripe olives (p. 23)

Rooting deeply herself in her homeland gives her robust faith in achieving her dream to live there. These lines present Hammad as a model for the displaced Palestinian woman whose extreme dream is to return to Palestine she is forced to leave behind. The lines also reflect the cultural semiosis of the poet's ecological Ecofeminist standpoint in terms of combining between Arab signs of communicative phrases such as "*ib rohi, ib demi*" that confirm her deep rootedness to the homeland and at the same time mirror her highly influence by her Qur'anic background. The Holy book of Quran states that humans were originally made of the dust of land and their end will be to the dust of land once they pass away in this life as it can be traced in the following chapters, "*And among His Signs is that He created you from dust, and behold you are human scattered*" (Qur'an, 30:20). However, the repetition of the phrase "*smell the ripe olives*" can reveal two meaningful views across the boundaries of culture. At one level, it reveals the poet's Ecofeminist perspective in the sense that she can smell the ripeness of homeland natural fruits due to what the cultural Ecofeminists confirmed about the close similarity between nature and women as 'givers'. At the other level, it evokes the sense of deep restlessness she experiences in the exile. Further, the lines show that the poet links her vow with her spirit and blood to confirm her willingness and her readiness to sacrifice her life to fulfill her oath to come back to her father land.

Similarly, in the poem entitled '*Blood Stitched Time*', Hammad declares that:

We call back to the phalesteen
Of folk songs and village dances
The phalesteen of martyrs and their mothers

The phalesteen bulldozed over in beirut

Whose mouth was jammed silent

With food stamps in brooklyn (p. 25)

These lines reveal clearly the cross-boundaries interconnections between Hammad's exiled identity in Brooklyn and her mother land country she left behind. They also signalize her overall doctrine of backness, interconnectedness and rootedness across the boundaries of all limits of space, time and culture. Further, the lines construct a firm and strong foundation of the bridge shaped between Hammad's past and current state of consciousness which in return get reflected in her words. It seems that she is living in the duality of the crisis ranging between the two cultural contexts. She is physically in Brooklyn facing the dilemma of racial discrimination and deeply connected to the ecological and cultural landscape and roots of her homeland ,i.e. Palestine .

Though she announces deep faith and hope of returning home, she gives us a clear picture about what is happening there and how much she suffers. She knows that it is not safe, however, she doesn't seem to care. The following lines of another poem illustrate the difficulties of living in exile and how it is better to live in your country regardless of the difficult circumstances and also regardless of any material gains that are available in exile. She sometimes inquires "why were they forced to leave their native land? "and" Why don't they have the right to live in their homeland?". Like these questions can be seen in her poem "*Argela Remembrance*":

Baba

We once stood on the edge of our sea

But they made us leave

I try to stop his crying

Sea foam escaping his eyes (p. 39)

These lines reveal a warm cry of the poet's yearning for the natural landscape of her homeland represented by "the edge of our sea". She called her father 'Baba' and they are a symbol for every Palestinian family hopes to return to Palestine. The lines show how they were forced to leave their land. The lines also demonstrate the idea of oppression on both Palestinians and their environmental surroundings and this is central to the recent trend of ecofeminism. Meanwhile, we can note that the poet keeps on building her Ecofeminist perspective across the boundaries of culture by outlining clearly the cultural and ecological state of double-consciousness of the homeland she missed in the host land of Brooklyn. That can be traced in the following lines of her select poem entitled "*Broken and Beirut*":

I want to go home, not only to mama and baba

I want to go home, to before me and pain

I want to remember what I've never lived

A home within me, within us (p 83)

The lines reflect the poet's deep engagement with the cultural and ecological semiosphere symbolized by the use of the word "home" in her poetry. The lines demonstrate the poet's everlasting longingness, homesickness as well as her sense of crisis and restlessness in the current home of exile. The repetition of "I want to go home" and the expression "A home with me, within us" display the human and ecological root as well as the cultural signs of the homeland and of the motherland that deeply and closely attached to the displaced people and they are always engaged with "to be back". Further, the word "home", at one level, symbolizes an icon of all the aspects of homeland's living both culturally and environmentally which are totally missed in the current living of exile. Therefore, she feels that it is totally a different home who has never forgotten and has never experienced such a state in exile. At the other level, the word "home" symbolizes the poet's Ecofeminist perspective across the boundaries of culture in the sense of the different aspects of homes in the two contexts of

Palestine and Brooklyn both ecologically and culturally. In other words, the employment of the concept of home in Hammad's select poems shows her engagement with the concept of a semiosphere where the two contexts get merged to shape her cross-cultural Ecofeminist perspective similar to what Poston argued in 1990 when he confirmed that the inclusion of two cultures generally leads to the formation of a new semiosphere in which the attached person constructs his own identity. Such a semiosphere in this regard is momentous as it provides a margin between two cultures and becomes the merging zone where the attaching process takes place.

