

From the Margins to the Center: A Reading of 'Antarah Ibn Shaddad' through Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic

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Abstracts

This study analyzes the Al-Moallaqa, a poem traditionally hung on the walls of the Kaaba, the holiest shrine for Muslims, by the pre-Islamic poet Antara bin Shaddad, through the lens of Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic. It explores the status of marginal identity, focusing on the poet's portrayal of the suffering endured due to slavery, humiliation, and deprivation of honor in a tribal society that devalues the enslaved. It also examines self-awareness and the desire for change, addressing the essential awakening of the 'Self', which drives a rejection of marginalization and a commitment to struggle and risk in pursuit of freedom. A qualitative textual analysis is employed, focusing on the thematic exploration of identity, self-awareness, and the struggle for recognition within the poem. Antara's poetry illustrates this self-awareness through vivid depictions of bravery, heroism, and chivalry, emphasizing the idea of testing oneself and others in the existential struggle between life and death. The contribution of this manuscript lies in its application of Hegelian philosophy to classical Arabic poetry, offering a new interpretative framework for understanding the dynamics of identity and freedom in pre-Islamic literature.

Keywords: Antara bin Shaddad, Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic, Marginal identity, Pre-Islamic poetry, Slavery and freedom.

Introduction

Antara bin Shaddad was a pre-Islamic poet whose works have long intrigued literary circles, largely due to the central issue in much of his poetry: his struggle for freedom. He spent his life fighting to reclaim that freedom from a society that sanctioned injustice and upheld slavery. This society drew a sharp distinction between the child of a slave woman, and one born to a free woman, even if both shared the same father. Due to these entrenched norms, Antara was condemned to a life of slavery and hybridity, making him the target of disdain and scorn.

His feelings of humiliation and contempt greatly affected his identity. Due to the problematic conditions Antara lived in, he suffered from an inferiority complex, seeking a mechanism to compensate for the feeling that never let him sleep (Tabrizi, 1992). Therefore, he armed himself with the might that pre-Islamic norms upheld. This mechanism involved chivalry, sword fighting, and poetry composition. He believed that defending the right to live free was indispensable, as he possessed the traits and abilities that qualified him for it. Consequently, he rebelled against his community to claim his freedom. To achieve this, he adopted several ways by which he proved his entitlement to gain that freedom (Tabrizi, 1992).

The study, therefore, aims to examine Antara's Moallaqa from both literary and critical perspectives to unveil the mechanisms he used to compensate for his deficiencies, and to explore the poet's experience of suffering from slavery and his struggle to achieve freedom. This freedom, in turn, allowed him to attain a genuine identity rather than a false, valueless one. For this purpose, we adopted Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic, which is his most well-known contribution to critical theory (Cole, 2004), to answer the following research questions: What was Antara's relationship with his pre-Islamic community in terms of family, clan, and adversaries? And In what ways did Antara's actions and attributes justify his claim to freedom?

By answering these questions, this research contributes to understanding how Antara bin Shaddad's struggle for freedom and his societal interactions are articulated through his poetry, revealing deeper insights into the dynamics of marginal identity and self-awareness in pre-Islamic Arabia. It also helps to profoundly analyze numerous aspects of Antara's life and provides a comprehensive understanding of his interactions with his society and the norms prevalent in that society.

Moreover, this research focuses on two important issues in Antara's life and poetry: freedom and recognition. Investigating the concepts of freedom and recognition provides a better understanding of Hegel's philosophy and societal norms.

Overall, this research contributes significantly to the fields of classical Arabic literature and philosophical literary criticism. It delves deep into pre-Islamic literature through studying Antara's poetry. Thus, it enriches knowledge about that literature, constituting a significant part of the heritage of Arabic literature and widens the range of literary and cultural studies about the pre-Islamic era. Moreover, the study applies Hegelian philosophy of the master-slave dialectic as a framework for analysis. This enables the application of Western philosophical theories to analyze classical Arabic literature. It adds a deep philosophical understanding of pre-Islamic literature and contributes to interdisciplinary studies that combine literature, philosophy and history. Besides, the study is also deeply rooted in the historical and cultural context of the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula, which makes the research culturally and historically significant.

Finally, the research highlights history and Arabic culture of the pre-Islamic era, reinforcing the general understanding of that important era of Arab history. Therefore, the results might enhance readers' cultural and historical awareness.

Literature review

Many studies examined Antara's Moallaqa in the context of its historical significance and literary merit, exploring themes of identity, social status, and poetic expression, yet few have applied Western philosophical theories, such as Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic, to provide a deeper analysis of the poet's struggle for freedom and self-identity.

Absi (2020) examined how self-effacing courage could achieve its essential human presence as reflected by using words of excellence, individualism, and action. By examining textual codes, the study used semiotics to unveil their positive meanings. The study concluded that the courage adopted by the 'Self' aimed to achieve actual human existence, rather than death and destruction. The 'Self' used its abilities to function effectively in both the present and the future, avoiding concerns about losing itself in the superficial presence of others or getting caught up in trivialities. Instead, the awareness of mortality drove it to seek freedom, pushing it to use its abilities to pursue a meaningful existence, even at the risk of death (Absi, 2020).

In the same vein, Salman (2019) examined aspects of argumentation in the poem Antara Bin Shaddad. He analyzed arguments and evidence that Antara used to establish a high position among clan members to achieve his goals. Salman tackled the argumentative structure the poet infused into the fabric of his poetry to defend himself and to win the hearts of his uncle and clan by using paradoxical and non-paradoxical diction to achieve his goal and convince others with his courage, chivalry, and originality. Salman concluded that the poet did not use only one idea or stance, a body of evidence that reflects his skill in achieving and shaping all that he aspired to. Such a technique helped the poet achieve his objectives and, thus, affected the readers of his poetry.

Similarly, Massas (2017) analyzed the poem, focusing on self-assurance and lost identity from a tribal perspective that ignores slaves and hybrids. The poet's personality was revealed through his relationship with the 'Other' /the beloved, to whom he did his best to assert his identity, and to the tribe, which drove him into isolation and identity loss. Therefore, he tried to relegate tribal laws and establish himself by imposing that self-imposing and drawing his lost identity.

