



THE CONCEPT OF LOVE IN THE QĀLŪ POETRY ANTHOLOGY BY ANIS MANSOUR: A PEIRCEAN SEMIOTIC STUDY OF LANGUAGE

Iqbal Fathuddin¹, Nurlinah², Ahmad Qonit³

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Bandung
E-mail: fathuddiniqbaal@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author:

Iqbal Fathuddin

Email Corresponding :

fathuddiniqbaal@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the concept of love as depicted in Anis Mansour's poetry anthology *Qālū*, through the lens of Robert Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love. A Peircean semiotic framework is employed as a primary analytical tool to uncover the various representations of love and the associated conflicts within the anthology. The research utilizes a descriptive-qualitative method, focusing on the phenomena presented in literary works. Data collection involves a thorough reading of the *Qālū* poetry anthology, from which specific verses related to the concept of love are selected for analysis. The data interpretation process is grounded in comprehensive analysis and supported by relevant sources. The findings reveal that the poetry anthology conveys several dimensions of love, including infatuation, empty love, romantic love, companionate love, fatuous love, and consummate love. Notably, consummate love, or "perfect love," emerges as the predominant theme. This suggests that the anthology primarily reflects the author's aspirations and idealized notions of perfect love, often disregarding obstacles or challenges that might interfere.

Keywords: *Anis Mansour, Qālū, Language, Tringular of Love, Poetry.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Anis Mansour, a renowned Egyptian writer, is known for utilizing wisdom or pearls of wisdom as a medium to express his feelings and thoughts to the public. One of his most famous works is the book "*Qālū*," published in 1967 in Cairo by Dar al-Katib al-Arabi li Taba'ah wa al-Nasyr. This work contains 1,721 pearls of wisdom spread across 236 pages (Dian Insani, 2021). The contents of this book reflect the various emotional nuances and thoughts of Anis Mansour, with dominant themes such as romance, domestic life, women, marriage, the dynamics of life, tragedy, and various other existential topics (Staniyah & Malik, 2023; Jaya et al., 2025).

The poetry anthology entitled *Qālū* by Anis Mansour is an example of a literary work that contains romance, household, women, marriage, tragedy and other bitter things. In contrast to the poetry anthology entitled *Qālāt* by Faruq Al-Juwaidah which

contains love, resistance and nationalism. The poems in the *Qālū* anthology use beautiful language rich in metaphors to express the meaning of love that the poet wants to convey (Dira & Rohanda, 2024; Rosetti, 2024). However, the meaning of love in this poetry anthology is very complex and not always clear and can even be interpreted in various ways. The uniqueness of the *Qālū* poetry anthology lies in its presentation: each phrase or sentence stands independently, without the systematic narrative connection that is common in poetry or prose. As a result, readers will encounter reflective fragments that appear separate, representing the author's observations of various events and situations. (Mulloh & Abyad, 2023; Fadilah et al., 2023; Sihite et al., 2024).

The selection of Anis Mansour's poetry anthology *Qālū* as the object of this research is not without reason. The author compares the work with the short story *Qālat* by Faruq al-Juwaidah, both born in the

Vol 9, No 1 (2026): ESTEEM

modern era of Egypt and written by figures with similar backgrounds and professions, namely as writers, journalists, and contemporary Arab intellectuals. Both raise related themes, namely love, life, and humanity, but with different styles and depths. Anis Mansour's work in *Qālū* has its own uniqueness compared to Faruq al-Juwaidah's work. In terms of format, *Qālū* is arranged as an anthology of wisdom poetry containing reflective and metaphorical fragments, not a narrative pattern like short stories in general (Staniyah & Malik, 2023; Wiendy RerefDianty et al., 2022; Pratama et al., 2020). This makes the work more philosophical, symbolic, and open to semiotic interpretation. Meanwhile, Faruq al-Juwaidah's work in *Qālat* more explicitly emphasizes psychological and emotional aspects through a realistic narrative that depicts the dynamics of love relationships between characters. Thus, *Qālū* was chosen because it has a depth of symbolic meaning and a rich diversity of linguistic signs to be analyzed using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach. In addition, the presentation of love in the form of poetic reflection makes this work relevant to be studied through Robert Sternberg's theory of love which highlights the dimensions of intimacy, passion, and commitment.