PHASE 2:NOT TO BE BLACK-POEMS

The select poems of this phase in general represent Hammad's interest in the issue of race and racialism and transfer her anxiety of one race to the angst of the entire East. She tries to deconstruct the power relation in terms of race and ethnicity, gender and violence. She knocks a lot of discomfort zones of the society that sounds perfect and writes about many issues. Similar to a lot of exiled people, Hammad shares an insider/outsider position in the new land, i.e. the American society. In her poems, the existence of the multifocal articulations comes from the ethnic tension of a proper identity that is continuously fluid. This phase concentrates on her use of the word "Black" in different ways and lists the various meanings associated to the word.

Her poems seem to be a battlefield to fight the hegemonic practices of the society of America and unmask the dark workings of power as it is obvious in her renunciation to become the 'erotic' and 'exotic' in her poem entitled "*Not your erotic, Not your exotic*". This poem outlines clearly her overall reaction against sexism and racism faced in the society of Brooklyn. Meanwhile, it reflects Hammad's homeland's background and culture. The opening lines of the poem present the displaced Muslim black female's outburst when she declares:

Don't wanna be your exotic
Women everywhere are just like me
Some taller darker nicer than me
But like me but just the same
Women everywhere carry my nose on their faces
My name on their spirits (p.6)

These lines explore Hammad's appreciation for her homeland heritage and culture and her feminist view of being the same and equal to the others. The expression "*Don't wanna be your exotic*" reveals the displaced Hammad's sturdy outburst creed of equality and sameness regardless of color and race. Further, it exposes her overall reaction to the racial discrimination practiced in the White society of America. It is a poetic cry of the displaced female's refusal against the American practice and view them as being "being exotic". These lines illustrate and display clearly Hammad's homeland Qur'anic background and culture. They also outline that she has drawn her poetic inspiration and spirit from her homeland Qur'anic background in the host land. The Qur'an talks about the equality of people from many different nations (Qur'an 49:13) – *O Mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another* – this is the essence of the human relationship across the boundaries of cultures emphasized in the Holy Qur'an from which Hammad has drawn her across-cultural Ecofeminist perspective throughout the selected poems of the study.

Don't wanna
Don't seduce yourself with
My otherness my hair
Wasn't put on top of my head to entice
You into some mysterious black vodou
The beat of my lashes against each other
Ain't some dark desert beat

It's just a blink

Get over it (p. 6)

In the above lines, Hammad addresses and attacks strongly a person who talks about her and her difference and is incapable to see her as a human being. She discusses the way men look at women of different color. Men of the white society of Brooklyn look at them in disrespectful and demeaning way. She presents the reductive stereotypes that women of black face in Western culture. She observes that although women of color are viewed as “exotic” to white men, there are really numerous women who appear and share a culture similar to her own. A sense of solidarity among women of color is formed. She protests against this classification of women in sense of color, and creates her place in the world. She builds a persona of an independent and feminist character. Moreover, she conciliates herself and appreciates her femininity because she believes in herself and in women’s values in this world. Therefore, she accepts herself and encourages other women of different cultures to accept themselves. She has the ability to highlight the problems in society that concern women, particularly the displaced black Palestinian women.

To involve her deep engagement in the semiosphere of the homeland and host land where her cultural Ecofeminist perspective get budded and ripped, we have quoted the following lines of her poem entitled "May I Take Your Order?":

I'm the main dish

Walking down the street

My face a menu

Of first world delicacies

Olive skin almond eyes bitter tongue (p. 62)

These lines portray explicitly a combined semiotic signs of the white society of Brooklyn and the ecological root of the poet's homeland. The poet

metaphorically presents a combined network of a semiosphere where she bridges the two contexts of the homeland and host land framing the platform of her across-cultural Ecofeminist perspectives. The expressions like 'dish', 'street', 'a menu', first word delicious' are the semiotic signs of the host land culture whereas the expressions like 'olive skin', 'almond eyes' and 'bitter tongue' are semiotic signs of the poet's homeland. By using such expressions, the poet presents a two- folded- image of a pandemic semiosphere of the two contexts of the host land and homeland she is involved in. However, engaging herself in such semiosphere as represented in the lines above, Hammad clarifies how the white society belittles a woman migrating from the so-called Third World. They not only consider her a commodity but also a food delicacy. Although this image of hierarchical position of women in society is not new, it puts controversial questions of race and class, gender and ethnicity. She keeps on explaining the process of this de-humanization in severe expressions as she lists the 'menu'—"olive skin almond eyes bitter tongue". These lines take up the subjects that are related to race and class, gender and ethnicity; along with the binaries between the white and black, male and female. They explain the conflicts on various levels, mostly on the basis of color.

Further, Hammad persists portraying an image of male oppression against the black females in the American society in a dialogic method as can be drawn in the following lines of the same poem "May I Take Your Order?":

He stir fries me w /

Questions like:

Where you from?

Brooklyn

I mean originally?