Another study conducted by Ibnayan (2007) highlighted how the introduction of the poem evoked values that the poet used to recall new ideas for creating new human values and modern concepts. He aimed to invest in developing new concepts of human dimensions based on existence, behavior, and action. The researcher explained how the poet surpassed his society mentally and morally through courage, generosity, and affection. Thus, through many attempts, Antara overturned life in a community that rejected him due to tribal fanaticism.

Ahmed (2017) examined Antara's rhetorical methods to prove his right to freedom in a class society that sanctifies and legalizes class distinctions. Such a society distinguishes between the son of a free woman and his counterpart from a slave. The researcher adopted the inductive analytical approach, presented verses based on argument and explained them by analyzing the used images and style to demonstrate the poet's successful argument. The tools analyzed include fronting and delaying, passive structures, deletion, metaphors, metonymy, oxymorons, similes, and other rhetorical devices. The study concluded that despite the motives of the poet's

vagabondism, he showed a sense of belonging to his clan, which he defended. For him, his existence relied on the tribe, and its glory was his as well. The war between Dahis and Al-Ghabra, in which he fought fiercely, was the best chance for him to attain the aspired freedom that his father openly recognized. Also, the study highlighted the strong connections between arguments and poetry. They never contradict each other because poetry addresses emotions, while argument relies on evidence and logical proofs —elements that Arabic poetry can incorporate.

The two terms the 'Self' and the 'Other' were examined in various poems by Larqam (2023). She investigated the challenge faced by the poetic 'Self,' which struggled to prove its identity through chivalry and verses to establish itself within the pre-Islamic community. It also highlighted resistance to oppression, injustice, and deprivation in an attempt to unveil the conflict and controversy arising between the poet's 'Self' and 'Other,' which might take different forms. The researchers presented some images in his poetry: the brave hero who tried to prove himself and attain freedom, the lover whose heart attracted his love, 'Abla.' The poet, though, wished to maintain his love for her; he also disclosed his opinion toward his tribe and people.

As for the 'Other,' the image varied; it could be the tribe that usurped his rights and subjected him to humiliation. His father, 'Shaddad,' the chieftain of the tribe, refused to recognize his son, 'Antara,' in compliance with tribal and community laws, resulting in his people's despise of Antara. The mother 'Zabeeba,' might also be the 'Other.' She was the black woman who gave him the black-skin color leading to his attachment to the slave class. Antara tried to trespass all that and establish a social status through courage and chivalry. Eventually, Antara's 'Self' could achieve its goal by recognizing the 'Other' (the father), who confirmed that the son belongs to the tribe and that he should defend himself against his enemy.

A study conducted by Mazhari (2020) aimed to answer important questions: Did slavery impact Antara's psyche? Could it reveal the hidden dimension of his sense of inferiority, and might this be compensated for through fighting, venturing, bloodshed, good morals, and habits? Mazhari discussed Antara's personality through investigating the motives behind the feeling of inferiority, and by compensating for that inferiority. The study found that the factors behind Antara's feeling of inferiority included slavery, his black skin, and the ridicule he faced from his beloved Abla. The tools he used for compensation were poetry, psychological rebellion, and chastity.

The primary result of the study is that Antara suffered from the effects of slavery for a long time due to his black skin. Consequently, he was in constant conflict to compensate for his feelings of inferiority, sometimes through chivalry and at other times through chastity and high morals. He strove to fill the psychological and emotional void with adventures, intense fighting, and defending his nation in battles.

Another result of the study was that Antara's love for Abla was not only pure but also passionate. She served as a conduit for expressing his strong feelings and emotions. At times, he underestimated Abla and displayed his superiority over her to highlight his exceptional personal traits. The researchers asserted that this conclusion was deduced from a deep analysis of Antara's poems and within the overall context of the text.

On that basis, the current study differs from previous ones in several aspects. It adopts a unique methodological approach that incorporates the concepts of the German philosopher Hegel, particularly his master-slave dialectic. The study applies these modern philosophical ideas to Antara's Moallaqa, approaching it from a philosophical perspective. In doing so, it explores the interaction between individuals and situations within this philosophical framework.

Theoretical framework: Hegel's master-slave dialectic

Hegel's master-slave dialectic discusses two figures: master and slave. For Hegel, these two figures are not actually two distinct people, but rather two forms of self-consciousness. Hegel's dialectics include two opposed forms: "a master-self-consciousness" and "a slave-self-consciousness" (Bornedal, 2005). These dialectics lead to an understanding of class struggle and awareness of that struggle. Whenever we talk about these dialectics, we should address the development of awareness in Hegel, or what is referred to as self-awareness. How is it formed when it becomes a true, essential 'Self', free from submissiveness, weakness, and mere basic awareness? (Bornedal, 2010).

In his famous book "Phenomenology of Spirit," Hegel divided human awareness into two different stages: In the first stage, the 'Self' is individualized and contained within his entire existence, his feelings, implications, and emotions in a purely subjective way (Hegel, 1807). In this case, the 'Self' does not have any external subjects or things (Sheik, 2006). Hegel compares the first awareness stage to a newborn baby who has not yet become strong.

In the second stage, the 'Self' develops to become capable of awareness and demonstrates a relationship between the 'Self' and the object, which eventually creates a relationship between the 'Self' and the 'Other'. Thus, the object is transformed into what Hegel calls 'The Here' (Farhah & Mohammad, 2017).

This idea emerges clearly when discussing his famous dialectic, 'The Master-Slave,' which is central to the concept of the self-awareness stage. This dialectic represents Hegel's discussion of self-awareness, which aims at achieving absolute knowledge. At this stage, the 'Self' acknowledges the existence of other selves, of which one shows superiority over the 'Other'. Historically, such a result has manifested in the system of slavery, which has taken various forms throughout history—whether in its traditional past forms or in modern manifestations like feudalism and capitalism. Therefore, we could argue that one self dominates, bullies, and dictates; in contrast, other selves remain weak and uncertain about their future (Hegel: 1807).

