

The Pursuit of Freedom in the Poetry of P. B. Shelley and Muhammad

Al-Shaltami

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54172/mjssc.v41i1.1249>

Abstract: The English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) and the Libyan poet Muhammad Farhat Al-Shaltami (1945-2010) were influenced in their writing by circumstances they experienced that shaped their poetry and empowered their thematic and stylistic representations. They are distant both historically and geographically, but they share a longing for disseminating their ideas of freedom and resisting all types of oppression among people. The aim of this comparative analysis of the two poets is to compare their approaches to the pursuance of freedom and the use of poetic images of nature in their poetry. There are numerous romantic features in Al-Shaltami's poems, which relate his poetry thematically and stylistically to that of Shelley's. This comparative study highlights the shared principles of human thinking. The two poets show a mutual interest in disseminating their words as depicted in their poetry through an appeal to the senses and by building a vivid identification between their feelings and the dynamics of the elements of nature.

Keywords: nature, dissemination, romanticism, regeneration, comparative.

السعي نحو الحرية في شعر بيرسي بيش شيلي ومحمد الشلطامي

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المستخلص

تأثر الشاعران: الإنجليزي بيرسي بيش شيلي (1792-1822) والشاعر الليبي محمد فرحات الشلطامي (1945-2010) في كتاباتهما بالظروف التي عايشها كل منهما، وشكّلت شعرهما، وعزّزت موضوع كتاباتهما وأسلوبهما، فعلى الرغم من كونهما بعيدين عن بعض تاريخياً وجغرافياً، لكنهما يشتركان في السعي إلى نشر أفكارهما عن الحرية ومقاومة كل أنواع الاضطهاد بين الناس. الهدف من هذا التحليل المقارن للشاعرين هو مقارنة مقاربتهم في السعي وراء الحرية، واستخدام الصور الشعرية للطبيعة في شعرهما. هناك العديد من الملامح الرومانسية في قصائد الشلطامي، التي تربط موضوع شعره وأسلوبه مع شعر شيلي. كما تسلط هذه الدراسة المقارنة الضوء على المبادئ المشتركة للتفكير البشري، حيث أظهر كل من شيلي والشطامي اهتماماً مشتركاً بنشر كلماتهما، كما تصورها أشعارهما، من خلال مناشدة الحواس، وبناء هوية حية بين مشاعرهما، وديناميكية عناصر الطبيعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الطبيعة، النشر، الرومانسية، التجديد، المقارنة.

Introduction

The quest for freedom has been a cognizant humans' aspiration all through the centuries, both in the West and in the East. This yearning for freedom and human struggle to attain it has been represented in literary works such as in novels, drama, and poetry. Literary works depict people's experiences in times of distress and their efforts to liberate themselves from their worst conditions. Poets, in particular, present in their poetry visionary outlooks for people to change and transcend their fears and be in charge of their destiny. Two of these poets are the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) and the Libyan poet Muhammad Farhat Al-Shaltami (1945-2010). The aim of this paper is to examine how the two poets have used aspects of nature to augment their poetic expressions and ideas in their poetry. Shelley and Al-Shaltami were distant both historically and geographically, but they shared a longing for disseminating their ideas of freedom and resisting all types of oppression among people. The focus of the analysis is on the poetic images that both poets used in enhancing their depiction of the notion of pursuance of freedom and their looking forward for their people to follow them in this quest.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was born into a world that suffers from oppression and political struggle for justice. He rebelled against all types of oppression and all established institutions and expressed his longing and aspiration for freedom in many of his writing. Shelley typifies the romantic poet in his interchange with nature, and his utilization of the power of the imagination in his poetry. While Shelley was seeking to comprehend the troubled world he lived in, he was influenced by some philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who advocated the freedom of the human spirit. As Paul Johnson (1988) points out, Shelley believes that society is corrupt and appeals for radical changes or transformation in which the intellectuals have a principal role (p. 28). Shelley states this appeal in his essay 'A Defense of Poetry' (1968 [1840]). He views poets as the leaders of the intellectual community; "the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (p. 500), and thus they have the responsibility of carrying out this mission.

