

جمهورية العراق  
وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي  
جامعة الأنبار



# مجلة جامعة الأنبار للغات والآداب

مجلة علمية فصلية محكمة  
تعنى بدراسات وأبحاث اللغات وآدابها

ISSN:2073-6614  
E-ISSN:2408-9680

المجلد ( 18 ) العدد ( 1 ) الشهر ( آذار )

السنة : 2026

جمهورية العراق  
وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي  
جامعة الأنبار - كلية الآداب



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مجلة جامعة الأنبار للغات والآداب

## مجلة جامعة الأنبار للغات والآداب

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رقم الإيداع في دار الكتب والوثائق ببغداد لسنة 1379

المجلد : ( 18 ) العدد (1) لشهر آذار - 2026

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**Pain Woven into the Body: A Study of Somatics in Emtithal Mahmoud and Jasmin Kaur's Selected Poems**  
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**ABSTRACT:**

**Received: 2025-12-30**

**Accepted: 2026-02-24**

**First published online: 2026-03-30**

**ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0903-445X>**

**DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37654/aujll684>**

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**Cite as:**

Ghazi, M. (2026). Pain Woven into the Body: A Study of Somatics in Emtithal Mahmoud and Jasmin Kaur's Selected Poems. *Anbar University Journal of Languages and Literature*, 18(1), 64-77.  
<https://doi.org/10.37654/aujll684>

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In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, where the body becomes the central point of reference and signification, the representation of experiences in texts is no longer mental or abstract. It is delivered to readers through its incarnation within the body that becomes the medium on which such painful experiences as discrimination, violence, racial relegation, and intergenerational trauma are reminisced and inscribed. The current study aims to explore the field of Somatics; the investigation of bodies. It examines the body as a principal site of meaning and perception. It also aims to inspect the way the idea of pain is materialized phenomenologically in the body as a lived experience. This noticeably appears in the poetry of Emtithal Mahmoud and Jasmin Kaur, where the body of people of color, mainly women, becomes a source of resistance against oppression while recording the severe scars of the racist encounter. Mahmoud deals with pain from a bodily perspective, relying heavily on poetic written verses whereas Kaur carries the idea of pain to the real corporality of the page, employing visual elements within the text. Methodologically, this study adopts the qualitative method, integrating a close reading with textual and visual analysis of the selected data. The study concludes that perceiving, acting, and thinking are somatically formed by the body which is not merely a vessel through which painful experiences can pass, but the very condition that makes such experiences fathomable.

**KeyWords:** Somatics, Hyphenated Identity, Corporality, Hanna, Grosz, Heidegger.

## تمفصل الألم داخل الجسد: دراسة عن علم الجسد في قصائد

### مُختارة لأمتثال محمود وجاسمين كور

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#### المستخلص

في القرنين العشرين والحادي والعشرين، حيث أصبح الجسد المحور الأساسي للدلالة والتعبير، لم يعد تمثيل التجربة في النصوص أمراً ذهنياً أو مجرداً. بل انها تُنقل الى القارئ من خلال تجسيدها في الجسد نفسه الذي بات الوسيلة التي تُستذكر وتُنقش عليها تجارب مؤلمة مثل التمييز العنصري والعنف والتهميش والصدمات المتوارثة عبر الأجيال. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى استكشاف علم الجسد والذي بدوره يُشير الى دراسة الأجساد باعتبارها موقعاً رئيسياً للمعنى والإدراك. كما تهدف إلى استكشاف كيفية تجسيد فكرة الألم ظاهرياً في الجسد كتجربة مُعاشة. ويتجلى هذا الامر بشكل ملحوظ في شعر امتثال محمود وجاسمين كور حيث يُصبح جسد الأشخاص ذوي البشرة الملونة وتحديدًا النساء مصدرًا للمقاومة ضد القمع في الوقت الذي يقوم فيه ذلك الجسد بتسجيل الندوب الناجمة عن التجربة المُعاشة. تتناول

امتثال محمود فكرة الألم من منظور جسدي حيث تعتمد بشكل كبير على ألبايات الشعرية المكتوبة بينما تقوم جاسمين كور بنقل هذه الفكرة إلى فضاء صفحة النص الشعري مستخدمةً عناصر بصرية داخل النص. منهجياً، تتبنى هذه الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً يدمج القراءة المتأنيئة مع التحليل النصي والبصري للنصوص المختارة. توصلت الدراسة إلى نتائج مفادها أن الإدراك والتصرف والتفكير يتشكل جسدياً بواسطة الجسم كونه ليس مجرد وعاء يمكن أن تمر من خلاله التجارب المؤلمة، بل هو الحالة التي تجعل هذه التجارب مفهومة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** علم الجسد، الهوية المركبة، الجسدانية، حنا، غروس، هايدغر

## 1. Introduction

We are born into the world as creatures of the flesh, and it is through our bodily perceptions, ... meaning becomes possible and takes the forms it does.