According to Hegel (1807), the disparity between the one self and the other selves produces the first stage of the human social life system. This life acknowledges "Mighty" only which is the one who generally dominates and imposes the system of sovereignty and slavery. In other words, the master dominates over the slave who loses his self-awareness and turns into something that is not aware of his human reality and dignity. He descends to the animal level that does not exceed simple self-indulgence (Hegel, 1807). Hegel asserts that at this stage, The master-slave dialectic begins to crystallize through a relationship that encompasses the master's 'Self'. This relationship is based on a conflict between two selves within the same environment,

where one seeks to achieve independence by defeating or destroying the 'Other', the object or the slave, or anyone under their domination (Kojev, 2000).

Based on the above, the master's independence relies on the destruction of the slave's independence, which is where the problem lies. When the 'Self' can destroy other objects, the issue becomes complicated for other selves who also seek independence and may wish to destroy other selves. This dynamic ultimately renders them dependent on that dominant 'Self'. Therefore, it abrogates its independence by becoming subordinate to the other self.

The master, at this stage, totally depends on the slave and exploits him for his needs. In this regard, Hegel (1807) explains that by depending on the slave, the master begins to lose his own independence. He adds that to achieve his self-awareness and independence, the master relies on the slave, which paradoxically undermines his own independence by negating the independence of the 'Other' (the slave).

Moreover, as the slave becomes responsible for meeting all the needs of the master, he develops his awareness gradually to reach independence and self-awareness. Through work and diligence, the slave acquires skills and knowledge that qualify him to develop himself and gradually gain independence (Bornedal, 2010). At this point, the master accepts other self-awareness and the slave becomes aware of himself. Therefore, the 'Self' and the 'Other' maintain a continuous relationship characterized by independence, desire, and domination, which ultimately seeks recognition (Kojev, 2018).

Analysis and discussion from Hegel's perspective

Antara's poem is one of the most important poems of the pre-Islamic era which was admired by many modern Arab critics and orientalists. It was one of the most precious poems, known as 'Rare,' and by which Antara was renowned (Meisami & Starkey, 1998). The poem is the outcome of a rich human experience where modern humans' aspirations, problems, and concerns are integrated. Antara recited his initial verses in response to a situation where a man from the Banu Abs tribe pointed out or emphasized the dark skin of Antara's family members, specifically his mother and brothers. Antara insulted him in return and proudly declared, "Indeed, I show Valor in battle, fulfill my duties toward the spoils of war, remain dignified when I need help, and give generously of what I possess." The man responded, "I am a poet better than you." Antara replied, "You will know that." He then mentioned the killing of Muwaiyeh Ibn Nazzal in the first line he recited, which is known as the Moallaqa (Eid, nd: 13). To further analyze the poem, the researchers focused on two main axes: the status of the marginalized 'Self' and self-awareness and love for change.

The status of the marginalized self

The ruins with which the poet opens his poem symbolize the suffering endured by the human 'Self.' This suffering results from the tribal social system imposed upon him and the slave class, representing the worst forms of oppression, humiliation, and scorn. Such a system made Antara feel nihilistic, as homes lay wasted and silent. This silence mirrored the poet's own sense of alienation from his people. He stated

هَلْ غَدَرَ الشَّعْرَاءُ مِنْ مُتَرَدِّمٍ أَمْ هَلْ عَرَفْتَ الدَّارَ بَعْدَ تَوَهُّمٍ
يَا دَارَ عَيْلَةٍ بِالْجَوَاءِ تَكَلَّمِي وَعَمِي صَبَاحاً دَارَ عَيْلَةٍ وَاسْلَمِي
فَوَقُفْتُ فِيهَا نَافَتِي وَكَأَنِّي فَدَنٌ لِأَقْضَى حَاجَةِ الْمُتَلَوِّمِ
وَتَحُلَّ عَيْلَةٌ بِالْجَوَاءِ وَأَهْلُنَا بِالْحَزْنِ فَالْصَّمَانِ فَالْمُتَثَلِّمِ
حُبَيْتٍ مِنْ طُلُلٍ تَقَالِمَ عَهْدِهِ أَقْوَى وَأَفْقَرُ بَعْدَ أَمِّ الْهَيْثِمِ
جَلَّتْ بَارِضُ الزَّائِرِينَ فَاصْبَحْتُ عَسِيراً عَلَيَّ طِلَابُكِ ابْنَةُ مَخْرَمِ

Figure 1: Antara's Moallaqa (Ibn Shaddad, n.d)

Have poets left aught that had not before been told?
Do you now know the house you did not know of old.
O Abla's "Jiwaa" home, of beloved ones, do tell
Good morn, Abla's home! May you e'er fare safe and well
By it I stopped my she-camel, so grand and fair
Palace-like she was. I, my love pangs had to air.
"Jiwaa" Abla has chosen as a place to stay
"Hazn", "Samman" and "Mutathallim" were our folks' way
Greetings! Your remains of old now stand all alone
Des'late you are after "Umm al-Haytham" had gone
She stayed in lands of roaring foes. And now you are
So hard to reach, O Makhram's daughter

Figure 2: Antara's Moallaqa Translated by Al Momayyaz (2013)

The wasteland nature of the place, the desertion of its inhabitants, the absolute silence engulfing it, and the obliteration of its landmarks cultivated in the poet a feeling of alienation and lifelessness similar to the ruins themselves.

Moreover, the presence of a female element (Abla) in the place reflects a desire for fertility and renewal, as a woman symbolizes life and fertility (Batal, 1981). Although Abla appears to be his beloved, she might also symbolize Antara's clan, to which he pays homage despite being denied recognition due to his hybridity and black color. This beloved (the tribe) denied him his rights, making the place lifeless both for him and for the tribe. The tribe's land was meant to be a sanctuary for the poetic 'Self,' but given the previous symbolic meanings, the poet illustrates the depth of his suffering within the context of his group.

