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An Evasive Aesthetics: Appropriation, Witnessing and War in Shadi Angelina Bazeghi's *Flowmatic*

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I investigate how Shadi Angelina Bazeghi writes about the Iran-Iraq War in her poetry collection *Flowmatic* (2020). Bazeghi assembles several different kinds of texts in *Flowmatic*, and one of these texts is a testimony by an Iranian soldier-engineer who worked as a programmer setting up at system to identify the bodies and body parts of fallen Iranian soldiers. Both the words of the soldier's testimony and the act of programming and data processing have found their way into the poem; as appropriated text and as the poem's overarching aesthetic mode. Using the soldier's witness account as a prism, I will look at three aspects of the poetry collection: 1) how the testimony is appropriated, 2) how Bazeghi is witnessing though appropriation, and 3) how she writes about war from a feminine point of view. I argue that Bazeghi through the evasive aesthetics and the heightened appropriation in Flowmatic challenges how women can witness and write about war.

Flowmatic was published in 2020 and is Danish-Iranian poet and translator Shadi Angelina Bazeghi's second poetry collection. It is a long poem, or a series of sequential "absinthe poems," as the genre label suggests, of about 80 pages followed by a bibliography listing the references in the poems, from Facebook updates to doctoral dissertations, which are mostly incongruously collected and appropriated. And with the appropriated text in several different languages, separated and tied together graphically and by different punctuation marks, the text both reads as and visually gives the impression of an assemblage of words and sentences. A note on the front flap explains the word Flow-matic: a data processing language invented under US Navy admiral Grace Hopper, that became the basis for the data-processing language COBOL. COBOL was used in the Iran-Iraq War to identify corpses and body parts of fallen soldiers. The title *Flowmatic* is in more ways telling of the aesthetics of the poetry collection. Both the noun and the verb *flow* suggest moving in a stream, gliding, or passing, the movement of both gasses, fluids, melted matter, and tides (Flow, 2023), while the compound word *flowmatic* suggests the auto-generated and its perpetual movement. This aesthetic is expansive, ever-moving, disconcerting, confusing, ambiguous, and evasive. *Flowmatic* could be thought of as a poem where the words have settled down (to borrow a phrase from Kenneth Goldsmith's description of Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, Goldsmith, 2011, p. 115) in a form that is analog but still bears the dynamic quality of its digital origins. As for the content, the poetry collection touches with humour, irony, sarcasm, and earnestness upon topics such as racism, feminism, war, trauma, poetry, translation, and witnessing. And it tells a love story

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that is at the same time, and among other things, embedded in scenes from the Iran-Iraq War, astronomical observations, returning from a night out, philosophical discussions, moments of closeness and intimacy, and making a living in Denmark as a female immigrant poet and translator.

Because of its disparate, intertwined themes and storylines it received a rather lukewarm critique from Tue Andersen Nexø in the Danish newspaper *Information*. As Andersen Nexø puts it, it is often hard to make out the situations or the scenes in the poem, a poem that jumps between "countless thoughts, postulates, and images" (Andersen Nexø, 2020). While Andersen Nexø exclaims that the poem feels as if a jumble of what someone would wear if they were to dress up like something poetry-ish had been emptied pell-mell all over the pages (Andersen Nexø, 2020), Lilian Munk Rösing describes it as "beautiful, explosive, and critical poetry" in the newspaper *Politiken* (Munk Rösing, 2020). *Flowmatic* was nominated for the 2020 Montana Literary Prize, and in the spring of 2020 Bazeghi also received a three-year writer's grant from the Danish Arts Foundation. Yet, at this point, her work has not received much academic attention.

