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Review

Taoism as ethics, science as background: On the left hand of darkness by Ursula K. Le Guin

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The Left Hand of Darkness by the modern American fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin is acknowledged as a classical work of science fiction literature. Although, it belongs to the science fiction genre, the essence of the novel lies in that it tries to interpret and understand the world from the perspective of Chinese Taoist ethics, while such scientific elements as the far-future setting, interplanetary travel and light-speed spaceship, only provide the background for Le Guin's thought experiment. The relationship between two sexes (androgyny), the relationship between man and nature (ecological consciousness) and the communication between different cultures are the focuses of this novel. From the perspectives of feminist theories and ecological criticism, this thesis tries to analyze its androgyny and ecological thoughts influenced by Taoism. From this analysis we can see that Le Guin has promoted the notion of harmony between Yin and Yang, that is, androgyny in the novel, to a higher level, and that the idea of "wei wu wei (not doing)" may point out an applicable way to alleviate the tense relation between man and nature.

Key words: The left hand of darkness, taoism, androgyny, ecological consciousness.

INTRODUCTION

Ursula K. Le Guin is a well-known contemporary American writer of fantasy and science fiction. Up to now, she has published more than thirty novels and short stories collections, five literary critical collections, numerous poetry and several children's books. She also translated the Chinese classic, the Tao Te Ching by Lao Zi into English after 40 years' of research. The themes of her works feminism, ecological protection, utopian ideals, anarchism, racial issues and the coming-of-age of adolescents, are often fused with Chinese, or more precisely, Taoist philosophy, which gives her novels a very different flavor from those of other science fiction

writers. Her love for Taoism was inspired by her father, the brilliant anthropologist Alfred Louis Kroeber. In one of her interviews, Le Guin (1982: 45) recalls that:

The old Paul Carus translation of the Tao Te Ching was always on the downstairs bookshelf when I was a kid, and I saw it in my father's hand a lot. ... He clearly got a great life long pleasure out of this book, and when you notice a parent doing something like this it's bound to have some effect on you. So when I was twelve years old I had a look at the thing and I reacted the same way my father had--I loved it. By the time I was in my teens I had

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thought about it quite a lot.

From then on, Taoism became her lifelong love. There are many Western fiction writers who are interested in myths, philosophy and religions of Asian cultures, especially those of China and India, and who have constructed the plots and characters of their works in the light of the Eastern wisdom. But few writers have done better than Ursula K. Le Guin in thinking thoroughly about Chinese Taoism and integrating it into various aspects of her works. One of her most famous novels, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), is a typical example of the fusion of Taoism and science fiction. This novel won both Hugo and Nebula Awards because of its literary achievements and its insight into sexual issues, communication between different cultures, ecological thoughts and utopian society. On the basis of Taoist philosophy and from the perspectives of feminist criticism and ecological criticism, this paper tries to analyze how Le Guin interprets androgyny and ecological consciousness in a science-fictional language. The author of the paper concludes that Le Guin constructs her understanding of androgyny on the basis of Taoist concept: the harmony between yin and yang, and that she expresses her concerns with the ecological problem in the light of another Taoist idea: *wei wu wei* (not doing).

Integrity of Yin and Yang: A new horizon of Androgyny

Androgyny is essentially a biological concept, meaning the co-existence of both male and female features in a single living creature. But it has unique meaning in human cultural history. There are gods who can bear children monosexually in most major myths of the world. God in Christianity first creates Adam according to his own image and then creates Eve by using a rib of Adam; in Greek myth, Zeus bears his son Dionysus by sewing him into his lap and Prometheus creates humans by using clay; Goddess Nv Wa in Chinese myth creates people also by using clay. These myths reflect human imagination and dreams on the origin of humans and the mystery of birth. All the gods mentioned are proto-types of androgyny. In the 20th century, the content of androgyny began to evolve and change. The first philosopher who did great contribution to the evolution is Carl Jung. Jung (1989:77) proposed that human beings have a tendency to androgyny both emotionally and psychologically, and describes androgyny with two Latin words: "anima" and "animus".

From then on, androgyny had a psychological meaning. In her ground-breaking work *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf (1931: 147) advocated that "the normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two (male and female) live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating". Since then, androgyny became a token for sexual equality and a powerful weapon for feminists against male

centrism. In the 21st century, a new phase of the feminist movement, post-feminism called by some scholars, was getting close to the truth of androgyny because it "rejects the essentialism inherent in much feminism", and is "more male-inclusive" (Clarke, 2010: 27). *The Left Hand of Darkness* was published in 1969, when the feminist movement was in its second wave, the concept of the relationship between the two sexes Le Guin proposed in it obviously exceeded most of her contemporaries because she foresaw a new phase would come and found that the *tai ji* symbol of Taoism reflects perfectly the concept of androgyny: the complementarity and interchangeability of yin and yang, of male and female.

As for the initiation of the novel, Le Guin once said that "...one of the things I was trying to do in the book was to get away from stereotyped roles of manhood and womanhood. I did so by the 'simple' trick of making the characters both men and women" (Quoted in Freedman 2008: 49). And the best genre for such experiment is science fiction. The background and setting of the novel are typically science-fictional: In a faraway future, an envoy from human society, Genly Ai, goes alone to a faraway alien planet winter (or Gethen) on the mission of persuading the rulers of Karhide to join the Ekumen, an alliance of human colonial planets. The prime minister of Karhide, Therem Estraven, tries to help Genly Ai fulfill his mission, but Genly refuses Estraven's kindness and help because of his own fear and prejudice to the androgynous Gethenian. For Genly, the progress of his mission is the progress that he overcomes his cultural fear and sexual prejudice and accepts the essence of Gethenians: they are both men and women; they are humans. By giving such background to this thought experiment, Le Guin pushes the reader to reconsider those values, conventions, rules of our world: man and woman, trust and suspicion, fidelity and betrayal, self and other.