There is nothing strange about this, given that the environment was neither safe nor nurturing for her son, affecting the preservation of his dignity and humanity. Consequently, the poetic 'Self' articulated the reasons behind this denial and lack of recognition by using symbols of contrast to highlight the racial and class discrimination he experienced. This denial reinforced his sense of nothingness and false reality. The poet's beloved (the tribe) resides in Ajwaa, where Abla also lives, while Antara and his family belong to a class of slaves living in Hazan, Saman, and Mutathallam.

It is overly simplistic to interpret the poem at a superficial level and accept its concepts and geographical locations without deeper analysis. The tribe could not realistically reside together in such a place; rather, the selection of these three locations highlights the discrimination between masters and slaves. The tribe's masters experience prosperity, fertility, and fortune, symbolized by the term Jewaa, which denotes openness and tranquility. In contrast, Antara and his family of slaves reside in arid areas, reflecting the poet's suffering and sense of loss among them. While Jewaa signifies expansiveness and abundance, Hazan, Samman, and Mutathallam represent harshness, drought, and hardship.

The contrast between locations underscores the poet's deep sense of racial discrimination and class disparity between master and slave, which bars him from joining the free class, the Nobles of his people. These connotations reflect the pain and sense of objectification experienced by the ego that is unaware of itself; it is 'I am living,' yet it remains undisclosed to both itself and others (Kojev, 2000). The poet continues to express these feelings of alienation, which overwhelm the poetic 'Self' with the burdens of slavery, as illustrated in the following lines:

عَلَّقْتُهَا عَرَضاً وَأَقْتُلُ قَوْمَهَا زَغْمًا لَعَنَرُ أَبِيكَ لَيْسَ بِمَرْغَمٍ
وَلَقَدْ نَزَلْتُ فَلَا تَنْظُنِي غَيْرَهُ مِنِّي بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْمُحَبِّ الْمُكْرَمِ
كَيْفَ الْمَرَارُ وَقَدْ تَرَبَّعَ أَهْلُهَا بِغَيْرِ تَيْنٍ وَأَهْلُنَا بِالْغَيْلِمِ

Figure 3: Antara's Moallaqa (Ibn Shaddad, n.d)

**By chance her love struck me, and went against my will
I, intent on her love, whilst I her people kill?
I have for you Honor'd love, none else should you assume
To doubt otherwise, never should you e'er presume.
Meet her? While to "Unayzatayn" her folk were bound?
While our folk in "Ghaylam" spring pastures they have found ?**

Figure 4: Antara's Moallaqa Translated by Al Momayyaz (2013)

The preceding lines are tense and emotionally charged. Although Antara's true love for Abila (the tribe) has deeply affected him, the slavery he endured, despite his innocence, prevented any possibility of forgiveness. Consequently, the gap between the poet and his tribe widened, leading to his increasing discontent with the rigid tribal system that further estranged him from a people who no longer recognize him. These class differences between the poet and the tribe are starkly evident in the final line of the previous poetic excerpt.

How can I visit... the land of Abila/the tribe in (Anayzatayn), situated on a high hill symbolizing the lofty status and elevation of the noble and free class, while his people reside in (Ghaylam), in the darkness of a deep well, signifying the inferior status of the slave class? According to the prevailing social system, this class is to be denied and marginalized. The poet conveys this through the tribe's metaphorical departure from Antara. The situation is depicted in a traditional manner, with the beloved leaving the place. However, in the Moallaqa, this tradition takes a new

turn; the poet does not yield to love but is instead troubled by the marginalization and lack of recognition symbolized by the departure (Oleimat, 2004). Even in the departure scene, class differences are evident, now symbolized by wealth. The caravan consisted of forty-two milking female camels, highly valued by Arabs for their rarity, reflecting richness and prosperity as echoed in the following lines of verse:

إِنْ كُنْتُ أَرْمَعُ الْفِرَاقَ فَإِنَّمَا زُمْتُ رَكَابَكُمْ بِلَيْلٍ مُظْلِمٍ
مَا زَاغَتِ إِلَّا حُمُولُهُ أَهْلِهَا وَسَطُ الدِّيَارِ تَسْفُ حَبَّ الْخَمْخَمِ
فِيهَا اثْنَتَانِ وَأَرْبَعُونَ حَلُوبَةً سَوْدًا كَخَلْفِيَةِ الْغُرَابِ الْأَسْحَمِ

Figure 5: Antara's Moallaqa (Ibn Shaddad, n.d)

**If you're bent on breaking with me, and will take flight
Your baggage packed, fleeing away in darkest night.
By her laden camels, I was by fright quite dazed
Watching them as they, on noxious, black-seed weeds, grazed
Forty-two milch camels did her baggage train bring
Jet-black they were as pinions of a raven's wing.**

Figure 6: Antara's Moallaqa Translated by Al Momayyaz (2013)

One cannot overlook the striking significance of the black color that the poet emphasizes at the beginning of the poem (night, dark, and the black color of the raven's wing). This use of color intensifies the negative connotations associated with it, highlighting the poet's sense of inadequacy, which led to his experience of slavery, self-abnegation, and existential struggle.

The poet's presence at the ruins, with all their symbolic meanings, crystallizes his feelings of marginalization and lack of recognition. This marginalization compels him to seek to cleanse his soul of the burdens of slavery and to look towards a hopeful future. The journey scene in the poem symbolizes this struggle and his determination to liberate the 'Self,' as expressed in the following lines:

هَلْ تُبْلِغُنِي دَارَهَا شَذَنِيَّةٌ لُعِنَتْ بِمَحْرُومِ الشَّرَابِ مُصَرَّمِ
 خَطَّارَةٍ غِيبِ السَّرَى زِيَاةً تَطْسُ الْإِكَامَ بِوَحْدِ خَفٍ مَيْثِمْ
 وَكَأَنَّمَا تَطْسُ الْإِكَامَ عَثِيَّةً بِقَرِيبِ بَيْنِ الْمُنْسِمِينَ مُصَلِّمْ
 تَأْوِي لَهُ قُلُوصُ النُّعَامِ كَمَا أَوَتْ حَزَقَ يَمَانِيَّةٍ لِأَعْجَمِ طَمْطَمِ
 يَتَّبِعْنَ قُلَّةَ رَأْسِهِ وَكَلَّتْهُ حَذَجٌ عَلَى نَعِشٍ لُهُنَّ مُحَيِّمِ
 صَنْعَلٍ يَعُودُ بِذِي الْعَثِيرَةِ يَبِضُّهُ كَالْعَبْدِ ذِي الْفَرَوِ الطَّوِيلِ الْأَصْلَمِ
 شَرِبَتْ بِمَاءِ النَّحْرَضَيْنِ فَأَصْبَحَتْ زُورَاءَ تَنْقَرُ عَنْ حِيَاضِ الدَّيْلَمِ
 هَلْ تُبْلِغُنِي دَارَهَا شَذَنِيَّةٌ لُعِنَتْ بِمَحْرُومِ الشَّرَابِ مُصَرَّمِ
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Figure 7: Antara's Moallaqa (Ibn Shaddad, n.d)

