

When Mercy Becomes a Poetic Value: Ibrahim Tuqān's "Angels of Mercy" Metamorphosing Femininity of Service into Semantic Serenity

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Abstract

This study offers a reading of Ibrahim Tuqān's poem 'Angels of Mercy' that moves critically beyond conventional rhetorical readings with an aim to explore the poem's structure and aesthetic mechanism as a modern ethical discourse that redefines mercy as a normative value. The study hypothesises that the text does not merely represent mercy as imagery but rather activates it through an integrated poetic system that mobilises metaphor, gendered representation and linguistic structure to bring about an overall ethical humanistic meaning. The study adopts an interpretive analytical methodology which incorporates the analysis of aesthetic structure with an examination of the value-representation function of stylistic elements, with a focus on three principal dimensions: how metaphor is transformed from a decorative device into a normative structure; how femininity is reconfigured from a caregiving perspective beyond the conventional binaries of romantic love and motherhood; and how semantic serenity is generated through syntactic simplicity and rhythmic rigour. The findings prove that the poem's central metaphor plays an interactive ethical role and that the way nurses are represented reframes women's roles within a caregiving social horizon, far beyond traditional stereotypes. The study further shows that linguistic economy and lexical calmness contribute further to the construction of 'serenity' not as an affective outcome but as a semantic value that arises from harmony between form and content. The study concludes that Tuqān's poem constitutes an early example of poetic integration of aesthetics and ethics in modern Arab poetry, shifting values from heroic bravado to a quieter human-centred ethic, and reflecting a qualitative interpretation of aesthetics and ethics within modern Arabic poetic discourse.

Keywords: Ibrahim Tuqān, ethics of care, value-based metaphor, femininity in poetry, linguistic economy, semantic serenity, ethical discourse in Arabic poetry

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between aesthetics and ethics is a central bone of contention in the study of modern Arabic poetry. In many critical readings, poetry remained limited either to personal emotional expression or to a purely aesthetic practice, thus contributing to the marginalisation of the ethical dimension of the poetic experience and undermining the status of the human being as a moral agent within the aesthetic fabric of the text. In its essence, however, poetry has never been detached from values. It has historically functioned as a medium for the expression of virtuous conduct and moral nobility, with such expression often materialising through artistic or metaphorical forms. Certain poetic texts, though, appear as representative examples of poetry's capacity to mould an integrated value system in which beauty becomes a shaping tool for (rather than merely a vessel of) moral sensibility. In such texts, beauty is not merely invoked as verbal ornamentation but as a means of the consolidation of awareness, cultivating taste and sharpening perception to recognise noble and magnanimous stances while also refining emotion so that it partners

in the construction of values. Poetry here emerges as a space for taming the spirit to engage and interact with goodness, compassion and dignity without relinquishing art's terms of reference or the requirements of aesthetic structure.

Ibrahim Tuqān's poem 'Angels of Mercy' (*Malā'ekatu Arrahmah*; also known as *Mumarridāt "Nurses"*, or *Bid-ul-Hamā'em "White Doves"*) is examined here as a text that establishes a modern ethical discourse grounded in mercy and care, a text that transcends the framework of praise and description towards the invocation of an ethical conception of humane action. The title of the poem itself signals to this premise: the white doves are not merely a dreamlike image but an invocation of a symbolic paragon for peace, purity and quiet giving. The poem functions as a condensed metaphor for the presence of the working woman, i.e. doing her duties, compassionate and gently overflowing with humanness at times of hardship. The text does not depict clamorous heroism in its traditional, martial sense, but rather reveals a form of concealed heroism and a kind of nobility that is rarely celebrated, yet exerts a deeper influence on the ethical landscape of human life. The poet, similarly, does not provoke emotion through acute rhetoric here. Instead, he whispers it with tenderness putting the reader amidst a scene that is infused with affective significance and moral elevation without much ado.

'Angels of Mercy' represents an eloquent example of Tuqān's movement from direct emotional expression towards processing an integrated poetic image in which a humane vision integrates with symbolic metaphor and a calm rhythmic structure to create a text that celebrates not the suffering self but pure humane action. The poem does not merely record an external scene. Instead, it penetrates the depths of ethical experience, where the nurse becomes a symbol of unconditional devotion, and where her care manifests moral purity. Tuqān stands here as a poet acutely aware of poetry's role in documenting moments of ethical transcendence, a catalyst to extract beauty from the ordinary, heroism from professional duty and a muted ethical cry from inner silence; soft in sound, yet resonant in reader's moral consciousness.

It seems that while composing the poem Tuqān was deeply conscious of word's role in painting an image that perpetuates silent dignity and records the contours of unseen goodness, a type of goodness not produced by assemblies or elevated by rhetorical speeches but embodied by a hand that soothes pain, an eye that remains vigilant and a heart that overflows with generosity. This is a text written by a poet but spoken by life itself; within its silence resides an unsung virtue worthy of being immortalised by poetry.

The poem's author is Ibrahim Tuqān, a lyrical poet from Nablus, Palestine, described by a contemporary critic as "sweet in melody, enchanting in cadence, torn between a concealed passion and a sorrowful homeland" (Ya'qub). During his study at the American University of Beirut, he excelled in both Arabic and English literatures. Later, he headed the Talks Department at the Palestine Broadcasting Station for nearly five years before moving to Baghdad as a teacher. Suffering from a bone disease that was aggravated by travel, he eventually returned ill to Nablus. He was referred to the French Hospital in Jerusalem, where he passed away. Known for his gentleness and cheerfulness, he left behind a printed poetry collection, introduced by an elegy by his friend Jalal Amin Zurayq, followed by a foreword by Ahmed Tuqān, the publisher, and a biographical letter by his sister poet Fadwa Tuqān. Fadwa Tuqān later devoted a separate biographical volume to him, entitled *My Brother Ibrahim*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The poem 'Angels of Mercy' has received much attention in studies on Tuqān's poetry; however, such attention has generally been either partial or contextual, and failed to bring about an integrated critical trajectory that reads the poem as a complex value-based discourse. These studies may be classified into several strands depending on their adopted methodologies, as follows:

I) Textual and stylistic studies

Shabāna (2015) is one of the most significant studies devoted exclusively to the poem. Adopting a structuralist and stylistic perspective, he focuses on the notion of the 'arc-metaphor' being the governing structure of the text and on rhythm as an organising element of aesthetic effect. While this approach successfully moved the poem beyond impressionistic reading towards a technically informed analysis, its scope remains confined to imagistic and rhythmic structures without examining the ethical or value-based functions generated by these structures within poetic discourse.

II) Contextual and biographical studies

Biographical works and general studies on Tuqān have approached the poem within its temporal and emotional context linking it to the experience of illness, hospitalisation and an early phase in the formation of the poet's voice. Within this framework the poem is often invoked as evidence of Tuqān's humanitarian sensibility or his ability to transform personal experience into a text of broader resonance. These approaches, however, remain largely descriptive and circumstantial rather than focusing on the textual mechanisms through which an individual event is transformed into a poetic discourse with normative implications. An example of this type is Abu Diyah (n.d.).

III) Partial thematic studies

The poem has also been the subject matter of studies addressing broader themes such as natural symbolism, colour symbolism or stylistic features in Tuqān's poetry. In such works, the reference to the poem typically delved into its opening lines or central images (doves, whiteness, serenity) as an example of a symbolic or emotional tendency rather than treating the poem as an independent text subject to comprehensive analytical reconstruction. As a result, its presence remains functional, serving general arguments, rather than constituting an object of enquiry of its own right. An example of these studies is Dabi (2015), an unpublished MA thesis.

Based on the above, despite diverse perspectives on 'Angels of Mercy', the common denominator in most of these studies resides in either of two trends: a focus on imagery and metaphor as aesthetic achievement, or a celebratory reading that highlights the poem's general humane dimension. In neither case has the poem been examined as a modern ethical discourse that redefines concepts such as compassion, care and what it is to be a hero. Nor has sufficient attention been paid to the relationship between the representation of femininity (embodied forth in the figure of the nurses) and the social role of care, or between linguistic economy and the production of serenity as a purposeful semantic value rather than a fleeting emotional effect. Accordingly, this study seeks to reread 'Angels of Mercy' as a text that lays the foundations for an ethics of care and mercy in modern Arabic poetry, and reveals an early transformation in the poetic value system, from dithyrambic bravado to calm humane action.

Study hypotheses

This paper proposes the following hypotheses:

1. The poem 'Angels of Mercy' is based on transforming the central metaphor from a decorative aesthetic value function to a normative ethical mechanism, thus contributing to a redefinition of mercy as a central poetic and human value.

2. The poem reshapes the concept of femininity, portraying nurses as active agents in care discourse, rather than subjects of external beauty, thus reflecting early awareness of the social role of care in modern Arabic poetry. It also reconceptualises femininity anew, based on the act of care rather than attractiveness or conventional female roles.
3. The linguistic economy of the poem, represented by structural simplicity, predominant lexical quietude and rhythmic harmony, has resulted in semantic serenity that goes in line with mercy discourse, apart from noisy rhetoric, and reinforced the ethical discourse of the poem, away from preaching or didactic instruction.
4. Through the integration of all these elements, the poem underpins a metamorphosis in the poetic value system that deserts clamorous glorification of heroism in order to celebrate the serene humane caregiving act being a form of ethical modernity. The poem also reflects facets of modern poetic sensibility in which beauty and ethics are entered in an inseparable wedlock.

Study limitations

- Thematic limitation: The study is limited to the poem 'Angels of Mercy' by Ibrahim Tuqān.
- Methodological limitation: The study is limited to pragmatic and semiotic approaches and whenever necessary makes use of some structural and stylistic tools.
- Textual limitation: The reading is limited to the text itself, irrespective of historical or other contexts, except in stances of methodological urgencies for analytical purposes.