Muhammad Farhat Al-Shaltami (1945-2010), on the other hand, is considered to be one of the prominent poets of modern Libyan literature. He writes his poetry during the years of the sixties and the seventies, in which he depicts a strong sense of rejection to all forms of oppression that is performed by the ruling systems and from which he personally was a victim multiple of times. He is called the poet of dissidence because his poems influenced young Libyan people who chanted his lyrics during their protests against certain injustices. Al-Shaltami's portrayal of the unjust facing innocent people is in away a call for a revolt against all kinds of oppression for humans in all parts of the world. He wants his poetry to be the fuel for days to come in which people acquire their freedom and their humanity.

Waves of British and Arabic Romanticism

The revolutionary spirit and the call for freedom in the poetry of Shelley and of Shaltami springs from their tendency towards a romantic trend, which was flourishing in their two different historical times and geographical locations. Romanticism, as a movement in the literature and arts, rose in a period that witnessed many political and social changes in Europe that started at the end of the eighteenth-century, especially as a direct impact of the French Revolution. Margaret Sherwood in her book *Undercurrent of Influence in English Romantic Poetry* (1934) outlines this period as:

a period of fundamental upheaval in every department of life, political, social, and in the world of thought.... This was the time of the birth of our modern world: of changing thought, political, social, philosophic; of changing forms of government; the depth and

energy of the revolutionary movement springing from fresh apprehension of the rights, the powers, the possibilities of man, can hardly be overestimated. (pp. 13)

Shelley is considered one of the second generation of romantic poets of the nineteenth century with John Keats and G. Gordon Byron. The notable first generation are William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who launched the romantic movement after their publication of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). Wordsworth's prominent tenets of romanticism is articulated in the 'preface' to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) describing poetry as: "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (p. x1).

Tracing the romantic movements in the Arab literature shows that it has flourished since the late nineteenth century and especially early twentieth century with poetic voices from the poets of the *Mahjar* and of *Apollo Society* in Egypt and other Arab countries. This wave of romanticism "swiftly spread and dominated much of the poetry written in the 1930s and the 1940s in most Arabic speaking countries" (Badawi, 1975, p. 116), which is considered a revolution in literature similar to the English romanticism. It is noticed that "Arabic Romanticism arose after great social and economic disappointments and series of colonial occupations" (Khalil and Ketabgian, 2008).

Similar to other Arab countries, the Romantic trend in Libya, which stretches through the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century, has been noticed in the works of major Libyan poets, such as Al-Shaltami. Muna Sahli (2016) asserts that this trend of romanticism among Libyan poets has developed in circumstances different from its evolution in the West, as it does not rise from the same cultural background. Sahli believes that the Libyan poets - in the midst of the struggle for freedom, and since poetry needed to explore new horizons and new values - find in romanticism a great sanctuary. This romantic tendency is demanded because of its celebration of the absolute freedom of the individual, and the subjectivity that had been lacking in poetry for some time (Sahli, 2016).

These romantic principles and attitudes find their resonance in Al-Shaltami's poetry. Amina Hedriz (2009) points out that Al-Shaltami was "initially romanticized by his introspection of the self with its various emotions. He also expressed existential problems by engaging in the dialectic of life and death" (p. 339). Hedriz assumes that Al-Shaltami, driven by the circumstances surrounding him, soon "slipped out from the mantle of romanticism to turn to be a realistic poet committed to the causes of man who dreams of liberty and justice" (p. 339). Nevertheless, even in his late works, there are traces of romantic tendency in his poetry that echoes Shelley's manifestations of romantic spirits of change and resistance to oppressive authority.