The reason researchers used Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach and not other semiotic theories such as Roland Barthes's is because Peirce's theory offers a more systematic and logical analytical framework in uncovering the meaning of signs. Peirce emphasized the triadic relationship between representamen (signs), objects, and interpretants that work dynamically in the process of semiosis. This approach is considered most appropriate for analyzing works that are reflective and full of symbols such as the poetry anthology *Qālū*. Meanwhile, Barthes's theory focuses more on the relationship between signs and cultural myths in social discourse, which is less relevant when applied to introspective and philosophical texts such as the works of Anis Mansour.

Meanwhile, the choice of Robert Sternberg's love theory over other theories such as Erich Fromm's was also based on considerations of the suitability of the research object. Sternberg's triangular theory of love (intimacy, passion, and commitment) is structural and can be clearly classified into categories of linguistic signs that appear in poetic texts (Pelangi et al., 2022). This makes it easier for researchers to identify manifestations of love based on the types of signs analyzed through Peirce's semiotics. Meanwhile, Erich Fromm's theory of love is more humanistic and philosophical, focusing on the moral dimensions and social relationships of love, making it less operational for application in the analysis of signs and linguistic meanings in literary works. Therefore, the combination of Peirce's and Sternberg's theories is considered most appropriate for revealing the representation of the concept of love in *Qālū* in a deep and structured manner.

Within Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework, the triangle of meaning that underlies the relationship between sign, object, and interpretant is further developed into three complex logical paths. Each of these paths represents a different dimension in the process of semiosis. Based on their physical form or appearance, signs are classified into three main types: qualisign (a sign of quality), sinsign (a sign of an actual or specific event), and legisign (a sign based on rules or conventions) (Hidayat et al., 2024). When viewed from its relationship with the object referred to, signs are divided into icons (signs that resemble objects), indexes (signs that have a direct or causal relationship with objects), and symbols (signs that are based on cultural agreements or conventions) (Salam, 2020; Kani & Yılmaztürk, 2021). Meanwhile, in the realm of interpretation or meaning captured by the sign recipient, Peirce divides it into rheme (a sign that indicates possibility or predicate), dicent (a sign that states fact or reality), and argument (a sign that conveys logical reasoning) (Listyani, 2019; Yuliana et al., 2022).

Vol 9, No 1 (2026): ESTEEM

The semiotic process above is the approach in this research to reveal the concept of love contained in the poetry anthology "Qālū". Speaking about the concept and meaning of love, Robert Sternberg, an American psychologist, has proposed the Triangular Theory of Love, or better known as the triangular theory of love. This theory explains that the concept of love consists of three components, namely intimacy as an emotional element containing closeness, connection, and trust; then there is passion that produces drive by producing physical connection, romance, and sexual relationships; and commitment related to the application of cognitive factors (Nayazha et al., 2022; Javid et al., 2024; Fitriani et al., 2023). These three classification paths do not work separately, but rather complement each other in forming a comprehensive understanding of the meaning contained in a sign in a text, including in literary works (Abdiani, 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research was conducted based on previous research published in national journals. First, the study entitled "The Existence of Women in the Anthology of Wisdom of the Quran by Anis Mansour (A Review of Existentialist Feminism)" written by Staniyah and Malik (2023b). In this study, the discussion of women's existence in the anthology is reviewed using Simon de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory. The similarity with this study is that the material objects used come from the same source, namely the Qālū Poetry Anthology by Anis Mansour. This similarity is expected to provide a comprehensive analysis despite the different approaches. The second study is "The Value of Religiousness and Solidarity in the Film Farha by Darin J. Sallam (Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis)" by Ramadhan et al., (2024). The second study provided inspiration in the form of applying Peirce's semiotic analysis to literary works in this case, films which is expected to produce an accurate analysis of the relationship

between representamen, objects, and interpretants, thus producing representative research. Finally, the research conducted by Azizah et al. (2025) entitled "The Value of Romanticism in the Poetry Stanzas on the Instagram Account @fatimahjufry01 (Semiotic Analysis Charles Sanders Peirce)". The latest research provides inspiration in the form of an analysis of a series of beautiful words in each verse of poetry with a Peirce semiotic approach which is expected to strengthen the treasure trove of analytical depth in this research.

The previous research mentioned above shows similarities, namely qualitative descriptive analysis of literary works using Peirce's semiotic approach. However, this study has succeeded in finding a research gap, namely the discussion of the meaning of love as defined by Robert Sternberg. The application of the analysis of the meaning of love with Peirce's semiotic approach has not been found in any research. Furthermore, previous research studies have shown that there has been no discussion of the Qālū Poetry Anthology using Peirce's semiotic approach. Therefore, this study is interesting because it has a novelty in the form of applying semiotics to analyze the meaning of love in the poem Qālū by Anis Mansour..