The poem

The text is extracted from Tuqān, Ibrahim. 'Angels of Mercy'. *Tuqān's Comprehensive Poetic Works*. Egypt: Hindawi, 2012.¹

بيضُ الحمامِ حسبهنَّه	أني أريدُ سجعهنَّه
The white doves, methinks I merely echo their coo The cooing cadences they softly throw	
رمزُ السلامة والودا...	عة منذ بدء الخلق هنَّه
A symbol of peace and compassion they've been Since the beginning of life, and shall always remain	
في كلِّ روض فوق دا...	نية القطوف لهنَّه أنه
In every garden, on every fruitful tree They are always where they need to be	
ويملن والأغصان ما	خَطَرَ النسيم بروضهنَّه
They sway as branches bend when the breezes glide In harmony from side to side	
فإذا صلاهَنَّه الهجي...	ر هيبنَّه نحو غدِير هنَّه
When noon's fierce blaze upon their feathers lies They rise and hurry where the cool spring sighs	
يهبطن بعد الحوم م...	ل الوحي لا تدري بهنَّه
Descending after circling, they fall Like whispered revelation, known to none at all	
فإذا وقعن على الغدي...	ر ترتبث أسرابهنَّه

¹ Aware that an equivalent translation is a far-fetched venture, the researcher has attempted a transcreation of the poem into English, striving to devise rhyme and imagery. However, as in all cases of poetic translations, translated poems always fall short of their original texts.

Once settled by the pool their flocks align In ordered ranks along water's line	صَفَيْنَ طُولَ الضَّقَتِي... نَ تَعَرَّجَا بوقوفهِنَّ
Two rows along the riverbanks Standing in harmonious ranks	كُلُّ تَقْبَلُ رَسْمَهَا فِي المَاءِ سَاعَةً شُرْبِهِنَّ
Each kissing her own image on the sheen While by water they drink and preen	يَطْفَنَنَّ حَرَّ جِسْمِهِنَّ... نَ بَغْمَسَهِنَّ صَدورَهُنَّ
They quench the heat burning the shape By immersing the breast's cape	يَفِغُ الرِّشَاشُ إِذَا انْتَقَضَ... نَ لَأَلْنَا لِرؤوسهنَّ
When they shake, scatter'd drops shine Like strings of pearls on their heads fine	وَيَطْرُنَ بَعْدَ الِابْتِرَا... دَ إِلَى الغُصُونِ مَهودهنَّ
They fly, once cool'd, back to their cradles Their wings beating their joy in ripples	تُنْبِيكَ أَجْنَحَةٌ تَصَف... فَقَ كَيْفَ كَانَ سرورهنَّ
Your eyes delight in their playful repose When down they settle, wrapped in plumes they close You'd think them headless near the approaching night Hiding heads beneath wings so to sleep tight	وَيُفَرِّعُ عَيْنَكَ عِبْتِهِنَّ... نَ إِذَا جَثْمُنَ بَرِيشهنَّ
Very often they stirred me, very often I drank their song I'd eagerly give away my life for the soft cooing to stay long	وَتُخَالِهِنَّ بِلَا رؤو... سَ حِينَ يُقْبَلُ لَيْلِهِنَّ
The kind ones tending every aching soul Have grown to be like them in grace made whole.	أَخْفِيهَا تَحْتَ الجَنَا... حَ وَنَمِنَ مَلَأَ جَفونهنَّ
Gardens like hospitals cure the ills with a company so nice No medical electric device is equal to a glance from their eyes	كَمْ هَجْنِي وَرُويثُ هُنَّ هِنَّ الِهْدِيلُ فَدَيْتِهِنَّ
Gardens like hospitals cure the ills with a company so nice No medical electric device is equal to a glance from their eyes	المَحْسَنَاتُ إِلَى المَرِي... ضَ غَدُونَ أَشْبَاهًا لِهِنَّ
The kind ones tending every aching soul Have grown to be like them in grace made whole.	الرؤوضُ كَالْمَسْتَشْفِيَا... تَ دَوَاؤُهَا إِنْيَاسِهِنَّ
Gardens like hospitals cure the ills with a company so nice No medical electric device is equal to a glance from their eyes	مَا الكَهْرِبَاءُ وَطِبَّهَا بِأَجَلٍّ مَن نَظَرَاتِهِنَّ
Gardens like hospitals cure the ills with a company so nice No medical electric device is equal to a glance from their eyes	يُشْفِي العَلِيلَ عِنَاؤُهُنَّ نَ وَعَظْفِهِنَّ وَلَطْفِهِنَّ
They heal the sick by effort, care and grace, By tender mercy written on the face	مُرُّ الدَوَاءِ يَفِيكَ حَل... وُ مِنْ عَذوبَةٍ نَطَقَتِهِنَّ
Though bitter cures may promise health anew Once sweeter word from them surpasses too.	مَهَلًا فَعَنْدِي فَارِقُ بَيْنَ الحَمَامِ وَبَيْنِهِنَّ
Wait – there's a difference hat should be plain Between the doves and those winning this gain	فَلرَبْمَا انْقَطَعَ الحَمَا... ثُمَّ فِي الدَّجِيِّ عَن شِدْوِهِنَّ
For doves may fall silent in dark night Their songs cut short, no sound no sight	أَمَّا جَمِيلُ المَحْسَنَا... تَ فِي النَهَارِ وَفِي الدَجْنِ

While beauty born of kindness, pure and true,
Sings on by day and through the darkness too.

Analysis

Problems of critical reception and lack of deep textual reading

In spite of its immense artistic and semantic significance, this text has remained outside the circle of text-based critical reflection, and beyond serious in-depth textual analysis using systematic analytical tools that can penetrate its deeper layers, uncover its veiled meanings, unravel the rhythm of its internal structure, and construe its stylistic and artistic features from within, beyond reliance on externally imposed frameworks. This tendency has led to a lack of more profound investigation into the poem's value-based function as well as its position within the metamorphic evolution of modern Arabic poetry, particularly at the level of redefining heroism, femininity and humane action. Based on this viewpoint, the present study seeks to provide an understanding of the text in and of itself, through its own internal relations rather than through juxtaposing external projections that – very often – come in the form of interpretive footnotes around the text that light the marginal surroundings of the poem more than its innermost corridors.

In this poem, Tuqān presents a rearrangement of the hierarchy of poetic and human values. It is a countermove to the prevalent conceptualisation of heroism, pride and martial valour which have long praised strength, violence, domination, and transient climactic moments of triumph over the other. In this poem, Tuqān reverses the compass of values, elevating mercy over violence, habitual daily service over clamorous glory, and calm feminine image over muscular heroism. This poem reconfigures many values in the hierarchy of Arabic poetic traditions, as follows:

i. Mercy instead of power

The poem is not initiated from a battlefield or sacrifice alter but rather in a quiet garden, using an image of a bird struggling with thirst or preening its feathers or sleeping in tranquillity. These doves, which recur prevalently as a dominant symbol throughout the text, do not symbolise brute force, but gentleness, sweetness, tenderness and care. As such, they turn into a covert antithesis to everything related to harshness, violence or corporeal bragging.

كُلُّ تَقْبِيلٍ رَسَمَهَا	فِي الْمَاءِ سَاعَةً شَرِبَهَا
Each kissing her own image on the sheen	While by water they drink and preen
يَطْفَنَنْ حَرًّا جَسُومَهُنَّ...	نَّ بَغْمَسَهُنَّ صَدُورَهُنَّ
They quench the heat burning the shape	By immersing the breast's cape
يَقَعُ الرَّشَائِشُ إِذَا انْتَفَضَ...	نَّ لِأَلْنَاءِ لِرُؤُوسِهِنَّ
When they shake, scatter'd drops shine	Like strings of pearls on their heads fine

A simple, soft, sensory and intimate act is foregrounded here by the poet elevating coolness and serenity as supreme values, hence submerging physical force or violent action in favour of another healing, nonharmful act.

ii. Act of service instead of act of heroism

The doves gradually turn into a symbol of benefactresses (i.e. the nurses), women not seen in the battlefields *per se* but on the margins of life; they pass water, soothe pain, hold a broken hand or a weary forehead. These daily routine acts, which have always been

relegated to sub-heroic positions, are elevated by Tuqān to a near-angelic level representing true symbolic heroism.

يَشْفِي الْعَلِيلَ عِنَاؤُهُنَّ	نَ وَعَطْفُهُنَّ وَلَطْفُهُنَّ
They heal the sick by effort, care and grace, By tender mercy written on the face	

In this line particularly, Tuqān redefines healing, not as the effect of medicine or some medical skill, but as a cumulative result of repeated acts of mercy, quiet, simple, gentle and yet essential and profound.

iii. The 'everyday' instead of the extraordinary

The poem does not in fact celebrate decisive, rare or climactic moments. It rather sanctifies admiration of repeated (often unnoticed) daily actions, things that are neither written about in newspapers nor celebrated in conventional poetry. The doves drink, sleep and preen their feathers; the nurses treat, comfort and console. Here emanates the heroism of everyday life, away from noise and spectacle.

وَيُفِرُّ عَيْنَكَ عَيْثُهُنَّ...	نَ إِذَا جَتَمْنَ بِرَيْشُهُنَّ
Your eyes delight in their playful repose When down they settle, wrapped in plumes they close	

This childlike play and unintentional flight, acts of ordinary rest, all suddenly turn into a delight for the eye, scenes of inner peace that need no advertisement to be seen. In this new order of value hierarchy, mercy becomes the criterion of heroism and the recurring daily act becomes more enduring than the exceptional moment. Tuqān dismantles clamorous glory in order to elevate quiet, silent dignity, and replaces battle heroism with vigil beside a sick body or the wiping of an unseen tear. In fact, the poem does not renounce heroism: it only redefines it, and teaches the reader that the world is ultimately saved not by the wounding sword but by the healing hand that soothes the brow, dresses the wounds and curbs harm.

