

## Feminist Stylistics and Some Sociolinguistic Features in *Trans-Canada*

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### Abstract

The concept of feminist stylistics or post-feminist text analysis addresses the analysis of the text in a manner that includes not only the text and its author but also the social stereotypes embedded in it, historical events related to it and its relationship to other writings (Mills, 1992). Such feminist stylistics perspective gives the analysis of a text new dimensions to work on especially if it is written by a female writer who lived and experienced both the eastern and western cultures. Such traits may be found in Samah Sadik's *Trans-Canada* (2014), which introduces a narrative with numerous feminist stylistic markers and a sophisticated level of discourse tracing the life of a female protagonist both in a patriarchal culture and after migrating to North America. The text is also overloaded with feminine experiences that represent all types of feminist ideologies that reflect women suffering in all social strata and countries. The following discussion starts by studying the novel utilizing Mills' (1992) feminist stylistics text analysis with a particular focus on four themes: feminist and post-feminist beliefs, nakedness and sexuality, patriarchy, and metaphor. In the second section, we shall follow the protagonist's and other characters' linguistic development in terms of dialect and language choices, as well as their experiences of linguistic diaspora following migration.

Keywords: feminist stylistics, gendered language in narrative, patriarchy, dialects, diaspora, sociolinguistics

### الملخص العربي

تهدف الدراسة إلى التحقق من الأدوات الأسلوبية النسوية المستخدمة في رواية "ترانس كندا" للكاتبة سماح صادق و التي عاشت في بيئتين متباينتين هما مصر وكندا كما فعلت بطلة روايتها "إيمان". وتتبع الدراسة استخدام الكاتبة للعديد من الأدوات الأسلوبية النسوية بحرفية عالية تبرز وعي الكاتبة بالمعايير الثقافية والاجتماعية التي تعكسها اللهجات واللغات المختلفة التي استخدمتها في رسم شخصيات روايتها. وتركز الدراسة في الجزء الأول على تحليل أربعة أدوات أسلوبية نسوية وهي: وجود مفاهيم نسوية ومابعد نسوية وحرية التعري وممارسة العلاقات غير المشروعة و المجتمع الذكوري واستخدام الإستعارة في ترسيخ مفاهيم معاناة المرأة. وتستخدم الكاتبة هذه الأدوات في رسم العديد من الشخصيات النسائية التي تمثل فئات مختلفة من النساء واللاتي تنوع الأمهن على اختلاف خلفياتهن الثقافية والاجتماعية. كما تقدم الدراسة في جزئها الثاني تحليلاً للتطور اللغوي لبطلة الرواية وبعض الشخصيات الأخرى وكيف تلعب اللغات واللهجات في المجتمع بل و في المهجر دوراً كبيراً في تمييز الطبقات الاجتماعية والهوية الثقافية المرتبطة بالتمييز.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Feminism and Post-feminism

The long history of the feminist movement, and through its different waves, an underlying concept of women liberation was the mainstream (Mills, 1995). Seen from a new perspective it could be claimed that all waves of feminism were rooted in the realization of social, cultural, and political injustice and discrimination against women (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003). However, differences between waves lie in the natures of the historical, social and cultural environment of one or the other (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003). Mills (1995) added that most feminists would tend to believe that societies discriminate against women based on gender and that men are likely to benefit from this discrimination; therefore, they sustain systems that enforce these practices. Some men may suffer from or not benefit from this social arrangement, but the majority of men and women do realize the constraints and opportunities forced on them as "gendered beings" (Mills, 1995, p.3). Furthermore, post-feminism which emerged in the 1990s is more related to increasing the gained rights of women like sexual freedom, economic independence and the ability to make a reproductive choice (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003). The journey of the protagonist in *Trans-Canada* is a reenactment of post-feminist beliefs as will be discussed later. Mihaila and Mateescu (2017) pointed out that "Post-feminism frequently operates as a way of recording and determining the continuity of option quandaries for women" (Mihaila & Mateescu, 2017, p.225).

### 1.2 Feminist stylistics

Feminist stylistics text analysis should be expanded to include not only the text and its author, but also the history related to it, and its relationship to other texts (Mills, 1992). This analysis is to be done in a more contextualized form where the text is not simply a representation of a woman in a sexist way but rather a reflection of several socio-cultural and several other factors (Mills, 1992). Therefore, analyzing the text "... is the negotiation of textual elements and codes and forces outside the text which influence both the way that the text is constructed and the way we decipher what is written" (Mills, 1995, p.123).