Comparative Aspects of the Two Poets

In this comparative analysis of the pursuance of freedom and the use of poetic images of nature in Shelley's and Al-Shaltami's poetry, it is noted that there are differences as much as there are similarities that distinguish their literary work. Shelley and Al-Shaltami came from different historical and social backgrounds and experiences. They lived in different geographical locations and distant centuries--early nineteenth-century England and late twentieth-Century Libya. They wrote in two different languages and literary traditions that have distinct stylistic and critical approaches to poetry; one is English, and the other is Arabic. Their socio-political circumstances are so different. The romantic English poet wrote during times of political and economic changes in Europe and the repercussion of the French Revolution as well as the industrial Revolution. The Libyan poet, on the other hand, wrote during a post-colonial era in the aftermath of World War II

and the struggle of nations in Africa, Asia and South America for their independence and re-establishing their national identity in face of newly merging oppressive rulers and dictators. All in all, each of the two poets, Shelley and Al-Shaltami, has been influenced in their writing by circumstances they experienced in their lived times and places that shaped their poetry and empowered their thematic and stylistic representations.

Nevertheless, the similarity between the two poets is striking. There are numerous romantic features in Al-Shaltami's poems, which relate his poetry thematically and stylistically to that of Shelley's. What is remarkable in this comparison is the agreement of their approaches to the call for freedom which extends to all humanity. They both want their messages to reach all people so that revolutions will spark in all parts of the world to liberate people from all kinds of oppression. The lived experiences of these poets in relation to the principle of freedom and their realization or deprivation of it remain to have a serious impact on their poetry. Al-Shaltami, for example wrote some of his poems while he was in prison. This is reflected in the kinds of images that he uses as an allegory for his aspiration for freedom which extends beyond his physical imprisonment to reach all people everywhere. Al-Shaltami blends political issues with poetry. Sahli (2016) acknowledges that "when freedom is absent and oppression is the rule, people's lives in all its aspects become desperate" (p. 60). The poet's voice depicts such bleak state of living. Shelley also has deeper and broader messages to convey concerning political and social issues. In his poetry, he hails and encourages revolutions in neighboring European states, such as Spain and Greece. He resists through his poetry all forms of oppressive institutions, political, social, or religious, that restrict human freedom and thinking.

Approaches to Nature in Romanticism

As the general characteristics of the romantic movement, the poets of romanticism uphold "nature as a primordial force," focus on "individual experiences," and embrace "isolation and melancholy" (Somers, 2021, n.p.). English as well as Arabic romantic poetry is marked by a distinctive attitude of identifying with nature. This attitude, however, is not homogenous in all romantic poets. While Wordsworth, for example, regards the harmony in nature as a stimulus of the poets' imagination, Shelley's perspective of nature tends to be carrying dynamic aspects that leads to changes in nature and in humans. Shelley identification with nature tends to develop vigorous symbols in his visionary pursuit of freedom mingled with deep skepticism. More than a hundred years later, the Arab poets of the twentieth century have also developed a distinct view of nature. They, like Shelley, perceive nature as a leading agent to inspire and fuel revolutions against all kinds of oppression. They develop a mutual identification with the elements of nature to respond to their urge for a change that transforms their life and ignite a revolution.

The Libyan poets, as acknowledged by Sahli (2016), "found in nature a fertile field for poetic inspiration" (p. 44). During the second half of the twentieth century, the concept of nature in romanticism opened the horizons of Libyan poets towards their feelings, emotions, hopes, and desperation. It facilitates a poetic platform to express issues of existence, concerns about fate, and the position of oneself in a world where justice is absent and filled with conflict and wars (Sahli, 2016). Al-Shaltami's poetry, as well as the poetry of some other Libyan poets especially in the sixties and seventies, is characterized by a romantic indulgence in nature and the worlds of imagination, portraying excessive pessimism and expressions of pain, and holding a tendency towards a sense of individuality.