Pragmatics of protest and the exposure of false humane discourse

'Angels of Mercy' is a typical example of the transformation of poetic discourse from emotional and sentimental expression to a pragmatic act of protest. The poet does not only describe the suffering caused by illness but rather mobilises language as a tool of ethical reproach or protest directed at pretentious humane discourse, i.e. that which claims mercy without translating it into action. Based on this viewpoint, the poem may be pragmatically read as a reproachful or protest discourse intended to expose false mercy, the type of mercy that remains limited to words and does not go beyond verbal sympathy. Pragmatics proposes that language is not used solely to convey meaning but also to perform actions (Austin, 1962). The poem does reflect so, clearly. Tuqān does not provide a neutral descriptive discourse but rather constructs the text through illocutionary acts such as reproach, accusation and ethical protest. Remarkably, such reproach is not articulated straightforwardly, but accomplished through rhetorical questioning and semantic paradox, which renders the discourse more impactful by having the reader gradually recognise the condemnation rather than receiving it in the form of a ready-made judgement. To Austin (1962, p. 94), these speech acts are "performed" through articulation rather than

description. In the same vein, Searle emphasises that protest discourse is rooted in a discrepancy between speech and behaviour, i.e. a pragmatic precondition for the production of the accusation act (Searle, 1979, p. 66). This precondition is embedded in the poem where a discourse that abounds in the vocabulary of compassion and mercy is weighed against an absence of genuine humane action commensurate with such vocabulary.

- Exposure of false humane discourse

The poem tends towards exposure of what may be called false mercy – i.e. which comes in word not in action. Tuqān says:

الرّوض كالمستشفيا...	ت دواؤها إيناسهته
ما الكهرياء وطبها	بأجل من نظراتهته
Gardens like hospitals cure the ill with a company so nice No medical electric device is equal to a glance from their eyes	
يشفي العليل عناهن	ن وعطفهن ولطفهن
They heal the sick by effort, care and grace, By tender mercy written on the face	

The poet here likens the gardens to hospitals in terms of qualities such as compassion and gentleness, as though these were medicines for the ill. Pragmatically speaking, the religious and ethical symbolism of mercy and care for the ill is used here as powerful linguistic signifiers in the discourse, contrasted to the actual absence of corresponding concrete action. As such, the poetic dialogue has turned into a discourse of verbal compassion that tends to be more like romantic compliments of mercy than actual actions of mercy *per se*, which in this case stands as a breach of the sincerity maxim in communication. The poet uses the mercy vocabulary as if it were acts of healing, although the poem remains a rhetorical depiction and description rather than evidence of an accomplished act in its material or actual sense. This disjunction between word and action can be construed as evidence of fake mercy in the poetic discourse, merely verbal compassion that does not materialise in action, which gives rise to the problem of conflation between linguistic expression vis-à-vis real action in the poetic text. Grice (1975, p. 49) indicates that violations of communicative maxims generate implicatures that are inferred from context rather than from surface meaning of utterance. In this text, the tension between the title and content gives birth to an implicature suggesting that the proclaimed compassion is more or less a linguistic mask that conceals indifference and routine-bred passivity. Early studies in Palestinian poetic discourse have noticed that this stratagem serves as a mode of ideological exposure in which a positive symbol is utilised as a tool for indictment (cf. Darwish, 2012, p. 133). In the lines cited above, Tuqān deploys a condensed poetic image that juxtaposes garden and hospital, flower and nurse, evincing the 'femininity of nature' as a symbol of care, and the 'glances' as medicine/medical electrical devices. On the surface level, these images appear to celebrate mercy, but the broader poetic context and the excessively ornamental language generate a pragmatic disruption: mercy turns into a translucent linguistic façade unsupported by actual events but instead relying on emotional and aesthetic suggestivity. From a pragmatic point of view, the paradox between the poem's title (which implies sacrifice and profoundly compassionate humane action) and its content (which is based on metaphor and symbolism) can be construed as a violation of the

sincerity condition of communication (Grice, 1975). The overt communicative intent (celebration of mercy) is not aligned with the implied contextual meaning (mercy as a façade that conceals an ordinary non-heroic practice). It is argued by some scholars that this mode of discourse marks a shift from emotion-laden poetry to socially oriented pragmatic poetry wherein language turns into an act of resistance rather than a mere act of expression (Shabānah, 2015, p. 87). This is indeed a signal to a fundamental change in the function of poetry itself, considering that language goes beyond the boundaries of subjective emotion to stand as an effective force in the social domain. Thus, poetry turns into a means of symbolic resistance through which consciousness is remoulded and prevalent discourses deconstructed.

- **The pragmatic function of paradox in protest discourse**

In this poem, paradox serves as a central pragmatic device that is used for performing an act of reproach rather than rhetorical ornamentation only. The choice of the title 'Angels of Mercy' creates a positive horizon for readers' expectations, which swiftly crumbles down producing a semantic shock that deepens the protest effect. Van Dijk (1998, p. 192) remarks that protest discourse relies often on strategies of pragmatic shock because they force the recipients to reassess their moral stances. This is a function clearly achieved in the poem. The poem is not a conventional elegy; it is a reproachful protest discourse that performs powerful speech acts and exposes the falsehood of a humane discourse that is limited to verbal compassion. As such, poetry in the hands of Tuqān turns into an active linguistic practice that puts responsibility on recipient's shoulders and redefines mercy as action rather than words.

▪ **Linguistic economy and semantic serenity**

The poetic discourse in 'Angels of Mercy' is based on deliberate linguistic economy manifested in syntactic simplicity, lexical calmness, rhythmical regularity and semantic condensation. Such economy represents an aesthetic choice that serves the ethical function of the poem and contributes to the production of a semantic serenity that itself constitutes part of the textual meaning, not merely an associated psychological effect. Language itself enacts mercy through linguistic economy and avoidance of verbal aggression, turning the style into an extension of the caregiving action.

▪ **The poem's title as a deceptive cultural, religious sign**

The title of the poem, 'Angels of Mercy', is saturated with a positive cultural and religious load deeply rooted in collective consciousness: 'angels' is invoked as a symbol of purity and salvation, and 'mercy' is associated with compassion, tenderness and protection. In this sense, the title presents itself to the reader as a reassuring sign that opens up a horizon of positive ethical and humane expectations. However, the text swiftly strips off this sign of its value content and stable collective conceptualization by disrupting the conventional relationship between the signifier (angels/mercy) and signified (salvation/compassion). Instead of becoming an entry point to a consoling or humane discourse, the title thus serves as a sign of indictment exposing the falsehood of a discourse that abounds in mercy vocabulary but lacks corresponding action.

In semiotics, a sign is identified as a binary relationship between a signifier (the sound-image) and a signified (the concept) (de Saussure, 1959, pp. 67-69): both are bound by a structural relation within the linguistic system.

Table 1: Relation between the signifier and the signified

A sign is a relation between

The signified or meaning invoked by this utterance in the collective consciousness	Signifier: linguistic form (utterance, statement)
The signified: the concept	Signifier: the sound-image

Firstly, even before reading the text, the title 'Angels of Mercy' serves as a complete sign with an anticipated signified that invokes in the reader culturally familiar meanings, e.g. mercy, compassion, rescue, reassurance and divine providence. In semiotic criticism, this is known as 'expected signified', i.e. a meaning which is automatically generated by religious background, cultural memory and social imagination. In other words, the title implicitly promises the reader a positive humane discourse. Secondly, the poem as a whole functions as a mechanism that undermines this expectation, though. Upon moving from the title to the poem's body, it appears that the text does not fulfil its semantic promise, but rather gradually deconstructs it. Rather than affirming mercy and compassion, it reveals blood instead of rescue, silence instead of intervention, and complicity instead of compassion, turning the text into a mechanism for deconstructing the meaning established earlier by the title. That is, the poem does not stabilise the title's meaning but rather undoes it. Thirdly, the signifier-signified harmony is fractured in the poem. In a conventional semiotic situation, the signifier in the poem is 'angels of mercy' and the signified is 'compassion, aid, salvation', but the poem deliberately destabilises this relationship, retaining the signifier linguistically but stripping off the signified of its value content. This is known in semiotics as the destabilisation of the formerly stable arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified, or the inversion of the sign from an instrument of significance into an instrument of indictment (de Saussure, 1916/1966). The angels remain silent instead of showing compassion; and mercy is reduced to a verbal status instead of becoming an action. Therefore, the title of the poem establishes a positive semantic horizon based on deeply rooted religious and humane reference, but the text dismantles that horizon by disrupting the conventional signifier-signified relationship and transforming the sign from being a promise for salvation into an instrument of interrogation and indictment. Thus, the title becomes a part of the protest structure of the text rather than an unbiased entry point into it, revealing a deliberate tension between the title and the text of the poem whereby 'mercy' is redirected from its traditional sense into a paradoxical semantic horizon. In this way, the semiotic relationship turns into a deconstructive instrument that destabilises expectations and produces a critical reading which goes beyond initial impressions (Barthes, 1970).

