

## Depiction of European nature by an Egyptian poet: An aesthetic analysis of Ali Mahmoud Taha's poetry

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### *Abstract*

This study analyses the depiction of European nature by an Egyptian poet, Ali Mahmoud Taha. Taha spent a considerable period of his life travelling across the cities and provinces of Europe, noting in particular, the manifestations of nature so different from his own country. These manifestations, being part of his poetic experience, find detailed reflections in his poetry, at times approaching the abstract. This study applied aesthetic thematic analysis to describe the European nature not as an abstract one, but rather as a concrete entity in the poet's feelings and expression. The analysis reveals that Taha's exploration of beauty in his poetry originated during his visit to Europe as a tourist in 1938. During this time, Taha developed a profound fascination with the picturesque landscapes of Europe, which he skillfully conveyed through his poetic expressions. His appreciation for nature in its most positive form was evident, as he focused on highlighting its inherent beauty rather than exposing any ugliness it might possess. Moreover, Taha's nature poetry prominently featured women, with love being intricately intertwined with the sensory experience of nature and shared moments with his companions. This research aims to pave the way for further literary and critical investigations into the influence of Arab poets on the Western manifestations, exploring every intricate detail and dimension. Additionally, it seeks to derive poetic connotations and their associations with novel contributions in the realm of Arabic literature.

Key words: Ali Mahmoud Taha, beauty, Egypt, Europe, modern Arabic poetry, nature.

### **Introduction**

Modern Arabic poetry showcases a multitude of visions and trends that define and highlight its unique characteristics. One noteworthy aspect is the association of certain poets with travels to Western countries, where

they draw inspiration from Western civilizations and cultures, enriching their emotional and poetic experiences. Despite the language barrier and societal differences, these poets adeptly adapt and find within Western realms a source of both hope and anguish, which they creatively express in their works.

The idea for this research was sparked by the profound impact European nature had on the collection of the Egyptian poet, Taha (2004). The captivating beauty of European landscapes serves as a prominent motif in the opening prose of many of his poems. Consequently, the research delves into three primary elements: the encompassing realm of nature in the poet's memories, the European cities and provinces that played a significant role in his life and movements, and the aesthetic factors that shape the poet's identity as well as the central theme of European nature.

This research holds a distinct advantage in its meticulous analysis of poetic texts, with a particular focus on the elements and components derived from the romantic inclination that often emerges from the poet's contemplation of humanity, existence, and the universe. This sentiment is deeply felt through the emotive inspiration and its profound impact, vividly expressed through the flow of poetry. Scholars have noted that nature poetry, a term unique to modern Arabic literature, was introduced through Western literary influences, specifically originating from the Romantic movement of the late 18th century (Nofal, 1978).

The novelty of this research lies in two key aspects. Firstly, it explores the poet's intriguing experience of cohabiting with and observing European nature, while maintaining his Egyptian/Eastern identity. Secondly, it examines how these two elements coalesce and complement each other aesthetically. The study of aesthetics encompasses the concepts of creativity and aesthetic reception (Murtad, 1983), which play a significant role in this investigation. The selection of Ali Mahmoud Taha as the subject of this research is purposeful, as he is a poet who spent a considerable portion of his life traversing European countries. Through these journeys, he sought to intertwine poetry and beauty, blending emotion and consciousness, with nature serving as a foundational pillar of beauty. Taha consistently expounded upon the essence, components, and effects of beauty.

What especially drives this study is that the poet transposes the reader across continents to places that he does not even name, by mere description of the beauty that he witnesses. Ali Mahmoud Taha, affectionately referred to as the "Gondola Poet," gained recognition for a poem he composed following his visit to the enchanting city of Venice during the summer of 1938. During his time there, he had the privilege of witnessing Venice's renowned annual celebration, where its inhabitants embarked on gondolas adorned with vibrant lamps and

intertwining strands of fragrant roses. Inspired by this captivating spectacle, Taha crafted a poem that became synonymous with his artistic legacy. In disguise, they pass through the city's canals and between its historical palaces. This charming atmosphere inspired Taha to compose this poem to commemorate his visit (Taha, 2017). This reinforces his close relationship with the beauty of European nature and his perception of it, which earned him great fame. One of the compelling motives behind the selection of Ali Mahmoud Taha as the subject of this study is the notable contrast between the perspectives on nature exhibited by poets of the modern era and those of the ancient era. In particular, the exploration delves beyond mere observations to encompass a profound emotional and psychological connection with the landscapes. Taha, driven by a deep longing, sought to establish a profound rapport with these natural surroundings, infusing his hopes and aspirations within them. By examining Taha's poetic expressions, we aim to capture the essence of this unique emotional and psychological state he sought to convey and embrace. Taha's experiences with Europe's beautiful landscapes paved the way for the initiation of many books and research articles in which he expressed his romantic tendency. In 1941, Taha published his book *Stray Souls* which most of which comprises articles on English and French literature. He spoke about the French poets Verlaine and Baudelaire (Taha, 2004). In *Stray Souls*, one chapter is meaningfully titled, *European memories*, and another fully dedicated to the impact of his trip to Europe.

I swore by wine, women,  
Poetry and singing council,  
The summer trip in Europe,  
And the magic of its dark days.

(Taha, 2004, p. 156)

Upon a preliminary examination of Taha's poetry collection, it becomes evident that European influence profoundly shaped his work, as reflected in his divans titled "East and West" and "Echoes from the West." Within these collections, Taha meticulously documented his emotional experiences and adventures, invoking the natural world that cast its profound influence on his poetic journey. It is worth emphasizing that while previous literary criticism has explored the study of nature primarily through patterns and imagery, this research aims to delve into the nature portrayed by Taha from the perspective of the desired aesthetics felt by the poet and perceived by the reader. This analysis often arises as a result of the poetic impact evoked by the impressionistic ambience created by Taha's visit to these captivating places.