-Mark Johnson, 2007, p. ix

In *The Meaning of the Body*, Mark Johnson announces that the existence of human beings starts and endures through the body, as the latter is the basis of all meanings and experiences. He posits that meaning stems from people's visceral interaction with life, and it progressively grows through corporeal connections. The bodily expression, imitation, gesture, and communication are consequently the very constitutive of human identity (2007, p. ix). The body, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty asserts in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, is "in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive", breathing life into it, sustaining it inwardly, and together forms a system (1982, p.181). It principally represents the textile itself into which every single object is woven, embodying the overall instrument of conception and comprehension (1982, p.211). Therefore, the body plays several significant roles. It becomes a receiver and a transmitter at the same time. It fully initiates and responds as well. It fundamentally contributes to the universe which in turn contributes to the body's composition and progression.

Accordingly, the body, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is considered not only a biological being but also a socio-philosophical construct, as it has "other experiences in its memory that have never taken place in history before" (Dziadec, 2018, p.9). Such experiences involve the bodies that were mutilated and exterminated in concentration camps, massacred and slaughtered during the two world wars, deprived of identity, and instrumentalized in totalitarian regimes. Thus, the body becomes a cultural and conceptual basis that reflects individual and collective identity. It is the main point of reference in negotiating and determining the primary directions of thinking when discussing a phenomenon or a problem related to the self (Dziadec, 2018, p.10). It is the constructor of meaning, the locale of social practices, the carrier of moral and cultural knowledge, and the essence of human equanimity as well (Becker et al., 2000, p.322).

However, the body is a sword of two edges: it either becomes a scar that reminds people of the pain and suffering they once experienced or becomes a source of resistance against any oppression. An example is the case of people of color, particularly women who have been dehumanized in the name of discrimination. They vary in their reaction towards suppression. Some of them suffer whenever they see

the black color of their body, considering it a burden whereas others revolt against such discrimination, refusing to be treated as an object. Then comes the role of the poets to reflect these variations on the canvas of their literary creations. They mirror the pain of the body in two methods. The first is by using the written poetic verse to convey the painful bodily experience. The second is by literally translating pain into a drawing placed on the whiteness of the page, where the body of the text becomes a representative to the real bodily experience of the oppressed. The representatives of those two methods are Emtithal Mahmoud and Jasmin Kaur, respectively.

## 2. Somatic Turn: The Centrality of Soma in Meaning Construction

The ubiquity of the human body in societies, and the variety of forms of its representation in literary texts emphasize that “we live in a ‘somatic society’, in which all political, moral and personal issues are problematised in the body and expressed through the body” (Turner, 1996, p. 6). This is due to the fact that the body, in the postmodern era, has become the cornerstone of civilization. Accordingly, societies have been dealing with a kind of somatic turn. The word ‘somatic’ is derived from the ancient Greek lexeme ‘soma’ which means the body as a whole as well as the instrument of life (Dunn, 2006, p.55). It is coined for the first time by the American philosopher Thomas Louis Hanna (1928-1990) who used it in a therapeutic context in the late 1960s, particularly in his *Bodies in Revolt: A Primer in Somatic Thinking*. Hanna identifies this term as a “bodily being” and not just a body. It is a word that usually reminds Hanna of “a piece of meat – a slab of flesh laid out on the butcher’s block or the physiologist’s work table, drained of life and ready to be worked upon and used” (Hanna, 1985, p.35). He adds that soma is “expanding and contracting, accommodating and assimilating, drawing energy and expelling energy. Soma is pulsing, flowing, squeezing, and relaxing” (Hanna, 1985, p. 35). Hanna stresses the dynamicity and the ever-changing nature of the body, leading him to think of the howness of perceiving the body, setting the foundations for regarding it as a phenomenon, and finally declaring the field of Somatics. He announces that:

Somatics is the field which studies the soma: namely the body as perceived from within by first-person perception. When a human being is observed from the outside – i.e., from a third-person viewpoint – the phenomenon of a human body is perceived. (Hanna, 1995, p. 341)

Hence, when the body is experienced from within, there would be no separation between the body and the mind. They both are experienced as a unified whole, forming a system of reference that is centered on itself.