The most astonishing and incomparable fact of the novel is the androgynous humans. Gethenians appear to have sexual characteristics only in a specific period of each month "kemmer", that is, estrus. In the other time of the month, they are in "somer", an asexual state. An individual has the same possibility to become a male or a female in the period of "kemmer"; that is to say, the mother of several children can be the father of several more. Le Guin (2010: 100¹) describes such unique phenomenon:

The fact that everyone between seventeen and thirty-five or so is liable to be tied down to childbearing, implies that on one is quite so thoroughly tied down here as women, elsewhere, are likely to be-psychologically or physically. Burden and privilege are shared out pretty equally; everybody has the same risk to run or choice to make.

¹ All the direct quotations of the novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* come from the version published by the Penguin Group, New York, 2010. The rest of such quotations are only marked with page numbers.

Therefore, nobody here is quite as free as a free male anywhere else.

One of the earliest reporters of the Ekumen observes with amazement that “There is no division of humanity into strong and weak halves, protective/protected, dominant/submissive, owner/chattel, active/passive. In fact the whole tendency to dualism that pervades human thinking may be found to be lessened, or changed, on winter” (90). Le Guin’s real purpose is, possibly, for us readers to consider what is left without these so-called masculine or feminine features. In this androgynous world, there is no male-centered or female-centered authority discourse, and the traditional social structures of human ethics, values and families are totally subverted. This text is the boldest imagination of androgyny advocated by feminists such as Woolf, leading the reader to transcend the sexual limitations and to re-investigate the rationality of the patriarchy of human society which has been taken for granted as the law of nature.

Furthermore, the androgynous Gethenian is the best representation of the Taoist concept-the harmony of yin and yang. Le Guin uses the *tai ji* symbol to describe the androgynous Gethenians, reflecting her admiration of Taoist thought “Everything has a bright and dark side, co-existent in harmony” (Lao Zi, 2011: 49). At the end of the novel, after Genly Ai accepts Estraven’s friendship and trust begins to develop between them, Genly expresses his respect for Gethenians represented by Estraven by drawing a symbol of *tai ji*: “It is yin and yang. Light is the left hand of darkness....Light, dark. Fear, courage. Cold, warmth. Female, male. It is yourself, Therem. Both and one. A shadow on snow” (287). This androgynous society which contains Taoist philosophy pushes forward the androgyny idea, because Le Guin’s thought is more diverse, including not only bold investigation of the relationship between men and women, but the quest of the relationship between men, man and nature, and different cultures. Thus, *The Left Hand of Darkness* transcends the ordinary science fiction.

The experiences of Genly Ai, also reflect Le Guin’s feminism. At first, Genly always treats Gethenians with sexual discrimination and sees them as the opposite of self and the other. The opposition between the two reveals the differences and conflicts between two sexes and two civilizations. But Estraven, out of pure love and trust for Genly, can overcome these differences, prejudice and conflicts, and help Genly break through the prison farm and complete the mission at the price of his own life. Genly realizes his shallowness and prejudice, accepts Estraven’s friendship finally. Recognizing that Gethenians are both male and female, Genly becomes peaceful. But the mutual love and trust between Estraven and Genly Ai are based on recognition and understanding of their differences, not eliminating these differences. Cummins (1993: 79) comments Genly like this:

As his experiences enable him to break through the

barriers he has erected between himself and the Gethenians, he becomes more patient, accepting, capable of reciprocating love, less rationalist, less dependent on the certainty of his beliefs.

Through Genly’s psychological progress, Le Guin expects that men and women, self and other, by eliminating conflicts and developing trust, can construct a relation based on equality, understanding, respect and love. Bernardo and Murphy (2006: 32) comments that, “*The Left Hand of Darkness* is an important book for both feminism and SF in offering explorations of the Other that challenge the reader to think of gender notions in a new light”.

Ecological consciousness of *The Left Hand of Darkness*

The ecologists think that most of literary works focus their attention only on humans and human society, concerned only human feelings and life, and neglect nature and ecological health. This phenomenon exposes the super narcissism of the human race. Therefore, they propose that, “Human should convert from ego-consciousness to eco-consciousness, think that human are not masters of nature, but a member of the land community, and live or die with other members of nature” (Cheng 2006: 491). *The Left Hand of Darkness* was published in the 1960s, when the ecological concepts were just budding and, though Le Guin didn’t claim that she was an ecologist, we can see her concerns with the relation between human and nature from the story frame and background of the novel. Though *The Left Hand of Darkness* is set in a faraway alien planet, it can be seen as a science-fictional metaphor and reflection of human society. Her ecological consciousness mostly derived from the Taoist thinking: *wei wu wei*, that is, not doing.

She thinks, faced with serious environmental disasters of the Earth, the proper way for us to take is to do as little as possible, not to disturb the rhythm and balance of Nature. As Sandra Lindow (2012: 249) points out, “Within the LeGuiniverse, the greatest suffering is caused by doing. Throughout her fiction, Le Guin’s concept of moral development is tightly knotted in the Taoist wisdom of not doing”. This value of hers is best reflected in her description of the religion and the way of living of Gethenians. By adapting her extensive knowledge and artistic sensitivity, Le Guin describes in detail the environmental features of the planet Gethen and the influences of natural environment on civilization. Gethen is extremely barren and cold, the most part of its surface covered with ice and snow. Except for the Gethenian race, there are no big mammals and little vegetation on the planet. Gethenian ecological system is simple and fragile, the resources of energy and food being scarce. This unique natural environment decides the history, religion, politics, culture and life style of Gethenians. For

instance, Gethenians are not in haste; they could make their vehicles go faster, but they do not. As a result, along in those four millennia the electric engine was developed, radios and power loom and power vehicles and farm machinery and all the rest began to be used, and a Machine Age got going, gradually, without any industrial revolution, without any revolution at all. Winter hasn't achieved in thirty centuries what Terra once achieved in thirty decades. Neither has winter ever paid the price that Terra paid (105).