The Pursuance of Freedom

The notion for the pursuance of freedom is constant in the poetry of both Al-Shaltami and Shelley. They looked at their present to arouse people's passions for bright days in which they be able to unleash all kinds of constraints on their free will. Hedriz (2009) infers from Al-Shaltami's first prison experience in 1967 and in 1978 the impact of it on his vision and hence his poetic experience. He emerged from the narrow tunnel of the Arab nationalist movement to broader heights and wider in his vision of the human experience in all its dimensions, which rejects injustice under any authority or name (Hedriz, 2020). Al-Shaltami's poetry is energized with an international spirit and a more radical revolutionary sense, including a diversity of humanitarian and liberation issues around the world. As Asma Ben-Saeed (2015) noted, Al-Shaltami was able to master the language and coined its vocabulary to sketch images in his poetry about freedom, the expected tomorrow, and his eternal love for the homeland.

Shelley, on the other hand, as a rebellion, an idealist, upholds to his beliefs to seek freedom and liberty for all suppressed mankind. In 'A Defense of Poetry' (1968 [1840]), Shelley states that poets are "the influence which moved not, but moves" (p. 500). His aim as articulated in his introduction to the poem 'The Revolt of Islam' (1829) is to ignite in his readers "a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever wholly extinguish among mankind" (pp. v-vi). As asserted by John Addington Symonds (2012 [1909]), "[as] a poet, Shelley contributed a new quality to English literature—a quality of ideality, freedom, and spiritual audacity" (p.96).

Shelley's Pursuit of Freedom

Shelley's revolutionary ideas and his pursuing of freedom is depicted in most of his poetry. Derived from the inspiration of the romantic spirit, Shelley turns to nature to express these revolutionary ideals. The force of nature is working fiercely in Shelley's poems. In the poem 'Liberty' (1824), for example, the notion of liberty is associated with a power of nature that sweeps the world to get rid of oppressed authority. "The sunlight is darted through vapour and blast" until "tyrants and slaves" vanish with the rise of the morning. In 'Ode to Liberty' (1820) Shelley uses fire as a strong symbol for light which metaphorically represents 'liberty' in: "Liberty / From heart to heart, from tower to tower, o'er Spain, / Scattering contagious fire into the sky, / Gleamed." These metaphorical images of the dynamics of natural phenomena in Shelley's poetry reveal his urge for a major change that comes over the world, acting relentlessly as does the power of the changing forces of nature.

Shelley's untamed spirit in its pursue of freedom is symbolized in many of his poetry, especially in his poem 'The Ode of the West Wind' (1968[1820]) which will be the focus of the analysis of Shelley's poetry in this paper. This is because it can be considered as a manifestation of the working of nature in the representations of Shelley's aspiration for freedom within himself and for the rest of the world. In this poem, he uses powerful images from nature to highlight his strong passion for transformation and liberation. The "West Wind", in its endless violent movement, resembles the poet's untamed spirit, which is constantly in search of freedom: "One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud." Here, the speaker claims a fusion between this natural phenomenon (the West Wind) and his individual self. Thus, a prophecy of transformation, rebirth, and regeneration in both the natural world and in society can be achieved in the future after the end of the current state of demise. Shelley has faith in the "West Wind" as an agent of revolution to energize his soul and achieve the reformation of human society. Through the 'Ode to the West

Wind,' Shelley maintains a prophecy of a radical change that will free him from the oppression of society that has caused him to "fall upon the thorns of life!" The "West Wind", for Shelley, is a symbol of a powerful spirit that is a destroyer and a generator at the same time. This creativity of nature appeals to Shelley's revolutionary concepts of transformation.