Pursuing a profound investigation of literary criticism, Somatics is represented by several philosophers and theorists. One of them is the feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz (1952), who is known for her involvement and contributions to Corporeal feminism<sup>1</sup>. She regards the soma as a source of creativity, knowledge, and transformation. In her *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Grosz posits that “the body is not an obstacle to thought or a vessel to be overcome; it is the very condition of subjectivity” (1994, p. xii). It is not a passive entity shaped by numerous social forces. Rather, the body is a dynamic process that produces subjectivity.

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<sup>1</sup> Corporeal feminism is an approach that redefines the human body, not as a given biological entity or a passive space of inscription, but as a productive, dynamic, and generative force (Kidd et al., 2025, p.599).

According to the Groszian Somatics, the soma is the ground of perception. It mediates between both the internal, such as the biological drives, and the external, such as language, discourse, and power (1994, p. 19). She even critiques the colonial and patriarchal systems, as both have erased and disciplined women's bodies. However, women can resist that oppression by concentrating on their body and what is related to it such as pain, suffering, pleasure, and desire, turning these bodily experiences into a political speech to regain what is usurped by the colonial and patriarchal suppression. Thus, Grosz declares that the soma represents a continual process of becoming which "writes itself, and is written, within history and culture (1994, p. 142).

As long as the investigation of somatics is not only expressed in written poetic verse but also in the spatiality of the text itself, it is necessary to refer to the philosopher Martin Heidegger and his description of language as 'a house of being'. In his *Being and Time*, Heidegger postulates that meaning is inherited within the layers of the body of the text. The meaning of any text is thrown in the middle of its canvas exactly like human beings who are suddenly thrown in the middle of this world. He entitles this process 'Geworfenheit', meaning the thrownness into a hostile world (Heidegger, 1962, p. 20-21). Sometimes, the soma of the text takes the shape of its meaning, and at other times, shapes and drawings are placed within the spatiality of the overall soma of the text to express the intended meaning. The Heideggerian theory highlights the idea that language, which shapes the soma of the text, speaks of its own accord, and thus becomes a spatial being that has the capacity of finding and originating expressions within its own domains. Heidegger announces that language is indeed the house of being which is hunted by readers to receive the call of language (Heidegger, 1962, p. 26). The readers, by poetically dwelling on the body of the text, would definitely respond to this call. Like the earth that exists the moment people dwell on it, and in their dwelling let the earth be as such, the text cannot be phenomenologically perceived without the reader dwelling on it (Meljac, 2008, p. 69).

Daniel Punday, the narratologist, also concentrates on the reader's encounter with the text, which always happens through corporeality. In his *Narrative Bodies*, Punday asserts that the composition of meaning has to be achieved through the corporeal. For this reason, bodies occupy texts in the same way that texts involve with the interpretations and articulations of bodies. He confirms that "narrative, then, always first and foremost depends upon a corporeal hermeneutics—a theory of how the text can be meaningfully articulated through the body" (Punday, 2003, p. 15). Thus, the concreteness of the page can bear the meaning of its intended message, contributing to the unified whole of the poem.

### 3. The Politics of Flesh: Emtithal Mahmoud and Jasmin Kaur

Emtithal Mahmoud, who was born in 1992, and Jasmin Kaur, who was born in 1993, have moved the experience of the body into an effective discourse, despite their young age, based on their own experience as females whose identity has been otherized because of their origin. Mahmoud, who lives in America, is of Sudanese, Darfurian origin, and Kaur, who lives in Columbia, is of Punjabi Sikh origin. Both of them have been suffering diasporic conditions, living in a foreign country, as their motherland was under the colonial violence. Mahmoud was forced to migrate to the United States at her early age, because Sudan witnessed a dreadful war. Kaur has also been deprived of her hometown because of the colonial conflict in India. Therefore, both poets decide to let their voice be heard through poetry, writing against all kinds

of colonial and patriarchal suppression that have been teaching women how to erase their identity, shrink, and feel unease with their skin color (Mahmoud, 2018, p.9: Kaur, 2019, p.256).

Mahmoud was the winner of the Individual World Poetry Slam Championship that took place in Washington in 2015. It is a performance-based poetry, where the participating poet not only reads poems but also tries to live and perform the experience mentioned in the poems through the bodily gestures. Mahmoud, when she first participated in this competition, regards the stage as an outlet of her desolation. She, through her bodily performance, shares her experience as a depressed female who is suffering both the diasporic conditions, and the memory of a war-tor Darfur which has haunted her so long. She, for instance, touches upon such ideas as “[f]lesh was never meant to dance with silver bullets”, and the fact that she has witnessed “sixteen ways to stop a heart”, and end the life of people through the destructive war. She also reveals that she is remorseful for having refuge in the United States, leaving her people behind without any support. She wishes that her “body should be lined with bullets: one for each of [her] brothers and sisters who stopped a bullet for [her]” (Castellanos-Monfil, 2015). Hence, Mahmoud tries to relate the body to every single experience she had in life.