On swift Yemenite she-camel to her home I'd fly
 A she- camel so cursed her udders had gone dry.
 Raising her tail, swaggering, throughout the night she pounds
 With her doughty pads at hardest and highest ground.
 For a day and a night, breaking rough ground she raced
 Like an ostrich, small-eared, head high, and widely paced.
 Young ostriches gather, unknowing, around this male
 Who's like an alien herdsman who in speech would fail.
 The young ostrich follow his head, raised high and tall.
 A tent-like howdah it was, tow'ring o'er them all.
 Small-headed, to "Al- Ashira" goes his eggs to save.
 Looking like an earless, fully fur-clad, black slave.
 To the two "Duhrudh" pools willing, she came to drink
 But from drinking at the "Daylam pools, she would shrink.

Figure 8: Antara's Moallaqa Translated by Al Momayyaz (2013)

The female camel was the most prominent means of the journey, serving as a bridge for crossing. It carries the oppressed 'Self' to its destination. The trip represents a critical stage in Antara's life; it prepares him for the moment of self-assertion and the rejection of slavery. The poet endowed the camel with his own strength, will, and determination. A strong, young camel that does not beget or breastfeed (Al-Zuzani, 1963), it is as active and swift as a male ostrich. Like him, she is resolute in her quest to eliminate slavery.

She refused to drink from turbid water (Dailam water) but instead drank from the pure waters of 'Dahradain,' metaphorically implying Antara's absolute rejection of slavery. In pre-Islamic society, the male ostrich symbolized slavery, as young ostriches sought refuge with it. Antara longs for his clan to recognize him and call upon him for help in crucial times due to his bravery and chivalry, qualities that set him apart from the other members of his tribe. Yet, he also desires that his family would recognize him and offer refuge, but they deny him, along with the principles of justice and equality. By doing so, he asks for things that go against the rigid tribal class system, marking him as an outsider who does not understand the 'language' of his people. He expresses this in the following lines:

كَأَنَّمَا تَنَاشَى بِجَانِبِ لَهْفِهَا أَلْ وَحْشِيٍّ مِنْ هَرَجِ الْعَشِيِّ مُؤَوِّمٍ
هَرَجٌ جَنِيبٌ كَلَّمَا عَطَفْتُ لَهُ غَضَبِي انْقَافًا بِالْيَدَيْنِ وَبِالْقَمِ
بِرَكَّتْ عَلَى حَبِّ الرِّدَاءِ كَأَنَّمَا بَرَكْتَ عَلَى قَصَبٍ أَجْشَلٍ مُهْضَمٍ
وَكَأَنَّ رُبَاً أَوْ كَحَيْلاً مُعْقَلًا حَشَى الْوَقُودُ بِهِ جَوَانِبَ قَمَمٍ
بُنْيَاعٍ مِنْ لَفَرَى غَضُوبٍ جَسْرَةٍ زَيْفَةٍ مِثْلَ الْفَنِيْقِ الْمَكْدَمِ

Figure 9: Antara's Moallaqa (Ibn Shaddad, n.d)

**Trotting at night, she inclines sharply to her right.
As if a cat scratches her left with all its might.
When she, in anger, turns to this cat, for to trounce
With bite and scratch the cat on her is quick to pounce.
By "Ridaa"'s sparse water, thickly o'ergrown with reeds
Under her weight hollow reeds did, with crackle, yield.
With thick, black pouring sweat her head and neck were soiled.
As if 'twas tar that in a wood-fired pot was boiled.
As she brays on, sweat first pours from behind her ears,
Like a well-tried tough male, away she proudly tears**

Figure 10: Antara's Moallaqa Translated by Al Momayyaz (2013)

At first glance, one might think that these lines of verse do not belong to the journey scenes. However, upon deeper examination, one can uncover the broader vision that encompasses the entire poem. The poet uses words metaphorically, with intellectual and emotional connotations, such as 'furious camel.' These words reflect his underlying ideas. He attempts to blend the

elements of the world into one coherent whole and rearranges them in a manner that is infused with two key psychological and emotional principles, both of which merit further investigation.

The image of the ugly-faced cat, showing animosity toward the camel by clawing at its side, is highly expressive. The camel, which escaped the drought and symbolizes the poetic 'Self' of the slave, is attacked by a fierce cat trying to halt its journey. Despite the challenges, the determined camel manages to escape, disregarding the obstacles in its path, driven by the hope of reaching its goal.