Comparing to them, Le Guin (52) says of the Earth people, "Terrans² tend to feel they've got to get ahead, make progress". Very obviously, Le Guin is being ironical and critical about human action of polluting and destroying the natural balance and ecological system. More importantly, this harsh natural environment gives birth to a special religion: the Handdara, which is invented by Le Guin according to her understanding of the Taoism. The followers of the Handdara hold in esteem such Taoist ideas as "inaction" and "passiveness", and think that "Ignorance is the ground of thought. Unproof is the ground of action" (75). This religion has no gods to worship, no fixed rituals and doctrines to follow, its ideological core being the Taoist philosophy: "The Tao always remains inactive, yet it acts upon everything in the world" (Lao Zi: 2007 171). In a conversation between Genly and Estraven about religion and philosophy, Genly says that many "dynamic, aggressive, ecology-breaking cultures" (251) tend to have the conclusion that singularity of man is his divinity. Estraven says the Handdarata "are less aware of the gap between men and beasts, being more occupied with the likeness, the links, the whole of which living things are a part" (251). It is the very reason why Le Guin praises the Taoism: atheism and mild tolerance to Man and Nature.

Influenced by their religious background, Gethenians have long learned to come to terms with and to live in harmony with nature. Looking themselves as part of their environment and try to integrate into it, Gethenians never struggle senselessly with nature and fate, never have blind faith in gods or kings, nor do they try to remould nature. They only try to keep their life pace with natural rhythm and bring it into correspondence with natural laws. Besides, Gethenians also know well how to make the best use of everything, but seldom waste anything. We can come to a conclusion that, on the planet Gethen, the three facts-- natural environment, religious belief and life style, are interdependent and interconnected. The Taoist thoughts are the essential spiritual bond that maintains this survival chain. Le Guin once said "...what I most detest in my own culture: people who want to control everything and to exploit for profit in the largest, most general sense of exploit and profit" (Quoted in Freedman: 45). In fact, not only American culture, the whole human

culture has damaged the ecological balance and biological diversity with its greed, selfishness and ignorance in the name of development and progress. As a result, the global natural environment is near the edge of collapse and all the species are threatened. The peaceful and natural life style of Gethenians is a mirror for human beings, an ideal relationship between man and nature Le Guin has been advocating and aspiring to. This sharp contrast between the two different development strategies reflects her concerns for the global ecology and her anxiety for the life and mental state of modern people.

The real purpose of the author may be that, by describing a life style influenced by the Taoist philosophy, Le Guin tries to find a probable way-out for the present ecological crisis: to learn from the Taoist philosophy and to treat our fellowmen and our nature with great tolerance, understanding and pity. Strictly speaking, however, Taoism alone can not solve the problem of protecting Earth's environment and keeping ecological balance, which need cooperation and efforts of all the society. However, changing our thoughts is the first step towards changing human life styles. Le Guin shows us a possible solution in a wise and calm manner, which, in the modern times full of ecological crisis, may be an advisable and effective way.

CONCLUSION

The uniqueness of *The Left Hand of Darkness* lies in that Le Guin subtly fuses the Eastern wisdom Taoism into the modern Western literary genre, and raises her work to the point of perfect combination of form and content, of thought and aesthetics. From the angle of the complementarity of yin and yang of the Taoist philosophy, Le Guin invents an androgynous society and provides for us a science-fictional counterpart to think about the relationship between man and woman, and a way to refer to and draw lessons from it. Furthermore, ecological consciousness in the novel is also branded by the Taoist thought *wei wu wei* (not doing). Le Guin assumes that the advisable way for us to solve the problem of environmental crisis would be not to disturb the balance and interfere the rhythm of Nature. In all, *The Left Hand of Darkness* demonstrates Le Guin's wish for better human relations and a better world. What she says in her famous essay "Is Gender Necessary? Redux" best expresses her assessment of the contemporary world and her real purpose of writing this novel: Our curse is alienation, the separation of yang and yin, (and the moralization of yang as good and yin as bad). Instead of a search for balance and integration, there is a struggle for dominance. Divisions are insisted upon, inter-dependence is denied. The dualism of value that destroys us, the dualism of superior/inferior, ruler/ruled, owner/ owned, user/used, might give way to what seems to me, from here, a much healthier, sounder, more promising modality of integration

² Terrans, an term invented by Le Guin, referring to the future humans who come from the earth and inhabit on colonial planets of Ekumen. Actually it means "the Earth people". The word "Terra" means "the Earth."

and integrity (172). The goal of integration and integrity can not be achieved until the uniqueness and difference of every single thing is accepted and respected. That is, perhaps, what we readers could learn after reading *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

Conflict of interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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Full Length Research Paper

The Impact of *muwashah* and *zajal* on troubadours poetry

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The Spanish culture has been exposed to European and Arabic culture. The Arabs ruled Spain from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries. The Arab civilization has left a significant impact on Europe in general and in Spain in particular. This paper aims to examine the impact of the *muwashah* and *zajal* of Hispano-Arabic on the troubadours' poetry in structure and themes, language and rhyme. In the field of poetry, the troubadours have resembled the Arab singers in structure and theme. These troubadours show their similarities with the Hispano-Arabic poetry in both form and content. Many characters in the troubadours poetry are found in the Hispano-Arabic poetry as "raqeeb" (guard), "hasid" (envious), "rasoul" (messenger between the two lovers), and "al-a'?'the" (lover). Themes that can be found in both the troubadours poetry and the Hispano-Arabic include love at the first sight, cruelty of the beloved, impact of true love on the lover's condition, pain, suffering, weakness and sickness. New forms of poetry, *muwashah* and *zajal* are developed. *Muwashah* directly expresses the poet's own thought and sentiments. In central Spain, the Spanish poets compose Arabic poem called "zajal" in a Hispanicized dialect. *Zajal* differs from *muwashah* in the rhyme scheme that runs often much longer than the five-strophe-length.