Common features that are usually analyzed by post-feminist stylistics include the existence of language related to themes such as patriarchy, intersectionality, sex positivity, sexual harassment, abortion, and above all love (Mills, 1997) However, not all post-feminist heroines are victims; some are featured as strong independent women who take

responsibility for improving their lives, and others may go into combat to save their people, such as Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*, or to save humanity, like Buffy in *Buffy the vampire slayer* (Kirby, 2015). However, ordinary women who strive in life within the hardships of social restrictions appear more commonly. It is worth noting that while early stylistic analysis of feminist literature was mainly concerned with the binary male-female linguistic distinction and the related stereotypical use of gendered language and power, post-feminist analysis is more into reinterpreting the gendered language uses within a framework of social roles (Jones, 2016).

One major theme that plays a pivotal role in the analysis and is reflected in the language of post-feminist writers is patriarchy. According to Hooks (2004), Patriarchy is a political and social system based on the belief that males are naturally powerful and have the right to dominate, rule, and preserve that supremacy via different types of physical and psychological violence. Before the popular usage of the term patriarchy, early feminists referred to the same issue as male chauvinism and sexism. One concept that is closely related to patriarchy is intersectionality in the sense that all women from all classes, colours, and ethnicities are suffering from a form of oppression (Hooks, 2000). Patriarchal practices usually assign language features and pragmatic functions for female language that reflects their submissive nature and weaknesses. Moreover, Lakoff (1986) explained that sexism in language reflects sexism within a society and is a symptom rather than a cause.

Metaphors are often used in postfeminist literature; in fact, most female authors share several recurring metaphors, such as the metaphor of birds and flying as symbols of freedom and liberation (Mills, 1995). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explained that cognitively a metaphor is a fundamental element in making thoughts as they represent some of the basic building blocks of creative thinking. They also added that in the creation of metaphors the linguistic functions used are usually drawn from the bulk of stereotypical associations of the lexis used in the metaphor with certain knowledge, feelings, and thoughts that are shared in a certain culture (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Thus, a conceptual metaphor that does not represent a completely new figurative comparison but rather “instead represents familiar linguistic expressions of culturally shared conceptual models” is very common in use (Steen, 2013, p. 319).

### 1.3 Sociolinguistic features of language, dialects, and diaspora

Ufot (2012) explained that "feminist statisticians highlight systematically the self-conscious attempts by female writers to modify traditional modes of language use which is done by identifying the dialectical features as well as the alternative forms of expression in such texts" (Ufot, 2012, p.2462). Such awareness helps the writer in utilizing a variety of repertoires in portraying sociocultural variation. For example, because some dialects and vernaculars are stigmatized as belonging to a lower socioeconomic class or a specific ethnic group, a person's choice of language and dialect is sometimes an intentional process. (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Chambers & Trudgill, 1998).

Inside a country the dialect people use can easily place them in a certain geographical, social, or religious sect. Bassuni (2009) stated that women in Egypt choose to use the mainstream upper middle class which is a prestigious dialect of urban Cairene Egyptian Arabic (CEA) to be perceived as educated and as having a better social background. Therefore, to move upwards on the social ladder a person, not to mention female, needs to adopt a vernacular that is more socially presentable. On the other hand, being competent in a second language like English or French may add to the social upscale of a person in such a context.

Nevertheless, migrants face the catastrophe of having to adopt the language of the new country to be able to function and fit into the new society. Chambers & Trudgill (1998) pointed out that the better the immigrants' ability to adopt the language of the country they travelled to, the better their chances are of being treated by the native population with less antagonism or discrimination. Usually, concepts like linguistic diaspora were associated with nostalgic practices of using the mother language of the emigrants in the new countries that would indicate belonging to or wanting to return to the home country (Canagarajah & Silberstein 2012). However, other diaspora research showed that there is a growing tendency among immigrants to drop the mother language and not to have an inclination to homesickness (Brubaker, 2005). Both attitudes were presented in *Trance Canada*.

### 1.4 The story "*Trans- Canada*"

*Trans-Canada* was written in 2014 by Samah Sadiq, an Egyptian writer and poet, who lived and studied in Egypt before immigrating to Canada in 2010. The novel touches upon the life of a generation that witnessed the flourishing dreams of the Arab Spring and had to survive through the hardships of life in recent years through the female protagonist "Iman". The poor Cairene girl, Iman, succeeds in immigrating to Canada to find her lost love and to liberate herself from what she

describes as the crippling life in her home country. The story does not follow the classical boy meets girl, fall in love then get married after a series of event patterns. It rather introduces a more intricate love misfortunate series of incidents even in the sub-themes woven into it.