Shelley addresses the "West Wind" as a destroyer and preserver of life in nature, hoping that its influence will able him to reach to people and spread his thought of freedom and liberty. The theme of regeneration has been presented in the 'Ode to the West Wind' through the natural cycle of the seasons. As nature regenerates itself, getting rid of the dead and reproduces a new life, the poet pleads to the "West Wind" to fuse with him and free him and mankind from all the oppression and misery of life "to quicken a new birth!" As Bidney (2003, p.236) points out, Shelley is aware of how autumn leaves in different shapes and color, resembling the human race in its multiple appearance: "Yellow, and black, and pale and hectic red," "Pestilence-stricken multitudes". Bidney (2003, p. 230) also noticed how the speaker pleads in this 'Ode' that he will have the power to act as 'trumpet of a prophecy' bringing hope and new life to humankind just as the buried leaves are resurrected in spring:

O though,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of Spring shall blow

The "West Wind" here represents a revolution that although it might be violent and may be accompanied by destruction, but it is also a cause for generating life: "Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere; Destroyer and preserver". However, Shelley uses the seasonal changes to reflect his philosophy that progress is not permanent. Jonathon Mendilow (1982, p. 172) concludes from Shelley's philosophy of liberty that as seasons change and the cycle of death and rebirth continues, progress is also cyclical with regress in a "wavelike" pattern of freedom and oppression.

Shelley's aching for salvation from his despair, and his pleading to the "Wild Spirit" of the "West Wind": "Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud," illustrates the poet's true revolutionary aspiration for liberation and freedom. Here, for Shelley, the concept of liberty is elevated to a higher statue. It has been transcendent. In fact, according to Michael O'Neill (2012), Shelley "makes the plea for transcendence" (p. 20) as a recurrent motif in the poem: "If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee; / A wave to pant beneath thy power" // "Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!" // "make me thy lyre." This progression of "the sublime towards representational freedom" is what "lies behind the romantic preoccupation with boundary lines, edges and horizons" (Leighton, cited in O'Neill, 2012, p. 22). Shelley, as a romantic poet, respects the capacity of the mind to rise above obstacles. However, in spite of all this euphoric calling for freedom and the hopeful tone with which Shelley ends the 'Ode,' freedom rarely becomes a reality. The existence of freedom is always something looking forward to in the future and, for Shelley, is an ideal that exists only in transcendence (McFarland, 1996, p. 83-4). Despite its ecstasy and the joy it brings in the mind, freedom is in itself is not in his possession at the present time.

Al-Shaltami's Pursuit of Freedom

All elements of nature are at work in Al-Shaltami's poetry. The figurative language he uses is loaded with metaphorical images of natural phenomena that reflect the unstable conditions in which he is trapped and the unsteadiness by which he pursues his dream of salvation. Not just the natural cyclic phenomena of night/day and the seasons, but the wind is a major image that heighten the overall state of the speaker that is fluctuating between melancholy over the present and hopeful wishes for the future. Similar to a pendulum, his words oscillated between how the concept of freedom inspires him to be a freedom fighter and the actual situation of confinement and oppression that obstruct the fulfilment of this quest. The images of wind with all its forms represent a force that acts sometimes as an agent that hinder the progress towards freedom and increases the poet's misery. He depicted such feeling in 'Smile' when he says: "the storm's hit tighter on your heart" (2002a [1976]). On other situations, however, the wind becomes an agent of change and transcendence to a better tomorrow: "our dream that is scattered in the fist of wind / Blow up anger... Blow it up / And let me rest" ('Waiting for Godot' 1998a [1971]). Al-Shaltami gives a mixture of allegorical images of the wind vested with human characteristics, so that with its fist, the wind blows up sensual feeling of anger. The wind also embodies an agent of movements that enable the poet to approach distances: "Let the wind carry me towards you, / O cities of light, love, and sadness, / across distances" (A Greeting Card, 2002 [1973]). Besides, the wind is portrayed as a force for change that wipe the undesired presence of the present time: "Granted me the power of the wind that erases the trace / and hide, / with a hand-veined the yellow leaves" ('Confessions,' 2002b [1976]). The poet wished to have such power to be able to change the world.