Through the preceding depictions of the ruins and the journey, one can uncover the marginalized tribal life the poet endured. The following lines are rich with persuasive elements that argue for his right to freedom—to live as a free human being—because he possesses the moral qualities that entitle him to live with honor and dignity:

إِنْ تُغْفِي لُونِي الْقِنَاعَ فَإِنِّي طَبَّ بِأَخَذِ الْفَارِسِ الْمُسْتَلِمِ
أَتْنِي عَلَىٰ بِمَا عَلِمْتَ فَإِنِّي سَمَحٌ مُخَالِقَتِي إِذَا لَمْ أَظْلِمِ
وَإِذَا ظَلِمْتُ فَإِنْ ظَلَمِي بِاسِلٌ مَرَّ مَذَاقُهُ كَطَعَمِ الْعَلَقَمِ
وَلَقَدْ شَرِبْتُ مِنَ الْمَدَامَةِ بَعْدَمَا رَكَدَ الْهُوَاجِرُ بِالْمَشْوَفِ الْمُغْلَمِ
بِرُجَاجَةٍ صَفْرَاءَ ذَاتِ أُسْرَةٍ قُرْنَتْ بِأَزْهَرِ فِي الشَّمَالِ مُقْدَمِ
فَإِذَا شَرِبْتُ فَإِنِّي مُسْتَهِلِكَ مَالِي وَعِرْضِي وَافِرٌ لَمْ يَكْلَمْ
وَإِذَا صَحَوْتُ فَمَا أَقْصَرَ عَنْ نَدَىٰ وَكَمَا عَلِمْتَ شَمَائِلِي وَتَكْرَمِي

Figure 11: Antara's Moallaqa (Ibn Shaddad, n.d)

**Should you, when seeing me, at once put on your veil
Know that I'm good at slaying knights in coats of mail
What you know of my good traits, you should others tell
If I am not wronged, with others I fare quite well.
But if I'm wronged, in punishment I'll be hard and free
And as bitter as bitter-apple e'er could be
At night I took drink after hot winds came to rest
Drink bought with a coin whose condition was the best
From yellow bottle of many a fluted line
And from a white cloth-stopp'd ewer, I poured my wine.
If I drink 'tis but my money that wears away.
But my honor, 'spite drink, intact will ever stay.
My bounty ne'er falls short after I rise from wine
As you know, my moral traits are e'er so benign**

Figure 12: Antara's Moallaqa Translated by Al Momayyaz (2013)

The preceding lines reveal the inherent traits of heroism that Abila/the tribe is aware of: the poet begins listing the qualities of knights. Pre-Islamic knighthood instills a sense of dignity and honor in its possessor. While tribe members boast of virtues such as faithfulness, extreme generosity, honor, patience, and loyalty (Daif, 1977), the knight (Antara) avoids being driven by whims—an implicit rejection of slavery. If Abila/the tribe places a barrier between herself and the poet (racial discrimination) by demeaning him as a slave, it is because the tribe refuses to acknowledge his valor and courage, despite his ability to defeat the bravest warriors. Antara pleads for the tribe to recognize the noble qualities that elevate him to the free class. His tolerance is admirable but contingent upon justice, as tolerance under oppression is mere weakness and humiliation. He connects chastity to sobriety, noting that one cannot protect chastity while intoxicated, as it requires awareness. Similarly, he links generosity to regaining awareness after intoxication, knowing that the intoxicated squander their wealth. In such moments, a person's noble morals are truly tested

As for drinking wine at noon, when the heat is intense and drinking may tempt one to abandon certain values, Antara's poetic 'Self' remains steadfast in adhering to his morals and principles. Through these lines, he calls upon the tribe to acknowledge him for the virtues he possesses, virtues that set him apart from the rest of the tribe.

Self-awareness and love for change

Antara's 'Self' was burdened with the chains of slavery imposed upon him, despite possessing the qualities that could grant him freedom, either through voluntary means or by force. His poetic 'Self', in its quest for freedom and the tribe's recognition, was driven by both love and a deep desire to transcend his status of humiliation. His determination to achieve freedom and prove his unmatched valor and heroism is evident. Through his memory, Antara revisits three scenes of heroism, which he presents in a narrative form, as the following lines reveal

وَحَلِيلٍ غَانِيَةٍ تَرَكْتُ مُجَدَّلًا تَمَكُّو قَرِيصَتَهُ كَيْشِدَقِ . الْأَعْلَمِ
 . سَبَقْتُ يَدَايَ لَهُ بِعَاجِلِ طَغْنَةٍ وَرَشَاشِ نَافَذَةٍ كَلَوْنَ الْعَنْدَمِ
 هَلَّا سَأَلْتُ الْخَيْلَ يَا ابْنَةَ مَالِكٍ إِنْ كُنْتَ جَاهِلَةً بِمَا لَمْ تَعْلَمِي
 إِذْ لَا أزالُ عَلَى رَحَالَةٍ سَابِحٍ نَهْدٍ تَعَاوَرَهُ الْكُمَاءُ مُكَلَّمِ
 . طَوْرًا يُجَرِّدُ لِلطَّعَانِ وَثَارَةً يَأْوِي إِلَى حَصْبِ الْقَيْسِيِّ عَزَمَرَمِ
 . يُخْبِرُكَ مَنْ شَهِدَ الْوَقِيعَةَ أَنَّنِي أَغْشَى الرِّعَى وَأَعَفْتُ عِنْدَ الْمُعْتَمِ

Figure 13: Antara's Moallaqa (Ibn Shaddad, n.d)

**A belle's man-friend I slew, and there on ground he laid.
And there, like a fear-gripp'd chewing camel, he stayed
A swift preemptive stab from me left him deceased.
A shower of his "Andam"-red blood was released
Inquire, Malik's daughter, from knights of high renown
Whate'er of me, to you, as yet, is still unknown
I'm still mounted on a large, fore-leg swimming steed,
Knights have covered him with wounds that heavily bleed.
Sometimes on him, at slashing foes I headlong charge.
Sometimes on him, I join a hardy host and large.
Who saw me in battle will tell I'm e'er prepared
To charge but I hold back only when spoils are shared.**

Figure 14: Antara's Moallaqa Translated by Al Momayyaz (2013)

The act of killing the lover of the courtesan symbolizes Antara's rejection of weakness and cowardice, traits embodied by the man Abla (representing the clan) chose, believing him to be deserving of her affection. In this dramatic scene, Antara recalls the killing with vivid details, capturing the motion, sounds, and turmoil of life—contrasting sharply with the emptiness and marginalization he endured. This revolt against the cowardly lover represents the self-assertion that Antara believes warrants freedom and recognition. As a dynamic and active force defending the tribe, Antara emphasizes his deservingness of honor and dignity. The vivid description of the enemy's wound and the sound of gushing blood reflects his insistence on being the agent of action, proving himself as a creative actor who seeks to attain the freedom his soul yearns for.