*Throughout the story, Iman fluctuates from her complete enchantment with her first love "Yusuf" to her mistrust of men in general. She states the reason behind her attachment to him is that it is simply because he was the only male that made her feel special and valued. The story traces her growth from a humble environment in a Cairene alley where she used the local vernacular of the uneducated low-class women while playing with other girls, to a young lady studying tourism and adopting a more refined middle-class dialect, and then a mature independent woman towards the end of the narrative with a multilingual repertoire. Although a post-feminist protagonist is independent, yet she spends her life looking for the man that will make life worthwhile (Mihaila & Mateescu, 2017). Iman started off fighting against all the sociocultural forces around her to become free and independent in her native country Egypt, but her love affair with Yusuf and the circumstances that led to his travelling to Canada added to her life another goal which is travelling out of Egypt to find him. After their marriage and his tragic death, she continued looking for a relationship that could be as meaningful to her as her first love but failed to find one. She was seeking love but also showed the characteristics of a solo player, and preferred to be alone, to make her own decisions, and take her risks.*

Iman's story covers two lives; one in Egypt and the other in Canada. Both of them are interwoven in a sequence of flashbacks that take the reader back and forth between the two countries and the two lives. These are introduced in two parts: the first carries the names of 5 characters including "Yusuf" her first love and herself "Iman". The following three chapters in this section carried the names of characters that she will meet in Canada and who will represent different types of feminist themes. The second part chapters carry the names of fifteen Canadian cities and locations and only two Egyptian cities, namely Cairo and Sharm El Sheik. The two Egyptian cities represent her birthplace Cairo, where she grew up, suffered her mother's suicide, and had her education while Sharm El Sheik is the place where she had her first feeling of independence when she was hired in a decent job and had a place to live away from the family, and most importantly it is the place where she met Yusuf. On the other hand, travelling on the famous road of

*Trans-Canada* alone in a self-discovery journey made each city and stop point on that road a pivot for reminiscing about her past. Her choice to leave her Canadian spouse and travel on the *Trans-Canada Highway* to get as far as she could be seen as the starting point of the adventure. She selected *Trans-Canada* since it is the longer route to her randomly chosen destination, Vancouver, where she hopes to start again.

## 2. Research points

The current research investigates the assumption that *Trans-Canada* not only bears numerous feminist stylistic tools, but it also successfully depicts gender discourse markers on several levels. The analysis addresses the following research points:

1- Discussion of the feminist and postfeminist stylistic markers that the text carries and how they relate to the socio-cultural backgrounds of the novel focusing on four features: feminist and post-feminist textual features, nakedness and sexuality, patriarchy, and metaphor.

2- The linguistic development of the protagonist, and other characters, concerning dialect and language choices and the experiences of linguistic diaspora after migration in a feminist context.

## 3. Analysis

Gender context-oriented research hypothesizes that language behavior cannot be evaluated in isolation from the context (Wodak, 1994; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992). As a result, whatever linguistic judgments a writer makes are typically related to their reflection on, or perception of, the world around them. In part I, we will examine the influence of post-feminist views on the writer's language in the novel *Trans-Canada* utilizing Mills' (1992) notion of feminist stylistics text analysis and focusing on four aspects: feminist and post-feminist textual features, nakedness and sexuality, patriarchy, and metaphor. While in part II The linguistic development of the protagonist, and other characters, concerning dialect and language choices and the experiences of linguistic diaspora will be discussed.

### 3.1 Part I

Discussion of the feminist and postfeminist stylistic markers that the text carries and how they relate to the socio-cultural backgrounds of the novel focusing on four features: feminist and post-feminist textual features, nakedness and sexuality, patriarchy, and metaphor.

### 3.1.1 Feminist and post-feminist stylistic markers in the text

In *Trans-Canada*, the language choices of the writer carry the following general features. First, the narrative is written in modern standard Arabic, while the dialogues are either in Cairene colloquial vernacular(s), or a transliteration of English, or French. Through these verities, the writer succeeded in depicting the interactive relationship between the various linguistic repertoire and their social functions. The first pages of each part of the novel contained two quotes one in Stranded Arabic which are related to the theme of freedom while the other is carnie colloquial Arabic and is about the need to find an escape from the bitter reality to a better wider space. This duality prepares the reader for the linguistic richness that will be later encountered in the chapters. Standard Arabic is used by the narrator for deeper thought and exploration of her feelings and suffering. On the other hand, colloquial words in the middle of standard sentences are usually used for expressing a meaning that is highly attached with a social, local or gender marker and interpretations

In analyzing gendered language, Jinyu (2014) explained that several differences can be traced in the language of men and women within a certain cultural context especially on the lexical and semantic levels (Jinyu, 2014). In *Trans-Canada*, for example, is the word "نسونجي" (Sadiq, 2014 p.18) which means womanizer has been used in the text as a gender marker with two different meanings. One is when it appears in the Egyptian male's repertoire to joke about a man's multiple relationships and in this case, it carries an insinuation that this is a marker of cleverness and masculinity. While, if used by a woman in the same social class it would indicate repulsiveness and rejection of being around such a man since he may practice an act of harassment.