In simple terms, the application of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to the Poetry Anthology "Qālū" will discuss the signs written in the poetry anthology by Anis Mansour that are related to the meaning of love. Then classified using Robert Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love. This research is interesting because it discusses the concept of love in poetry based on Sternberg's triangular theory of love. The process of revealing the concept of love is carried out using Peirce's semiotic approach which is expected to make this research representative (Yasmin et al., 2024; Hal, 2021; Yohana, 2021). Through this research, various concepts of love will be described based on established theories and approaches, thus providing a clear understanding of the signs of love and romance expressed by the author. Furthermore, this research is expected

Vol 9, No 1 (2026): ESTEEM

to contribute to the development of language and literary research, specifically the analysis of love triangles using Charles Sanders Peirce's theory.

3. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method, complemented by quotation and reference analysis techniques and an expressive approach. The descriptive analysis approach is carried out by first describing the facts found in the data, followed by an analysis process of the data. (Abdussamad & Sik, 2021). As explained Neuman (2019), A qualitative approach focuses on examining the quality of a relationship or phenomenon, with a primary emphasis on comprehensive and in-depth descriptions of the details of events within a specific context. The object of study in this research is Anis Mansour's poem "Qālū," which contains themes of love, marriage, and emotional wounds.

A qualitative-descriptive method was applied by utilizing semiotic analysis developed by Charles Sanders Peirce (and the theory of love) (Bonk & Graham, 2023). This approach was chosen to explore and interpret the various signs of love contained in the poetry anthology Qālū by Anis Mansour. Peirce's semiotic theory is considered relevant because it offers a systematic analytical framework through three main components, namely the representamen (the form of the sign), the object (the referent referred to by the sign), and the interpretant (the meaning or understanding resulting from the interaction between the sign and the object) (Hartono et al., 2024). This approach allows researchers to examine the meaning of love in the text in depth and contextually. From a semiotic perspective, this poetry anthology is viewed as a symbol or sign in each stanza. The meaning of these signs then refers to a predetermined object (Putri & Dawami, 2024). The results of the interpretation of each sign are in the form of an interpretation that is expected to reveal various concepts of love in the poetry anthology "Qālū" by Anis Mansour.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As explained above, the poetry anthology "Qalu" by Anis Mansour has several themes, including: Marriage, Romance, Women, and Suffering. Pierce's semiotic theory explains that every sign is always connected to an object and evokes a specific meaning. This analysis and discussion only selects a few pieces of poetry that relate to the relationship between signs and objects. Therefore, the authors found:

theme	Number of Examples	The concept of love
wedding	4	1 Consummate Love 1 Romantic Love 2 Empty Love
Love	3	1 Infatuation Love 1 Companionate Love 1 Consummate Love
Woman	4	1 Infatuatin Love 1 Non-Love 2 Romantic Love
Suffering	3	1 Romantic Love 2 Consummate Love 1 Empty Love

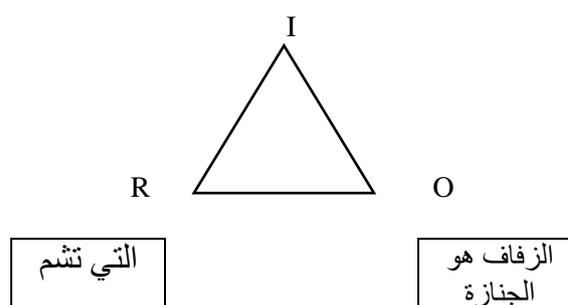
a. Wedding

1) Consummate love

الزفاف هو الجنابة التي تشم فيها
رائحة الزهور بنفسك

"Marriage is a funeral where you smell the flowers yourself."

Consummate Love



فيها رائحة
الزهور
بنفسك
(where
you
yourself
smell the
flowers.)

(marriage
is a
funeral)

In this poem, the poet uses a metaphor that compares marriage to a funeral, emphasizing their shared symbolism and rituals, such as processions, flowers, and life transitions. The object (O) in the stanza refers not to marriage or a funeral literally, but to the concept of marriage as a “symbolic death” a shift from personal freedom and old identities to a committed bond. This metaphor suggests that love leading to marriage brings not only happiness but also suffering, sacrifice, and a deep understanding of the consequences. The interpretant (I) that emerges is the recognition that marriage involves both joy and hardship, a truth often overlooked.