### **Methodology**

The perception of beauty is a matter of subjectivity and it is liable to differ across cultures and individuals. In the realm of philosophy, each school encompasses its unique set of aesthetic components. A subject lacks artistic value unless it possesses inherent aesthetic value, as it is the aesthetic value that draws attention to its artistic worth. Consequently, the objective of aesthetic interpretation is to embark on an exploration of the cultural essence of the Arab individual outside their homeland, as exemplified through the poetry created by Taha. This research endeavors to delve into the very foundations of Taha's cognitive existence within this cultural context.

The study examines the distinctive manifestations and features of nature specific to Europe in terms of its geographical reality, as observed and described by the poet. It shifts focus from the general characteristics of nature that remain largely consistent across different locations, to delve into the particular aspects that set European nature apart.

In other words, this research does not describe the European nature as an abstract one, but rather it analyzes its beauty from the eyes of the poet and its reflection on the poet's emotional canvas. Aesthetic thematic analysis has been taken as a method in this research. This approach adopts a thematic analysis that focuses on specific topics derived from an in-depth exploration of the poet's collection of poems. The primary objective of this research is to address a fundamental question: How was the poet's perception shaped by the beauty of European nature, and what was the extent of his being influenced by it? Additionally, it seeks to examine how the poet depicted the intricate details of European nature in his poetry.

By employing this approach, we aim to unravel the nuances and complexities of the poet's encounters with European landscapes, uncovering the transformative impact it had on his artistic expression. Through careful analysis of his poetic works, we endeavor to shed light on the ways in which he captured and conveyed the essence of European nature, delving into the minute details that enriched his poetic repertoire.

### **About the poet**

The poet, gondola, Ali Mahmoud Taha Al-Muhandis, is an Egyptian poet of the modern era. He was born in Mansoura, Egypt in 1902 (Al-Maadawi, 1986; Al-Zarkali, 2005). His poetry occupied a prominent place among the poets of the forties in Egypt since the publication of his first collection *The Lost Sailor* (Taha, 1941). The significance placed on the sensory experience surpassed that of cultural implications, highlighting the poet's preference for evoking a sense of taste and visual allure. Within the realm of Taha's verses, the vivid depiction of beauty takes center stage, captivating the reader's senses with its allure and

enchantment. While emotions certainly find their place within his poetry, they are often eclipsed by the prominence of aesthetic expression. Taha's emphasis on taste and the visual elements of beauty further underscore his inclination towards the aesthetics of his craft.

Writers and critics, however, have differed about his poetic and emotional experiences, as some support it and others distance themselves from it. At a time when Shawqi Dhaif sees him as a poet devoid of meaning and spirit in a chapter he named, *The Noise of Beautiful Words* by Ali Mahmoud Taha, Muhammad Mandour and Nazik Al-Malaika see him as a master craftsman (Dhaif, 1999).

Many diverse views of Taha's unique descriptions of beauty can be found in literature. For instance, that he 'was a young man with a bright outlook, imprisoned by passion, enchanted by imagination'. Further, he saw nothing but beauty, sang nothing but love, and did not consider 'existence but a poem of heavenly courtship that eternity seeks and the ark dances upon'.

However, Anani and Sarhan (2002) assert that the key to Taha's poetry is the idea of romantic individualism and freedom, which naturally comes only with the availability of material resources that liberate the individual from need and do not make him feel pressured, so that he could only see beauty and devote his readings in European literature to the poetic problems that occupied him, romanticize about man, existence and art, and all that is related to the realization of the imagination. In this sense, it goes without saying that Taha differed from the poets of the Diwan group. They went to Europe, specifically the United Kingdom for the purpose of study, while Taha went for tourism and exploration. This made him indulge more freely in appreciation of the nature of that country, consequently, his poetry was the outcome of a special emotional experience.

In 1945, Taha published his book, *The Returning Longing*, in which he talks about some of the memories of his trips to Europe before World War II. Here, he also mentioned Berlin, the German capital, which he visited in the 1939, with the poem titled, *Between Love and War*. The last of the poet's collections which he published in 1947 was, *East and West*. Didactic as the title is, it is a collection distributed from the West to the East. In the western section, the poet described his memories formed on his travels in Europe (Divan, 2004).

Taha had visited Europe as a tourist in the summer of 1938 by sea, and it had a great influence on him. His book, *Nights of the Lost Sailor* was published in 1940, and most of the poems in this are reflections of his European tourism (Divan, 2004). There is no doubt that his visit to Europe at a time when World War II broke out on September 1, 1939, and lasted for about six years, greatly influenced his writing. However, even at the summit of political conflicts everywhere, Taha only cared

about the cause of love and the call of nature. He transcended the struggle of philosophies and opinions to reach the heights of beauty in poetry. The poet was then moving between European cities, immersing in their beauty and capturing everything in his poetic ruminations. Taha used words for his intense emotions and sentiments, the source of which is the beauty of nature in general, and the European sights in particular. Beauty to him was intermingled with feeling and sensation, and nature became a basis for him that he could not escape from in most of his poetry.

In Salah Abd al-Sabour's introduction to Taha's poetry collection, he provides extensive insights, spanning 20 pages, into Taha's intricate relationship with Europe and the profound influence it exerted on him. Al-Sabour delves into the dynamic between the Eastern individual and the Western world, shedding light on the multifaceted aspects of this interaction. According to Taha's own observations, Europe encompasses a rich tapestry of elements. It boasts a diverse array of culture and civilization, vibrant music and art scenes, captivating works of painting and photography, significant industrial advancements, and, notably, the inherent beauty found in its natural landscapes (Divan, 2004). Through Al-Sabour's exploration and Taha's own reflections, readers gain a deeper understanding of the wide-ranging impact of European influence on Taha's artistic sensibilities and creative expression.

What is beauty?

Aesthetics is a difficult abstraction to define and determine the scope of, but its founder Alexander Baumgarten (1714-1762), and the first theorist in aesthetics and modern poetry tried to make boundary of aesthetics as a science of sensory perception (Al-Jihad, 2007). Baumgarten initially linked aesthetics to poetry through his book, *Reflections on Poetry and Its Techniques*, which was published in 1753. He used the term "aesthetics" to refer to the philosophy of art and beauty. The Italian philosopher and literary critic Croce (1866-1952) followed suit in his book, *The Poetry of Dante* (Abbas, 2012).