Indeed, Mahmoud attacks the systematic subjugation and the oppressive ideologies that attempt to brainwash the Black identity. She reflects on these issues in her poetic collection *Sister's Entrance*, which is published in 2018. Brimming with anger, mourning, and resilience, this defiant and empowering collection inspects the unspeakable. It narrates the experience of a Black female in the United States, dealing with the diasporic conditions that affect women of color all over the world. It challenges several issues such as misogynoir, the patriarchal lens that severely affects women, and the influence of racist practices on a female's body. Mahmoud, in *Sister's Entrance*, uses her voice to “enunciate the issue of violence as a universal problem instead of a third world issue for women who feel equally unsafe” in various places in the world (Sohini, 2022, p.45).

Likewise, Kaur amenably calls for the rights of women, and rises up against the injustice of women of color. She posits a question that “in a world intentionally silences the voices of its marginalized communities, what does it take to be heard?” (Kaur, 2021, p.2). She intends to move marginalized women from the state of being merely subalterns to that of being heard by the entire community, no matter what it takes. She even defies the male gaze that considers a female an object of desire, a commodity to be traded, a burden to be cast-off, and a source of free labor. She believes that the soma of a female must be respected and not to be verbally and physically devastated. Kaur postulates that a woman, despite her inherent human rights, is deprived of her future, life, and even her body. They are no longer her own (Kaur, 2020, p.7). She avows that:

We live in a world where so many dimensions of power and choice are still determined by gender. Most women and girls face some, if not many, discriminatory barriers to equality. Among the many causes and consequences of gender discrimination, harmful practices rank as some of the most insidious. (Kaur, 2020, p.7)

Kaur touches upon several harmful practices that enlarge the oppression of women. She adds that women all over the world are damaged spiritually and physically with

the full consent of their parents and society. Such practices involve selling and exchanging a female for money, “mutilating their genitals, often rationalized as a rite of passage from childhood to womanhood”, and forcing a little girl to marry in the name of traditions, regarding her as a commodity (Kaur, 2020, p.17). Kaur deals with such issues in her works *When You Ask Me Where I'm Going* (2019) and *If I Tell You the Truth* (2021). The poems in these two books vary in their exploration of different subjects related to women, including their soma, trauma, distress, survival, empowerment, and social injustice. The poet, in these two books, not only depends on the poetic verse to convey the intended message but also on the visual formation of the text. The spatiality of the text becomes the medium through which the poet communicates her ideas to the readers. This means that the abstract idea of the body turns to be tangible through the physicality of the poem.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The representation of females' pain woven into the body takes two directions. The first is depicted by Mahmoud, particularly in her *Sister's Entrance* (2018), where she deals with the pain of black-skinned people, particularly women from a bodily perspective, whereas the second is portrayed by Kaur, especially in her *When You Ask Me Where I'm Going* (2019) and *If I Tell You the Truth* (2021), in which she carries the bodily experience to the real corporality of the page.

In her “Eulogy” (Mahmoud, 2018, p.115), Mahmoud depicts the brutality of discrimination that is practiced against people of color, particularly women. It digs deep into loss, ferocity, bodily damage, and the emotional aftermath of war. Through the lens of an immigrated female, Mahmoud stresses the experience of a woman who lives with a hyphenated identity in a country that is indifferent to her pain. She exposes the soma and the way the latter becomes the carrier of inherited trauma and anguish. This results in the idea that the poem is not only a eulogy of those who have died because of war but also for Mahmoud's own trauma and wounds that are metaphorically emblazoned on her soma. At the very beginning of the poem, Mohamoud says:

Black girl writes eulogy in the flesh.  
They took my skin;  
Paraded it around the town square;  
pinned their desire, their hatred to it;  
Hung it on their clotheslines;  
Fastened it over the eyes of their  
children  
so they wouldn't see me

In these lines, the intensive sentiments are not portrayed intellectually but somatically. The human body, following the Groszian ideas, becomes a witness and a narrative archive at the same time. It records experiences. That is, Mahmoud starts the poem with a strong reference to her soma. Instead of having a paper to write on, she uses “flesh” to inscribe her eulogy on. Her Black body is considered a text on which the eulogy is lived, thrived, and extoled throughout life. It becomes a living experience that records every single emblem of suffering.