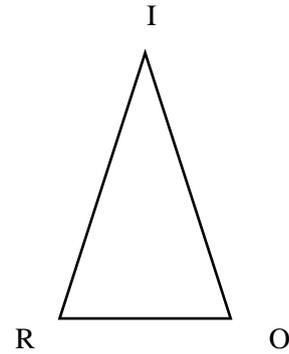
In the context of Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love, this love is considered consummate love, primarily focused on commitment. The metaphor of the funeral signifies the end of individual freedom, while the act of smelling flowers represents accepting the sacrifices that come with it. The poem portrays love as a mature, lasting choice, where intimacy, passion, and commitment combine in the complex reality of marriage. It highlights that love in marriage is not without sacrifice, suffering, and responsibility.

2) Empty Love

السلسلة التي يتعلق منها الكلب والقرد مكونة
”من مئات الحلقات كل منها تشبه دبلة الخطوبة

“The chain the dog and monkey were hanging on consisted of hundreds of links, each resembling an engagement ring!”

Empty Love

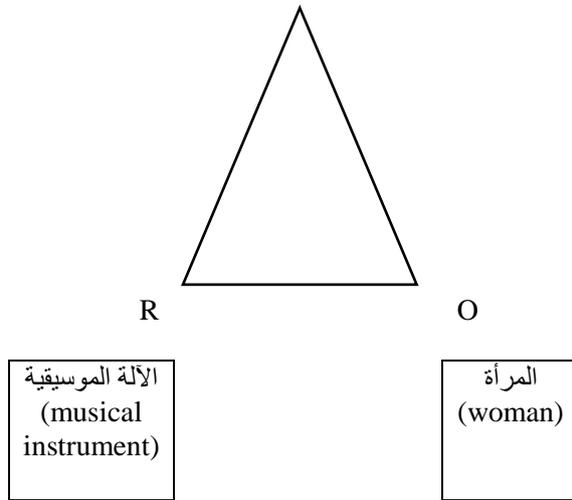


السلسلة
التي يتعلق
منها الكلب
والقرد
مكونة من
مئات
الحلقات
(The chain
on which
the dog
and
monkey
were
hanging
consisted
of
hundreds
of links.)

كل منها تشبه
دبلة الخطوبة
(each
resembles an
engagement
ring)

In this poem, the poet uses a metaphor that likens a chain to an engagement ring, highlighting the visual similarity between the circular links and the form of the ring. This metaphor ironically combines the symbols of freedom and affection with restraint and control. The object represented is not the chain or ring in a literal sense, but rather the concept of love and marriage as a potential source of restriction, where a bond meant to symbolize commitment can instead become a tool of control. The interpretant emerging from this relationship is the realization that love and engagement can be ironic: what seems beautiful can also become a shackle.

According to Sternberg's theory, this love is categorized as Empty Love, focusing



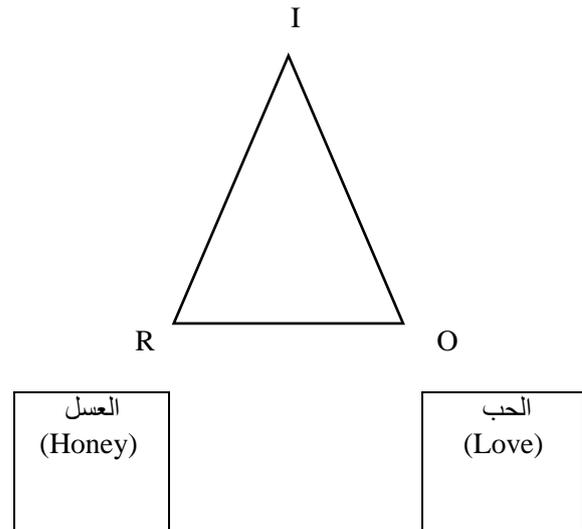
In this verse, the poet uses a metaphor comparing love to a musician playing the same instrument to criticize the tendency to change partners in relationships. The metaphor suggests that just as a musician can create different melodies with the same instrument, a person can experience various aspects of love without needing to change partners. This symbolizes love as a space for acceptance, adaptation, and continuity, rather than being driven by one-sided expectations. The interpretant emphasizes that the longevity of love is not determined by changing partners but by the ability to adapt and understand each other within the same relationship, preserving individual identities. The poem focuses on love as a commitment to grow together, highlighting intimacy and stability over passion. This love is best classified as Companionate Love, which emphasizes intimacy and commitment, and views the relationship as an ongoing, creative process.