Key words: Hispano-Arabic poetry, *muwashah*, *zajal*, kharja, troubadours, Spain, Andalus, courtly love.

INTRODUCTION

Hispania is the name given by the Romans in 212 B.C. to what the Greeks called Iberia. In 1711, North Africa Moorish Omayyad took over Hispania renaming it al-Andalus "land of the vandals" since it was invaded by the Germanic tribe of Vandals. From eighth to fifteenth centuries, Moors ruled parts of Iberian Peninsula. In fact, The Arab civilization has left a

significant impact on Europe through three means: First: the trade caravansary that continued to take place travel between Asia and Europe through Constantinople; second, the Crusaders (1096 to 1300) who lived in the Levant and Egypt, and other Islamic countries for a long time; During the Crusades, geographic and political ties were established between Occitan and the Arabized

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world of the late 11th century. Arabic poetry and song were a fact of everyday life of the court of Alfonso II (King of Christian Aragon from (1162 to 1196), Catalan and Provençal troubadours. Finally, Spain, became Andalusia in the rule of Muslims (711 to 1492), and its Arabic and Islamic culture lasted for eight centuries.

The people of the Provence imitated the love-song of the Andalusians. During the Crusades, geographic and political ties have developed between southern France and northern Spain; ultimate contact has been established between Occitan and Arabized world of late 11th century. Hundreds of troubadours started modern European literature, which is originated in Occitania in the early 12th century. These troubadours are poet-musicians. In France to the north, the ideas copied by speakers of French who are generally known as *trouveres*. This was flourishing when William IX's grand daughter married the King of France. She exported the same ideals of courtly love to England when she later married King Henry II. Muslims' Andalusia Spain contributed to the development of civilization that have emerged in that era and embodied in all aspects of arts and culture. Poetry flourished and began to include a variety of numerous purposes that have been known for a long time in the East. New forms of poetry began to develop and come into existence such as *muwashah* and *zajal*. There is a general disagreement on who was the first poet composed the first *muwashah*. Al-Shatrinee (1997) says that it is Mohamed ben Mahmoud al-Qibri (a blind poet who used to include it in his poetry) and his predecessor Ibn Abed Rabbuh who wrote *al-'qd al-Fareed* (volume 1, 469). However, there is a consensus regarding the certainty of *muwashah*'s first appearance in the 10th century.

Literature review

According to Stern (1974: 215 to 216), Konrad Burdach argues that there is no antecedent in Greek or Roman literature that could have served courtly love and troubadour poetry as their psychological basis. Burdach also says, "troubadour poetry and courtly love were of such out-of-the way phenomena in the development of Western culture that it was necessary to suppose that they had been borrowed from somewhere, and Arabic poetry seemed a likely source." Dozy (1994: II), the famous Dutch Orientalist interested in Arab Andalusia, notes in his book *Spanish Islam* that it was due to the international appeal of the Arabic language that the people in Andalusia were keen on learning Arabic, and that they were enamored with the language and its literature. Dozy also cites Alfaro, Cordoba's priest then, as complaining that his people Christian Spaniards, were eager to read the scientific and literary books of Muslims, not in order to rebuke them, but in order to master Arabic, the language that they loved. The Spanish, according to Alfaro, were infatuated by the magic and appreciation of

the rhythm that they despised Latin and began to write in the language of their conquerors.

Briffault (1945:25) confirms, "no belief could be more uninformed that the notion, not infrequently entertained, that the Arabs knew nothing of love beyond its sensual aspect." Abu Haider (2001) denies any affinity between Hispano-Arabic poetry and the Provençal lyrics. Regarding Ibn Hazm's *Tawq al-Hamama* (1022) (The Ring of the Dove's Neck), Abu Haider (2001:257) argues that it is not related to the courtly love because Ibn Hazm's treatment is realistic and it is by no means related to the concept of love as presented in the troubadours. Moreover, he insists that study should be conducted to the poetry of the troubadours for its own sake: "Hispano-Arabic literature and the poetry of the troubadours should each be studied for their own sake, and not for the purpose of determining the influence of either literature on the other."

Zwartjes (1997) conducts an examination of the relationship between Hispano-Arabic *muwashah* and its relation with Romance literatures: he concludes with a list of analogous *zajal*-like strophic poems in both Late Latin and various Romance languages. Moreover, Zwartjes provides thematic parallels between Romance and Arabic *muwashah*. His conclusion is that no substantial differences are found between them. Griffin (1992) traces the origin of courtly love of the troubadours in Arabic love poetry by making some parallels between the themes of Ibn Hazm's *Tawq al-Hamama* (1022) and the troubadours' courtly love. Boase (1992) provides examples from both the Provençal and Arabic poetry demonstrating that courtly love shows Arabic influence on European poetry. Boase (1992:64) remarks that there has been an intercultural experience of Arabic poetry of medieval Spain with western culture: an exchange of concepts, themes and stylistic devices between the popular poetry and courtly poetry. Schippers (2005) examines and analyzes a Hispano-Arabic *muwashah* and compares it to the love lyrics of the troubadours such as Bernart de Ventadorn and Amaut Daniel. Shippers confirms that the structure of a *muwashshah*, its themes and its leading motifs of the strophes are analogous with that of the troubadours.