Researchers have affirmed that aesthetics is a branch of philosophy which deals with the study of perceptions of beauty and ugliness. It attempts to explore whether the aesthetic features exist objectively in the things we perceive or exist subjectively in the mind of the perceiver (Abdel-Hamid, 2001). Taste is perhaps one of the most prominent issues in aesthetics among ancient Arab critics, including Abdulqahir Al-Jurjani (1009-1078) who made cultured and trained taste a legitimate means to knowledge and appreciation of beauty (Al-Kafaween, 2018). Aesthetics, as defined by philosophical thought, is a normative science that establishes rules and standards for human behavior and what it ought to be (Blues, 1981).

It is a science that only emerged as a result of realizing its epistemological crisis at the level of critical concepts that accompanied literature, poetry, and other arts. These perceptions and concepts were unable to perceive the transformations of modern creativity that surpassed the dimensions of the ancient world. Judging things by "beauty" differs from one thing to another because it is a reflective judgment that does not fall on external things, but on the self and what it is affected by regarding external things (Al-Kanji, 2017).

Accordingly, many terms connected with beauty have emerged, including the "aesthetic moment," "aesthetic experience," "aesthetic expertise," "aesthetic stance," "feeling of beauty," "artistic pleasure," and others. Similarly, these terminologies multiply according to the diversity of perspectives and observations, in harmony with research methodologies and the conflict of knowledge fields (Muqabla, 2006). The term "beauty" conflicts with several concepts such as "beautiful," "aesthetic tendency," "aesthetics," and "aesthetic method." The beautiful is what addresses the feeling of beauty or the emotion of beauty in the soul (Al-Hefny, 2000).

It is clear that the concept of beauty is divided into two parts: natural beauty and its manifestations that we can touch in nature, and artistic beauty that we find in the artistic creations in various fields of art, without neglecting those who enhance beauty with morals. However, the problem remains in judging these perceptions, as the intervention of taste leads to differences in judgments (Hamza, 2009). It is also a science that may be known as a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of beauty and the judgments related to beauty (Abdel-Hamid, 2001). The aesthetic vision in literary and artistic works has been specifically agreed upon by a group of critics. This view is determined through the aesthetic feature of the artwork, which is often conveyed through the image or the aesthetic form alone (Gadamer & Hans-Georg, 1986).

However, this is an oversimplification of the aesthetic essence that dominates many of these concepts and goes beyond the idea associated with feeling and emotion. The poet's aesthetic position usually begins with the feeling and enjoyment of beauty, then this position is manifested to the recipient/reader through the manifestations of a phenomenon that the aesthetic moment generally comprehends, far from the feature of self-feeling to altruistic feeling. Therefore, there is an opinion that insists that poetry is an aesthetic practice that emerged from the Arabs' vision of their world and their way of understanding and evaluating it. The poetic phenomenon is a beauty phenomenon, and from this, we derive that such vision involves knowledge of a specific aesthetic nature (Al-Jihad, 2007).

### Title aesthetic

Indeed, the titles of poetry collections play a crucial role in shaping semantic visions and evoking powerful images that reflect a poet's ability to convey their experiences and guide the reader towards their intended message. A well-chosen title can encapsulate the essence of the collection, offering a glimpse into the poet's thematic and stylistic intentions. Through a carefully crafted title, a poet can evoke curiosity, establish a thematic framework, or convey a specific mood or atmosphere. It serves as a guiding force, directing the reader's attention and setting the tone for the poems within the collection. The title acts as a gateway, inviting the recipient to embark on a poetic journey curated by the poet. The artistry of selecting titles lies in the poet's skill to encapsulate the essence of their work, piquing the reader's interest and providing a glimpse into the intended emotional and intellectual experience that awaits them within the collection.

The title is the first threshold that the reader resorts to in interpreting the poetic text and analyzing its elements. The title is one of the most important aesthetic features that distinguish contemporary poetry given the poet's keenness to put a title to each poem and even for each collection he publishes (Wadi, 1994). Taha was not very different from those poets. He relied on the title to establish semantic connections with the poetic content, especially regarding his European journey. This is evident in his first collection titled 'The Lost Navigator', and later, 'Echoes from the West, East and West', which includes a number of his aesthetic visions that indicated that the European nature, in particular, was able to influence his poetic experience. Beauty then, infiltrated the description of that nature based on what he saw and felt.

In the inside titles of the poems, nature received much praise and attention: 'To the Egyptian Nature', 'Rural Song', 'The Deserted Beach', 'To the Sea', 'The Lake', 'In Winter', 'Lake Como', 'Egyptian Beaches', 'The Thirsty River', 'In the Sky', 'Birth of a Flower', 'My Flowers', 'Island of Lovers', 'The Sea and the Moon', 'The Rural Hero', and 'The Yellow Rose'. Taha's first collection, 'The Lost Navigator', was filled with descriptions of European nature, and perhaps the interpretation of the title suggests a lot of admiration and worship for the beauty that he encountered in his travels until he became - rightfully - a lost navigator among the different landmarks of nature.

### Elements of European beauty in the Taha's poetry

#### Human/woman

The artistic formation is elusive, and its purpose is to establish meaning and truth that reveal the existence of human beings and the effectiveness of their consciousness. Thus, human existence turns into existence for the sake of meaning, and beauty is what causes this transformation. Humans are closely linked to nature and form an

essential component in terms of interacting, talking, and supplicating with it. The human mind is a mirror of the most important characteristics of nature and its greatest ones (Marzouk, 1983). Formation, as a complementary aspect, is an attempt by humans to establish themselves by composing the existing things to express meaning (Al-Jihad, 2007). *Melodies and Poems* was written in the house of the German musician and playwright Richard Wagner (1813-1993). In the introduction of the poem, a prose passage was mentioned that explained many visions related to this musician's ability to stimulate imaginations and contemplations in life. The beauty surrounding his residence inspired him with many artistic and literary creations. The poet was fortunate enough to attend the first night of the first music festival held after World War II in Lucerne in the summer of 1946 (Divan, 2004). Taha also described the nature surrounding the small and modest house as unique in its undulating hills, meadows, and plateaus, as well as the charming shades of mountains, lush trees, and enchanting beach that extended to the edges of its garden. It is no wonder that the Lucerne district was displayed in this house and its garden to make it a wonderful museum that collected artifacts (Divan, 2004).