Gradually, the agony in these lines is charged politically. The body, which is the medium of communication between the self and the universe as well as the source of creativity and knowledge, is severely usurped. The speaker's “skin” is forcibly taken

by the Whites who “[p]araded it around the town square”. This unquestionably contradicts the fact that “[t]he human body is not an instrument to be used, but a realm of one’s being to be experienced, explored, enriched and, thereby, educated” (Hann, 1985, p.39). Indeed, the act of stealing the skin causes a kind of crack in the boundaries of the self. Penetrating this boundary initiates a psychological instability and a loss of protection. Moreover, this incompleteness of the somatic integrity designates the idea of thingification and commodification of Black bodies through the act of enslavement. That is, the soma of this Black female definitely records the idea of slavery practiced against Black people who have been treated as objects, taken and “paraded” from one place to another to be sold. It evokes the idea that the flesh, being observed as a property, is racially dehumanized publicly at “town square”; an area for communal gathering. This by itself permits violence to be something normal and socially accepted.

The poet proceeds in depicting the meanness of white-skinned people, announcing that their “desires” and “hatred” are “pinned” on her skin. The latter compulsorily turns to be a display screen on which various aggressive emotions (e.g. anxieties and illusions) are glued. This makes her soma tear into pieces. It can no longer bear the tension of the double burden it has because of the Whites’ contradicted emotions. Indeed, the impossibility of avoiding this racist eye verifies the idea that people of color cannot escape stereotypes imposed on their bodies by the White community.

Again, the Black body is objectified and turned into a thing hung on “clotheslines”. In addition to normalizing violence by carrying it to the everyday domestic space, this act of hanging the skin on clotheslines designates the idea that the soma of this Black female becomes a thing used by the Whites who wash its identity and form it the way they like. Like the pain that is woven into this Black body, the violence is publicly woven into every single part of life. It even extends to be practiced in front of the white-skinned children as a way of planting its seeds in their minds and numbing their senses. This definitely depends on the phenomenologicality of the soma in front of those children, and how it is perceived by them. That is, the body, here, serves as a barrier between those children and the Black female. Covering their face with her skin signifies the idea that those children are not meant to observe this Black female as a human being. Her visibility is denied. She is displayed as merely an object, and should remain as such in their minds so that they would not sympathize with her, neither now nor in the future. Thus, instead of writing itself throughout history, as it is declared by Grosz, the soma of this Black woman is written and shaped by society, leading to the fact that she is culturally distorted. However, there is a strong rejection of letting violence expunge the identity of Black people, as long as the speaker is resisting such racial practices by not being afraid of voicing them in her poem.

In the second stanza, Mahmoud goes back in time, exhibiting the first moment of her birth, when suppression and agony engrave themselves onto her very existence:

Blanket. Burial shroud. Body.  
My mother gave birth to me in a casket.  
I never grew out of it

The burden of a Black body is experienced since the speaker’s first breath in life. What usually comes to mind when hearing the word “birth” is such indications as

contentment, a new beginning, happiness, etc. Yet, what is delivered here is the opposite. The poet starts the idea of birth with such words as “Blanket. Burial shroud. Body” which all have the connotations of death, suffering, the end of the beginning, and suppression. These three words are revolving around the soma itself, proving that the body is the first and the last site of meaning. The “Blanket” signifies the envelope of a dead body, the “Burial Shroud” is the clothe of death, and the “body” is the cadaver. Mahmoud, when she delves deep into the idea of birth, concentrates on the connotation of the soma itself, and what moves around it. The fact that “[m]y mother gave birth to me in a casket” implies that the speaker is being born into a trauma. Following the Heideggerian idea of thrownness, she is thrown into this aggressive world, and she “never grew out of it”. The fact that she was born into “a casket” symbolizes that she is thrown into a cocoon, and has to burry herself into it as long as she was born with a Black skin. The latter, that supposed to be one of the main keystones of her identity, becomes a shameful scar that needs to be buried from the very beginning of her life.