One of the many stories told in the poem is one, where the lyric I, in the midst of the Iran-Iraq War, is programming a register of dead soldiers and unidentified body parts collected in big silos, spraying them with insecticide and covering up the stench of their putrefaction with rosewater. Throughout the poem, the lyric I is in several ways firmly attached to the poet Bazeghi herself, yet these accounts of the war turn out to be appropriations of the Iranian soldier Mohandes' witness account published in an article by The Teheran Bureau in The Guardian. The words of the soldier appear in the poem as fragments, rearranged and slightly modified, while their origin is, at times meticulously at other times more loosely, accounted for in the bibliography at the back of the book. This appropriation of the soldier's account and his personal experiences raises questions of how a poet can witness in relation to an appropriated text and the person who experienced the event. These are questions that the poem also raises indirectly though citations from for example Khashayar Naderehvandi's monograph on literary witnessing *Vem vittner for vittnet?* (*Who can Witness on Behalf of the Witness?*) (Naderehvandi, 2020). These issues of witness and experience are further emphasized as Bazeghi in one of the poem's many poetologic comments points to how readers tend to read literature written by certain poets as first and foremost accounts of their lived experiences, assuming that those experiences are the only thing they can write about, while they are unconcerned with aesthetics, style, and formal experimentation. More specifically, issues of witnessing, aesthetics and racism intersect, when she writes: "the mechanisms that cause/you to not review our form; the thinking the aesthetics and/the concepts but simply the rhythm—and believe that we can only/write by virtue of our particular experiences" (Bazeghi, 2020, p. 40).[1] What Bazeghi hints at is how in Scandinavia, so-called immigrant authors tend to be read first and foremost, if not only, as voicing personal experiences from an authentic insider position of being non-white (Jagne-Soreau, 2021, p. 161, see also Trotzig, 2005). And, case in point, Bazeghi anticipates critiques such as Andersen Nexø's, since he not only disregards her poem as poetry-*ish*, but also turns to the expressions of personal experience in the text, which he has no trouble acknowledging, making the observation that "there is also a very understandable anger in the passages about Danish and Western prejudices" (Andersen Nexø, 2020).

The tension between the aesthetic and the personal experience is a crucial concern in *Flowmatic*, and its aesthetics makes it difficult to simply read it as an account of Bazeghi's personal experiences. This is particularly manifest in her formal and aesthetic use of Mohandes' witness account, which will be the focus of this article. Employing Mohandes' witness account as a prism, I will look at three aspects of the poetry collection: how the testimony is appropriated, how Bazeghi is witnessing though appropriation, and how she writes about war from a feminine point of view. My aim is to put forward how Bazeghi challenges both readerly practices and expectations as to what she can write about and how she can do it, through her exploration of the poetic genres of witness poetry, lyrical poetry, and postproduction conceptual poetry.

In the following, I will first analyse how Bazeghi appropriates Mohandes' testimony, creating an oscillation between the lyrical and the conceptual in the poem, and how this

affects the lyric I and the place of Bazeghi herself as a poet within the poem. Then, I will turn to the ways that this appropriation can be considered as a form of witnessing, engaging Moberley Luger's exploration of conceptual witness poetry, following her argument that the conceptual poet through deep engagement in reading, and by mimicking the act of listening to the testimonial, can offer a completion to someone else's witness account. Finally, I will consider how the violence of Mohandes' testimony is transferred from a masculine to a feminine position, experienced though a female body and taking place in intimate, homey spaces.

Appropriation

Programming is evoked thematically through the depiction of the lyric I's programming in the poem, and formally through numbers and commands in square brackets, asterisks assigned to some of the stanzas, the monospaced typeface Courier that the book is set in, the few black pages with letters in white font, and as an overarching idea, mode, aesthetic, or concept of the poetry collection already hinted at in the title. The practice of processing data, entering something into a system and reorganizing it according to some specific rules, connects the practice of the soldier-engineer Mohandes, the lyric I, and, self-referentially, Bazeghi, as the poet writing the text. Programming and data processing also evoke the practices of conceptual poets working with postproduction methods, for instance as Kenneth Goldsmith refers to himself as a word processor (Goldsmith, 2015), or when he cites Majorie Perloff for envisioning the author of the future as a programmer (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 1) and goes on to describe contemporary literary practices as "word processing, databasing, recycling, appropriation, intentional plagiarism, identity ciphering, and intensive programming" (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 2).