Hispano-Arabic literature and troubadours

There was contact between Southern France and Muslims in Spain. Muslim Arabs live side by side with the Spanish Christians who spoke Arabic. According to Simondi (1813:I, 65), the Arabian tales are the source of "that tenderness and delicacy of sentiment, and reverential in our chivalry feelings." and the chivalry, the soul of new literature is an Arab importation that has no connection with the feudal system. Simondi (1813:I, 86-87) states: "Raymond, Berenger and his successors introduced into Provence the spirit both of liberty and chivalry, and a taste for elegance and the arts, with all the

sciences of the Arabians.” Regarding the status of the women, Simondi says that “women are served and protected as if they are representatives of the divinity upon earth” (90). Trend (1965:34) confirms that the troubadours’ “form and style closely connected with Arabic idealism and Arabic poetry written in Spain.” Boase (1992:62-63) emphasizes that the major influence on the troubadours’ poetry is the Arabs in Spain. There are a number of factors that led to the idea that Arabic poetry has an impact on the troubadours. These factors include rhyme and poetic forms, poetic themes, etymology of the troubadours and the concept of love.

Stern (1974) observes the literary connections between the Islamic world and Western Europe. In the homogenous culture of Moorish Spain, there must have been a constant exchange of themes, concepts and stylistic devices between courtly and popular poetry. Watt (1972:27) states that popular poetry, “composed by Mozarabs, Christians and Jews of the north must have formed a link between Muslim Spain and Provence.” The oldest lyric poetry written in a romance language in the 11th and 12th centuries is a strophic poem consisting of five strophes: Its rhyme scheme aaa bb/ ccc bb/ ddd bb, eee (bb). The final verse pair is *jarcha*, which is written in Mozarabic vernacular (spoken Andalusia). Poets would make use of popular poetry (*jarchas*) for inspiration in the creation of *muwashshah*. Aspects of *jarchas* (in Spanish) include feminine voice directed to the usually absent lover or to another female (mother, sister, or friend), unrequited love, sadness at the absence of a lover, or lover is suffering. Images include love as sickness, an urban environment, heartache, the dawn, light of day, or a simple style with a question or exclamation. Troubadours found channels of communication with Mozarabs. In the 11th century, Spanish language is recorded in the *kharjas*. In Spanish refrains and Muslim poems, slaves and wives would sing to their masters. In certain instances, the troubadours develop their own convention of love. The first troubadour Guilhem of Poitou writes:

For she knows that she alone can cure me
I have a love; I do not know who she is, for in all truth, I
have never seen her (quoted in Ja’fari and Jafri, 2010:22).

Early Spanish refrains became popular in 1042 (Steiner, 2008): “*Tan tea mare*” (I will love you so much); another is “*Vaismeu Corazon de mib*” (My heart leaves me). Among hundreds of examples is: “*Non quero non, jellello*” (I will have no compassion but my dark lover).

Troubadours

The word “troubadour,” according to philology comes from the Arabic word “*tarab*” or “*taraba*”, meaning “to sing” and “to sing poetry” among other things. This is the root of the “*troub-dor*” (trobar). “*Tarab*” means “music

song;” therefore, the origin of the “troubadour” is found in Arabic musical practices. The derivation of the Arabic roots *TRB* and *RBB* literally mean, when spelled as “*RuBBab*” “Sufi singers” (used by Omar Khayyam and Ibn Rumi to apply to themselves). When spelled *RaBBat*, (plural of *RaBBah*) means “lady”, “mistress”, “female idol”.⁵ In Southern France, the first Provençal poets appear full-fledged toward the end of the eleventh century with “palpitating love expressed in a wealth of fantastic imagery”. The troubadours (TRaB: music, song) who flourished in the twelfth century imitated their southern contemporaries, the *zajal* singers (Scholar, 2009). Hitti (2002:138) states: “The *Chansens de Roland*, the noblest movement of early European literature whose appearance prior to 1080 marks the beginning of a new civilization just as the Homeric poems make the beginning of historic Greek, owes its existence to a military contact with Moslem Spain.”

The romantic theme characteristic of *zajal* (Ja’fari and Jafri, 2010:23) leads to a speculation about the troubadours’ poetry in Southern Europe: “the Troubadours imitated their southern contemporaries, the *zajal*-singers, contributed towards the growth of the cult of dame in the western literary tradition, which later came to be described as ‘courtly love.’” Following the Arabs precedent, “the cult of the dame” suddenly arises in Southwest Europe. In many instances, the Sufis use the divinity imagery as female. Historically speaking, the Sufis flourished in al-Andalus from the 9th century while the troubadours came to existence in the 11th century. Idries (1964) sees that the European concept of love comes from a “deterioration of Sufist-love ideal.” Idries believes that the word “troubadour” is Arabic and it is associated with all sorts of pun such as musical performance, lovemaking, and close fellowship.

Troubadours are called minstrels (a minstrel is one who earns his living by the arts of poetry and music, and sings verses to the accompaniment of musical instrument). Sallefranque (1947:97) notes that it would be vain to claim to exhaust the common elements in the two poetries [Hispano-Arabic poetry and troubadours’]. Just as the Arab lover follows a religion of love (*deen al-hawa*) just so the troubadours love is religion because of the correspondence and similarity. According to Hitti (2002:144), “The troubadours resembled the Arab singers not only in sentiment and character but also in the very forms of ministry. Certain titles, which the Provence singers gave to their songs, are but translations from Arabic titles.” Hitti regards the Provençal troubadours’ transmission as the marking of a new civilization for the Western World. The troubadours (1100 to 1350) are attached to the courts in South of France. Their poetry dealt with sexual love, which later develops into the concept and practice of courtly love. Schlegel (1818:67) rejects the view that the Arabs have had any impact on Provençal poetry. He claims that the Arabs are “hostile people, keeping their women in a state of subjection, could not inspire those who compose poetry

for the worship of women.” Schack (1865) confirms that certain aspects of European chivalry are derived from the Arabs: the ninth-century Arabic poetry written in Al-Andalus reveals the quasi-religious veneration for women, which later becomes a characteristic of Christian chivalry and troubadour poetry. Tarrago (1915:32) states that the principles of troubadours’ music are learnt from the Arabs. Tarrago conducts a study of Ibn Quzman’s *Diwan, Elcancionero de Abencuzman* in which he confirms that the Arabic *zajal* is the key to strophic forms of the troubadours’ poetry. Moreover, he believes that Hispano-Arabic poetry serving as a model for that of Provence is recognized by a number of scholars, Carolina Michaelis in Portugal, Msssignonin in France, Burdach in Germany and Mendendez in Spain.