▪ The semiotics of paradox and the inversion of the ethical sign

The poem is built on a network of relations and counter-relations which constitute its deep semiotic structure. The signifier-signified relationship is not based on equivalent correspondence but rather on rupture and contradiction whereby the positive signifier is invoked to juxtapose with a negative and/or paradoxical signified. The table below reflects some of the most important of these pairings in the poem:

Table 2: Positive and negative signifiers in 'Angels of Mercy'

Positive Signifier	Negative/Paradoxical Signifier
Mercy	Blood
Angels	Silence
Rescue	Complicity
Peace	Violence

The table illustrates how the meaning of the text is built on internal paradoxical tensions where significance does not stabilise within similarity relations but is rather produced through paradoxes opening interpretive horizons. The paradoxical relations are deployed to unravel the covert structure that makes mercy an act of softly muted resistance to a painful reality. Greimas (1983, pp. 23-25) maintains that meaning in literary texts is not produced by means of isolated signs but through the relations forged by these signs inside the overall structure, particularly the relations of opposition and contrast. In 'Angels of Mercy', these relations form a semantic network that pressurises and motivates the reader to recognise that the problem lies not in the absence of values but rather in their detachment from real practice. The rhythmical structure, which is based on verbs and movements, adds more to this paradoxical effect, given the prominence of verbs of violence vis-à-vis the absence of compassionate action, turning silence itself into a semiotic sign highly charged with significance. These oppositions lead to a 'semiotics of paradox' (Groupe μ , 1976). Here, mercy is not attached to action, but is associated with (the extraction of) blood and piercing of syringes, an image that displays a sick collapsing body at the verge of death, surrounded by 'angels' who are doing nothing but watching in silence. As such, the poem becomes a typical example of the semiotics of paradox where the ethical sign is inverted and fake humane discourse deconstructed. The title therefore does not portray a merciful reality but rather exposes the ineffective compassion that is limited to mere observation and turns – without explicitly declaring itself – into a form of complicity. In this poem, complicity is understood as a complex pragmatic and semiotic stance, not based on direct violence, but rather on the abstention from performing rescue in an ethical context that requires intervention. The poem does not condemn anyone for committing violence, but rather for ineffectively watching and expressing verbal compassion without really doing anything that would alter the tragic reality.

From this perspective, abstention is not construed as a neutral stance but as a negative act with significance considering particularly that the context embedding the poem abounds in blood, violence and imminent death, a context which ethically disapproves of standing idle in a middle ground. Modern pragmatics in these contexts sees silence not as absence of talk but as an unspoken speech act with a clear semantic force. Silence itself is a choice, not without significance, but rather expresses a stance and carries liability. In this framework, the 'angels' as a symbol becomes a passive pragmatic act; they neither speak nor intervene. Their silence, however, turns into a sign, their abstention into a stance, and then into implicit complicity in the status quo. This sense is crystallised if the poem is read based on the pragmatic maxim of sincerity, which presupposes coherence between utterance and action (Grice, 1975, p. 45). In the poem, the mercy lexicon is used as explicit discourse, but with nothing corresponding in terms of action. The ensuing disjunction between word and action leads to a semantic rupture that renders false the speech discourse and turns verbal compassion into a moral mask for silence or any other form of undeclared complicity. Such a stance may by no means be called neutrality, because neutrality presupposes the existence of an ethical space for choice. But the context displayed by the poem is acutely tragic, allowing no room for hesitation or suspension. When blood is shed, violence a reality, and death is at the door, silence becomes implicit bias, not a neutral stance. Therefore, complicity in the poem is not confined to the direct violent doer but extends to the negative spectator whose role is limited to verbal sympathy devoid of real action. Semiotically, this complicity becomes clear in the semantic structure of the title itself, where 'angels' are invoked as a symbol of capacity, deliverance and rescue. However, the abstention from implementing action (despite having this capacity) is a betrayal of the

sign itself and an inversion of its function. As such, the religious symbol transforms from a sign of salvation to a sign of complicity, not in a legal sense, but rather in an ethical symbolic sense emanating from the absence of action despite capacity. Therefore, complicity in this context is understood as a passive pragmatic stance arising from verbal sympathy coupled with abstention from intervention in a situation where intervention is demanded. Silence becomes an indirect participation in the continuity of the tragedy, and ineffective humane speech turns into an ethical cover masking an implicit complicity that the poem clearly and poignantly exposes.

▪ **Pragmatics of irony in the title 'Angels of Mercy'**

From a pragmatic standpoint, the title of the poem can be seen as an ironic speech act, not in a humorous sense but rather in the framework of what can be called 'tragic irony'. The designation does not reflect the reality presented in the text; it contradicts it blatantly, generating a semantic tension that forces the reader to reassess the proclaimed discourse (Booth, 1974, pp. 5-6). This irony stems from the sharp contrast between the transcendent, luminous semantic load of the word 'angels', given its connotations of absolute power, capacity for healing and giving and miracles on one hand, and the reality depicted by the text in which pain and suffering continue in front of the eyes of the nurses/angels without practical interception or rescue, on the other hand. The symbol thus turns from a promise of salvation into a witness to inefficacy, and irony becomes an instrument of exposure of a humane discourse that limits itself to names and signifiers only while abandoning practice and action. This transformation makes the title itself an instrument of protest rather than just a label, whereby the act of reproach is performed even before the reader proceeds to the poetic text. According to pragmatics, the title in such contexts performs an illocutionary function orienting readers towards taking a more critical ethical stance than silent negative sympathy (Senda & Sinohara, 2002). The title of the poem is thus not a marginal element in the structure of the poem but is indeed a semiotic and pragmatic gravity centre based on deliberate semantic deception, ethical paradox and tragic irony. Through this title, Tuqān successfully transforms the religious symbol from a sign of assurance into an instrument of indictment, hence exposing humane discourse that remains confined to speech and relinquishes action.

▪ **Mechanisms of semiotic reinforcement in the text**

The text reinforces the title's efficacy through a set of stylistic mechanisms which have a semiotic dimension, notably repetition.

• **Repetition**

Tuqān employs both semantic and sound repetition, being a central artistic device which contributes to the construction of the overall poetic image and consolidation of the symbolic significance. Repetition in this text serves as a conscious technique that boosts the aesthetic and emotional impact of the poem, focusing on the recurrence of certain key terms, notably the pronoun *hunnah* ('they/them' [fem.]) at the end of most lines, as in the following verses:

Line	فَق كَيْفَ كَانَ سُرُورَهُنَّ	تُنْبِيكَ أَجْنَحَةٌ تَصَفُّ...
Transliteration	<i>Tonbika ajnibatun tossaffiqu kaifa kaana sorurahunnah</i>	
Translation	They fly, once cool'd, back to their cradles Their wings beating their joy in ripples	
Line	وَإِذَا جَثْمُنَ بَرِيشَهُنَّ	وَيُفَرِّعِينَكَ عَيْنُكَ...
Line	سَ حِينَ يُقْبَلُ لَيْلَهُنَّ	وَتَخَالِهِنَّ بَلَا رُؤُوءٍ...
Transliteration	<i>Wa yaqerro 'ainoka 'abathahunna 'ethaa jathamma berishahunnah</i>	

	<i>Wa takhaalahunna bilaa ro'usin hina yoqbilu laylahunnah</i>
Translation	Your eyes delight in their playful repose When down they settle, wrapped in plumes they close You'd think them headless near the approaching night Hiding heads beneath wings so to sleep tight

The repeated rhyme scheme at the end of lines emphasises the feminine presence of doves and consolidates the rhyming dimension of the poem; it serves as a phonetic refrain that creates a delicate internal rhythm in the poem, in harmony with its ephemeral theme.

The word *hamā'em* (doves) – and its pronominal form '*hunnah*' – is also repeated several times in reference to the central figure of the poem, which turns symbolically into an embodiment of beauty, mercy and peace. It is to be noted that Tuqān's use of the morphological plural form *hamā'em* instead of *hamām* (doves) reflects sophisticated linguistic sensitivity: in Arabic morphology, irregular (*taksir*) plurals are traditionally classified into plurals of paucity and plurals of abundance, each reflecting specific semantic and rhetorical nuances. The former type refers to a limited group of 3-10 whereas the latter refers to bigger or unlimited numbers and is more commonly used in the language to refer to generic objects. Apparently, Tuqān uses irregular plural of paucity with intention for the following reasons:

1. To indicate limited quantity, shifting the image from an unlimited number or indefinite mass of doves to a small group which can be imagined easily, in harmony with the poetic context which tends toward depicting a precise image.
2. To maintain phonetic delicacy and rhythmic equilibrium, in harmony with the rigorous rhyme scheme, since indefinite mass or huge numbers tend to create the impression of being difficult to control.
3. To ensure figurative resonance and semantic harmony, considering that in Classical Arabic Poetry poets often select rhymes and rhythms that serve their emotional and symbolic intents. The plural or paucity may imply purity, gentleness and harmonious restraint, compared to plurals of abundance which suggest density and disorder.

Tuqān's use of the plural of paucity is a conscious stylistic and imagistic choice that reflects quantity, significance and rhythm, welding a poetic image that is more meaningful than another with the plural of abundance. The former plural, indeed, makes the number concrete and limited, and gives a classical aura for the text. This image is further substantiated by other lexical choices such as *alghadeer* (the creek), *alghusoon* (the boughs), and *arrawdh* (the gardens), in the following lines:

فإذا وقعن على الغدي... Once settled by the pool their flocks align In ordered ranks along water's line	ر ترتب أسرابهنه
ويطرن بعد الابترا... They fly, once cool'd, back to their cradles	د إلى الغصون مهودهنه
الروض كالمستشفيا... Gardens like hospitals cure the ills with a company so nice	ت دواؤها ايناسهنه

These words carefully depict the incubating environment of these creatures, infusing the scene with an atmosphere of clarity and softness and further emphasising the connection between doves and serenity and purity. The poet does not ignore the physical

characteristics of the doves – e.g. 'their feathers', 'wing', 'wings' – interweaving the concrete visual aspects with the lexical rhythm to paint a delicate picture. Besides, the repeated use of *hadeel* ('cooing') in different ways adds an acoustic dimension to the aesthetic experience, reflecting an emotional call that attracts the poet to the world of doves, and from there into the deeper symbolic meaning representing the benefactors-nurses.

At the level of meaning, the repeated use of the plural of paucity of the doves reinforces the symbolic image of peace, gentleness and tenderness, and recontextualises their behaviour, e.g. in flying, drinking, sleeping, and collective discipline, as in the following lines:

ويطرنَ بعد الأبترا...	د إلى الغصون مهودهنَّه
تُنبئك أجنحة تصف...	فق كيف كان سرورهنَّه
They fly, once cool'd, back to their cradles Their wings beating their joy in ripples	
ويقر عينك عبثهن...	ن إذا جئمن بريشهنَّه
وتخالهن بلا رؤو...	س حين يُقبلُ ليلهنَّه
أخفينها تحت الجنا...	ح ونمن ملء جفونهنَّه
Your eyes delight in their playful repose When down they settle, wrapped in plumes they close You'd think them headless near the approaching night Hiding heads beneath wings so to sleep tight	

All these images develop a symmetrical symbolism with the 'angels of mercy', i.e. the nurses, considering that their tenderness resembles that of birds looking after their fledglings, a scene that merges physical care with spiritual mercy.