The practice of programming and its aesthetics enter the poetry collection through appropriation. Body parts keep appearing and reappearing on the pages of *Flowmatic*. They both mime and enforce the effect of the dispersed and restless in the text, as words popping out from nowhere, or: from elsewhere. And in fact, these body parts originate from the Guardian article "The Missing: The Eight-Year Iraq Conflict Looms Large in Iran", where Iranian soldier Mohandes recounts events from the Iran-Iraq War. During the war, he worked in a unit that collected dead bodies and body parts and identified them using COBOL, the data processing language developed from Flow-matic. At that time, the difficulty of identifying the bodies of Iranian soldiers who had lost their lives in chemical-weapon attacks, made systematic data collection of bodies found and soldiers missed necessary. When the Teheran Bureau's article was published, it was estimated that around 8.000 Iranian soldiers were still unaccounted for (Teheran Bureau, 2015). In the article, Mohandes describes how the bodies were stored for engineers like him to photograph and collect information about:

> "I still wake up in horror, remembering that night," he says, his eyes hollow. The silo has been emptied of grain, and huge freezers have been brought in. Inside each lie half a dozen corpses. As the fridge doors are opened, men spray insecticide and sprinkle rose water to counter a stink penetrating every molecule of air. All he can smell is decomposed flesh, rose water and bug spray. (. . .). "A few bodies were unscathed, completely intact," he says,"as if they had just lost life." But most were deformed. Some looked like burned wood, others were bloated. Some were just fragments: a leg, a torso, a hand (Teheran Bureau, 2015).

Most of the redirected language in *Flowmatic* originates from this account, and can be found in the following segments:

> [01] we drove a couple of times around the square and the fountain *a leg/a torso a hand* dilated nostrils winged horses/with dilated nostrils from which the water gushed (. . .) a fortune teller swore that women who always carry the conserved/genitals on her will attract more men *a leg* you said/it was unusually stupid to kill a creature in the hope of penis/that the hyena bitches have false male genitalia *a torso*/you asked her about the fragments (Bazeghi, 2020, p. 9)[2]

I programmed a new data system with COBOL/invented and coded the 7-digit identification codes/the 7-digit identification codes in order to systematize/the unidentified bodies// *a leg a torso a hand* (13)[3]

you fall onto the bed on your stilettos/I carry the bodies into the cold-storage room/I sprinkle them with insecticide and rosewater (19)[4]

few bodies are unscathed, completely intact/most of them are deformed/some of them look like burned wood/ others are bloated/and then there are the fragments/a leg a torso a hand (20)[5]

one of the outer sheets is a little creased/I straighten it sprinkle the memories/with insecticide and rosewater (37)[6]

I carry the bodies into the cold storage room/you stare at my hands for a long while (50)[7]

with insecticide and rose water//*all the different ways in which it is possible to lose something* you know/*a leg a torso a hand* (51)[8]

Mohandes' testimonial concludes in an effectful fragmentation: *a leg, a torso, a hand.* The fragmentation in itself mimes the body parts but also the many missing individuals and unidentified bodies. Bazeghi uses these three fragments repeatedly in the poem, sometimes together, sometimes torn apart. Furthermore, the fragmentation exists in the poem as a more overarching aesthetics that can be found on different levels, for instance in the many citations. As already touched upon, Bazeghi's appropriation of Mohandes' text could also be thought of as an analog reiteration of his programming, working his words into the body of the text, collecting, and reassembling them into the system of the poem.

In some of the segments above, Bazeghi uses words from the article as longer citations, one of them even marked in italics, while in others she uses the words of the article in the style of free indirect discourse, rather than citing his words, imitating them. While the excerpt in italics resembles pure appropriation, it turns out to be quite impure. And rather than being simply a matter of transcribing text, Bazeghi's appropriation is a heightened appropriation: when she incorporates the text into the poem, she does so in the literal sense of the word, embodies it—or rather, the lyric I does so.