Guillaume de Poitiers (1071 to 1126), (William IX) one of the leaders of the Crusade of 1101, is the earliest troubadour a vernacular lyric poet in the Occitan language whose work survived after his death. He was known as a composer and singer of songs (Boutière and Schutz, 1964: 7 to 8). Guillaume had been to Iberia (Spain) to the Caliphate of the Moors, where he found first love poetry, preceding troubadours’ poetry almost two centuries. He had been exposed to Arabic poetry and song. The Andalusia Arabic poetry furnishes an undisputable predecessor for the first troubadour Guillaume de Poitiers (Sallefranque, 1947: 102). Pound (1998) mentions him in *Canto VIII: And Poitiers, you know, Guillaume Poitiers, had brought the song up out of Spain with the singers and veils. In Spirit of Romance*, Pound also calls William IX "the most 'modern' of the troubadours": "For any of the later Provençals, that is, the high-brows, we have to 'put ourselves into the Twelfth Century' etc. Guillaume, writing a century earlier, is just as much of our age as of his own" (Pound, cited in Bond, 1982: lxxvi). *In his study of Levi-Provençal, Pound says to have found four Arabo-Hispanic verses nearly or completely repeated in William's manuscript (Piered'Alvernhe, a troubadour, writes a poem "Be m'esphzen in the translation of Guillaume's. This poem is constructed about the three types of love, physical, spiritual and imaginary that can be discerned in the songs of the early troubadours. In this courtly song, Pierre resolves the conflict between profane and divine love as they provide happiness (Topsfield, 1978:175, 178). As travelling singers, troubadours are received at the English court. Their art and tradition have become part of the English society. The ideals of courtly love are included in the poems, ballads, and writings, which are sung by medieval troubadours in England.*

Nature of love in Andalus

The presentation of love poetry and nature in Andalusia happened because of the new moral law that has granted independence and enabled the woman to develop her social character. Because of this, *al-hubb al-otheri*

(spiritual love) grew and the poets expressed their repressed emotions in a very delicate style showing their submission to the woman and her authority. During this time, Ibn Hazm’s book, *Tawq al-Hamamah* (the Ring of the Dove) in 1022, embodying the Arabic philosophy of adoration and love towards the woman, has a significant impact upon the Andalusian poet-singers as it focuses on the new conception of profane love. In addition to Ibn Hazm’s *Tawq al-Hamamah* (the Ring of the Dove), there are two other significant works that dealt with the nature of love in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: *Kitab al-Zahra* (The Book of the Flower) by Muhammed Ibn Dawud al-Asfahani and *Tarjman al-Ashwaq* (A Translator of Longings) by Muhyey Ed-Din Ibn al-Arabi.

Arabic language and courtly love

Similarities between Arabic *muwashah* and *zajal* on the one hand and the poetry of the troubadours on the other are found in language, theme and rhyme. Arabic has a great influence on Spanish, especially in vocabulary. Arabic has notably influenced Valencian variety of the Catalan language spoken in Spain, south of Catalonia proper. Due to the rule of the Iberian Peninsula (Al-Andalus), hundreds of words from many fields (including Arabic inventions) have been adopted: *sorbet*, (sherbet) *paraíso*, (paradise) *alberca*, (tank, swimming pool) *Alá*, (Allah) *alcazar*, (fortress, palace), *rehén*, (hostage), *momia*, (mummy) *fulano*, (what's-his-name), *guitarra*, (guitar), *azúcar*, (sugar) *cero*, (zero) *aceite*, (oil) *aceituna*, (olive). *Lafactura*, (promptly brought the bill) *alcalde*, mayor *alacrán*, (scorpion) *álcali*, alkali *lima*, lime, *alcoba*, bedroom, alcove, *limón*, (lemon) *jirafa*, (giraffe) *ojalá*, (I hope, God willing) *gacela*, (gazelle) *hachís*, hashish, *harén*, (harem) *burca*, (burqa) and *café*, (coffee). There are certain Arabic words (Sallefranque: 1947) employed in courtly love poetry: “*hub*” (to love), “*shagha*” (to love privately), “*sababa*” (to love ardently), “*walla*” (to become mad with love), “*gharam*” (infatuation), and “*mutayam*” (to become enslaved by love). In courtly love (Bell, 1979: 221), troubadours⁵ praise the woman’s beauty almost religiously. In their songs, love is usually unrequited and extramarital, and it is always enduring. According to Gustave E. von Grunebaum_ (Ousby, 1995:213), there are several elements, which have developed in Arabic literature, including such contrasts as sickness/medicine and delight/torment to characterize the love experience. Ibn Sina (980 to 1037) [known as Avicenna] writes *Risala fi al-Ishq* (Treatise on Love). The concepts of the elevating power of love, love for love’s sake, love has the power of lifting up the individual and love as desire never to be fulfilled are developed in the early eleventh century. All these concepts can be found in courtly love.

Muwashah and *Zajal*: Characters and themes

There are many characters that will be found in the

Troubadours poetry and Hispano-Arabic poetry, in particular, *muwashah* and *zajal*. A character named *gradador* (the guard) is the same in Arabic "*raqeeb*"; his function is to take care of the woman and makes sure that no other character keeps any contact with this woman. Another character is the "*evejos*" who plays the role in Arabic poetry as the "*hasid*" (envious). Other characters include the messenger, "*anel*", between the two lovers called in Arabic "*rasoul*" and the "*lauzengier*" who is "*al'athe*" (the lover). Another usage in both forms of poetry is to give a pseudonym about the beloved. The lover stands in a position of being subservient and loyal to a cold and ungenerous woman. The woman holds a high position. The most dominant themes in both the troubadours poetry and Hispano-Arabic poetry is love at the first sight, the cruelty of the beloved, the impact of true love on the lover leading into suffering, pain weakness, sickness and/or death. The lover makes excessive meditation upon the beauty of the woman. The lover is suffering of endless desire without consummation. In other words, the lover is ready to do what is pleasing to his loved one.