The poet purposefully repeats these scenes and behaviours in a typically repetitive environment – boughs, gardens, creeks – thereby constructing a circular poetic narrative where symbolic elements synergise with linguistic elements to consolidate the central idea, which is: when beauty and mercy combine, their most clear embodiment manifests in the image of the doves, and in their symbolism extending to merciful women in real life.

- **Repetition as a semantic pressure mechanism insisting on the grand paradox**

Repetition is used as a mechanism of semantic pressure that persistently stresses the grand paradox in this text, i.e. the tension between the traditional image of doves as a symbol of beauty, peace and tenderness, and the silent, mostly unperceived reality bodied forth by the presence of the nurses-benefactors. The poet utilises this repetition as a means of suggestive pressure on the readers' minds, repetitively evoking the image of doves while flying, drinking, resting, cooing, etc.

يهبطن بعد الحوم م...	ل الوحي لا تدري بهنَّه
Descending after circling, they fall Like whispered revelation, known to none at all	
فإذا وقعن على الغدي...	ر ترتبت أسرابهنَّه
Once settled by the pool their flocks align In ordered ranks along water's line	
صقّين طول الضقتي...	ن تعرّجا بوقوفهنَّه
Two rows along the riverbanks	

Standing in harmonious ranks	
كُلُّ تَقَبَّلَ رَسْمَهَا	فِي الْمَاءِ سَاعَةً تُشْرِبُهُنَّ
Each kissing her own image on the sheen While by water they drink and preen	
يَطْفَنَنْ حَرَّ جِسْمِهِنَّ...	نَ بَغْمَسِهِنَّ صُدُورَهُنَّ
They quench the heat burning the shape By immersing the breast's cape	

Such repetition aims to overwhelm the reader with an affective state saturated with softness and tenderness. However, this recurring image does not only ornament the scene but also paves the way to an unexpected paradox at the end of the poem as the poet says:

مَهْلًا فَعَنْدِي فَارِقٌ	بَيْنَ الْحَمَامِ وَبَيْنَهُنَّ
Wait – there's a difference that should be plain Between the doves and those winning this gain	

At this very moment, repetition turns from being a tool of celebration into a tool of exposure, to distinguish between the signifier (doves) and the signified (benefactors/nurses). Doves are no longer enough to contain the profound humane meaning that nurses carry in terms of their care, sacrifice and dignified silence. In this way, repetition turns into an instrument of poetic insistence that prepares the reader for the vocative call of paradox ('Wait') where the poet emphasises that what seemed at first to be an equivalent resemblance is in fact a prelude to emphatic recognition of the superiority of real human aspect over the symbol itself. In conclusion, repetition in this poem serves as an instrument of semantic insistence to lead readers' consciousness towards a decisive turning point that deconstructs (not nullifies) the metaphor in order to reveal that reality is more profound than poetic imagery itself. That is why it is called here the 'grand paradox', considering the synergies of several subsidiary paradoxes that converge to create this decisive rupture.

- **Repetition as a tool of pragmatic awakening of the reader**

Tuqān uses precise repetition more as a tool of pragmatic awakening than as stylistic ornamentation or purely rhythmic device, in order to awaken readers' consciousness to resist readerly complicity with illusory or impressionistic discourse. Faced with a successive series of images of doves with their beauty, serenity, cooing, orderliness and tenderness, readers may slip into an illusion created by the symbolic comparison, and adopt the metaphor without resistance. With his acute awareness of discourse dimensions, Tuqān, however, does not permit this slipping movement to continue. He uses repetition as a tool for a more profound pragmatic end, i.e. awakening the reader from a slumber induced by aesthetic brilliance, and drawing attention to a symbol-related gap between metaphor and reality. It culminates at a moment of sudden emphatic declaration:

مَهْلًا فَعَنْدِي فَارِقٌ	بَيْنَ الْحَمَامِ وَبَيْنَهُنَّ
Wait – there's a difference that should be plain Between the doves and those winning this gain	

The abrupt, sharp correction, inserted in one line, does not only change the course of meaning but awakens the reader pragmatically to avoid falling for readerly passive identification and feel compelled to reassess all previous images retrospectively. Repetition here does not suggest similarity but rather paves the road to paradox. That is what makes

repetition a tool of exposure of the limited power of metaphor: it reveals that the beauty of doves may not be equivalent to the depth of nurses' humanity. Based on the above, the poet seems to exert implied resistance to the idea of aesthetic complicity which may goad the reader into adopting familiar metaphors without questioning, i.e. where doves may be considered 'sufficient' to represent mercy. But through cumulative repetition, followed by abrupt rupture, Tuqān sensitises and prevents the reader surrendering to the familiar, compelling the reader to go into a serious dialogue with the metaphor itself. It is a meticulous pragmatic function, deconstructing the poetic discourse when it borders into falsehood, and summoning the reader to interrogation instead of acquiescence. In this way, the poem acquires an ethical and communicative dimension that redefines poetry as a tool for awareness and insight.

• The verbal sentence

The verbal sentence appears as the dominant grammatical structure in the poem, serving not only a purely grammatical function but also as a mechanism for the construction of meaning and rhythm through its expressive and symbolic qualities. In this context, it operates as a tool to convey movement, evoke imagery and infuse a sense of internal dynamism that regulates the poet's relation with the topic addressed in the poem.

1. A tool of dynamic personification

In this text, the poetic discourse is built on a succession of verbs related to doves – e.g. *descend, fly, quench, circle, sleep, kiss, sway*:

وَيَمْلَأْنَ وَالْأَغْصَانَ مَا خَطَرَ النَّسِيمُ بِرَوْضِهِنَّ	They sway as branches bend when the breezes glide In harmony from side to side
فَإِذَا صَلَاهُنَّ الْهَجِي... رَ هَبْبِنَ نَحْوَ غَدِيرِ هُنَّ	When noon's fierce blaze upon their feathers lies They rise and hurry where the cool spring sighs
يَهْبِطْنَ بَعْدَ الْحَوْمِ مَث... لَ الْوَحْيَ لَا تَدْرِي بِهِنَّ	Descending after circling, they fall Like whispered revelation, known to none at all
فَإِذَا وَقَعْنَ عَلَى الْغَدِي... رَ تَرْتَبِثُ أَسْرَابِهِنَّ	Once settled by the pool their flocks align In ordered ranks along water's line
صَفْوَيْنَ طُولَ الصَّفْقَتِي... نَ تَعْرَجَا بَوَاقِفِهِنَّ	Two rows along the riverbanks Standing in harmonious ranks
كُلُّ تَقْبَلِ رَسْمَهَا فِي الْمَاءِ سَاعَةً شَرِبَهِنَّ	Each kissing her own image on the sheen While by water they drink and preen
يَطْفَنْنَ حَرًّا جَسُومَهُن... نَ بَغْمَسِهِنَّ صَدُورَهُنَّ	They quench the heat burning the shape By immersing the breast's cape
يَقَعُ الرَّشَاشُ إِذَا انْتَفَضَ... نَ لَأَلْنَا لِرُؤُوسِهِنَّ	When they shake, scatter'd drops shine Like strings of pearls on their heads fine
وَيَطْرُقْنَ بَعْدَ الْإِبْتِرَا... فَقِ كَيْفَ كَانَ سِرُورَهُنَّ	They fly, once cool'd, back to their cradles

Their wings beating their joy in ripples

These and other similar verbs impart a kinetic crescendo that builds on successive scenes permeated with vibrancy, vitality and softness, in complete harmony with the theme of mercy and tenderness. Thus, the doves transform from a still image into creatures able to perform tangible, observable and perceptible actions which impart symbolic personification on them and pave the way to later projections of the same attributes onto the nurses.

2. A tool of unconventional narrative sequencing

The verbal sentences here do not assume a conventional linear narrative function but instead fragment the poetic event into closely linked poetic kinetic flashes intended to reflect a kaleidoscopic view from multiple angles, condense imagery and build up suggestive meaning. Each verbal sentence leads to another without interruption, successively and interactively, evoking an image of beautiful women hand in hand in a circular motion around the creek, thus presenting a cohesive and vivacious system that enhances the harmony between the avian movement and the pulsation of life it symbolises.

3. A tool of emotional and connotative intensification

Most sentences start with a verb, imparting a direct and vital tone to the poem, moving the reader from stillness to action and from contemplation to participation. The poet does not describe doves as a static motif to be contemplated but instead to have the reader involved, as if witnessing their flight, sleep, cooing and caring. Hence, the reader is engaged in a lively emotional experience instead of mere description of the scene.

4. The verbal sentence vis-à-vis the nominal sentence

It is noted that the poet minimises nominal sentences in favour of verbal sentences, apparently in preference of kinetic movement over stillness, and metamorphosis over stasis. This stylistic choice enhances the implicit message of the poem: mercy is not a static attribute but instead a continuously regenerated act (Al-Kafawi, n.d., p. 408), manifested in bodily movement, gentle look, quiet service and tender practice, in a vivid emotional experience that conveys (rather than describes only) actions.

5. Effect of verbal sentences on rhythm and repetition

The verbal structure contributes into the creation of a throbbing internal rhythm that intersects with lexical repetition in the poem. Verbs remoulded in closely related morphological forms (or using feminine affixes, in a melodious recurrence of the collective suffix, *hunnab*, they/them [fem.]) produce a musical unity that goes in harmony with the unity of the poetic image. Indeed, the verbal structure in 'Angels of Mercy', is not merely a linguistic choice but rather a conscious poetic strategy employed by the poet to activate the picture, deepen the connotation, awaken the feelings, and engulf the reader with a soft symbolic movement similar to the act of mercy itself, as if to convey that this is language and this is how it should practice mercy as an action, not description.