Oh, what a narrow and winding,  
road between two hills.  
As if it was drawn for  
two lovers' footsteps.  
The trees around it,  
are like eyelashes  
(Dvain, 2004, p. 348).

This poem was characterized by two distinct components. The first is the human/history component, where history was considered an important part of nature in Europe by summoning European historical figures who visited his homes or events that were associated with them. This important aspect also appeared in the poem 'Pharaoh Farouk II' about the fall of the Italian leader Benito Mussolini (1883-1945).

The woman emerges as a significant and prominent element in Taha's poetic and emotional experiences. One notable instance is the poet's visit to the residence of a German musician accompanied by a Scandinavian artist at dawn, where they immersed themselves in the captivating melodies. They embarked on a journey on foot, traversing valleys, hills, and verdant plateaus under a cloudy, rainy sky that breathed the scent of sunrise. Taha's words depict an enchanted lakeshore setting (Divan, 2004). This particular poem exemplifies the poet's association of women with summoning and inspiring poetry. Taha lays the groundwork for numerous other poems by recounting his

encounters and companionship with friends from various countries, with women assuming an integral role within the poetic narrative. The presence of women becomes intertwined with the elements of beautiful nature found throughout Europe, serving as catalysts for poetic inspiration. The fusion of women and the natural world within Taha's poetry not only underscores the depth of his emotional experiences but also highlights the interplay between human connection and the awe-inspiring landscapes he encountered during his European sojourns.

In general, the human component, and specifically women, in light of the beauty of nature in the poet's view, are closely linked to psychological and spatial estrangement that the poet was unable to envision or understand in a continuous questioning narrative.

She beautifully breezes,  
Shaking the nests of two birds.  
A whisper spread in the woods,  
From the lips of two flowers.  
Who are these strangers here?  
What is their story, and they are where?  
(Davin, 2004, p. 349).

The poet continued to describe the visitors/strangers within an intense description of nature's manifestations that he encountered, highlighting their beauty and how they affected his poetic experience. He also showed this impact through introductory descriptive passages and repeated questioning about the nature of the coming human.

This lake and its surroundings, a dream of its night,  
it was not awake from the demons and valleys.  
The land beneath the clouds of water is adorned  
With what the grass and flowers portray.  
Morning in its eastern cradle has not risen  
From its rose made of woven clouds.  
Who are the ones coming? The wind whispers  
Their footsteps, and the earth is watching!  
(Divan, 2004, p. 349).

Woman, as an essential component of nature, was also associated with love in many places in Taha's poetry. He mentioned his visits to the natural habitats accompanied by his female friends or writers from those areas, and feminine speech fantasies appeared in some of them.

Love manifested in many of Taha's poems in various contexts, which became the driving force for the poet's emotions towards humans/lovers who thirst to answer deep questions posed by the poet.

Every living and non-living thing here,  
Is calling out, inviting the beloved.

(Divan, 2004, p. 159).

In Philosophy and Imagination, the poet insists on sending out calls of love towards women and their close connection to nature and its various manifestations. It is a call full of many repetitions that lead to being influenced by them and feeling their impact, and attempting to follow them until reaching the aesthetic beauty of the auditory pleasure that harmonizes with the nature of darkness in the nights.

Oh daughter of the lakes,  
valleys, greenery, and mountains,  
Love echoes in the song, and our hearts respond  
to the call of passion and the voice of imagination.  
We followed in the footsteps of dawn,  
accompanied by grass, dew, and shadows,  
We heard the rustling of wings  
the wind carried from the caves of the nights.

(Davin, 2004, p. 353).

Certainly, the connection between nature and love within Taha's poetry, and the utilization of nature as a vehicle to express love and beauty, suggests a deeper emotional and self-reflective dialogue. It unveils a dimension that goes beyond conventional relationships and emphasizes the significance of an intimate connection with the beloved. From this perspective, it becomes evident that the romantic sensibilities expressed by Taha do not solely revolve around the pursuit of sensory pleasures or physical gratification in love. Instead, the lover finds solace and fulfillment in the mere act of conversing with their beloved. The emotional and intellectual exchange becomes the source of contentment and fulfillment. This observation aligns with the characteristics commonly associated with romanticism, where emotional depth and the exploration of profound connections take precedence over more superficial aspects of love. Taha's poetry reflects a yearning for meaningful engagement and intellectual communion, intertwining the realms of love, nature, and self-reflection.

The poet listed the signs of beauty present in describing the female/daughter, which were natural aesthetic features that were

primarily driven by love. Perhaps this agrees with some philosophical definitions of beauty that linked it to emotion and the recipient's sense of it in artistic and poetic works, and its attachment to levels of aesthetic perception (Al-Hefny, 2000).

In 'Between East and West, the poet is inspired by his journey to Europe. Taha calls out for love and its components of a sea and a mermaid. Against the backdrop of his discourse on nature and its charms, he emphasized the importance of showing a special philosophy for the relationship between that love and the poetic impact and emotional sentiment of the poet.

Do you not see how the sea in its charms appears,

With every new love having its own atmosphere?

Fisher at dawn releases his excitement,

A blonde mermaid in the depths of the sea?

(Divan, 2004, p. 363).

Thus, the woman appeared frequently in Taha's poetry, where the European/Western girl-friend was present in the context of describing nature. He did not visit a place without evoking the woman/girl-friend. This was in poems such as, Lake Como, which he dedicated to an American girl-friend who accompanied him on a visit to the lake, and the poem of the Rhine River, which was inspired by a Swiss maid he met there. Between Love and War is directed to a literary friend who accompanied him during the trip, and others. Therefore, it is natural for women to occupy a high place in his literature that they have not achieved before, as the elevation of emotions and sincerity in it led to a kind of sanctification and admiration of women, and the source of all was emotion (Helal, n.d.).