Several additional post-feminist beliefs and attitudes are portrayed in the protagonist 'Iman's language. Her name means "Faith," but she lives and thrives in doubt. She is a postfeminist heroine in the sense that she carries a plethora of feminist ideals and ambitions inside her. However, she discovers that the realities of life make fantasies often impossible or incomplete, even in the country of freedom represented by Canada, and after achieving her goal of being with the only person she loved. On the other hand, she is powerful and independent, like heroines who build their own lives (Mihaila & Mateescu, 2017), yet she suffers from inner battles and insecurities because she was intended to represent ordinary women and not to be a heroine with superpowers. Her suffering and the painful lives of the other female characters in the narrative represent intersectionality which will be discussed later under patriarchy.

As post-feminist heroines, she starts her quest by asserting to herself "if you want to win endure" (Sadiq, 2014 p.60). The strength and power of her lexical choices reflect post-feminist heroine's beliefs by using multiple negation and antonyms (Martens, 2017). She goes from one hardship into another but never loses faith in herself. She clearly expresses her attitude to life in the following extract which is translated below:

نعم أنا الفتاة العادية ذات الأحلام الكبيرة ، لن أخضع لتهديداتكم، ولن أخاف المستقبل، المستقبل لن يجرحني، البقاء هنا بينكم هو ما قد يقتلني ويقتل كل أحلامي.  
كنت أتطلع إلي السماء ، فيقولون لي انظري إلي تحت قدميك، اخفضي بصرك، عيشي عيشة أهلك، مدي ساقيك فقط بطول غطائك، ولكن غطائي القصير لم يرتك لي سوى مساحة أتكوم فيها بوضع الجنين. وكان الحل الوحيد أن أرفس هذا الغطاء، أنطلق عارية، لا شيء يغطيني سوى جلدي، أتلقى الصفعات والركلات والبرد والجوع، وطالما قررت أن أمد ساقِي ، بل وأفرد ذراعي أيضا، طالما قررت أن أطير أو أقطع المسافات وحدي، فلأتحمل!  
(Sadiq, 2014 Pp59-60)

"Yes, this is me, an ordinary girl with extraordinary dreams. I will not be submissive by your threats; I will not be afraid of the future, which will never hurt me. Staying here with all of you is what could kill me and murder my dreams...I had no choice but to set off naked with nothing to cover me except my skin receive blows, slaps, and kicks. I decided to stretch my legs and arms too, if I decided to fly and cross these distances alone, then I will endure!"

The contrast in the text between "ordinary," which is expected from Iman, who has an ordinary modest upbringing, ordinary government schooling, and even average beauty, prepares the stage for a realization of the achievements she would make on her trip because what she attained was neither ordinary nor expected. Furthermore, in the Arabic version, the writers additionally employed various grammatical constructions that reinforce the sense of empowerment and introduce the concept of independence. For example, the negation forms of "لن" "will never" followed by verbs like "أخضع" be submissive" and "be afraid" "أخاف" in a present tense were employed and this form of negation in Arabic changes the verb from present to future and means the eternal impossibility of the action (Ryding, 2005). Furthermore, the protagonist, Iman, was chosen by the writer to be the first person narrator and her feminist strength, and decisiveness are asserted in the use of the first person pronoun (Martens, 2017).



### 3.1.2 Nakedness and sexuality

The two themes related to the social perception of women that the writer explored through her post-feminist protagonist are also two common patterns in feminist language: freedom of sex and a positive view of women's bodies. Since Iman is a person who rejects and physically runs away from her native sociocultural norm and adopts another, she is constantly on a journey of debate over all the taboos. In other words, matters that are considered hideous actions or prohibited violations of religious and sociocultural codes are open to consideration of a different point of view.

First, freedom of sex and sexuality for the empowerment of women is repeatedly expressed through the repetition of explicit sexual lexical choices. Some feminist female writers indulge in giving details about sexual practices for gaining the merit of universal authorship claiming that they are more capable of describing the physical and emotional intensity of a woman's sexual experience (Walsh, 2001). Therefore, the writer invested in this theme and included several paragraphs to the description of her female characters' sexual activities. For example, Iman's sexual adventures before going to Canada were "attempts to forget him" i.e. Yusuf. While after his death they were "a way to drown herself in a form of senseless punishment". On the other hand, the concept of freedom of sex as a positive life right for women is introduced through the adventure of Hala who was the wife of a sexually impotent man but she preferred to stay in the marriage, and sought sexual experience with another man. In this episode, words used to describe Hala's affair with her lover did not include any inclination towards showing the incident as a repulsive act of adultery and betrayal to a husband, but rather "a good revenge" and a way "to become aware of her feminine self" and to "control the monster that is lurking inside of her" (Sadiq, 2014, p.164).