Yeah there's no hidini'm original recipe

From the region of

Figs lentils & pomegranates (p. 62)

These lines reveal, on the one hand, the poet's resisting stance against the racial practice she faced. They explore obviously the kind of racial discrimination in the Brooklyn society in which the black are victimized by the sense of racism. Hammad takes umbrage at the way the White men gaze at the Muslim minority women. She becomes outraged with the questions of the White man that are unanswered, "where you from?" and "I mean originally". As a result of the occupation of Palestine, many Palestinians immigrated to foreign lands as other Arab nations from different countries did for several reasons. This produces the hyphenated identities of the people known as Arab-Americans, or to be more precise here, Palestinian-Americans. Through these lines, Hammad shows her deep and intimate knowledge of the coercion and conflict between these identities and the Americans. Further, the lines display the cultural aspect and practice of the American society where the displaced black people suffer from the racial discrimination. She intentionally chooses to use 'figs lentils and pomegranates' which are considered native to the Mediterranean countries to symbolize the black African Americans as well as other minorities living in the American society especially those from her homeland 'Palestine'. On the other hand, the lines above reveal Hammad's ecological rootedness to the homeland as symbolized by '*fig and pomegranates*' the two well-known native fruits of homeland of Palestine. They also evoke the poet's being highly influenced by the Qur'anic background. The Holy Quran prohibits such a look of discrimination to be practiced as can be traced (49: 11):

"O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name [i.e., mention] of

*disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent -
then it is those who are the wrongdoers"*

Similarly, the poet carries on enlarging and clarifying the picture of dilemma by connecting the two contexts via her across-cultural Ecofeminist perspective. For instance, in the poem entitled "*Delicious*", she inquires the motives of the American people in the society of Brooklyn she is living in:

*Why it is men
Describe our colors
As edible?
Chocolate skinned
Cweet honey shade
Café au lait delicious
Olive (an acquired taste)
Peaches and cream
Brown sugar
Is it because they are
Always ever so ready
To eat us? (p. 57)*

These lines reveal the extent of the poet's dissatisfaction with the reduction of the White men to the colored women and considering them as something can be eaten. That means, they think about colored women only as something that they can benefit from. Her question "Is it because they are always ever so ready to eat us?" has two implicit meanings. She wants, on the one hand, to give a feminist message that males of the society of Brooklyn are always ready to reduce and demean the value of females in general and colored women in particular and such issue is central to the recent theory of ecofeminism. On the other hand, she presents another feminist message across the boundaries of culture that male and female should be in warm and close relationship based on

respectful values regardless of color, race and gender. Such messages have been rooted back to her Muslim beliefs and cultural background of her homeland of Palestine. These views of Hammad reveal her Quranic background as it is mentioned in the Quran (4: 1):

" O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you."

Last but not least, the following lines of Hammad display the highest degree of the racial crisis in the sense of the pressures that colored women are subjected to make them underestimate their lives, and that has been seen in Hammad's poems as in the poem entitled "Suicide Watch ":

*Colored girls commit suicide
Buying ugly lies & no lye straight &
Straight nose lies
Thinking the rainbow ain't enuf
Anyway the rainbow was a slave ship (p. 31)*

The racial crisis of the poet can be strongly smelled from these lines as it reflects people's suffering because of only their color. Even the beautiful things in the eyes of people like rainbow, they are considered additional tragedies for them. Thus, Hammad dreams of returning to her original land of birth, returning to a country that appreciates her and does not pay any attention to her color, in the poem "Broken and Beirut "she clarifies that:

*Return to what we've forgotten
Return to the whiteness of black*

The drum, the hum, the sum of my parts

To god, the boiling in my belly

Touch it, taste it, name it and come back to... (p 83)

In these lines, Hammad reveals her sense of double-consciousness and how she is fully engaged and rooted to the semiosphere of the homeland indicated by the mentioned semiotic signs of the homeland's society such as 'whiteness of black', 'the drum' and 'the hum'. The word 'return' is used, on one hand, to show the difference between her life 'here' in the culture of Brooklyn society and 'there' of 'a returned home'. On the other hand, it indicates the displaced poet's sense of restlessness, engagement and rootedness towards the homeland across the boundaries of culture and land.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis Hammad's works, it can be concluded that the select poems of the current study are classified into two main phases, namely, 'To be back' poems and ' Not to be black' poems. Accordingly, the discussion has been carried out in two main phases and shown genuine manifestations of two crucial semiospheres which are bridged by the poet to form her collective Ecofeminist tunnel across the boundaries of culture. Throughout the select poems, she presents herself like a pendulum that swings between the two extremes of a dual semiosphere of the homeland and that of the host land of current living. Fixing herself at its center, she is totally engaged, at one extreme, with the ecology of the homeland she left behind and reveals her distinctive sense of consciousness and creeds such as Palestinianness, family's Muslim beliefs & Qur'anic teachings, ecological rootedness, cultural and social commitments and the zeal to come back. At the other extreme, she is thoroughly recalcitrant and restless due to a current active social pandemic of blackness that experienced and suffered in the society of the host land she lives in. Overall, Suheir Hammad presents the flamboyant voice of the displaced black Muslim Palestinian females in Brooklyn society that they have their rights to live irrespective of their color, race, gender and religion. Discussing Hammad's prophetic message as manifested in her work, the present study contributes to popularize and increase awareness of women rights especially those of the displaced and the black in the critical racial society as well as provide some insights into reading of humans' connection to land and culture.

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