Andalusian literature, including *muwashah* and *zajal*, is deeply rooted in the mainstream of Arabic literature. The word "*muwashah*" comes from the Arabic "*al-wishah*", a type of material weaved from leather, jewels and pearls worn by a woman. It denotes chanting poetry with a rotating parallel rhyme scheme according to a certain order. *Muwashah*, beginning its spread in the 10th century, is an Arabic poetic form and a secular musical genre, consisting of multi-lined strophic, usually of five stanzas, alternating with a refrain with a running rhyme. Normally, it opens with one or two lines that matched the second part of the poem in rhyme and meter. *Muwashah* has intricate melodic, rhythmic and poetic structure, as well as the meanings it provoked in its use of imagery. *Muwashah* may use more than one rhythm, although, the norm is a single rhythm throughout. Lyrics in a *muwashah* are poetry which must fit the rhythm and in which every syllable must fall on a beat.

Undoubtedly, the strophic lyrics of the *muwashah* directly express the poet's own thought and sentiments. These lyrics deal with the theme of love or wine, joy and sorrow. The content of *muwashah* may address the sufferings of the speaker after his heart is broken over the beautiful woman. It presents obstacles to love and shows evidence of the speaker's devotion to his love. *Muwashah* may reveal that the speaker loses his mind, in a very critical situation, and sends a messenger to tell the woman of his deteriorated catastrophic and weakened health position. The speaker may also appeal to her by begging help to put an end to his sufferings. In another *muwashah*, the speaker describes his beloved by recollecting his past love memories. *Muwashah* is sung and recited in palaces and castles for caliphs, princes, kings and royalty. This explains Robinson's view (2002) who considers that the courts and the court culture,

courtly models of good behavior and courtly love of tenth/eleventh centuries as sites of interaction between Arabic Andalusia and Occitan poetry.

Rhyme in *Muwashah* and *Zajal*

Perhaps, poetry is the most closely related art to music. Poets seem to be the only singers who enjoy the composition of their lyrics, singing for themselves and for those willing to repeat with them. The most important element for the Andalusian poets is rhyme. Rhyme is the music of poetry. Rhyme has an impact on aesthetic liking and emotional involvement. Words rhyming with a preceding prime word are easier to process and to perceive the felt-emotions. Repetition of sounds might encourage a soft or sensuous feeling. Rhyme comes first without paying attention to syntax and meter. The *zajal* consists of several stanzas in which the rhymes are so arranged that the master-rhyme ending each stanza and running through the whole poem as a refrain. The stanzas are interrupted by a succession of subordinate rhymes: aa/bbba/ccca/ddda/. In the rhyme, metrical system is employed in the *muwashah* that is composed in Classical Arabic. *Muwashah* has regular quantitative patterns but these patterns do not coincide with those of traditional system of prosody in classical Arabic poetry. The poem may have new meters, which are unknown to the classical tradition. In medieval Spanish poetry and in *muwashah*, there are no lines longer than twelve syllables and the only regular stress in each line falls on the accented syllable of its rhymed word. It is a "hybridization system": the Arabic patterns (Reichl, 2012:605) are adjusted to fit in the underlying Romance syllabic system.

According to Monroe (2007:330), *zajal* is an example of intercultural hybridization. *Zajal* may have existed as early as ninth century or earlier in the seventh century. In central Spain, the Spanish poets compose Arabic poems called "*zajal*" in a Hispanicized dialect. *Zajal* originates in Andalusia Spain written in the local vernacular Arabic dialect and it is "punctuated with non-Arabic words or phrases". All syllables are phonetically and linguistically of equal duration. The regular stress falls on the accented syllable of the rhymed word in *zajal* as well as in *muwashah*. However, *zajal* differs from *muwashah* in the rhyme scheme that runs often much longer than the five-strophe-length of the *muwashah*. *Muwashah* and *zajal* consist of *matla'* (a short rhyme introductory verse) and strophe (*bayt* and *qufl*). These components make Andalusian poetry. The *matla'* is followed by five or seven strophes; each has two parts called *bayt* (Arabic stanza) and *qufl* ('return'). This '*qufl*' is known in French as "*vuelta*" and in Spanish "*tornade*". Each strophe is made up of a rhymed verse and rhymed refrain: *bayt* uses different rhymes from strophe to strophe; the *qufl* has a common rhyme scheme found in *matla'* and

repeated in the *kharja*. The lines in the last strophe, preceding the *kharja*, introduce the singer of the *kharja*: this singer is a creation of the poet whether a young woman, a bird, a personified abstract concept or the people of the city.

Troubadours, *Muwashah* and *zajal*

Mushah and *zajal* have had their impact on the Spanish and French poetry in particular and in European poetry in general. Many Spanish eminent literary figures reveal their influence by Arabic *muwashah* and *zajal* such as Álvarez de Felicia Ndino, Monk Deco Ablenci, GarcíaFernández, elMontreux. Troubadours lived in the court of kings and princes, song of love, as it is subject to the loving sweetheart, and it expresses the jurisdiction. Ja'fri and Jafri (2010:24) mention that the *zajal* is invented by Muqaddam of Cabra, a tenth century bard who has composed in both vulgar Arabic and Romance. To get an idea of what is a *muwashah* and its themes, here is a famous well-known *muwashah* by Ibn Zahr al-Hafeed (1072 to 1166) and another *muwashah* by the Spanish RioSaledo.

قد دعوناك وان لم تسمع أيها الساقى اليك المشتكى
 "ay-youha as-saqie-laika al-mushtakal ghad da'wnakawa in lemtasm?" (O Bartender! we come to complain to you/ We call on you, but you do not hear).