Even though, as I have pointed out, the poem evokes the conceptual in different ways, because of Bazeghi's heightened appropriation it also, at times, becomes more lyrical. The marks of direct speech "he says" have been removed, so that through enunciation the experiences are the lyric I's own, creating unity between the speaker and the spoken. Another strategy that Bazeghi uses to incorporate the soldier's witness account is by translating it into Danish. This translation is atypical for *Flowmatic*, since it is multilingual and has text in English, Danish, Swedish, Arabic, Persian, and German. But because the poetry collection is primarily in Danish, the Danish translations of Mohandes' account are integrated in a more subtle manner. Along the same lines, and also with the effect of creating lyrical presence and intensity, Bazeghi changes the tense from the past to the present in most of the citations. Retelling the identifying of bodies in the present tense is of course also a way of insisting that the war is not over, that it is not something of the past but still ongoing— in a very manifest sense, as the bodies of so many fallen soldiers still remain unfound. The fragmented triad of a leg, a torso, and a hand has a similar effect in the text, resurging again and again throughout the poetry collection and thus perpetuating the horrors of war. Munk Rösing compares these constant repetitions of images in loop with GIF's flickering before the eyes of the reader (Rösing, 2020). In the excerpts above, Bazeghi also writes Mohandes' account into other completely different situations or adds to or extends his text, weaving it into her bewildering imagery introducing more personal pronouns, deictics that are not always easily attributed to the persons in the poem.

Through her appropriation Mohandes' words become almost imperceptible. They only really appear as foreign to the poem, when the reader at some point ventures from within the poem to its outskirts, in the bibliography, and from there out on the internet, where they will find the article

about Mohandes' war experiences. In other words, the poetry collection really begins to oscillate between the lyrical and the conceptual, as the reader explores the text around the poem.[9] This confusing and refractory mode is further complicated by the place that Bazeghi writes for herself inside the very poem. Both the importance of the lyric I, and the role that Bazeghi herself plays in the poem become incentives to ponder who has experienced what and whether Bazeghi is in fact in some way witnessing on behalf of Mohandes. The poet who is witnessing through appropriation is no longer the person who experienced the event and instead takes on another role. Martin Glaz Serup for instance proposes that the poet can be regarded as the editor of the witness (Serup, 2015, p. 45), while Goldsmith, commenting on his poetry performance "The Body of Michael Brown" (Goldsmith, 2015) insists that in this case he did not even editorialize it, he simply read it (Garcia, 2015). As I have mentioned above, this kind of poet has been conceptualized as a programmer, or even as the machine itself (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 101). Serup emphasizes the impersonality of the conceptual poet (Serup, 2015, p. 44), while Goldsmith invokes a postidentity practice (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 90). Meanwhile, the flaws of this dream of the neutral or impersonal poet become visible in controversies such as Goldsmith's poetic performance of Michael Brown's autopsy report (for a critique of the idea of the erasure of the poet and by extension the poet's body, see Garcia, 2015). Looking at *Flowmatic*, even though programming is intimately related to Bazeghi's practice, as a poet she is far from impersonal in the poem. Throughout the collection, the lyric I is stretched almost to its breaking point, always at risk of breaking into the many different voices that the poem incorporates. Even so, the poem has, as demonstrated, a lyrical mode, that ensures unity, and it is also its lyrical mode that can explain how the poet Bazeghi finds a way into the poem herself. Namely, in the particular attachment of the poet to the lyric subject in lyric poetry, in the reader's tendency to attach the lyric I to the poet, a mode that *Flowmatic*, through family resemblance, inherits from lyric poetry. In her article "The 'I' of the Beholder: Equivocal Attachments and the Limits of Structuralist Narratology", Susan Lanser examines how and under what circumstances the reader will attach an I in the text to the author: "Lyric poetry, with its conventional singularity, its commonplace anonymity, its almost axiomatic reliability, its likelihood of evoking aspects of its author's identity, and its relatively low narrativity, is primed for authorial attachment" (Lanser, 2005, p. 213). Many of these aspects can be found in *Flowmatic* – at least until the position of the lyric I is rendered inauthentic by the bibliography, destabilizing the poetic nearness and thus poetry's axiomatic reliability. Meanwhile, Bazeghi writes herself into the poem by for instance mentioning her own work as the lyric I's; here, the lyric I speaks about herself as the Danish translator of poets Farough Farrokhzad and Audre Lorde, with a reference to these two translations by Shadi Angelina Bazeghi in the bibliography (Bazeghi, 2020, pp. 35, 63, 69, 79, 80, 87, and 89). In this way, Bazeghi becomes a constant presence throughout the poem, not only when she refers to herself, but also, because of and reinforced by this particular lyrical attachment. As a result of Bazeghi's heightened appropriation and its concealing of Mohandes, the lyrical unity persists. And the question that emerges from the incongruity between the unity of the speaker and the spoken, the poet in the poem, and the origins of the experience told in the bibliography, is what kind of witnessing this might be, since Shadi Angelina Bazeghi most likely did not collect dead bodies during the Iran-Iraq War that lasted from 1980 to 1988 – even if she was born in Teheran in 1974 and only left Iran for Denmark in 1986.