#### Place and space

The difference between the terms 'place' and 'space' lies in the fact that space implies inclusiveness and expansiveness, while the term 'place' implies some degree of limitation. However, both are connected. Generally, when it comes to the poet's psychological perception, the place is transformed into a space filled with various sensations that the poet is either attracted to or repelled by. The place, in this sense, moves with the writer or its threads are woven according to his vision and emotional interactions with external circumstances that evoke them (Dakhmouch, 2004). The formation of poetic/ aesthetic space has made the place (read Europe) an essential component in the poet's imagination and was associated with the reality he lived in and greatly admired. The space was not just a synonym for the place where the poet lived at the moment of creating the poem, but it extended to a number

of private and realistic and imaginative concepts. It is known that places are not measured by their size or population, but by their human appeal.

The formation of the poetic/aesthetic space led to making the place/Europe an essential component in the poet's imagination and was associated with the reality he lived in and admired greatly. It is known that places are not measured by their areas or by the number of their inhabitants, but rather by their human attractiveness (Al-Manasra, 2000). In, *The Sea and the Moon*, the poet recalled the French city of Cannes in the summer of 1946. An interesting party was held one moonlit night. Taha tried to expand the circle of space to include the imaginary one. Such a space made the water and trees celebrate, and the moon by the sea and poplars came alive in dreams:

The water in you and the trees wondered,  
Where do these pictures come from?  
The sea and the poplars swimming  
Visions of which the moon is now dreaming!  
It came and the light is a spinning dancer  
Called by the heart and harden the sight  
(Davin, 2004, p. 363).

The poet could adapt and interact with space in a way that highlighted all its aesthetics, and became the only refuge through which he aspired to resort to him and his monologues responded to a number of important questions that nature was the only one directed to and that motivated more emotional responses to the various calls of nature.

In an evening The Sheikh's dream  
As if he being young  
Lakes and mountains for  
You are charged with trees  
They covered their faces with clouds  
And explain to the moon  
Space transcends us  
On the fresh sandalwood  
(Davin, 2004, p. 131).

The open space that Taha experienced during that evening, with all its encompassing elements and surroundings, finds its expression through an aesthetic lens. This evokes a striking analogy, an unlikely juxtaposition of imagery. The connection between the temporal

dimension and the pleasure derived from it is primarily rooted in the moral significance of the aesthetic moment that the poet lived through. The evening time and the aesthetic space intertwine, creating a transformative moment akin to a dream imbued with the magnificence of the landscape. The aesthetic experience of the place extends beyond Taha himself, becoming a reflection of an ideal and a model. This interplay of aesthetics and fascination within the space prompts a series of inquiries that ultimately lead to a conviction and certainty in the sheer grandeur of its creation. This portrayal emphasized the profound impact of aesthetics on Taha's perception and understanding of the world around him. It underscored the power of the aesthetic experience in shaping his poetic sensibilities and fostering a deep appreciation for the beauty inherent in the surrounding environment.

As this splendor coincided with the utmost beauty, with which the poet tried to confirm its ability to affect him emotionally.

Oh Lord, your creation is all temptation  
Where to flee, and how my excretory!  
These masterpieces, you are their creator  
Between a stripper and an illusionist  
(Davin, 2004, p. 157).

The major and minor spaces appeared for the poet in explaining the European nature to emerge as an embodiment of it within the scope of the living and rational being. Indeed, the example showcased through Taha's poetic prowess lies in his ability to establish an emotional connection with the natural world surrounding him. His poetry goes beyond mere observation and description, delving into the profound impact of the spatial dimension and the significance of awareness in shaping the perception of beauty. Therefore, the romantic poet does not deal with nature with his sensory perception. Rather, he is required to add to it of his affection what reaches from it, and to revive life in its inanimate objects (Qabbash, 1971).

Darkness is drunk,  
Star has some regrets  
The forest and river listened  
to rock and water  
(Divan, 2004, p. 159).

We conclude with a poem titled, A Melody From Vienna, where a band from the Austrian capital Vienna – for the first time after the World War – came to Switzerland, and sang with much joy and pleasure. The poet was affected by what he saw, evoking the combative reality he

experienced in Europe. Emphasizing the special space of this city connected to its nature, he said:

Oh Vienna,  
renew the joys of nights  
Your dancing soul did not  
celebrate land and fight  
Music is still singing  
between waves and mountains  
With legends, dreams,  
art, and imagination  
It is the spirit of melody,  
in the world of beauty.  
(Davin, 2004, pp. 367-8).

Vienna, as a place, offered Taha a multitude of unique visions that inspired him to convey the profound impact of the city itself. The beauty of its nature served as a foundational element that remained untouched by the ravages of wars and calamities. Taha's poetic exploration of Vienna serves as a reminder of the healing power of nature and its ability to transcend the challenges and tribulations of human history. This vision - on the other hand - resulted from the conviction of the poet that the beauty bestowed upon this city is due to the nature which has bestowed upon it. Vienna still represents a special space for the poet, embedded with memories, immortal stories, and hymns of lovers. It was expressed by the details of the place and the plurality of spaces in the text, and the poet's emotional experience connected with the influence of that nature with his relationship of love and harmony.

O Vienna, make the world hear and bring  
The story of the forest and the Fils music  
Where in the Danube are the memories?  
Lovers echoed in the last night  
They left you with the dreams of life  
Except on heart in love is captive!!  
(Davin, 2004, p. 368).