The theme of resurrection is symbolized by the regeneration in nature. The agents of change for a revolution are symbolized by the agents of nature that works in the spring season. These elements of nature such as the wind, the soil, and the rain are natural factors in bringing life to the dead world. The speaker considers himself dead in this miserable world, but he dreams of change that brings the sun and arouse the seeds from their deep buried soil: "For spring to come with the morning / And with windows and chimneys and tombs, / The graves are pregnant, torn by contraction / of the birth of the definite resurrection" ('One of Sailors' Songs,' 1998a [1968]). The contrasting images of death and life that are associated with his life represent the revolution that he aims at in his struggle for freedom. He believes that despite the current living conditions which resemble a grave and a tomb, there is an internal force bears a strong passion for freedom and which will erupt and lift him up for positive resurrection. Despite the dimness, he sees "A seed conceived of good / And a longing that does not die" ('A Song About Anger,' 2002 [1971]).

To express their conflicting feelings of worries and hopes, both Shelley and Al-Shaltami use images of nature that emerge from the cycle of day and night represented by the light (the sun) and the dark. These are recurrent images in Al-Shaltami's poems, bearing special connotations to the state of mind of the speaker as well as to the actual physical state in the confinement of the prison. The state of misery and oppression are presented in his poetry by images of the dark and the night. He says in 'Smile' (2002a [1976]):

If darkness dimmed in the cellar,
And the wind ripples on the horizon,
The range collapses
under your feet at night and seems

like bitumen the night balconies,
 And the storm's hit tighter on your heart
 And the lights of this universe went out in the eye,
 And melted
 down the sidewalks

Here the poetic images of "dimmed cellar" "darkness", "at night", "the night balconies", and "lights went out in the eye" all present a bleak environment portrayed by images of nature of night. The night represents a burdened condition that the speaker is describing full of gloomy images. He continues with the same images of night that is associated with sadness: "If your burden ... / ... overflowed your eyes, / in the stillness of the night, / with things of sadness" ('Smile,' 2002a [1976]).

The image of the night in Al-Shaltami's poetry is presented as a binary contrast of the sun. While the speaker is degraded in his gloomy nights, he is looking forward to the light of the sun which represents freedom, an emancipation from captivity of the body and of the mind. Hedriz (2009) points out that, in Al-Shaltami's poetry, "contradiction plays a symbolic role in the alternating relationship between the words, as the night represents injustice, and the day radiates with the sign of revolution" (p. 193). The sun is the freedom that he longs for, and that the persistence of night forbids him from fulfilling this strong urge for liberation. It seems that the symbol of the sun becomes a dream for him that will release him from his restricted environment of confinement and of oppression: "We still carry the sun in our depths / As a wonderful face / to mankind" ('A Song About Anger,' 2002 [1971]). Al-Shaltami's aspiration for liberation, here, is not restricted to himself or his people but transcends to be a desire for all mankind.

The natural cycle of regularity of night and day/sun and dark, doesn't function in Al-Shaltami's situation. In 'On Death, Love and Freedom' (1998c ([1971]), the speaker exclaimed: "So why? / The desire to dream, / Of Sun and green spring / emerging from our fallow depths, is extinguished / and a world is not revolving." The speaker puts forward some questions about how the dream is put off and the natural cycle of the universe does not revolve so that his darkest nights would be replaced by brighter days of sunrise. He continues by stressing the fact that the situation is beyond his control: "Don't blame me, the morning's / Exit door is the alienation / and travelling / And the long night." No paths of salvation are accessible to him except to immerse in a state of melancholy: "Oh, I have no means but to carve what sadness reads / and what the wounds dictates in the heart" ('On Death, Love and Freedom,' 1998c [1971]). The speaker's night seems to have no end, he is tormented and alienated, and the salvation seems to be so far away from his reach.