Witnessing

In his essay on witness literature "Philomela's Tongue", Horace Engdahl explains: "One does not become a witness only by observing an event with one's own eyes. A witness is a person who speaks out and says, "I was there, I saw it, I can tell people!"", and later on he adds that "to be complete, the testimony requires an answer from the human community" (Engdahl, 2002, p. 3 and 4). The "I" of the first person singular and the importance of having been at the place at the time of the event are largely accepted arguments in witness literature. This also holds true for witness poetry with for

instance, Carolyn Forché insisting that the witness account belongs to the witness, who is also the poet: "The witness is the one who endured the conditions of extremity" (Forché, 2011). According to her, "the witness is *in relation* and cannot remove him or herself. Relation is proximity, and this closeness subjects the witness to the possibility of being wounded" (Forché, 2011, p. 167). Durham Peters similarly insists that the witness is bound to "the mortal limits of the human sensorium" (Luger, 2020, p. 507).[10] Meanwhile, some recent forms of witness poetry do not live up to these requirements of proximity. This especially holds true for postproduction conceptual poetry. Consequently, though not without remarking on the contradiction of the cool detachedness of the conceptual form and the dramatic hotness of the content,[11] Martin Glaz Serup proposes what he calls a second-generation witness poetry, a conceptual witness poetry that does not depend on lived experience (Serup, 2015, p. 42). Moberley Luger, calling conceptual poetry the very antithesis of witness poetry (Luger, 2020, p. 506), equally explores a conceptual witness poetry. As mentioned above, she emphasizes the reader's engagement in the witness account (Luger, 2020), i.e. the second aspect of Engdahl's concern, namely the response given to a testimony. Luger argues that through their practice of copying, as both readers and writers, postproduction conceptual witness poets, are witnessing too (Luger, 2020, p. 509). She points to how processing also means "to register or interpret (...) to consider, take in, mull over", and that conceptual poets "practice a kind of word processing that mimics and extends the practice of listening that scholars of testimony have attended to" (513). She concludes that: "the conceptual poet, like the listener, becomes the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed", a reference to Dori Laub who describes the listener of the testimony as a blank screen (Luger 513 and 508). It is in these forms of "deep textual engagement" (513), that Luger identifies a different ethical imperative than one dependent on proximity (525). Even though the conceptual poet expressing someone else's emotion, shock, or tragedy has been described as vampiric, Luger argues that the poet is not necessarily taking something from someone else; instead, she insists that "assuming the role of engaged reader, the poet is able to give something—namely, the completion of the witness testimony" (Luger, 2020, p. 520).