• Event condensation and emotional rhythm acceleration

Event condensation and emotional rhythm acceleration come as two central aspects of the poem's structure which mould a condensed affective experience that does not depend on linear narration or slow contemplation, but instead on rapidly flashing succession and escalating emotional pressure that follows the images and overwhelms the reader without allowing for a pause for comprehension or relaxation.

Event condensation

The poet deliberately segments the scenes into small, condensed units, that follow each other rapidly, each presenting a specific moment of the doves' behaviour:

Descending to the creek	يهبطن نحو غدِير
They quench the heat burning the shape	يُطفئن حرَّ جِسمهنَّ
Once settled by the pool	يقعن على الغدير
Hiding heads beneath wings so to sleep tight	ينمن ملء جفونهنَّ
Your eyes delight in their playful repose	وَيُقر عينك عبثهن
Each kissing her own image on the sheen	تُقبل رسمها في الماء

These and other similar images take place in incessant succession, without a pause, reflecting a type of condensation that is not limited to kinetic events but also includes the inherent emotional impact. Each image generates an immediate sensation, e.g. calmness, tenderness, intimacy, warmth, etc., in a series of feelings that keep the reader in a state of continuous affective engagement.

Emotional rhythm acceleration

The poet invests in the rhythm of the verbal sentence, the repetition of the feminine pronoun *hunnah* (they/them [fem.]), and the cumulative succession of plural verb forms in order to generate a rapid internal rhythm in the poem such that the reader has no opportunity to take a breath. The scene is not narrated slowly but is instead constructed out of successive flash images (like a camera in a fast-paced video). The poem does not use a traditional narrative arc (with beginning, climax and end) but instead presents a series of juxtaposing scenes, propelling the emotional response to escalate in a cumulative and accelerating pace at the same time.

Interaction between movement and image

In this poem, the poetic image is inseparable from the continuous movement, which is not only a physical movement but also an emotional one. Each movement of the doves, each action they do, stirs emotional vibrations in the reader. This reciprocal relationship between small-scale events and big-scale emotional echo is the main reason behind the accelerated emotional rhythm in the text.

Preparation for the final paradox

This emotional acceleration and visual condensation are utilised as a prelude to what can be called 'semantic shock' at the end of the poem, when the poet abruptly interrupts the series of delicate images by saying:

مهلأ فعندي فارق	بين الحمام وبينهته
Wait – there's a difference I need to make plain	Between the doves and those winning this gain

At this very moment, the flow of images stops, and the reader is encountered with a sudden moment of cessation, shocking silence and reflection, propelling a recognition that all the previous images (no matter how beautiful they were) are not enough. As a result, the emotional intensity appears to serve as a prelude to a coming rupture that shatters the illusion of metaphors and reinstates human reality (represented by the benefactors/nurses) in place. It is noticed that Tuqān here refrains from using the term *hamā'em* (plural of paucity for doves), which has hitherto constituted the central recurring motif in the poem's structure, using instead the word *hamām* (generic term for doves). This significant change is deliberately made for semantic purposes, not just for stylistic variation only. The former – used hitherto in the poem – represents a symbolic image charged with tenderness and

care, referring to the nurses. The latter, however, stands for the generic image of doves which, taken as a symbol, traditionally represent peace and whiteness. The poet's differentiation is based on that, aiming to deconstruct the prevalent established metaphor to give rise to a new sharp difference of significance between the habitual symbol and the special poetic experience. This transformation is further consolidated by the poem's rhythm and rhyme scheme, as the former sounds more harmonious with the structure of the lines, in addition to its role in supporting the text's argument of establishing a real distinction between the nurses and any familiar symbol. Therefore, the events condensation and emotional rhythm acceleration not only serve the aesthetic aspect of the text, they also have a strategic role in the poem by reshaping the readers' consciousness and forcing them to interact mentally and emotionally with the affective experience being a lively act rather than merely a lexical description.

- **Display of the bloody act vs. absence of the act of mercy**

The text operates on a subtle implied duality that foregrounds the bloody act in the backdrop while also shyly presenting the act of mercy. Although not overtly declared, this duality smartly infiltrates through the poem's internal rhythm, through the said and the unsaid, and through the present and the absent.

- 1. Deliberate absence of the bloody act, serving as a silent backdrop**

The poet never explicitly mentions illness, wounds or blood but instead constructs a world of caregiving, quietude, calmness and tenderness, a world woven by doves through their nature, and in which nurses exercise a human presence based on similar nature. This construction is not a negation of pain and suffering, but rather an implicit deconstruction thereof, using the binary opposition. Each soft act, serene image and calm presence in the scene entails the existence of a painful reality and a repressed groan, absent in the present and present in absence.

- 2. Absent and absented bodies**

In this poem, illness is presented through displaced rather than declared meaning, through absence rather than focused present. This poem is almost devoid of description of the afflicted body, which is erased and replaced with an angelic external scene, so merciful and so kind (nurses, doves, whiteness). The bodies absented in this text are many, starting with the afflicted body, the poet himself who has forgotten his emaciated body and celebrated the nurses' caregiving act – so dumbfounded by the act that he has forgotten his own pain, as though the pain was erased to highlight the symbol/sign. The second absented body is the nurse's female body: women are associated with corporeal beauty and attractiveness, but the poet here ignores women's physical beauty and celebrates her humane act. All bodies are absented for the sake of accentuating the act itself and humanity, as if they were souls without bodies. The patient's body mattered not to the patient, nor did the nurse's body.

- 3. Displacing the act's centre toward the merciful margin**

The poet deliberately tends to highlight acts of mercy – e.g. drinking water, soft flying, safe sleeping, touching water, exchanging looks. These acts do not cause death, but rather preserve life, relieve pain and heal wounds. This insistence on merciful acts highlights the contrast with probable reality which the reader does not see but feels: the scenes of pain, loss, bleeding and breakdown.

- 4. Reader's complicity with beauty until the epiphany**

Absorbed by the beauty of the doves, the reader gets distracted from observing the wound, until the poet explicitly declares the distinction between doves and nurses. At this moment the reader suddenly realises that the images of beauty were only a temporary veil, or symbolic objective correlative, to reflect a harsh reality where nurses work. Thus, the act

of mercy does not come out of the blue, but is rather a reaction to the act of feeling pain, which is verbally absented but is very much there.

5. The function of silence in a poetic counter-narrative

Being silent about the scenes of pain, wounds and surgeries doesn't mean they do not exist, but rather turns them into a strained background that transforms every scene of mercy into soft resistance to an act of violence. The nurses are not sitting idle; they are in a hidden encounter with disease and pain. The poetic act comes to show their calmness as a soft power that mitigates the chaos of loss and cries. Therefore, the poet does not appear to offer neutral scenes of beauty but instead assesses a poetic argument between the absented act of illness and the present act of mercy, so that the poem becomes in its core a celebration of the act of mitigation, a reminder of the unsaid, and a sculpture of beauty inside the heart of tragedy.

• Structural and rhythmic analysis as an approach to the semiotics of the sign in 'Angels of Mercy'

The structural and rhythmic analysis of poetic discourse is a basic systematic method to unravel the deep semantic layers since structure is not limited to the formal organization of the text but in fact partakes in the production and orientation of meaning. Therefore, 'Angels of Mercy' provides a fertile soil for the application of the semiotics of sign, considering the symbolic signs it contains, which reveal contradictory significance, taking into account the deep-rooted collective and religious imagination. The poem even reformulates these signs using a compressed rhythmic and contrastive structure.

- Central metaphor and the construction of meaning

Metaphor in modern Arabic poetry does not serve only as a stylistic tool aimed at clarification and ornamentation; indeed, in some texts, it goes far beyond to serve a much deeper function, yielding a new value system through which grand human concepts are remoulded. In this context, 'Angels of Mercy' is a typical example of how metaphor is shifted from its traditional aesthetic dimension to another ethical-normative dimension that consolidates the value of mercy as a semantic centre-point for the text (Shabānah, 2011, p. 52).

The poem revolves around an extended metaphor in which the natural elements intersect with the human dimension: nurses are likened to white doves, a metaphor that exceeds the formal resemblance to evoke a dense symbolic network. In cultural imagination, the dove is a symbol of peace, gentleness and purity; these values are not evoked for aesthetic descriptive purposes, but rather as a normative framework to redefine the act of caregiving. At this level, the metaphor does not only convey a sensory image but rather produces an implicit judgment. Just as the dove signifies peace, caregiving is presented here as a sublime ethical act worthy of appreciation and glorification. In this way, the metaphor turns from being a stylistic device into an instrument of value codification that plays a foundational role in constructing the poetic discourse (Al-Jurjani, 2004; Fadhal, 1998). Moreover, the rhythmic structure of the poem creates internal tension due to the acceleration of poetic lines, the density of verbs and the rapid sequence of highly emotional images. As discussed earlier, this rhythmic structure serves not only as a purely musical element but also transforms into a semantic tool that contributes to the exposure of the paradox lurking beneath what is expected from 'mercy' and what actually materialises in the text. Shabānah (2015, pp. 88-90) indicates that this poem operates on 'rhythmic engineering', where the rhythmic movement synergises with poetic imagery to construct the 'arc-metaphor' that extends all over the text; a metaphor that does not simply reveals its tool, but is rather built on parallelism, repetition and contrast. This rhythmic structure provides an important approach to understanding how sign works in the poem; it prepares the reader to receive

the paradoxical meaning not as a deviation but rather as the core of discourse. Shabana (2015, pp. 85-102) also maintains that these mechanisms contribute to the construction of the 'arc-metaphor' where imagery, rhythm and meaning coalesce to produce a poetic discourse with powerful argument.