#### Imagination

The image in aesthetic intuition takes its meaning from the emotional content of which it is a part; it is not the different qualities of perception

that enable understanding the interrelationships between the qualities. The bouquet is a group of different flowers, whatever these flowers are (Abbas, 2012). The logical image that is the word corresponds to a group of flowers that, according to the content of the direct psychological field, will be transformed into a festive bouquet or just a decoration for a room. Aesthetics is also associated by many of its philosophers with intuition, which performs an important function in human thinking and creative activity in images production (Abbas, 2012). It is confirmed that imagination is an essential component of poetic beauty (Shretah, 2017). Some researchers have mentioned that philosophers require poetic beauty to be imagined. The impact of poetic work on the recipient can vary greatly, as it is a deeply personal and subjective experience. However, there are several common elements that poetry often evokes in readers and influences their subsequent behavior (Al-Kafaween, 2018). Taha emphasized his care for the imagination and his special interest in it in his poetic composition.

I have a penchant for fantasy,  
And I wish for an expatriate nostalgia  
(Davin, 2004, p. 141).

To Taha, the nature of Europe was associated with realism. This is the image in which he tried to familiarize himself with all the details of the place and show the manifestations of its beauty. Indeed, Taha's poetic experience encompasses not only the external beauty of nature but also his personal joy and pleasure that he felt in its presence. This deep connection with nature is reflected in his poetry, which evolves to a point of immersion where he merges mentally and intellectually with the natural world and its manifestations (Hilal, 1979). In, *The Island of Lovers*, the poet composed based on memories of a trip that took place in September 1938 between the Volcano Vesuvius and the Italian Capri Island and its famous cave, Grotta Azzurra, he says:

When the sun saw her,  
She was young in the early days  
She was ashamed of nudity,  
People's eyes in land  
She surprised him veiled  
On current it approached  
She ran out of its crops  
And threw them on the rock  
And her eyes were napping  
She fell asleep not knowing.

(Davin, 2004, p. 288).

A comprehensive picture of the beauty of the sun in that emotional journey that the poet lived through is depicted. The poet explains an aesthetic aspect that he used to see on the European continent. It is the moment of clouds condensing in the sky and anticipating rain. The poet depicts the sun as it began in the imagined/aesthetic absence, not the natural sunset. This new image of the sun that he devised from his vast imagination differs greatly from the repeated poetic images that depict the setting of the sun before sunset, and receiving the darkness of the night. The poet here has a special philosophy in shaping his image that relies on two aspects: the borrowed feminine analogy for the beauty of the sun and its consequent impact on viewing, and the other side is the general atmosphere of the sky that is tempting to touch the sources of beauty. The poet confirmed the aesthetic of the sun in another poem that he drew from the memories of Lake Lugano, Switzerland, in the summer of 1946. Taha highlighted a diagnosis of the universal image of the sun with the traditional inspiration of Andalusian spinning in his influential formation:

I shouted to the sun in sunset  
kissing the blossom and the leaves of the trees  
I imagined of a lover,  
a kiss at farewell and travel  
It bent down looking at the wondrous valley,  
Images going after images  
And I heard a whisper from her  
And with my soul, you, Andalusia  
(Davin, 2004, p. 369).

The poet's fantasies play a pivotal role in shaping the broad picture of his poetic sensibility and emotional depth. Taha's creative imagination allows him to establish a profound connection between his poetic compositions and the natural world. He places great emphasis on the significance of nature in all its diverse realms and boundaries. Taha's ability to merge his poetic sense and emotional breath with the natural world allows him to convey a heightened sense of beauty, invoking a vivid sensory experience in the reader's imagination. Through his imaginative linkages, he invites the audience to explore the interconnectedness of nature and poetic expression, blurring the lines between the two.

I have a heart like a white flower  
that the sky has grown from every light

(Davin, 2004, p. 360).

The poet wandered a lot about the Rhine River in Switzerland. It became his big dream and inexhaustible imagination, and he quoted from his drunkenness the titles of beauty and influence. Taha became a dreamer in a way that was overwhelmed by many repeated questions that only the voice of the bartender wanted, and daydreams when they control a contemplative person clouding the details. The images are denounced, the hours pass without him noticing them, and the space stretches on to infinity (Bachelard, 2014).

Where are you now or where am I?

Hands of nights separated between us!

Other than a voice that floated like a dream about us:

Give us a wine of the river, give us a drink

(Davin, 2004, p. 160).

Joy

Nature has long been a source of inspiration for poets, evoking a range of emotions that can include both joy and sadness. The beauty and magnificence of the natural world often fill poets with a sense of awe, wonder, and delight, leading them to express their joy and ecstasy through their words. The vibrant colors of a blooming flower, the gentle caress of a breeze, or the majestic grandeur of a mountain peak can all serve as catalysts for uplifting and joyful verses.

In fact, nature in Taha's poetry was only conducive to the joy that dominated some of his poems. In some of them, sadness was in tune with pain. In, *To the Egyptian Nature*, Taha asked nature about the sadness that enveloped it in the partial relationship of analogy with the sad soul, then he added some of the features of beauty that almost adorned it by approaching the overall description of heaven and abundant goodness.

Why are you, O nature, as sad in my country?

Had it not for the songs chanted between singers

I would have thought that you were

a deserted paradise from Ad's era .

(Davin, 2004, p. 323).

The interrogative introductory add an element of suspense and longing to the poet's contemplation of nature's beauty. It introduces a sense of curiosity and wonder, as if the poet is eagerly seeking confirmation or validation of the inherent beauty they perceive. The conditional clauses further emphasize the poet's connection with nature and their personal

experience of its beauty. By expressing their joy and pride, the poet establishes a deep emotional bond with the natural world, allowing it to affect them profoundly. Through this emotional connection, the poet's imagination is ignited, enabling them to envision nature in its most exquisite form, accentuating its features and qualities to the highest degree.

However, Taha'a poems which described the European nature had added to it many features of joy and ecstasy, and that nature combined with his influence and admiration. So, joy became a phenomenon manifested in his poems. In the poem, New Tais, where it was the first night of August 1939 in the city of Zurich (on the shore of its lake). Taha celebrated Switzerland's National Day among the joyful noisy processions, the lights of torches, the fireworks, and the lights of its great exhibit, he says:

My soul resides in you, Or a ghost?  
The ecstasy of joy played with my head!  
Why does the sky perpetuate it with flames?  
Dawn? The dawn has not come yet!  
And why the lake as it was drained  
Or blew from a slaughtered sweat!