The theme of body positivity and nakedness has always been of central concern to feminist writers (Walsh, 2001). Different attitudes towards this issue range from rejecting the use of women and their naked bodies for commercial or promotional purposes to the positivity of women taking care of their bodies as means of self-assertion and power (Mills, 1998). The writer in the novel used the word "naked" repeatedly in different contexts and with different references that all refer to a positive perception of nakedness. Some of these incidents include: First, she, used it in the context of being free and without experience when she voiced her desire to travel to Canada and said " set off naked with nothing to cover me expect my skin receive blows, slaps, and kicks,...to fly and cross theses distances alone" (Translation of Sadiq, 2014, p. 60). Then

she used it as an indication of getting rid of shame and guilt that a female associates with her body when she described being naked in front of one of her lovers. Later when she had a massage by a professional male massage therapist she describes how it was not "erotic" and rather made her identify her own body and become in harmony with all the pain that was known or hidden from her which brings to mind the concept of facing one's fears. The writer also augments the experience and uses it as a clarification of the protagonist's rebellion against her old beliefs and social taboos that women have to abide by in her home country. Finally, the description of the naked bodies' episode toward the end can be considered as a classical feminist representation of the feminist concept of body positivity (Mills, 1998). Iman, the protagonist uses positive language to describe her amazement when she first saw women walking naked in the changing room in the sports club, and compared that with the image of women who cover most of their bodies in her home country. The episode celebrates the naked women for their ability to accept their bodies as they are and not to be afraid to show them as well as the celebration of all women who accept what they are and liberate themselves from the sociocultural views.

### 3.1.3 Patriarchy

Language that reflects patriarchy appears as early as the first few pages of Trans-Canada as one of the major feminist stylistic features that can be spotted in the text. The male characters in the novel exemplified the worst aspects of societal and political prejudice against women. The majority, from all socioeconomic groups and walks of life, is accused of corruption and abuse.

Mills (1998) suggested that the analysis of gendered language occurs both on the word level and the sentence level. It is essential to realize that Arabic is not a gender-neutral language; not only do nouns have inherent and/or affixed gender markers, but verbs are likewise mostly affixed with masculine or feminine markers to indicate the gender of the doer of the action; therefore, unlike English, the usage of gender markers on nouns cannot be interpreted as a form of hostility toward females (Bassiouney, 2009). However, sexism can be detected in the discourse and the sentence levels. In Trans-Canada, the language used to describe males, in general, reflects the writer's view of the patriarchal Egyptian society that she had to run away from and is extended to her experience with men in Canada as well; hence, the gender bias is clear in the text. Male characters are referred to as exploitive, greedy, unethical, misogynists and cursed.

"العن في سري كل الرجال فهم السبب في كل هذه المعاناه" (Sadiq, 2014, p.176)

"I whisper to myself, I curse all men, they are the reason behind all this suffering"

When comparing Imam's conversational language as the female protagonist with that of the male characters in general it can be seen as a good example of what Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) described in the following quote "women's language reflects their [our] conservatism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurture, emotional expressivity, connectedness, sensitivity to others, solidarity. And men's language is heard as evincing their toughness, lack of effect, competitiveness, independence, competence, hierarchy, control." (Eckert & Mc Connell-Ginet, 1992, p.90). However, the language used to describe other female characters in the text was characterized by the victimization of those females they were mostly not negotiating their oppression or situation. For example, Iman's mother and her hated stepmother were victims of ignorance and poverty while victims of family and social class restrictions were represented by Hala and Noha, and victims of old age and lack of love were exemplified by Diane. Nevertheless, two shadow female characters were described as strong supports of others in their community: Iman's aunt to whom she confided all her secrets and Om Sayed the lady who handled her mother's suicide incident. The two characters are not well developed in the text but their strength was inspirational to the protagonist.