Shedding light on the killing of the courtesan's lover reinforces the poet's sense of absolute power. By defeating the lover, Antara conveys his desire to claim a symbol of life and its varied pleasures. This victory signifies his worthiness to defend his world, representing his quest for recognition, honor, and the right to experience life's richness, which had been denied to him due to his marginalized status.

Thus, in the following lines, the poet expresses concern about Abla's recognition (as a symbol of the tribe) of his knightly abilities. He highlights his heroic efforts, urging her to inquire about his great deeds: "Didn't you ask the horses, daughter of Malek?" The poet concludes that his fight is driven by virtue, the cornerstone of his heroism, rather than material spoils. Through this, he emphasizes two defining traits of a free human: heroism and the pursuit of moral values, reinforcing his desire for acknowledgment and respect from both Abla and the tribe.

The poet continues exalting the 'Self', which helps deny shortage and absence, and insists on permanent presence through heroic deeds that occupy a significant portion of Al Moallaqa. After the scene of the killing, he talks about the heavily armed hero, saying:

مَنْجَحْ كَرَّةَ الْكُمَاةِ نَزَالَهُ لَا مُمَعِنَ هَرَبًا وَلَا مُسْتَسْلِمَ
جَادَتْ لَهُ كَفَى بِعَاجِلِ طُعْنَةٍ بِمُتَقَفِّ صَدْقِ الْكُعُوبِ مُقَوِّمَ
فَشَكَّكَتْ بِالرَّمْحِ الْأَصَمِّ ثِيَابَهُ لَيْسَ الْكَرِيمُ عَلَى الْقَتْلِ بِمُحَرَّمِ
فَقَرَعَتْهُ جَزْرُ السَّبَاعِ يَنْشُنُهُ يَقْضِمُنْ حَسَنَ بَنَانِهِ وَ الْمِصَصَمِ

Figure 15: Antara's Moallaqa (Ibn Shaddad, n.d)

**Well-armed am I , brave knights decline to challenge me
Surrender I do not, nor far away I flee.
A hard, direct and swift stab my arm to him gave
With a re-smithied, re-straightened, re-sharpened glaive.
I pierced his clothes with along and sharp-pointed spear
Those who with honor charge will not of spears stay clear
I left him for wild beasts to have as their fair share.
Between his head and wrist, they set upon to tear.**

Figure 16: Antara's Moallaqa Translated by Al Momayyaz (2013)

To establish itself, the poetic 'Self' enumerates qualities of that hero whom it confronted bravely: he is a conquering hero, heavily armed, and the bravest knights fear his confrontation. Listing such qualities was not done for eulogy but to review the juggernaut which took an imaginary curve. He confronts those whom heroes avoid confrontation with. The brave fear him because they will be food for lions.

This scene highlights the core issue of the poem, exemplified by slavery, and amplifies the voice of revenge from the free people who have denied him. In the third narrative scene, which deals with the death of the protector of truth, the theme of killing recurs, as presented in the following lines:

وَمِنْكَ سَابِغَةٌ هَتَكَتْ فُرُوجَهَا بِالسَّيْفِ عَنْ حَامِي الْحَقِيقَةِ مُعْلِمِ
رَبِّدْ يَدَاهُ بِالْقَدَاحِ إِذَا شَتَا هَتَاكَ غَايَاتِ النَّجَارِ مُلَوِّمِ
لَمَّا رَأَى قَدْ نَزَلَتْ أُرِيدُهُ أَبْدَى تَوَاجِدُهُ لَغَيْرِ تَبَسُّمِ
عَهْدِي بِهِ مَدَّ النَّهَارِ كَأَنَّمَا خَضِبَ الْبَنَانُ وَرَأْسُهُ بِالْعِظْلَمِ
فِطْعَنَتْهُ بِالرَّمْحِ ثُمَّ عَلَوْتُهُ بِمِهْنَدٍ صَافِي الْحَدِيدَةِ مَخْذَمِ

Figure 17: Antara's Moallaqa (Ibn Shaddad, n.d)

**I strike to prize apart the plates that form a shield.
This marks the prowess that warriors should always wield
With dice his hands are deft when winter times are lean
And he who bought all wine, leaving vintners tents clean.
When he saw me come, and that I would take his life.
He bared his back-teeth, but was not with laughter rife
Early in the day, it was him who I descried
All covered with his blood, like one with “Idhlim” dyed.
I speared him first, then, from up high, I ran him through
With sharpest Indian sword whose blade to kill was true.**

Figure 18: Antara's Moallaqa Translated by Al Momayyaz (2013)

In this scene, the poet's 'Self' grows more than in the previous two. The killed hero was of a higher rank, as shown by the distinctive features he possesses. He is the protector of truth in the social system. This term refers to a hero who defends his tribe's rights, name, feats, and history—tasks that cannot be performed by just anyone (Abdul Rahman, 1961). He is a famous leader marked by war insignia and chosen for dueling. Generous in winter, when generosity is rare, he is stout and tall like a giant tree, symbolizing reverence in his group. He is unmatched among heroes. The poet magnifies the traits of this hero, who was killed by a sword blow and arrow stab from Antara.

From the three previous scenes, one notices the rising intensity of the voice of killing: the courtesan's lover, the heavily armed hero, and the truth protector. It becomes apparent that the usurped 'Self' can only restore its lost freedom by overcoming those who threaten its existence and asserting its right to freedom against the 'Other' through rebellion against norms and ideologies that marginalize it. According to the concept of rebellion, rejecting the 'Other,' and the existing conflict, the 'Self' generates its counter-power, beginning with a creative act within the context of the battlefield.