(Davin, 2004, p. 169).

The poet's moment of joy appears in the exhibition of sensing the Swiss beauty between belief and denial. Therefore, there were many exclamation and question marks that also drew an important aspect of being affected by the beauty of European nature, and how this western lake connected with the eastern status lake in Egypt through his poem titled, The Lake, inspired by the poem Lamartine.

The poet continues his manifestations of joy in the poem itself with repeated questions. His ecstasy faltered over that exceptional event that changed the features of realistic nature from darkness to light, and from a present body to a disguised ghost, until he reached the question of himself and our strangeness and intimacy. It is a denial question that indicates presence and pleasure without alienation or fear, and ecstasy and joy possessed him until he saw the perfect beauty displayed between the two extremes of madness and joy.

Vanity possessed me and amazed me  
Amongst astonishing is the antics of beauty  
Here I am the stranger and fill my hands  
Sympathy of this cheerful fool?

Showing beauty to him and he was shocked

He saw you then he becomes a mad of joy.

(Davin, 2004, pp. 169-70).

Taha continues to highlight the joy and happiness towards what evokes them in the scenes of European nature, especially with regard to the lakes whose vision of beauty coincided with the taste of the poet in a poem titled, Lake Como:

Prepare the cup and the tendon

Cuomo has a spacious look

Wake up, my thoughts

The travel hardship is folded

Paradise of Al-Muna came

In it residency became a joy

We have sent with it

With an unexpected date.

(Davin, 2004, pp. 169-70).

The poet here insists on the nature of that lake with an aesthetic/subjective introduction, through which he sings of the joy he received from seeing that beauty. The vanishing of travel hardship and the effects of alienation and fatigue on the one hand, and the association of that beauty with the highest and most accurate analogy descriptions between the witness of the lake and the example of the highest paradise, on the other. It is clear that the nature in the verse lines is suggestive, and it gives the poet an abundance of aesthetic impact.

Cuomo is considered one of the most beautiful of the three lakes that is unique to the Italian Lombardy. Yet this charm of Europe attracted many poets and inspired them with their most delicate poems and sweetest songs.

Taha visited this lake, traveling between its shores, cities, and its most magnificent mountain called Al-Bronat, where he composed this story, which he dedicated to an American female writer who accompanied him on this visit.

#### Comparison

The comparison between the Egyptian and European natures appeared in the poetry of Taha. The poet used comparison to prove many things. Perhaps the most important is that high view of the element of nature in particular, in addition to the emotional experience that was reflected in

himself and translated in his poetry. Taha is the poet of nature, and therefore the Egyptian nature influenced him initially, then during his travels to Europe he admired its nature greatly, and between these two natures he saw himself inclined to the European nature, where he sensed the underlying beauty, and realized whose emotional impact he realized. This comparison helps highlight the most beautiful of the two.

Taha did not only perceive the European nature with its various features and appearances, but rather evoked Egyptian nature in his sad thoughts and longing for his homeland. In this poem, he compared between the two natures and how European nature brought him great emotional and aesthetic value, and he wished that his country represented such nature (Davin, 2004). On the other hand, Taha did not let his love for his homeland and his longing for his birthplace be overshadowed by the temptations of Western civilization and nature. Cairo, its countryside, the Nile, and its banks were described in great detail in his works, especially in his collection, *Voices from the East*, in addition to portraying various Arab issues. The description of the journey from East to West was like the poet's first attempt to demonstrate an important aspect of the impact of travel and displacement on him. He found it a great opportunity to make emotional comparisons. He said in a poem titled, *Under Sail, Between East and West*, inspired by the first stage of his trip to Europe in the summer of 1946, from Alexandria to Beirut and Athens on the way to the West.

This sky is clear, and the darkness is moonlit  
For beauty and lovers to enjoy as they wish  
Oh sea, why are you so agitated! Egypt has not gone far  
I, through this poem, have ascended to it.  
(Davin, 2004, p. 336).

Taha recalled the sea, the means that he travelled through to the West while leaving the East with all its nostalgia and admiration. He began to compare between the countries of the East and the West, recalling several Arab cities in his mind (Beirut - the magic of the East, Cairo of love, and Tunisia, the green city) while being on the sea. On the other hand, he compared those cities to what he received in the West in terms of clarity, beauty, and love. Ultimately, he showed solidarity with his homeland and emotions, which dominated a part of his poetry. The poet's emotional experience transcends, after many a push and pull, in appreciating the special poetic position that he tries to show through the relationship between two natures with their various phenomena and the components of their beauty in a poem describing the beauty of Lake Como in Italy:

The poet of the Nile roam it  
Every creative sing it  
Where is the Valley of Palms?  
Or it was beaten by Gharr  
Don't say fertilize the soil  
So here I leaf the stone!!  
Here inanimate feels  
And live to those who felt!  
(Davin, 2004, p. 132).

This poem implicitly suggests that Egyptian nature has remained silent for centuries. This comparison between the two natures reflects two aspects: the beauty of European nature and how it alone inspires poets in their art, and the emotional sadness towards Egyptian nature that did not allow the Egyptian poet of the Nile to evoke those aspects to express his poeticism. The poet linked his trivial past and beautiful present in a special state that leads to the beauty he experiences. The notion of inanimate objects exaggerating the beauty of nature can be seen as a poetic device where the poet attributes human-like qualities or emotions to non-living things. This technique, known as personification, allows the poet to imbue the natural world with a sense of life and agency, heightening its impact on both the poet and the reader.

Even if he did not express them, they are understandable and included in the spirit of the poem and the atmosphere of the text. Perhaps this point specifically suggests to the reader a special view of the emotional attachment between nature and the repeated experience/observation of its landmarks and elements.