The lexical items used to describe men in the story are full of hostility. For example, there is the "impolite" "drugged" taxi driver, the rude males in the Egyptian street that "enjoy verbal harassment" to young ladies, and finally Iman's manager in Sharm El Shiek who was described as a "womanizer" and favoured the female workers who were subdued to his sexual whims. Even Iman's lovers were shown to be capable of loving her but yet did not provide any stability or contentedness to her soul. Even though Yusuf was the love of her life and that all other men were not half the man he was according to her, the text describes him as "a drug addict" and "a womanizer". Later in Canada, he became a dealer and facilitator of illegal money and human trafficking. However, because he was a man in a patriarchal society and had a powerful father with money, political power, and influence, Yusuf could get away with murder. The Father and brother of Yusuf are briefly portrayed as corrupt powerful men on the political and social levels. Contrary to Iman's father who represents the familial patriarchal model, Yusuf's father and elder

brother represent upper-class patriarchal domination of the entire society through their powers. The analogy between Yusuf's family and the police force as dominating oppressive powers echoes the dominance of men over women which can be explained within the paradigm of patriarchy as the dominance of some social classes to other classes (Lazarc, 2007).

Male domination and the exertion of injustice on women is a prevalent theme in her account of life in Egypt. The first of these men is Iman's father who was always described as a drugged, irresponsible person whose actions led to the suicide of the "pretty and compassionate" "طيبة وجميلة" mother. To assert her refusal of his domination on her life and her emotional detachment from him as a father figure, Iman never tells us the name of her father. The reader never hear his words in actual dialogue as happens with the other male characters, but his actions are negatively described through a word like "whenever he is sober" he used to fight with her mother.

Not only Egyptian men were described as being oppressive but also her Canadian Husband. He was described as "very nice since he never gives me a direct "no" for an answer, but also very stubborn and dominant since he never answers with yes and never listens to any of my suggestions" (Sadiq, 2014, p.67). He is also referred to as "very practical", and "controlling"; therefore, According to Lazar (2007) this can be accounted for as another form of patriarchal oppression, a passive one, that does not threaten a woman directly, but hurts her feelings and puts her under pressure. Eventually, the protagonist Imam finally leaves him.

Intersectionality appears as the appropriate concept that explains this line of female suffering vs. male aggression in language use since all women from all sectors of life are subjected to it. Starting from the poor ladies in the poor neighborhood in Cairo represented by Inam's mother and stepmother, to the well-educated middle and upper-middle-class young ladies like Hala and Noha, and finally, Canadian middle-aged lady Diane. Each has her battles to fight with male figures in her life and each has won and lost some of those battles. If the words of the drunken father never appear in the text because he is a repulsive, refused father figure, the voices of Iman's mother and the stepmother are not present for another reason. They represent oppressed females in a poor social stratum; therefore, they hardly practice freedom of choice. On the other hand, the two upper-middle-class young ladies like Hala and Noha, their education and social orientation appeared in their language. Hala is a bright young lady full of agility and love. The spark in her spirit and the strength of her character does not fade in the text but rather matures with

time. Her nostalgic romantic email to her first love Hatem soon leads us to her confrontational words defying her parent's authority and seeking to keep her relationship with Hatem as can be seen in the following examples:

(Sadiq, 2014, P.36) "ياسستي شوفوه الأول واقعدوا معاه واسألوه كل الأسئلة دي"

To her mother "first you meet him then ask him about whatever you need to know"

"هو انتوا حتى حاولتو تتكلموا معاه أو تعرفوه كويس... انتوا حتى ماقولتلوش أهلا"

(Sadiq, 2014, P.37)

To her parents "you did not even try to talk to him, or know him ... you did not even say hello"

Her choice of Hatem itself was a rebellion against the norms that she had to abide by in her social milieu. However, in Canada, she rebels against her first love and finds a more liberating relationship with a Canadian young scholar. Her suffering is different from the other women in the novel since her battle is more intellectual than physical or material.

As for Noha, her first words in the narrative were polite decisive words when she asked for time to think and to decide about accepting the groom:

"والله يا بابا... أنا محتاجة شوية وقت أفكر. ومحتاجة كمان.. بعد إذنك طبعاً لو نتقابل كمان مرة.. محتاجة يعني أعرفه أكثر"

(Sadiq, 2014, P.39)

"Dear dad ... I need more time to think it over, and if you please grant me permission to meet him one more time cause I need to get to know him better".

Interestingly, her words are never heard again as if she gave up her right to speak out when she agreed to the marriage. Iman, the narrator-protagonist, describes what happened to Noha, and how she felt.

The Canadian middle-aged lady named Diane is another sample of feminine suffering in another part of the world. Although she is not poor or uneducated she is a victim in her way. Her need for love and companionship leads her to marry or rather buy the love of a man who is much younger than she is. The language used in describing Diane is repulsive and painful. For example, she is described as:

"هي تشرب كثيرا، وبالخمر تتغلب على كل مخاوفها"

(Sadiq, 2014, p.39)

"She drinks a lot, and with alcohol, she overcomes all her fears"

#### 3.1.4 Metaphors

Several types of metaphors are usually extensively used in postfeminist writings as mentioned before. For example, classical conceptual bird metaphor and association of sex, hunger and lurking beast instinct metaphors are all utilized in Trans-Canada. Nevertheless, the two most prominent metaphors that are considered to have a deeper and more extended significance in the text were chosen for analysis: the Canadian highway "Trans-Canada" and the game "setat mohamedat". These two metaphors run as thematic metaphors in the text.