Turning to *Flowmatic*, the way the analogy of programming inscribes Bazeghi as the poet in the poem also inscribes her as a reader of Mohandes' testimony, the method of postproduction mimicking the act of reading and taking in his text. Bazeghi's method is intensifying rather than accumulative, it is not a method of collecting several testimonies, as in the poems on which Luger concentrates. It is the appropriation of a single testimony. Her heightened appropriation could be considered to be a trace of her deep engagement in Mohandes' witness account. While conceptual poets, as Luger puts it, refuse to convey their own sensoria (Luger, 2020, p. 507), Bazeghi does exactly that, letting the body of the female lyric I experience the sensoria of Mohandes' testimony, and even adding to it. Bazeghi's writing herself into the poem, and creating the attachment to the lyric I, can be thought of as a way of emphasizing her engagement, she is not simply a machine but a poet of flesh and blood, not attempting to erase her authorial or human engagement in the poem. This body becomes the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed. Similarly, Bazeghi lends her name to the testimony. The soldier is called Mohandes, which means engineer in Farsi; he was the engineer in his unit. In the article in The Guardian the first letter has been capitalized so as to use the designation as a pseudonym. The name of the journalist has not been indicated either, since the article is written by the independent news organization Teheran Bureau. Thus, there is a double blurring of the witness even before Bazeghi appropriates the testimony. Bazeghi then not only lends the body of the lyric I, and by extension herself, to the testimony, she also lends her name to the testimony.

As Andersen Nexø notes in his critique of the poem, *Flowmatic* is very confusing to read. I would argue, though, that this is exactly its mode, its aesthetic of evasiveness and of radical openness used to communicate experiences of the war. This radical openness in for instance its many deictics and confusing imagery invites the reader to continue the work of completion, of processing the poem. And so, even more importantly, does the openness that the bibliography

creates. The information that the postproduction poet leaves about the origins of the text in the conceptual poem invites, as Luger also points out, the reader to retrace the steps of the poet (Luger, 2020, p. 525). Along the same lines, Serup suggests that indications of source texts around the postproduction poem constitute the beginning of the reader's project of acquiring knowledge about the subject of the poetry collection (Serup, 2015, p. 48). Thinking this in extension of Luger's argument above; with the bibliography, Bazeghi lays out a path for the reader to engage even further in the war, and thus continue the completion of the witness account.

So far, I have mainly focused on the postproduction of the excerpts of Mohandes' witness account, and how they coincide with or affect the whole aesthetic mode of *Flowmatic*. I will now turn to the aspect of Bazeghi writing war poetry from the position of being a female poet. Bazeghi's transferring Mohandes' testimony from one context to another, and appropriating it, is also a transfer and appropriation from one gender to another. The appropriation allows for the lyric I to explore and experience spheres of war that have been particularly masculine and inaccessible to the woman war poet, making her position that of an outsider.

Women's war poetry

War poetry by women easily gets sidetracked, as their position is considered outside of or at best liminal to the horrors of war. Moreover, the genre of women's war poetry traditionally tends to be limited to the sentimental and patriotic elegy for the dead soldiers written from within the domestic space (Buck, 2011, p. 34). As Claire Buck points to in her article "Reframing Women's War Poetry," women in war often cannot speak from the position of the soldier, or soldier poet, and therefore do not have his authenticity. Rather, since they are associated with home, women tend to become the poet soldier's antithesis (Buck, 2011, p. 31). Even so, these separated spaces get intertwined though integration and interaction in women's war poetry, and Buck points to how this challenges "the apparent obviousness of when and where war happens" (Buck, 2011, p. 26).[12] Bazeghi uses two overall, though intertwined, strategies when writing about war. One is, as I have shown above, rewriting Mohandes' experiences as her own; in this way she sidesteps the problem of not having had access to this traditionally masculine space of war. The other is letting war occur thematically within a feminized and intimate homey space in the present, engaging with topoi of the romantic lyric poem and its woman figure. In other words, for Bazeghi to write about war is to write up against the limitations of both gendered space and a gendered genre, challenging the limits for what women can experience during war, and consequently, how they can write about it.[13]