Like the custom of some poets, Taha focused heavily on the aesthetics of inanimate objects alongside the poetic feeling and suggestion. These two aspects formed a pivot point in this text, as well as a means of preferring this nature over others. On the other hand, the poet's description of himself as the poet of the Nile is a description he derived from Egyptian nature, just as he derived other attributes from European nature, such as the poet of the Rhine. The poet continues to depict his feeling of the beauty of nature, appreciating the cultural and historical connection between the two natures, and addressing European nature that he associated with tradition and modernity. This view can be inferred from the poet's feeling towards the new civilization that took him and made him travel for it.

O daughter of the new world  
Link a dusty world

In my blood is his heritage  
The whiff of Bedouins and urbanites.

(Davin, 2004, p. 133).

The duality of the present and the past appeared in the comparison between two civilizations. However, the poet did not abandon his heritage or denounce his past amidst the beauty of the European civilization and nature. It is known that the characteristic of the romantic Easterner is prevalent in leaving his Arab identity and perhaps denouncing it. Therefore, Anwar al-Madawwi expressed this through a nationalistic gesture by relatively connecting it to the terms "my blood" and "my heritage" in his study of the poet (Al-Maadawi, 1986). The poet's personal experience towards comparisons with what Arab and European nature went on and was known for, especially regarding the requirements of ecstasy and complements of joy that often evoke feelings.

The wine of Babylon has run out  
And the cup fell and broke  
Here is the vine of eternity  
Blessed are for its residents.

(Davin, 2004, p. 133).

The utilization of symbolism in these two verses draws upon a compelling juxtaposition between the present and the past. Through this juxtaposition, the poet endeavors to illuminate a profound impact and influence. The aesthetic elements of the poem are vividly showcased in the comparison, emphasizing the notions of resilience and permanence. These qualities contribute to what the poet perceives as an enduring beauty, one that holds an eternal place within their contemplation of nature.

The poet also used dichotomies and contrasts in some of the comparisons, which were influenced by the circumstances he experienced during his time in Europe. It is known that dichotomies play an important role in poetic meanings. Among the most important examples of such indications are those recent studies that highlighted the aesthetics of ugliness (or the ugly, beautiful) in Arabic poetry. They are considered amongst the logical dichotomies that the reader interprets in his poem titled, *Between Love and War*. The poem was inspired by rumors that circulated in September 1944 about a truce between the warring parties in World War II, which deeply affected the poet's heart, dreams, and memories. The poem reflects the poet's multiple visits to European cities and places over the five years since he arrived there in 1939. The poet returned to his homeland Egypt on the ship "Nile" amidst the horrors of war, and all those dual feelings are

dramatically expressed in the following choices from a long poem, leading to his pride in his Egyptian nationality and his passion for the national cause. However, on the other hand, the poem expresses the poet's deep sadness about a personal experience in the embrace of European nature that he cannot forget. It is clear that the poet sings of love and beauty in Europe at a time when the signs of world war had begun to show themselves, an emotional paradox translated by his poetic experience between the positivity of love and the negativity of war.

After five years, my memories came  
And the wishes came between death and life  
After five oh what years  
I bore all the sins of beings

...

O East! contemplate !! Do you see  
As relative, where is its shining light.  
The five year crossed me in silence and sadness  
What other five extends my age?

...

I tasted abroad, hardship and sickness  
Do you see that I don't love Egypt stay?

...

This is Egypt, home and tribes  
Is there an equal in this world?  
It's amazing to me, and it's amazing what I'm saying  
How do tomorrow call me to leave?

(Davin, 2004, p. 319).

On the other hand, the poet's aesthetic philosophy in the East and the West can be summarized in the world of reality and imagination, which is a contradiction that combines between the intimacy and alienation, the intimacy of people and the alienation of place. The aesthetic element highlights the impact of observation and the sense of imagination. Perhaps this indicates an important aspect that the poet's attraction to places of pleasure in general involves a special and opposing vision. The poet did not see that staying abroad as a negative aspect in his emotions and feelings, but he lived in the place with all its beautiful details that dominated and impressed him.

East from a distance is a real world

West from near is an imagination

(Davin, 2004, p. 235).

One of the noticeable aspects in this poem and others is that the poet often emphasizes the unity of living and destiny. He realized that enjoying that beauty is part of his poetry as it is part of the formation of European poets. The poet did not differentiate between the nature of the East or the West, but the Eastern poet has the same interest in the beauty of nature and the joy of the soul as the Western poet. Certainly, standing in front of nature and being moved by its beauty requires a higher aesthetic awareness than that represented by the pre-Islamic poets in their attitude towards the beauty of the beloved (Ismail, 1992). It is clear that the poet organizes a large group of verses on one rhyme, followed by a stanza with a continuous rhyme that differs from the first one (Al-Qat, 1981).

### **Conclusion**

This study discusses the European nature and its manifestations and components in the poetry of the Egyptian poet, Ali Mahmoud Taha. The study yielded several results, including:

Firstly, Taha's poetry and his connection to beauty began with his tourist visit to Europe in 1938, and his poetry was influenced by the translated works of some English and French poets, culminating in his latest collection of poetry, *East and West*, in which he praised the manifestations of European nature.

Secondly, Taha's portrayal of the beauty of nature in Europe was a passing infatuation that was associated with many romantic features that he expressed. Therefore, those features were more present in his European/ poetic tourism than in his national/Arab identity, although some of those poetic models aimed to change his mental perception of his country.

Thirdly, Taha appreciated nature in its positive aspect and did not expose the ugliness in that nature. His aesthetic view of European nature was purely sensory, a view that has extended throughout the ages in Arab poetry.

Fourthly, women had a prominent presence in the poet's nature poetry, and love was expressed through a combination of feeling the impact of nature and experiencing it with his companions. Imagination also played a significant role in portraying European nature, and the beauty of comparisons between Egyptian and European nature emerged.

Fifthly, in most poetic models, the poet's perception of European beauty in nature remains closely intertwined with its fundamental function. This function centers around the essence of beauty itself, which serves as a conduit for revealing the inner emotions associated with the natural world and experiencing them deeply.

Finally, due to the clear and evident impact, it is recommended to study Taha's poetry in comparison with Western romantic writers.

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