The first metaphor is based around the Canadian highway Trans-Canada. It was chosen by the writer to be the title of the novel forming an extended thematic metaphor that starts from the title and ends with closing words of the novel. The concept of the road and travelling depicts the protagonist's life on several levels. One of the most used lexical items related to this concept is the word /tari:k/ طريق in Arabic means road, or highway. This word can take both masculine and feminine cases in Arabic. The life of the protagonist is a long drive or rather a journey that has some stop points just like the towns and cities that she passes through on -Canada.

Cities both in Canada and Egypt are significant to her journey and had parallelism with people; therefore, adjectives used in describing them are synonymous. For example, in her homeland (Egypt) the two cities mentioned in the text were both a source of love and pain exactly like her first love Yusuf. Both Egypt and Yusuf were the source of her suffering and the starting point of her journey. Both appeared extensively in her flashbacks. Nevertheless, the Canadian highway was cold but convenient like most of the people and relationships she had in Canada. Most of the people in her life, just like the cities on Trans-Canada are either a source of temporary comfort or providers of certain things she needed at a time. Her decisions in life are as impulsive and random as her choices of towns and cities that she passes by and rests in. There is one clear aim for taking Trans-Canada that she declared in the story which is escaping from her monotonous life with a husband that she cannot relate to. Nevertheless, her life journey that started back in her homeland Egypt has one clear aim which is escaping from all the socioeconomic conditions that could make her life as miserable as the other females there, the same conditions that forced her mother to commit suicide. The journey on Trans-Canada

started with a blurred vision of a hypothetical destination exactly like that of her life.

The second metaphor is "setat mohamedat" which is a local game that is played by little girls in alleys and rural areas. The one common theme of the game is the role play imitation of existing practices of the grown-up woman around the little girls. The girls in the game mimic the household chores that their mothers do, and versions of the activities differ according to the responsibilities of women in the environment. In Iman's version, she played the role of a lady buying breakfast beans from a street vendor and enjoyed imitating the sweet voice of her mother asking for a little bit extra from the vendor. The syntax of the noun phrase "setat mohamedat" reflects these notions. The word "Setat" is an indefinite head noun of the noun phrase while "mohamedat" is the modifier carrying within it the image of delicate, submissive, hardworking females "setat" that can only function and thrive in a household which can exist if there is a provider male figure represented by the word "mohamedate" which is the plural form of the name Mohammed, one of the most common male names in Egypt. Therefore, the mere existence of the female is defined through the existence of the predominant male. On the other hand, the metaphor itself can be described as a conceptual metaphor which does not represent a completely new figurative comparison discussed above.

The protagonist like all other girls played because it's a game, but later on and after the suicide incident of her mother she realized that the game is a replication of a lifestyle that she has to run away from. It is then when she decides not to play the game ever again, and starts a life journey with the sole aim of not being entrapped in this stereotyped version of womanhood. She tries to have financial and social independence from the male figure of her father (or rather all men in the world). She decides to work, to get an education, to run away before she is forced to marry someone chosen by the family. The power of feminine seductive language that she gained from the game in her childhood helped her train herself when and how to use this seductive female voice for her benefit and at her convenience in her adulthood. The woman she grew up into at the end of the story is nothing like the image of women in setat mohammedat.

### 3.2 Part II

In this section, we will trace the linguistic behaviour of the protagonist, together with other characters, and the sociolinguistic impact of the dialect and language choices on her social upgrading and the notion of linguistic diaspora.

Language plays a pivotal role in shaping the identity and life choices and development of many of the characters in Trans-Canada. Iman's linguistic development throughout the novel can be traced in several stages. The protagonist in her childhood spoke the only local vernacular that she naturally acquired in her local environment in one of the alleys in Alssayyidah district in Cairo. At this point, she carried around a local vernacular that was not only stigmatized by the low class, poor environment and lack of education but also carried the stigma of being a female with a weak submissive language or what Lakoff (1986) called the female register. Such features of a vernacular are usually not used by the males of the same social class because they are associated with feminine attitudes (Dendane, 2013; Trudgill, 1983). This sociolinguistic orientation of females to speak differently and in a more submissive way is a manifestation of cultural oppression in many cases (Jinyu, 2014). Therefore, when Iman's mother burned herself to death, the shock rendered her speechless for a while, but she later claimed that when she regained her ability to speak she declared that she "can now, unlike my moms, express herself with greater assertion" (Sadiq, 2014 p.66). As a result of this decision, she abandoned the feminine local vernacular. In the following stage, as a young girl beginning to work in her teens and working for getting a university degree, she realized that her local vernaculars would get her nowhere in life. Hence, she adapted to a more sophisticated Cairene colloquial middle-class accent when she started working in downtown Cairo stores.