Al-Shaltami's quest to fulfil an ambition for a better tomorrow passes slowly with a tedious time: "And the sun, and the colourful dream, and spring on a cross / I'm still sailing, and the ship eats the monotonous time" ('One of Sailors' Songs,' 1998a [1968]). The path he intends to take towards the light, where the sun sparks in the colourful days, seems to be overshadowed by the "sterility of the night": "let's move on / Under the wing of night... / two stars... / two stars / we run above the dims of lights, / and colours / And above the sterility of the night in the big cities, / waiting for the sun" ('Night in Big Cities,' 1998b [1971]). The cycles of nature entail the birth of the sun from the dimness of the night, but Al-Shaltami's night is impotent, and it does not carry in its womb a sun to deliver to the world.

In Al-Shaltami's 'On Death, Love and Freedom,' the speaker (1998c [1971]), continues with a grim metaphorical image of a heavy "rock" to describe the time that isolates the long night from morning: "Oh how heavy it looks / This rock in between the night, / and the morning." The speaker here describes how time is lagging before the morning. The delay of the morning is having a gross effect on him just like a heavy rock. This time-lag in the night waiting for the sun to rise is portrayed as death that nobody can escape from or is allowed to get into the sunny morning and to enjoy joyful innocent time, "I have no means to pass over death to perfume, / Childhood festivity / Under the face of the sun in a noble world" ('On Death, Love and Freedom' 1998c [1971]). He exclaimed in another poem about the same image of the heavy rock that represents the extent of great burden: "Would at dawn these rocks grow grass? / Does the wishes bloom over the wall of doom," ('Writings on the door of Cell Number 6', 1998b [1968]). The poet here combines contradicting images of rocks and grass intermingles with his own contrasting feelings of helplessness and hopeful desire for freedom. As articulated by Herdiz (2009), "the metaphor in these lines is based on the interrogative structure in which the poet, through successive interrogations in the text, reveals to us his anxiety and tension, and his dream of advancing a revolution capable of establishing a new, happy world" (p. 125). This interrogative technique of writing mingles with contradicting images of nature and abstraction augment his inner doubts of the possibility of changing the miserable state he is experiencing and at the same time enhances his aspiration to pursue the path to freedom.

Similar to Shelley, Al-Shaltami has a mission in this world and dreams of reaching out to his people and to all people of the world to disseminate his ideas and fulfil his dream of freedom: "I have been singing / To wake people up / From the death of the black age" ('Letter to the Children,' 2002c [1976]). His mission extends to all humans who are marginalized, and he prophesized of a revolution that will be ignited by the poor: "I dream of you / flashed like a raging fire eludes, / to all graves / to inform / The nation of poverty that afflicts with poverty, / on poverty shall revolt" ('On Death, Love and Freedom,' 1998c [1971]). He continues in the same poem, confirming that his call is for everybody in this world: "It is born in the heart like another wound, / pushing me to, / sing / of wounds of others / And for the sake of others." It is obvious that he is still clinging to a sense of hope. Al-Shaltami does not lose faith for a better future, for freedom, as he is still waiting for the sun to shine in the whole world.

Responses to Shelley's and Al-Shaltami's Call for Freedom

Both Shelley and Al-Shaltami have a cause to fight for and ideas to disseminate. Their call is for a revolution that abolish all injustice and oppression in the world. However, they both complain that people are indifferent to their calls. Al-Shaltami urges people to revolt against oppression and to pursue their freedom. Nevertheless, they are not listening to his call: "Then the universe that slept did not hear you / and did not support your head" ('Smile,' 2002a [1976]). Al-Shaltami's words are not reachable to the people. They are not responding to his call, "Oh, no one will hear us now" ('On Death, Love and Freedom,' 1998c [1971]). Even the people who seem to have vision in this world are silent and speechless: "Blind time, all sighted / fell into a speech crisis and fussed / in the letters of the mute spoken language" ('Confessions,' 2002b [1976]). Al-Shaltami considers all these people who do not act to change their world as dead and thus they cannot hear his cries for change: "It is in vain that we fear death while we are dead / in the ashes of silence," "Oh won't hear us now, / Nobody." The poet calls upon his followers to keep a strong spirit by singing their words that bear their ideas of freedom and not become frustrated by the indifference of others. He urges them to "Sing," and not to expect direct responses because "the word is like a palm tree, does not bear fruit / In the first year" ('On Death, Love and Freedom,' 1998c [1971]).