2) Infatuation Love

الحب كالعسل المسموم .. لا تعرف آثاره إلا
! بعد فوات الأوان

“Love is like poisoned honey, the effects are only seen when it's too late!”

Infatuation Love

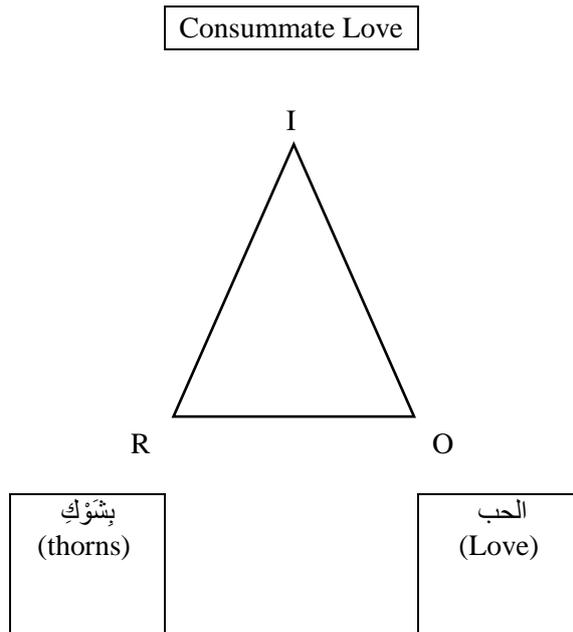


In this verse, the poet uses contrasting metaphors like "poisonous honey" to depict the paradox of love that appears sweet but carries hidden dangers. The metaphor combines images of sweetness and danger, representing love that seems beautiful but leads to unforeseen emotional consequences. The phrase "the impact is only seen after it is too late" further emphasizes the suffering that arises in a relationship, which is only realized after becoming deeply involved. This relationship between the icon and symbol forms an interpretant that highlights how love's risks often go unnoticed until emotions cloud judgment. The poem describes love as initially passionate but lacking true intimacy, with regret setting in once the consequences are inevitable. This type of love aligns with Infatuation Love, driven by passion without intimacy or commitment, ultimately leading to suffering and regret.

3) Consummate Love

لَا يَنْشَعُرُ بِشَوْكِ الْوَرْدِ إِلَّا الَّذِي يَقْطِفُهُ.

“Only the one who picks the rose feels its thorns”



In the verse “Only those who pick roses feel their thorns,” the poet uses the metaphor of beauty and pain to describe love. The rose symbolizes love's beauty and romance, while the thorns represent the pain and risks involved. Both elements point to the concept of love, which blends happiness and suffering. The poet suggests that only those truly committed to love, willing to accept its emotional impacts like pain and sacrifice, can fully experience it. The metaphor emphasizes that love is not without its challenges, and the willingness to endure these difficulties is part of what makes love complete. Thus, the poem illustrates Consummate Love, where intimacy, passion, and commitment are intertwined, even if they include suffering.

c. Woman

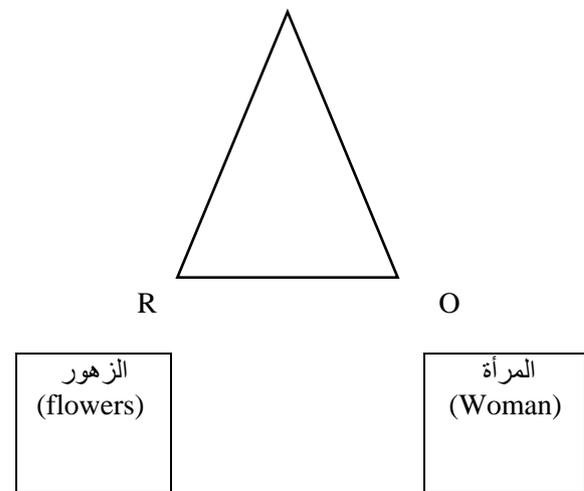
1) Romantic Love

كما يعيش النحل على امتصاص الزهور يعيش
! جسم المرأة على الم يعيش القبلات

“Just as bees live by sucking flowers, a woman's body lives by kisses.”