In the following excerpt from Al-Moallaqa, Antara expresses a profound sense of belonging to the tribe, particularly after his father recognizes his lineage. When enemies raided them, his father called upon Antara for assistance. Antara initially responded, “The slave is not good at fighting, but good at milking and squeezing.” His father then urged, “Fight, and you are free.” Antara subsequently engaged in the battle. The following lines elaborate on this:

لُبَيْتُ عَمْرًا غَيْرَ شَاكِرٍ نِعْمَتِي وَالْكَفْرَ مَخْبِئَةً لِنَفْسِ الْمُنْعِمِ
وَلَقَدْ حَفِظْتُ وَصَاةَ عَمِّي بِالضَّحَى إِذْ تَقْلُصُ الشُّفْتَانِ عَنْ وَضَحِ الْفَمِ
فِي حَوْمَةِ الْحَرْبِ الَّتِي لَا تَشْتَكِي عَمْرَاتِهَا الْأَبْطُلُ غَيْرَ تَغْمُغِمِ
إِذْ يَتَّقُونَ بِي الْأَسِنَّةَ لَمْ أَحْمِ عَنْهَا وَلَكِنِّي تَضَالِقُ مُقَدِّمِي
لَمَّا رَأَيْتُ الْقَوْمَ أَقْبَلَ جَمْعُهُمْ يَتَذَامَرُونَ كَرَّرْتُ غَيْرَ مُذَمِّمِ

Figure 19: Antara's Moallaqa (Ibn Shaddad, n.d)

**Umar, I'm told, for my favors, no gratitude shows.
Thanklessness deals the giver's soul quite painful blows.
I kept what my uncle entrusted to my care
During battles, when tightened lips one's teeth laid bare.
From bloody fields of death, heroes ne'er back away.
But of death's horrors they mutter what they must say.
Tween them, and foes spears, they place me in tightest spot.
I cower not, but space to fight I have not got.
The self-urging host had advanced on us in force.
I wheeled at them straight on, and blameless held my course**

Figure 20: Antara's Moallaqa Translated by Al Momayyaz (2013)

In this scene, exaltation reaches its peak as the 'Self' feels it possesses a grace that the masters refuse to acknowledge. The lines reveal the 'Self's stance toward Amro, who represents the master. The struggle between master and slave begins, each trying to assert the true existence of the 'Self'. The poet's 'Self' responds to the master's denial of its existence, which has marginalized it from the societal system.

As for the uncle, he symbolizes the ego, which urges Antara to shoulder the burden of existence through active participation in life, exemplified by excellence and individualism on the battlefield. Actual existence does not negate or contradict group responsibility, as it lacks meaning without the presence of the 'Other' (Hegel, 1807).

However, we saw in the previous scenes that the poetic 'Self' usurped the individuality of the 'Other' by neutralizing him through killing. In contrast, it did not attempt to do this here because the unique excellence it demonstrated was for the sake of recognizing the 'Other.' The 'Self' understood that its existence is meaningless without the presence of the 'Other.' The two adversaries must survive after the struggle (Kojev, 2000). The following lines confirm this issue. The poetic 'Self' was content with merely diminishing the status of the 'Other'—the master and his people—while excelling them and relying on them for protection. Thus, the 'Self' felt victorious. The poet portrayed himself as the leader of the battle, asserting that there was no knight but him, and depicted his people as cowards who sought his help and protection when the conflict intensified. Thus, he says:

يَدْعُونَ عَنَّتْرَ وَ الزَّمَاحَ كَأَنَّهَا أَشْطَانُ بِنْرٍ فِي لَبَانِ الْأَذْهَمِ
مَا زِلْتُ أُرْمِيهِمْ بِثَغْرَةٍ نَحْرِهِ وَ لَبَانِهِ حَتَّى تَسْرِبَلَ بِالْأَدَمِ
فَارْزُورَ مِنْ وَقَعِ الْقَنَا بِلَبَانِهِ وَ شَكَا إِلَيَّ بِغَيْرَةٍ وَ تَحَمُّمِ
لَوْ كَانَ يَدْرِي مَا الْمُحَاوَرَةُ اشْتَكَى وَلَئِنْ لَوْ عَلِمَ الْكَلَامَ مُكَلِّمِي
وَلَقَدْ شَفَى نَفْسِي وَ أَذْهَبَ سُقْمَهَا قَبْلَ الْفَوَارِسِ وَ يَكْ عَنَّتْرَ أَقْدَمِ

Figure 21: Antara's Moallaqa (Ibn Shaddad, n.d)

**They call on Antarah, midst the thickest of spear fall
On “Al-Adham”; spears long as rope, down wells, falls tall
On my steed I charge, slash away, and at them tear,
Till my steed looks as if a shirt of blood does wear.
He reeled from the heavy fall – on his neck – of spear
and to me complained with a choked sob and a tear.
If dialogue he knew, complaining he would be
If he could talk, conversing he would be with me.
My soul’s canker when knights to me called out
“Curses, Antar! Advance and put them to the rout!”**

Figure 22: Antara’s Moallaqa Translated by Al Momayyaz (2013)

Although the mare's presence is typical on the battlefield as a tool of war, the poetic 'Self' endows her with some of its own qualities. The mare, in this context, serves as the objective correlative for the suffering soul that aspires to eliminate slavery. It symbolizes salvation and life (Ajeena, 1994). Salvation is illustrated through the knights' call for help from the active 'Self,' “calling Antara.” This call signifies a quest for actual existence and liberation from the constraints of slavery, thereby enabling the 'Self' to realize its true potential.

Conclusion

The study interpreted Antara’s Moallaqa through the lens of the Master-Slave Dialectic, highlighting the struggle to dominate the 'Other,' which involves erasing their humanity, dignity, sources of freedom, and elements of success, often at the expense of the victim's suffering.

The analysis revealed the deep-seated emotions experienced by those subjected to slavery, oppression, and a sense of inferiority. The poem explores themes of alienation, concerns about the future, and a false sense of identity, all within the context of slavery. The study also explored the struggle between two authorities: the individual Antara, who sought to create his own system through heroic acts, and the 'Other'—the foe and the tribal norms that dominated the pre-Islamic social system. Through challenges, heroic deeds, and bold ventures, the poetic 'Self' was able to assert its identity, achieve actual existence, and gain recognition.

The implications of this study are significant for academicians and researchers in Arabic literature as they become well acquainted with the complex dynamics of identity and freedom in historical contexts, influencing both teaching and research in Arabic cultural studies. Similarly, philosophers who are interested in Hegel’s dialectic philosophy can benefit from the results of this study through understanding how philosophy interacts with literature and various cultures.

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