Femininity of caregiving between symbol and social role

The poem reconfigures the image of femininity outside the conventional binary of amorous love and motherhood by presenting nurses as social benefactors practicing caregiving in an organised public space. Femininity here is not an object of attractiveness and beautification, but rather an active human energy dedicated to service and care for others. This shift reflects an early modernist consciousness that transforms femininity from private sphere to public sphere, and from aesthetic sign to social role. In this way, the poem sheds off the conventional representations of femininity and adopts an ethical conceptualization that links beauty to action and responsibility.

- The symbolism of doves and mercy in relation to social imagination

The symbolism of 'doves' and 'mercy' are invoked in this poem from a shared semantic field deeply rooted in social and religious imagination. Doves conventionally symbolise peace, purity and serenity whereas mercy is associated with tenderness, compassion and rescue. Nonetheless, this poem does not reproduce these signs in their traditional sense but instead deconstructs and recharges them semantically. In the context of this text, these signs do not perform their expected positive function; they instead turn into silent signs, placed in a space typically associated with violence and blood, resulting in a sharp paradox between the sign and its cultural reference. This displacement refers to what semioticians call the dissociation of sign with its axiological referent, where the signifier remains but is emptied of its ethical substance (Barthes, 1986, pp. 41-43). As such, doves and mercy become a part of an indictment discourse rather than a consolation discourse, and the sign turns from a tool of reassurance to an instrument of exposure of the falsity of a human discourse which remains limited to symbol without real action.

The structural and rhythmic reading of 'Angels of Mercy' provides an effective methodological approach to the application of semiotics of the sign. It exposes how the signs operate in the text, and how contradictory the relations are between signifier and signified by deconstructing the symbolism of doves and mercy, highlighting the role of rhythm in directing meaning. It becomes obvious that the poem does not merely depict tragedy but seeks to expose the ethical malfunctions in the social imagination, as sign turns from being a promise of deliverance to a witness to indictment.

Rhythm and semantic serenity

In this text, rhythm flows with softness and dulcetness, in harmony with the atmosphere of mercy and serenity, and away from tension and clamour, reinforcing the emotional unity of the poem and invoking calmness. The poem's music stands as one of the deepest keys to expressive experience being a soft rhythmic structure that goes in parallel with the theme of mercy and serenity and embodies by itself a melody of compassion and tenderness which both constitute the core of this poem. The poem's meter, feet and rhyme scheme all display a precise harmony with the semantic function of the poem.

- Meter and feet

In the Arabic poetic metric paradigm, this poem is composed in the *majzu' al-kamil* (partly complete) meter, which is a truncated form of the *al-kamil* (complete) meter, with a metrical pattern of: mutafaa'lun / mutafaa'ilun

in each hemistich, providing the poem with a soft, steady and balanced internal rhythmic pulse. It even echoes the images of flying, cooing, drinking, sleeping, and caring. The meter avoids sharp or fragmented beats, flowing like water or fluttering like wings – images within

the text itself. The repetition of the same foot without conspicuous change imparts an atmosphere of deliberate, soft monotony that produces no boredom but rather induces an emotional state overwhelming the recipient in the same recurring mercy that constitutes the actions of the doves and nurses.

- Rhyme, geminated *nūn*, and nasal resonance

Throughout the poem, the poet utilises a unified rhyme scheme ending in a geminated *nūn* followed by the feminine plural suffix '-*bunnab*'. This rhyme scheme is typically rare, but it has an explicit feminine touch, enhancing the presence of the doves being a feminine symbol. Also, the poet makes use of geminated *nūn* and nasal resonance (*ghunnab*) to serve as sonorant internal rhythm. This musical feature of the poem relies on the repetition of the geminated *nūn* through prolonged nasal resonance, followed by the feminine suffix '-h', creating a series of softly euphonious, extended sounds, especially during the pauses of at the end of articulating the suffix '-*bunnab*'. This poem's rhyme scheme has, indeed, a phono-semantic function that goes beyond the conventional rhythmic dimension to the level of precise psychological, symbolic formation. It brings about a recurring soft auditory effect, almost like a sigh or a distant bird call, creating a state of subdued auditory harmony reminiscent of the image of the 'merciful femininity', which is the poem's central motif. This effect is further enhanced by the deep auditory intertextuality between the tune of rhyme scheme and the lexical terms of tenderness in the text, consolidating the function of the rhyme as a sonic extension of the feminine significance. Besides, the deliberate monotony in this rhyme contributes to establishing an internal tone designed purposefully by the poet to inject emotional tranquillity into the reader, hence turning the text reception into an affective experience based on calm and gradual engagement rather than tension or emotional escalation. In addition, the *ghunnab* in the geminated *nūn* imparts warmth to the tone, echoing gentle sighs or soft cooing of doves. As such, the rhyme does not only play a prosodic role but also functions as an active auditory element in shaping the general atmosphere of mercy.

Therefore, the rhyme scheme of 'Angels of Mercy' is not only a musical framework but rather an expressive system in which the synergy between the truncated prosodic *al-kamil* meter (with its calm beats) and the rhyme (saturated with the nasal resonance and the *nūn*) creates an auditory experience that conveys mercy not only as a semantic concept but also as a sound scheme, a soft linguistic undulation that is parallel with the tenderness depicted in the poem.

- Prosodic enjambment

Tuqān employs prosodic enjambment (between hemistiches) as a rhythmic and aesthetic device to enrich the text formally and semantically (Kishk, 2016), and activate the function of mercy through a semi-circular rhythm similar to nurses' repetitive, tender movements around patients. Enjambment here is not a mere formal fragmentation of word order but rather a medium for constructing a fluid dynamic image that imitates the compassionate circular movement around the patient, with its calmness and lightness, free of noise and disturbance, as in the following lines:

وَيَمْلَأْنَ وَالْأَغْصَانَ مَا...	خَطَرَ النَسِيمُ بَرُوضَهُنَّ
They sway as branches bend when the breezes glide In harmony from side to side	
يَهْبِطْنَ بَعْدَ الْحَوْمِ مَث...	لِالْوَحْيِ لَا تَدْرِي بِهِنَّ
Descending after circling, they fall Like whispered revelation, known to none at all	

In these lines, the poet utilises enjambment to ensure sonic fluidity and unbreakable semantic flow, resulting in a continuous circular rhythm, like the gentle circular movement of doves (the symbol for nurses) in gardens or creeks (or around patients here), unnoticed by people around. This circular movement imbues the lines with a lyrical and supple touch through extending and prolonging the melodic contours (Al-Mala'ekah, n.d., 112).

Enjambment as a symbolic kinetic image

Semantically, enjambment quietly reproduces a constant kinetic image; words do not stand still, but instead slide smoothly from the end of first hemistich to the beginning of the next in the same verse, resembling nurses' ceaseless yet gentle movement while caring for patients. They keep coming and going in circular movements to exercise care and vigilance. These loops turn the poem's structure from linear into a soft, rhythmic and circular one, containing patients and their pains with unending mercy.

The rhythm of mercy through enjambment

Enjambment, therefore, becomes more than just a prosodic technique; it turns into a rhythmic body for the act of mercy itself. The verse does not stop at its end; just as a nurse does not pause during work. This uninterrupted rhythm creates a sense of harmony and continuity, reinforcing the poem's general atmosphere – quiet, tender, uninterrupted and compassionate mercy. In this sense, enjambment in this poem is not used merely for formal purposes but rather as a structural instrument that embodies mercy in motion, imitating nurses' benevolent circular movements around patients. It is the rhythm of mercy itself in a prosodic form. Nurses keep moving from one patient to another, only to return to the first patient for more care, in a constant movement throughout their workday.

Moving from description to the ethical norm

The poem does only describe or praise nurses but in fact enables the reader to change from a mere observer to an assessor of how mercy becomes a norm to measuring humanitarian action. The poetic image does not remain confined to emotional response but instead seeks to generalise the norm/value, turning care into an example to emulate rather than a temporary condition linked only to illness. This transformation displays an early modernist consciousness in which the poetic value hierarchy is reordered: heroism is no longer confined to power or conflict but refers to the calm act of looking after the other. Finally, the poem does not celebrate nurses as specific individuals but rather as an embodiment of a universal human value.

Mercy as a discursive structure

In this poem, mercy is constructed as a comprehensive discursive structure that combines image, lexicon and rhythm, creating an indirect ethical discourse. The text nowhere contains explicit ethical discourse or a preaching tone; it leaves the persuasive task to the image, where both the aesthetic and ethical sides are woven together (Fadhal, 1995). The modernist aspect of this discourse lies in the fact that it does not separate the value from artistic embodiment, but rather turns beauty into a means for generating ethics instead of simply serving as a veneer for ethics. In this way, the poem contributes to establishing a new conceptualization of the function of poetry, based on matching human sensibility with aesthetic construction, far from direct moralization or overt statements. The metaphor in 'Angels of Mercy' stems from the poet's ability not only to employ the image for aesthetic purposes but also to transform it into a tool for the remoulding of human values, notably mercy. Therefore, the poem can be construed as a modernist ethical discourse in which poetry moves away from glorifying clamorous heroism to celebrating the quiet act of caregiving.

From beauty to action

Nurses here are not presented as objects of visual contemplation or purely aesthetic elements but rather evoke an image tied to action, movement and influence on others. The resemblance to white doves does not only refer to corporeal softness and colour purity but also to a specific mode of behaviour featured by gentleness, proximity and reassurance. Thus, femininity moves on from static description to the caregiving act in which the ethical value is inseparable from the aesthetic representation (Tronto, 1993, pp. 101-104). This transformation reflects a new poetic consciousness that sees femininity as an active human energy, not a symbol of decoration and insinuation. The poem celebrates the beauty of the nurses not in isolation with their sole, turns beauty into an inherent aspect of the humane act they perform.