The existential possibilities of the speaker’s soma are striped at birth. The somatic horizon of her identity is embodied in this “casket”, as the body is ruffled with racial discrimination, destruction, constriction, danger, and precarity. Her nervous system is constructed within a vessel of bereavement and death instead of wholeness and life. Such somatic memories will live with her, emerging from time to time, and creeping into her gestures, movements, speech, postures, and breath. Accordingly, her trauma would turn to be a permanent bodily habitation as long as the soma is the residue of a lived encounter, as Merleau-Ponty says: “the body is our anchorage in a world” (1982, p.146). Here, this anchorage is formed by perpetual inclusion, suffocation, threat, and violence. This verifies the idea that her first somatic experience with this universe is one of conclusiveness and confinement. She experiences a body whose identity, according to her society, is destined to be restricted, controlled, and eventually buried. Thus, the way out of this is either reshaping that cage/casket from within or experiencing a new birth after her birth.

The pain woven into the body is not limited to the speaker herself, it is extended to include another woman; the mother of this Black female. When the speaker’s body is hung, an attempt is made to carry it to the mother, and here another disaster unfolds:

...  
and carried me to my mother.  
Spoiled fruit to an unknowing owner.  
She couldn’t see me. They had taken her eyes,  
Her mouth, her feet.

In these lines, the body of this Black female is likened to a “[s]poiled fruit”, signifying that her body is damaged, decayed from within, corrupted, and definitely unfit for its purpose. The mother, who is the primary source of this body, is described as “unknown owner”, because both of them, the daughter and the mother, are somatically deformed. It is hard to decide which is which. That is, the body of the daughter is completely besmirched and distorted as the Whites hung it before. And, the mother’s body is also malformed as “[t]hey had taken her eyes”, “[h]er mouth” and “her feet”. This distortion of the Black somatics creates a sort of disconnection between these two bodies. A somatic gap occurs between the body of the daughter, which bears a trauma and spoilage, and that of the mother, which is no longer able to

receive the knowledge provided by the transmitter; her daughter's soma. The mother becomes unable to observe, speak, or move. They numb her senses, making her a subaltern. This violence practiced against the mother's soma is portrayed in its ugliest forms. It is embodied in the act of the literal confiscating of corporeal and expressive organs, including eyesight, talking, and movement. Taking the mother's "eyes" indemnifies that she would no longer witness the cruel reality of the White community. Taking "her mouth" ensures that she would neither call for the rights of her daughter nor narrate this reality to others to destain the reputation of the Whites. And, taking the mother's "feet" certifies that she cannot escape or move forward to avenge herself and her daughter. Accordingly, she becomes somatically disassembled, and perceptually absent. She is entirely denied her bodily access neither to the universe nor to her child, risking the idea of being somatically validated.

Thus, the body, which is the source of all meaning, is demolished. It becomes merely an archive of such racial practices as well as painful experiences to be remembered throughout history. This proves that the act of annihilating the Black bodies is the vicious circle by itself. It starts with the body of the main, ultimate source, the mother, and extends to include that of the new generation, the daughter. It results in making the new generation agonize a double trauma: the suffering of being a rotten "fruit" because of her damaged body, and the suffering of being carried to an "unknown owner", who lacks the ability to soothe her child and see her wounds.

In "People Like Us" (Mahmoud, 2018, p.11), Mahmoud proceeds in observing pain somatically through the lens of her bodily experience. She exhibits how painful memories are stored not only in her mind but in all parts of her soma. At the very beginning of the poem, she says:

Memories of my childhood live  
between the rings of sand around my  
ankles and the desert heat in my lungs

Here, the poet perceptibly states that the sore memory of her childhood is resident not in the cognition but in her body, particularly in the "ankles" and the "lungs". Being a Black little girl, experiencing war for the first time in Darfur expands the wounds of her body. Mahmoud is confined by her childhood trauma which is phenomenologically revived whenever her body meets this universe and touches the sand. The memory turns to be visceral as well as interoceptive. It is visceral for being stored in the concreteness of the world, particularly in the "sand". And, it is interoceptive, as it is kept in the "lungs" of the speaker as well. That is, the lungs are the responsible of breathing and surviving in this life. They create a kind of a regular exchange as well as an ongoing process of interconnection between the inner world of the self and the external one, amalgamating both sides together. Through the act of respiring, the soma, along with the processing of the lungs, engrosses not only the air itself but also every single atom of this larger biosphere. Consequently, with every inhalation, the brutal atmosphere of the past is restored. The "desert heat" of Darfur at the time of war is constantly felt somatically, becoming part and partial of the poet's internal climate. Sensing that dry and hot air when it moves in and out of her soma is considered the main imprint of that memory.