She also learned her first foreign language namely English and that helped her to be seen as an educated young lady since mastery of a few foreign terms and phrases in most Arab countries and using them in speech is a mark of good education and socially presentable personality (Osama, 2020). When she was trying to travel to Canada, Iman thought that she had "إنجليزية سليمة" "correct English" and that enabled her to pass the visa interview. However, this English was described as broken and insufficient to use in Canada, which is a problem faced by most immigrants in the target language country (Rassool, 2012). Hence, in Canada she discovered that she neither had enough English nor any French to survive within a foreign country. The protagonist explained that "I spent my few first years (in Canada) like a blind person, like a child finding my way through the alphabet ... knowing just a few simple words that express a few naïve and trivial things" (Sadiq, 2014, p.200). Finally, she learned French and this marked a sociocultural rebirth for her and at the core of this rebirth was her linguistic achievement. Most migrants face the problem of not only having to learn the new dominant language



but also assimilating its cultural setting and they develop at one point of time a hybrid linguistic identity (Rassool, 2012). This inner conflict of hybridity (Rassool, 2012) was explained by the protagonist when she stated that marrying a western man and having to learn and live with it a new language Canada has "created another woman out of me, even my thoughts are now in another language, I don't even whisper to myself in Arabic anymore." (Sadiq, 2014, p.52). She listens to the Arabic singer Om Kulthoom while travelling on Trans- Canada towards the end of the novel, which cannot be considered a nostalgic act of diasporic language practice (Canagarajah & Silberstein, 2012) since the protagonist explained that listening to the Arab singer arouses the feelings she wanted to have, or helps to reminisce about the ones that she had.

Another character who exemplifies the significance of language in a person's identity and societal transformation of personality is "Hani," who attempted to leave his country by marrying an elderly Canadian woman. His lack of communicative skills in English or French hampered his ability to obtain a respectable career in Egypt, as the writer regarded his English as a "poor English language" (Sadiq, 2014, p.32). However, after marrying the elderly Canadian woman "Diane" and travelling to Canada with her, he is shown trying to say the street name to the taxi driver in a perfect accent that his wife "exactly instructed him to speak in" (Sadiq, 2014, p.30). This is an indicator of attempting to fit into her culture, lose his individuality, and integrate into the new life, and his reward is immediate as the elderly lady tightens her grip on his arm when she is satisfied with his pronunciation. He switched to Arabic in his first encounter with the protagonist, most likely to show the solidarity that may be achieved between people in a foreign environment based on ethnicity (De Fina, 2007).

Iman immediately placed Hani geographically in Upper Egypt based on the dialect of his Egyptian Arabic, and she concluded that he must be carrying the inner core of sociocultural beliefs and behavior of this area as opposed to the false identity covered by his French that would sustain his sense of inclusion in Canada. Nonetheless, at intimate times with his old Canadian wife, he switches back to Arabic and murmurs to her "Wahashtini" (Sadiq, 2014, p.32), which means "I miss you," indicating that he is still emotionally disconnected from French, which is a second language to him. As a result, he is a textbook example of diaspora (Canagarajah & Silberstein 2012). He is caught up in a life that he cannot abandon in Canada, while his inner self belongs to his original country, language.

#### 4. Conclusion

*Trans-Canada* introduces the life of a female protagonist that is fully aware of her limitations in a patriarchal society; nevertheless, she aspires to fulfil her dreams and escape from the harsh life she faced in her life as a child and a young woman, to a mature view of happiness and life in general where the solitary of a single female in western society is seen as an achievement of the liberation of her soul. All other female characters were subjected to different types of oppression that cursed their life calamities. The linguistic devices and themes presented in the story are abundantly reflected in the feminist stylistic tools used by the writer to manifest her feminist beliefs. Furthermore, the novel introduces a mature level of linguistic choice of discourse markers for both genders and a good depiction of the dialectical and sociocultural features of the language. In general, the analysis shows how it is a feminist narrative that is overloaded with feminist stylistic tools and exhibits a series of stereotypes and codified structures that constitute a sociocultural linguistic tradition connected to both the local culture and feminism represented in themes of female suffering in the home country and after immigration. The male characters are linguistically well depicted to serve the feminist text and they are also authentic representations of their sociocultural roles.

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