ونديم همت في غرته
 wa nadeemin hammat fi ghurratehe (and a companion was infatuated by his appearance)

ويشرب الراح من راحته
 wa bishrub er-raha min rahatehe (drinking wine from his palm)

كلما استيقظ من سكرته
 kullama istayqatha min sakratehe (whenever he wakes from his drunkenness)

جذب الزق إليه وأتكنى وسقاني أربعا في أربع
 jathaba ez-ziq elaihe wat-takal/ (He grabs the wine pot and bends over) wa saqani arb' fi arb' (He pours for me sixteen glasses of wine.)

ما لعيني عشيت بالنظر أنكرت بعدك ضوء القمر
 ma le'nee 'sheyat bilnadhher / ankarat b'daka dhuo al-qamer (My eyesight has weakened because of my continued looking/ So that I cannot see the moon's light).

وإذا ما شئت فاسمع خبري
 wa edha ma she'atta fassm' khabari (If you would like, you can hear news about me.)

عشيت عيني من طول البكا ويكى بعضي على بعضي معي
 'sheyat ainaya min toul el-buka / (My sight is weakened because of my long crying.) wa baka ba'dhi ala ba'dhi ma'ee (All the parts of my body are crying with me.)

بات من يهواه من فرط الجوى
 bat men yahwahu men fert el-jawa (The lover is mad in love; he withers and becomes very thin and weak)

غصن بان مال من حيث استوى
 "ghusnu banin mala min haithu esstawa" (like a branch of

a gum tree which bends because of its inability to stand up).

خافق الأحشاء موهون القوى
 khafeqa al-ahshay mowhouna al-quwa (He is scared at heart and all his efforts are exhausted)

كلما فكر في البين بكى ويحه بيكي لما لم يقع
 kullam farkar fi al-baini baka / (whenever he thinks of being a way, he starts crying) wihahu yabkee lema lam yaq' (O! why is he crying for something that is not going to happen?)

The Spanish Rio Saledo wrote a *muwashah* entitled "ojo grises" (Grey Eyes).

habibi mis ojos grises (My lover is my grey eyes)
 de tanto como han llorado (from too much crying)
 solo parecer felices (Alone they appear happy because)
 a tu memoria amarrados (they are tied to your memory.)
 In Rio Saledo's *kharja*, he uses the Arabic word "habibi" (my lover) and the rhyme is very clear. Regarding *zajal*, Ibn Quzman writes:

sabbyatun maleehatun idh ghunnat (A young girl sang)
 ghunnah rasheeqah (A very beautiful song)
 ghunnat wa lam yafadheh min semat (the qualities are uncovered)

a?la al-haqeeqah (in reality)
 a'sheqtu mema ashat al-jari (I was infatuated with what the maid has decorated)
 al'?la al-khemari (on the veil).

Similarities between the Hispano-Arabic *muwashah* and *zajal* on the one hand and the Spanish troubadours lyrics are very obvious to the reader. Taking another example from the Spanish poet, JesUs Reo Saledo's *zajal* about a girl who stripped off her clothes. In this *muwashah*, a girl speaks the *matla*:

me han pinchado las rosas (The flowers have punctured me)

me han heeho sangre (I have been crying)
 te cubri atupelo (Your hair has almost covered you)
 te la has abierto (I opened it)
 como rosal del pecho (like a chest rose of the tree)

CONCLUSION

The Arab civilization has left a significant impact on Europe through trade, the Crusades and the Muslims' rule of Andalusia Spain 711 to 1492. One of the significant factors that have left its imprint on Europe is the composition of poetry. The Hispano-Arabic poetry, embodied in *muwashah* and *zajal*, is deeply rooted in the mainstream of Arabic literature. The European troubadours' poetry has similarities with the Arabic *muwashah* and *zajal* in structure and language, theme and rhyme. The structure of a *muwashah*, its themes and its leading motifs of strophes are analogous with that of

the troubadours. Moreover, many characters in the Hispano-Arabic poetry are found in the troubadours'. The theme of love from the first sight, the cruelty of the beloved, the impact of true love leading into the suffering of the lover, sickness and weakness are also included in the troubadours' and Hispano-Arabic poetry. As the troubadours are travelling poetry-singers to entertain the royal courts, the *muwashah* and *zajal* are sung and recited in the palaces and castles of caliphs, kings and royalty. Medieval Spanish poetry and the *muwashah* employ musical rhyme. In both types of poetry, there are no lines longer than twelve syllables and the only regular syllable stress in each line falls on the accented syllable of its rhymed words.

Notes

1. King Alfonso II (1157 to 1196) of Aragon was trained in poetry and a poet of his time. He was called "Chaste or the Troubadour" and addressed a number of poems to a lady in Spain. He exchanged writing with important minstrels of his time like Giraut of Bomelh. For more on Alfonso, see Bosqued (2010).
2. See Stendhal (1783 to 1842) for a discussion of some excerpts from two Arabic works: Ibn Abi Hadglat's *Le Divan de l'amour* and the anonymous *Historic de Arabes qui sontmorts d'amour* (20). Ibn Abi Hadjala (1325 to 1375), author of the *Divan al-Sab'ba*, wrote a history of celebrated lovers, with selection of erotic poems.
3. Mozarab is from the Arabic word "*musta'rab*" meaning "Arabized"; the language used by the people of Iberian Peninsula who were not Muslims.
4. For a discussion of *kharja*, see Sola-Sole' (1973). For more discussion and examples on *kharja*, see DEBoer (2010).
5. On the troubadours, the influences on the troubadours and their matriarchal theory of troubadours see Scholar (2009) and Harvey and Paterson, eds. (2010): 699 to 705.
6. For examples of *zajal* and *muwashah* translated into English in the twelfth century, see Constable and Zurro, eds. (2012).

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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