Then, Mahmoud seeks for a way of cleansing her exhausted body, exposing the healing process of a damaged body:

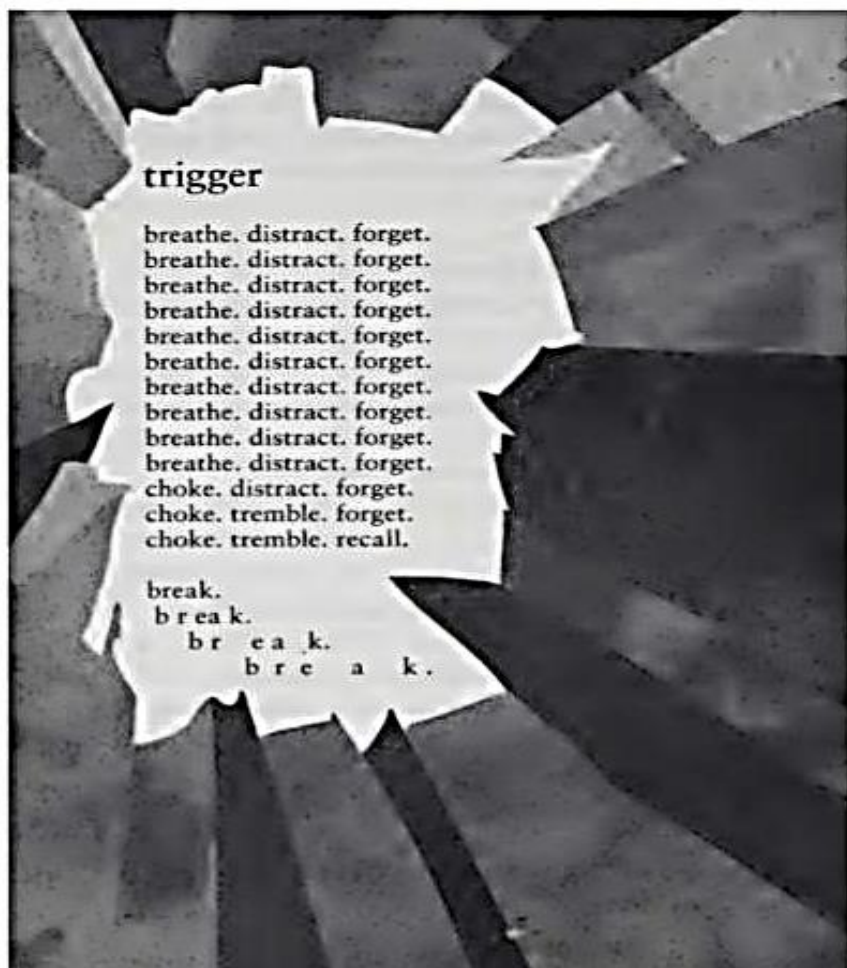
I still believe that nothing washes



Before reading the poetic words of the poem, the structure is deeply examined, as the meaning of the text is related to the howness of its phenomenologicality; the way the text appears to the perception of the eye. The first thing that comes to mind while observing the corporality of the poem is that the text is generating a deep-pulling vortex that has no telos. Getting closer to the text, it is figured that the canvas of this vortex is structured by merely six words, “violence grows hurt grows darkness grows”, repeated many times, and forming its entire body. Accordingly, the body of the poem is visually establishing its intended message. The idea of continuity and infinity of the vortex goes hand in hand with what is intended to be conveyed through the poem; the violence that is constantly and endlessly practiced against women of color from one generation to another with no mercy.

As long as the encounter between the reader and the body of the text happens through corporeality, as Punday believes, meaning is obtained through the corporeal. In this case, readers are invited to dwell on the spatiality of the poem. The readers are called to fill the gaps left by the poem. The gap here is represented by the question that is left unanswered by the poet. It is a clear invitation to the reader to answer the call of language and dwells on its house of being. That is, succeeding the six repeated words in the poem, a question is emerged: “and tell me what breaks the circle?”. This question is left open as a way of motivating the readers to search for solutions to support the marginalized women and break the vicious circle of violence that broaden their suffering. If violence grows, the spiritual wounds of the relegated women would grow, too, and consequently desolation, fear, anxiety, distress, disarray and pain, represented here by the idea of “darkness”, would prevail all over their life, making the body itself alien and outlandish. Thus, the idea of pain here is visually woven into the body of the page, corresponding the one that is woven into the soma of women of color.