Romantic Love

I



In this verse, the poet uses biological and sensual metaphors to describe love as both an emotional need and a means of spiritual survival. The metaphor of "bees that live by sucking flowers" symbolizes the natural, unforced need in relationships, while "a woman's body lives with kisses" represents affection and intimacy as vital components of love. The poet compares affection to "emotional nutrition," essential for sustaining relationships. The metaphors highlight love as a need that provides emotional and spiritual energy, emphasizing intimacy and interdependence. The love portrayed here aligns with Romantic Love, combining passion and intimacy without a formal commitment, focused on emotional fulfillment rather than long-term dedication.

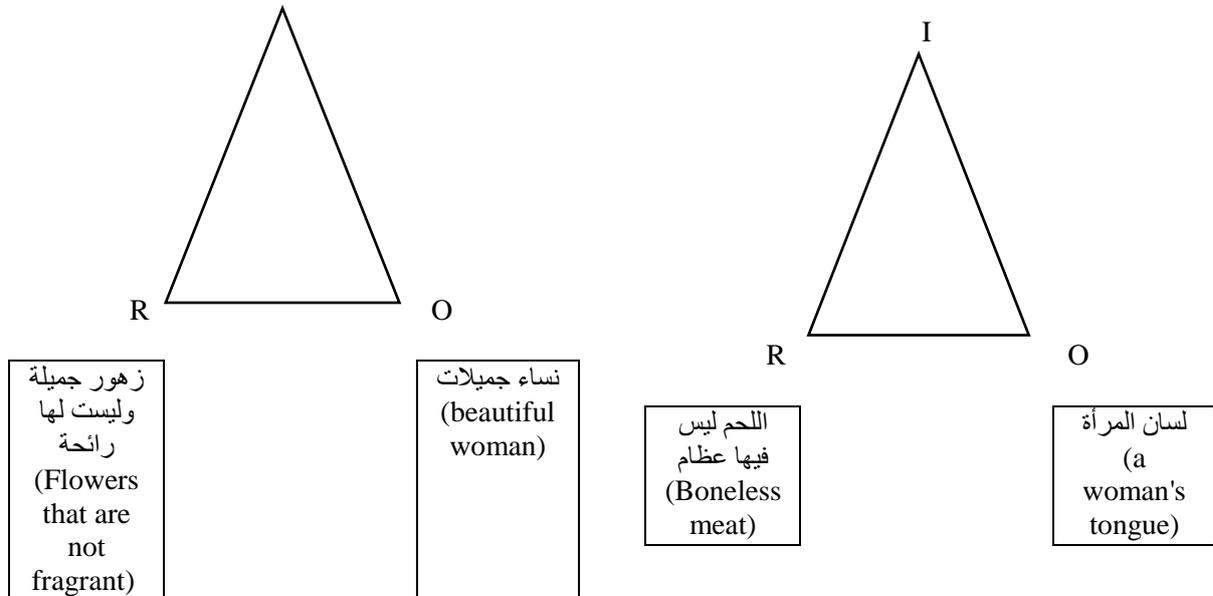
2) Non Love

هناك زهور جميلة وليست لها رائحة ، وهناك
نساء جميلات ، ولكن غير قابلات للحب !

“There are beautiful flowers that do not smell good, and there are beautiful women, but they are not worthy of love”

Non Love

I



In this verse, the poet critiques the aesthetic values of love by contrasting appearance with essence. The metaphor of "beautiful flowers that are not fragrant" symbolizes external beauty that lacks depth, suggesting that physical beauty doesn't always reflect inner goodness or meaning. The phrase "beautiful women, but not worthy of love" challenges the idea that beauty equates to worth, revealing that physical appeal does not guarantee emotional depth, loyalty, or sincerity in love. The poem forms an interpretation that true love requires more than surface beauty; it needs depth, emotional connection, and qualities that are not immediately visible. The love described here aligns with Non-Love, where physical attraction does not develop into a meaningful relationship because it lacks intimacy and commitment. The poem emphasizes that true love is based on relational qualities, not external charm.

3) Romantic Love

قطعة من اللحم ليس فيها عظام . ولكنها
حطمت عظام الرجال : لسان المرأة!