Beauty beyond the love-motherhood dichotomy

Many representations of femininity in traditional and early modern Arabic poetry remained confined to the binary of love and motherhood, where a woman is seen either as an object of romantic desire or a symbol of unconditional emotional domestic giving. 'Angels of Mercy', however, proposes a third paradigm in which femininity is constructed on the basis of an organised social role, inside an institutional space (the medical care space). Here, the nurse is not a lover, nor a mother, but a social actor practicing caregiving as a human and professional vocation. This representation reflects a significant semantic transformation, as femininity is shifted from private sphere to the public domain, from abstract emotion to organised profession, which gives the poem a distinctly modernist dimension (Tronto, 1993, pp. 103-105). An analysis of the image of nurses in the poem shows that the poet reconfigures femininity as a caregiving agency based on its social role, rather than a merely aesthetic or emotional symbol.

Caregiving as a modern social value

Caregiving here transcends the individual dimension and is presented as a social value based on human relationships. The act of caregiving does not emanate from personal relations or kinship bonds but rather from a general human sense of responsibility towards relieving pain and addressing weakness. In this context, the image of nurses perpetuates a new ethical conceptualization based on service, care and soft presence, rather than confrontational heroism. It is observed that the poem implicitly integrates this conceptualization in its aesthetic fabric, presenting care as a natural practice rather than an exceptional sacrifice, which is an aspect that aligns with modernist ethical thought (Al-Ghathami, 2006), as care ethics has become a basic approach to understanding human action.

Equilibrium between aesthetic symbolism and social agency

The poem successfully strikes balance between aesthetic symbolism and social agency. The image does not marginalise the role, and the role does not turn into a didactic discourse. The metaphor of doves retains its aesthetic quality, yet it does not undo the practical dimension of care, but rather imparts it with a symbolic dimension that uplifts its human value. This balance is one of the clearest aspects of the maturity of Tuqān's poetic experience, revealing a striking ability to merge ethical aesthetics and social role in a single, cohesive structure without being artificial or didactic (Abbas, 1978).

Linguistic economy and semantic serenity

Linguistic economy in this poem is not merely a formal choice but rather a structural component that contributes to the production of semantic serenity underlying the ethical discourse of the text. Through this economy, language integrates with image and value in order to produce a poem that exercises mercy stylistically and celebrates it semantically. If 'Angels of Mercy' has, through its metaphorical structure and the image of the nurses, established an ethical discourse based on mercy and care, the discourse cannot be complete without discussing the linguistic mechanisms that produce and maintain it. These

mechanisms adopt a deliberate linguistic economy that deflects expressive tension and contributes into generating semantic serenity consistent with the nature of the care action celebrated in this poem.

- **Linguistic economy: concept and semantic function**

Linguistic economy refers to reduction of non-essential expressive components and reliance on minimal structures and words which can produce highly dense meaning. It is an index of a stylistic awareness that gives priority to effect over rhetorical accumulation. In this poem, it is manifest as an aesthetic choice that serves the ethical function of the text (Bakkār, 2004). The poem avoids digression, complex metaphors and layered images, and instead adopts clear images, direct grammatical structures and a limited, yet highly charged lexicon, allowing ethical meaning to manifest without linguistic obstructions. The poetic discourse in this poem adopts a deliberate linguistic economy that crystallises in simple structures, serene lexemes and regular rhythm, highlighting an adept aesthetic choice that serves the ethical function of the text. This linguistic economy contributes into generating semantic serenity that is part and parcel of the poem's meaning, and not merely an associated psychological side-effect. Language itself exercises mercy here by avoiding verbal violence and maintaining linguistic economy, turning the style of the poem into an extension of the caregiving act itself.

- **Serene lexicon and sentence structure**

The poetic lexicon on the poem is characterised by calmness and softness. Words of reassurance, whiteness and peace prevail, compared to semi-total absence of words of violence and confrontation. This lexicon goes in parallel with the short or medium-length sentences, clear in structure and free of syntactic complexity or rhetorical circumlocution. Such lexical and syntactic choice brings about a state of semantic stability that allows the reader to receive the text in tranquillity, without tension. In this way, language becomes an extension of the caregiving action depicted in the poem; it does not burden the reader, nor cause tension, but instead gives rise to quiet contemplation (Abbaas, 1978).

- **Rhythmic regularity as a semantic instrument**

The poem's rhythm is not only a musical device but has a semantic function directly linked to the poem's ethical discourse. The rhythmic regularity, moderate metrical feet, and deliberate lack of sharp or sudden transitions are all elements that contribute to inducing a sense of harmony and reassurance. Some stylistic studies have drawn attention to the notion that calm and harmonious metrical beat can guide reader's affective response, turning beat into a carrier of meaning instead of a mere framework thereof (Shabānah, 2011). In this poem, beat integrates with image and lexicon to produce coherent semantic serenity that reinforces and inculcates the value of mercy into reader's consciousness.

- **Serenity as a produced meaning**

Serenity in this poem does not manifest as an accidental psychological effect but is rather constructed as a meaning produced through the synergies of lexical and rhetorical elements. Linguistic economy, rhythmic calmness and simplicity of imagery all take part in transforming serenity into a semantic value per se. Such construction reflects exquisite poetic consciousness that transforms language into an instrument of emotional and ethical refinement, rather than a means of expression only. The poem does not speak about mercy explicitly, but rather practices it linguistically through avoidance of verbal violence and encouragement of calm suggestiveness, which is consistent with modernist concepts of the function of poetry being a discourse that reconfigures human sensibility (Greimas, 1983, pp. 110-112).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that 'Angels of Mercy' stands as an early model of modern Arabic poetry's integration of aesthetics and ethics in a single mould. Mercy transforms from an emotional reaction into a normative value developed within the poetic structure itself. This study sought to reread the poem in such a way that transcends conventional descriptive or rhetorical reception, with an end to question the poem's value-based structure and aesthetic mechanisms, being a text that seeks to establish a modernist ethical discourse in modern Arabic poetry. The central premise of this study is that the poem does not only bring out a descriptive representation of mercy but also produces mercy as a normative value through the synergies of metaphor, femininity representations and linguistic economy.

At first, the study showed that the central metaphor of the poem is not only meant to serve a decorative function but instead turns into a normative mechanism that redefines humanitarian action. Mercy turns from being an emotional reaction into a value intrinsic to the text itself. Doves and whiteness are not only attributed to abstract beauty but rather become an ethical model that can be used to measure human behaviour, reflecting a shift in the poetic value system hierarchy from clamorous heroism to a calm act of caregiving. Then, the study demonstrated how the image of nurses represents a reconfiguration of femininity in Arabic poetry. Femininity here is constructed as a social agency based on caregiving, rather than a sign of romantic desire or domestic affection. Such representation allowed the poem to move femininity from the private sphere to the public domain, linking beauty to action and sign to social role, in a gesture of early modernist consciousness that sees caregiving as an organised human practice.

Finally, the study proved that linguistic economy and rhythmic calmness are not merely rhetorical aspects but rather semantic devices that contribute to the production of semantic serenity being a producer of meaning in the text. The poem, indeed, practices mercy linguistically by reducing expressive tension and adopting structural simplicity and rhythmic regularity, turning language itself into an extension of the act of caregiving depicted by the poem.

Through these three dimensions, the study concludes that Tuqān's 'Angels of Mercy' is an early example of the integration of aesthetics and ethics in modernist Arabic poetry, where value is not simply displayed as an abstract idea or didactic message, but is rather interwoven in the textual structure of the text. Therefore, the significance of this poem does not merely hinge on its overall emotional and humanitarian dimensions but also on its ability to reconfigure poetic sensibility and broaden the function of poetry to become a domain to produce (rather than describe) values.

The key findings of the study include the following:

1. The study has demonstrated that the central metaphor in the poem transcends its conventional rhetorical role to serve a normative ethical role that redefines mercy as a central value in the poetic discourse.
2. The study has offered a new representation of femininity, based on care and social agency, and away from the dichotomy of romantic love and motherhood characteristic of many portrayals of women in Arabic poetry.
3. Linguistic economy and rhythmic calmness have proved to induce semantic serenity that is part of the overall meaning rather than merely an associated psychological effect on the recipient.
4. The poem proves an early shift in the poetic value system in Arabic, deviating from the glorification of confrontational heroism to celebrating the human act of caregiving as a form of ethical modernism.

The recommendations of the study include the following:

1. Expand the study of care ethics in modern Arabic poetry, linking it to the transformations in aesthetic and social values instead of limiting it to emotional or rhetorical analysis.
2. Reconsider femininity representations in Arabic poetry from the perspective of agency and role instead of only the perspective of beauty. This will open new critical avenues in literary gender studies.
3. Benefit from the linguistic economy approach in the analysis of other texts, applying it as a method to understanding the relationship between language and ethical effect in poetry.
4. Conduct comparative studies between this poem and other modern Arabic poems that deal with the themes of illness and care, with an aim to highlight the development of this discourse in Arabic context.
5. Expand studies on ethics of care in modern Arabic poetry, re-reading the representations of femininity from the perspective of social role and paying attention to linguistic economy as an approach to the assessment of poetic values.

This poem is a great text, and still has many gaps waiting for someone to decipher, including analysis of ethics of care through feminist lenses and relevant modern theories. Also, did Tuqān depict the nurse image as a stereotype of the sacrificing woman, or give her a 'cognitive authority' and sovereignty in the text? Does the deconstruction of the 'angelic' discourse elevate women or is it only a stereotype that limits her role to emotional labour (comparing that to the prevalent contemporary patriarchal discourse)? How does poetic vision anticipate medical ethics, and how does Tuqān depict the hierarchical (yet compassionate) nurse-patient relationship as an example of power relations and human weakness – with 'weak' woman as powerful vis-à-vis 'dominant' male as weak, vulnerable and in need of help? Also, away from praising the nurses, the poem can be studied from the perspective of the 'semiotics of place' (hospital/clinic) and its relation to the body. How does Tuqān reshape the image of 'hospital', from a place of pain and death into a poetic space brimful of life? Focus can be placed on place geometrics and human corporeal interaction with 'white' clothes, whispering and motion in the poem, and how white colour has turned from association with death to a colour symbolizing rejuvenation.

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