In Kaur’s “trigger” (Kaur, 2021, p. 160), the linguistic items within the body of the text personify their intended meaning. Readers’ two activities of perception, seeing and reading, are evoked for the meaning to be revealed. Kaur somatically exhibits the useless attempts of a marginalized woman who tries to find a way out of her agony:



At first glance, the text seems to be structurally signifying a chaotic linguistic field that has no cohesion. There is a sense of aporia sweeping throughout the body of the text. The latter seems to be written by someone aphasic because of the lack of the essential rules of writing well-constructed sentences. The poem looks like a heap of words that has no anchoring points for its meaning. It is merely built on certain words repeated several times with unfamiliar visual formation. Yet, it is the readers who, through their dwelling on the text, digs deep into the corporality of the text to figure out its meaning which, as Heidegger believes, is thrown within the canvas of the poem.

Here, there is an attempt to internalize pain, from the very beginning of the poem, in which the poet offers a kind of exercises to forget about suffering. She is triggering women of color to embrace the process of healing. She, for example, highlights such acts as breathing, distracting the self with something, and trying to forget about the painful memories of oppression. Yet, her attempt is destined to failure, as the text somatically hints at something different, asserting the continuity of suffering. That is, after reiterating these exercises ten times, based on the ten repetitions of the words “breath. distract. forget” in the poem, there is a moment where the speaker starts trembling, and her body becomes incapable of enduring the burden of pretending that she is spiritually cured. Following the Heideggerian phenomenologicality of meaning within the layers of the poem, the words “breath. distract. forget” are immediately followed by “choke. tremble. forget” as well as “choke. tremble. recall”. This proves that the speaker is in a vicious circle of such situation, and cannot find a way out. She

is constantly trying to forget about pain but eventually it creeps into her mind, making her “recall” all the misery she lives in. This also can be seen through the body of the text, where the shape of the poem indicates a sort of a deep, shallow hole with sharp carvings at its top. And, the speaker is metaphorically thrown into this hole, which is a representative of depression, trying futilely to get out of it.

Additionally, the last lines of the poem also mirror the pain as well as the inner struggle of the speaker, where she encounters a kind of “break”. Somatically, the text starts forming the shape of a real break when the letters of the word “break” is literally dropping and falling apart. This act of breaking parallels the idea that this woman is spiritually breaking and tearing into pieces because of her attempt of internalizing pain.

Thus, the body of this poem plays a significant role in delivering the message, in which the bodily experience of the marginalized woman is carried through the corporality of the text. In this case, the abstract idea of pain becomes tangible through the perception of the eye of the visual formation that is combined with the linguistic items within the body of the poem.

Integrating the textual and visual analysis of the selected poems of both Mahmoud and Jasmin, it becomes obvious that Somatics is conceptualized in multidimensional patterns of poetic writing. The pain that is woven into the soma is conveyed not only thematically but also materially. It is, as it is seen in Mahmoud’s poems, anchored in the racialized, displaced body. It manifests through the bodily gesticulations, holding narratives of viciousness, exile, and struggle. Therefore, Somatics here runs through the real, susceptible body, foregrounding an actual corporal presence. Conversely, Somatics, in Jasmin’s poems, is reconfigured through the physicalness of the blackness and blankness of the page. The very structure of the words somatically executes pain through the textual fragmentation and compression. The poetic lines that are broken, for instance, and the visual disproportion firmly feign bodily tension and strain. Thus, braiding together these two multidimensional poetic patterns, pain is portrayed as an affective force that surpasses narrative descriptions. It operates equally within and beyond the human soma as an internal sensation as well as a material practice capable of redesigning the form of the poetic text.

## 5. Conclusion

Through the embodiment of painful experience and memory in the body of the oppressed, on the one hand, and the body of the text, on the other hand, the soma proves to be the origin, medium, and initiator of meaning. It orients the self within the entire world, becoming the basis of perception, the instrument of refined awareness, and the space of social engraving and resistance. In Mahmoud and Kaur’s poems, the depiction of pain is not merely emotional but also somatic. It reveals that the body progressively records the scars of the lived experiences. This undeniably appears through the actions, gestures, movements, and even the breathlessness of the traumatized. It also demonstrates that the aftermath of pain and suffering is encoded within the layers of the body. It transforms the flesh into a register of forfeiture and resilience at the same time. In this case, the body is not a passive object that is marked by an act of suffering. It becomes, in addition to mediate the painful experience, the experience itself through which the world can be intelligible. The

body ultimately emerges as an active sphere that endures, senses, and reconfigures experiences throughout time.

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# UNIVERSITY OF ANBAR JOURNAL FOR LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

Quarterly Peer-Reviewed Scientific Journal  
Concerned With Studies  
And Research On Languages

**ISSN : 2073 - 6614**

**E-ISSN : 2408 - 9680**

**Volume : (18) ISSUE : (1) FOR MONTH : MARCH**

**YEAR: 2026**