“A piece of meat without bones, but can crush a man's bones: a woman's tongue”

Romantic Love

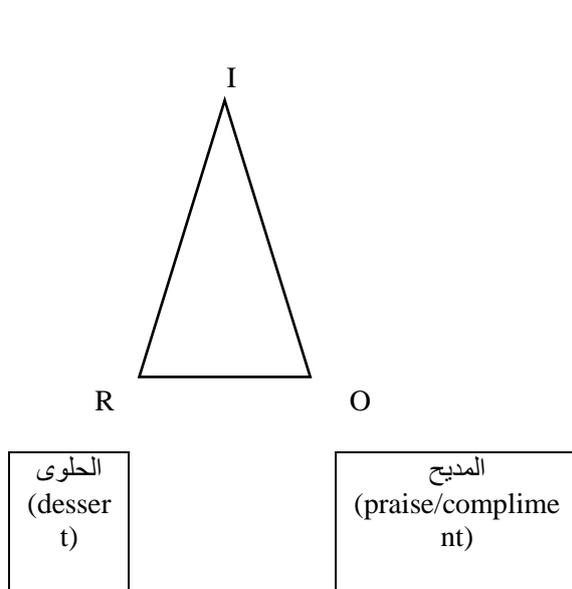
In this verse, the poet critiques the power of language and emotional communication in love relationships. The metaphor "a piece of meat without bones" represents something soft and harmless, symbolizing the tongue's ability to speak words that can either heal or harm. The phrase "can destroy a man's bones" exaggerates the destructive power of words, highlighting how language, especially during emotional conflicts, can damage self-esteem, trust, and psychological stability. By linking this power to "a woman's tongue," the poet critiques the stereotype that women are often associated with verbal dominance in relationships. This verse suggests that love is not only about physical closeness but also the constructive or destructive power of speech. The poem portrays Romantic Love, dominated by intimacy and passion, where language plays a central role in shaping emotional connection and conflict, but without the foundation of long-term commitment.

4) Infatuation Love

كما تأكل الحلوى اسنان المرأة ... يأكل المديح قلبها!

“Just as candy eats away at a woman's teeth... praise eats away at her heart.”

Infatuation
Love



In this verse, the poet uses metaphor to highlight the destructive side of love hidden beneath tenderness. The image of “candy gnawing at a woman’s teeth” represents something sweet yet slowly harmful, symbolizing how seemingly pleasant things can cause hidden damage. The phrase “praise gnaws at her heart” symbolizes how praise, often seen as affection or appreciation, can be manipulative, leading to emotional dependency or harm when insincere. The combination of these metaphors reveals that love, while sweet, can also carry the potential for inner damage. The poem critiques love as Infatuation Love, where passion and verbal charm are dominant, but intimacy and commitment are lacking, emphasizing the irony of love that appears sweet but ultimately erodes trust and emotional stability.

d. Suffering

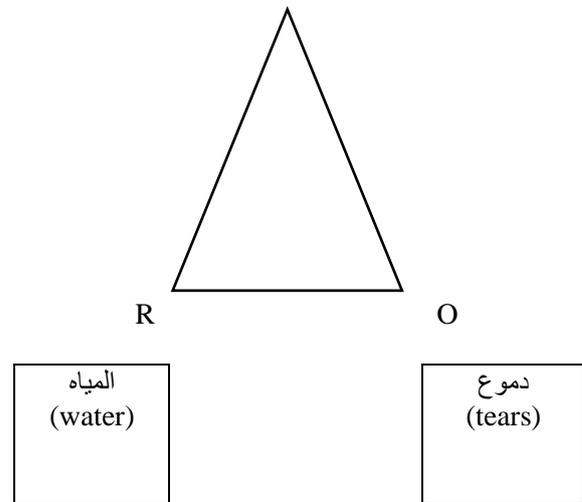
1) Romantic Love

ثلاث ارباع الكرة الأرضية تغطيها المياه ،
والباقي تغمره دموع المرأة!

“Three-quarters of the Earth is covered by water, and the rest is covered by women's tears!”

Romantic Love

I



In this verse, the poet uses metaphorical hyperbole to highlight the emotional pain in love, particularly from a woman's perspective. The phrase "three-quarters of the Earth is covered by water" represents abundance, while "the rest is covered by women's tears" symbolizes emotional suffering, suggesting that love often brings sorrow, particularly for women. Tears here represent sadness, disappointment, and grief, emphasizing that love is not solely about happiness, but also deep emotional wounds. The woman's tears reflect the intensity of emotional involvement and passion, but the poem does not suggest a lasting commitment, as it lacks mutual responsibility. Thus, the love portrayed is Romantic Love, defined by emotional intimacy and passion, without a stable commitment, critiquing love relationships that cause deep emotional pain.