Bazeghi feminizes the war by engaging a sentimental female figure of lyric poetry; by introducing war into the domestic space, particularly the feminine spaces of the kitchen and the bedroom; and by turning images of everyday events into war events. Formally this comes about through a play on the openness of ambiguous sentences, through metonymic transformations, and through enjambments interacting with the flow of reading. Buck's point about integration and interaction is essential to the logic of the images and the enunciation in *Flowmatic*. This becomes apparent on a narratological level in the very tangible form of appropriation, but also on a semantic level, where war violence keeps emerging in otherwise peaceful and homey domestic scenes, as Mohandes' war account spills unto descriptions of cooking, of stumbling unto the bed on stilettos after a night out, of reminiscing over lost loves, and so on (Bazeghi, 2020, pp. 9, 19, 37, 51).

Bazeghi employs the olfactory sense to make the two gendered zones interact. Smell is particularly present in Mohandes' description of the war, for instance in his account of how the soldiers used rosewater to cover the smell of decomposing bodies. The olfactory sense, a sense that is often linked to resurfacing memories, is also predominant in *Flowmatic*, where everything smells, stinks, and reeks (Bazeghi, 2020, pp. 8, 19, 22, 36, 37, 45, 47, 73). The presence of smell both in Mohandes' account of the war and in other parts of the poetry collection could also be an example of yet another way of appropriating the first text into the second, and additionally as an imitation of

smells' ability to flow around freely and penetrate spaces. The abilities of the olfactory sense to recall memories create a simultaneity of events; while Mohandes wakes up *remembering* the horrors of the war, the lyric I experiences them in a heavily loaded and extremely crammed present.

The nerve agents that were used in the chemical warfare in the Iran-Iraq War smelled of fruits or sweet apples, and the words "everything smells of sweet apples" (Bazeghi, 2020, pp. 8, 22, 24) appear throughout the poem at the same time as this smell takes the form of a Pink Lady apple, with the gendered name "pink lady" also serving as the female lyric I's pet name (Bazeghi, 2020, p. 23). By naming the smell of nerve agents *pink lady*, the feminine enters the war zone, while the smell of apples draws war into the peace zones. Meanwhile, this gendered pet name assigns the deadly toxic to the lyric I, while evoking other dangerous apples and dangerous women, from Eve and the Forbidden Fruit to the stepmother handing Snow White a poisoned apple.

Moreover, the proximity that is required to smell something makes it problematic to think of the war as something far away in both space and time, and consequently challenges the conception of war and peace as spaces and states that are separated and unambiguously gendered. This is also the case in the following stanzas, where violent death for the short moment of an enjambment takes place within the kitchen and its domestic tasks:

kornblume/and I constantly burn//the food these days (Bazeghi, 2020, p. 8)[14]

This citation is once more an example of how Bazeghi plays with the genre of lyric poetry. Here, the lyrical is evoked thematically with the "kornblume", a central image in German romanticism, and the flower that became the blue flower of poetry. Just as the lyric I is sometimes called pink lady, at other times she is called "kornblomst", cornflower (Bazeghi, 2020, pp. 25, 28, 36), following a logic similar to calling her pink lady, but less dangerous, evoking the lyrical and romantic, the pastoral.

Another lyrical topos is the moonlight poem

[10] it reeks of smoke and unfulfilled night/the dreams grow out of your hair//I wake up under the bed/with a shared pain and blood in my face//it is the blood moon of the century/you say (Bazeghi, 2020, p. 36)[15]

Here again, Bazeghi uses enjambment to create shock, as the lyric I wakes up in the middle of the night bathed first in blood and then in moonlight. Through the metonymic likeness of blood moon, blood, and moonlight, the stanzas become a violent transfiguration of the romantic use of the moon in lyric poetry. Furthermore, the blood of war is turned into menstrual blood through the word play on blood moon, and is thus feminized. The menstrual blood is already evoked by *flow* in the title of the poetry collection, just as *flow* also points to the tide's flow, and thus back to the moon.