Shelley, on the other hand, is aware that people are not interested in his poetry and thus his ideas of free spirit will not have the effect he wished for as he is "chained and bowed" by a "heavy weight of hours." He is eager to spread his message but disappointed because he received little attention in his lifetime. As Johnson (1988) acknowledges, "[i]t is no accident that two of his most passionate poems ['To a Skylark' and 'Ode to the West Wind'] are pleas that his words circulate widely and be heeded" (pp.29-30). Nevertheless, he is hopeful that change is coming and will bring transformation and freedom. He believes that through poetry, he can appeal to the imagination to stimulate the readers and influence them with his thoughts towards the path of freedom. He pleads to the "West Wind" to "scatter" his "words among mankind!" hoping that his thoughts and ideas will stir the "unawaken earth" and have an effect on the readers. He aspires to spark among people a revolution that can extinguish systems of corruption and oppression that make him 'bleed', 'chained, and bowed', creating a free and prosperous world, just as the new life of vegetation grows out of dead leaves. O'Neill (2012) notes that Shelley creates a stimulation for the reader to think of the reason behind using the natural cycle of seasons to present the revolutionary inspiration of the poet by ending the poem with a rhetorical question emphasizing his faith on the upcoming liberty for mankind in the near future:

O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Conclusion

Shelley and Al-Shaltami were influenced in their writing by circumstances they experienced in their lived times and places that shaped their poetry and empowered their thematic and stylistic representations. This comparative study of Shelley and A-Shaltami highlights the shared principles of human thinking. There were conditions that inspire the rise of romanticism in the Western World, shifting poets' attitude towards their society and their intimate relationship with nature. In Al-Shaltami's case, there are conditions, though historically and culturally different, that stir the feeling of the poet to develop his poetry, which shares elements of human thinking with Shelley. The cultural and philosophical dimensions in Al-Shaltami's vision resonate that of Shelley's in which the poetic image is shrouded in a halo of thinking and questioning. Despair and pessimism intertwine with perplexed questions, creating feelings of alienation in the poets that lead them into the path of searching not only for the lost self, but also for the meaning of its existence. The two poets seek a lasting and genuine solution in order to address the roots of the human crisis, to relieve them of suffering, pain, alienation and slavery in all its forms.

In spite of the fact that each of them was different in his literary rage even from their contemporaries, Shelley and Al-Shaltami show a mutual interest in disseminating their words as depicted in their poetry through an appeal to the senses and by building a vivid identification between their feelings and the dynamics of the elements of nature. These images of nature, which are not static description, are disclosure of intimate relationship between nature and humans. Through illustrations of the elements and conditions in nature, they both construct pictorial images of the dark and the night representing oppression whereas the light and the sun representing freedom and salvation. Steered by their imagination, they approach the wind and other elements of nature to build thematic images of regeneration and hope for freedom. In nature they find the power that destroys but preserves at the same time to create a new life. Shelley and Al-Shaltami hope these cyclic changes of the day and night and of the seasons will be transferred to them and elevate them from their desperate conditions into a new birth that allows them to disseminate their ideas of freedom and justice to mankind. Despite the frustrating reality that these poets encounter because of

the indifference of their people to their call for the pursuit of freedom, they both share a bright glimmer of hope that their poetry fuels days yet to come.

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ⁱ *All Arabic in-text references are translated into English by the author of this paper.

ⁱⁱ ** Lines from Al-Shaltami's poetry are translated into English by the author of this paper.