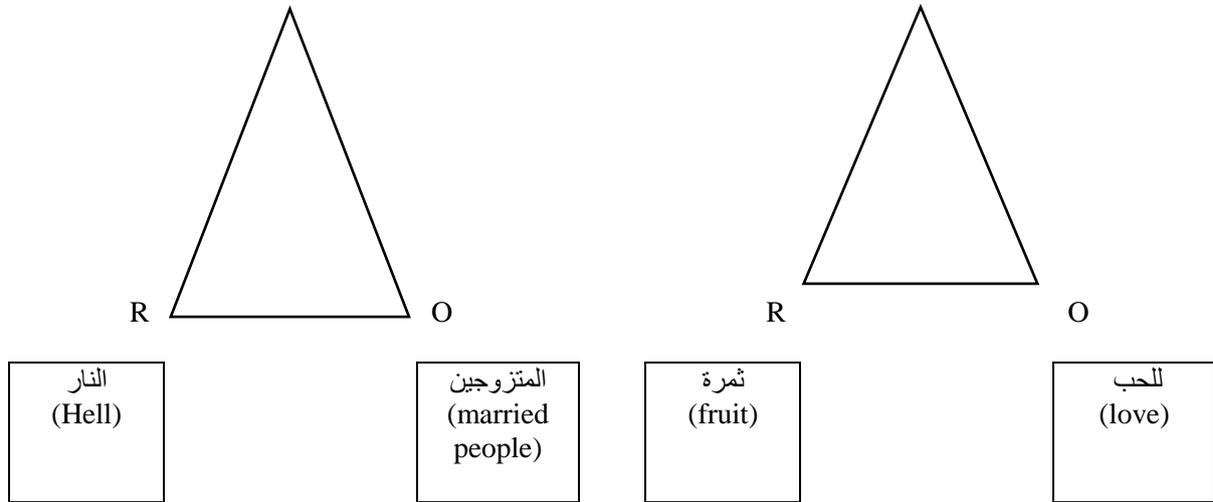
2) Consummate Love

الجنة لكل المتزوجين ، لانهم ذاقوا النار قبل ذلك!

“Heaven is for all married people, because they have experienced Hell before..”

Consummate Love

I



In this verse, the poet uses theological and emotional metaphors to illustrate the paradox of love within marriage. The words "Heaven" and "Hell" symbolize the extreme experiences of happiness and suffering in marriage, based on cultural and religious conventions. "Heaven is for those who are married" represents marriage as a spiritual and social achievement, while "because they have experienced Hell before" symbolizes the conflicts, sacrifices, and emotional struggles inherent in marital commitment. This creates the understanding that love in marriage is not just romantic, but a challenging journey requiring sacrifice and resilience. The poem portrays love in marriage as a form of Consummate Love, where intimacy, mature passion, and commitment are integrated. It emphasizes that true happiness in love comes not from avoiding suffering, but from enduring and growing together through life's difficulties.

3) Empty Love

كثيرا ما يكون الزواج ثمرة للحب و نادرا ما
يكون الحب ثمرة للزواج!

"Marriage is often the fruit of love, and love is rarely the fruit of marriage!"

Empty Love

I

In this verse, the poet uses metaphorical irony to criticize the relationship between love and marriage in societal norms. The phrase "marriage is the fruit of love" symbolizes the common belief that marriage is the natural outcome of sincere and mature love. However, the contrasting phrase "love is rarely the fruit of marriage" challenges this view, suggesting that marriage does not always sustain or generate love. The poet highlights that while love may spark marriage, it does not guarantee its continuity. This irony critiques the imbalance between the idealized link of love and marriage and the reality that, after marriage, passion often fades, leaving the relationship sustained by commitment alone. This poem is best classified as Empty Love, where strong commitment exists without emotional warmth or passion. The poet stresses that marriage, without nurturing intimacy and passion, risks becoming a mere social structure devoid of emotional depth.

5. CONCLUSION

The research on Anis Mansour's *Qālū* anthology concludes that love, as depicted in the work, is a complex and paradoxical human experience, marked by both happiness and pain. Through themes of marriage, romance, women, and suffering, Mansour portrays love as a multifaceted journey that involves sacrifice, emotional depth, and inner struggles. Love is not a

Vol 9, No 1 (2026): ESTEEM

static or idealized emotion but a dynamic process that shapes human maturity and awareness. The findings imply that love is not only a source of joy but also a continuous learning experience. Future research could explore how these themes of love and human relationships resonate in different cultural contexts or examine the impact of Mansour's work on contemporary views of love and emotional expression.

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Vol 9, No 1 (2026): ESTEEM

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