The scene with the bed also plays on the trope of sleeping safe and soundly in one's bed because brave men fight the war elsewhere—in a wording often attributed to Winston Churchill: "We sleep soundly in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm", as for instance the US Army's 75th Ranger Regiment posted it on their Facebook page (The 75th Ranger Regiment, 2020). This idea depends on the juxtaposition and separation of domestic peacefulness and masculine violence happening elsewhere. In the poem, conversely, the war is not someplace else but depicts the lyric I, to borrow the words of Mohandes, wake up in horror bathed in blood.

Bazeghi's poem transcends the problem of women's outsider position in war by letting the near, domestic, and feminine get intertwined with and happen at the same time and place as events of the distant war that was. In this way, she makes it difficult to separate these two spaces—a strategy that can be conceived in relation to smell and its penetrating and evasive capabilities. This exploration of war zones and domestic life, then, also becomes a way of challenging gendered genres. And so, Bazeghi challenges not only the idea of the so-called immigrant poet, as mentioned above, but also that of the female poet writing about war, not by distancing herself from the genre, nor from her gender, but by challenging it from within. Her consciousness of the poetic genre and her way of exploring its core and its borders become the very way of calling into question what it means to have

experienced something and how to witness it. Bazeghi's criticism of prejudices against female immigrant poets, and her way of exploring and creating authenticity and attachment enable a poetics of embodied and sensuous appropriation that through its evasiveness and its oscillation between authentic experience and appropriation, between lyrical and conceptual, challenges how certain experiences, spaces, and genres are assigned to certain poets.

Notes

1. "de mekanismer der bevirker/at man ikke anmelder vores form; tænkningen æstetikken og/koncepterne men bara rytmen—og bilder sig ind at vi kun kan/skrive i kraft af vores partikulære erfaringer." All translations of *Flowmatic* into English are my own.
2. "[01] vi kørte et par gange rundt om torvet og springvandet *et ben/en torso en hånd* udspilede næsebor bevingede heste/med udspilede næsebor hvorfra vandet fossede ud (. . .) en spåkvinde sværgede at kvinder der altid har den konserverede/kønsdel på sig vil tiltrække flere mænd *et ben* du sagde/det er ualmindeligt dumt at dræbe et væsen i håb om penis/at hyænetæver har falske mandlige kønsorganer *en torso*/du spurgte hende om fragmenterne (. . .)".
3. "(. . .) jeg programmerede et nyt datasystem med COBOL/opfandt og indkodede de 7-cifrede identifikations-koder/de 7-cifrede identifikationskoder for at systematisere/de uidentificerede kroppe//*et ben en torso en hånd*".
4. "[01] du vælter på stiletter i seng/jeg bærer kroppene ind i kølerummet/jeg overstænker dem med insekticid og rosenvand".
5. "– få kroppe er uskadte/fuldstændig intakte/de fleste er deformerede/nogle ligner brændt træ/andre er opsvul-mede/og så er der fragmenterne/et ben en torso en hånd".
6. "et af de yderste blade er lidt krøllet/jeg retter det ud overstænker minderne/med insekticid og rosenvand".
7. "jeg bærer kroppe ind i kølerummet/du stirrer længe på mine hænder".
8. "med insekticid og rosenvand//*alle olika sätt som det går at miste noget* du ved/*et ben en torso en hånd*".
9. Even though *Flowmatic* suggests the conceptual, it is not incontestably a conceptual poem but oscillates between the lyrical and the conceptual. In this article, I focus on Bazeghi's appropriation of Mohandes' witness account, which is indeed a postproduction manoeuvre, and which makes it relevant to look at theories of postproduction conceptual poetry and witness poetry. There is no clear-cut definition of conceptual poetry, though Martin Glaz Serup proposes that in conceptual poetry the content must be influenced by the structuring idea of the work (Serup, 2015, p. 44), whereas Vanessa Place and Robert Fitterman employ a spectrum of conceptualism (Fitterman & Place, 2018, p. 109). Here, I focus on postproduction conceptual poetry, that is conceptual poetry that uses strategies of appropriation. For an overview and a discussion of conceptual forms in contemporary Danish poetry and how it has been influenced by American conceptual poetry, see Larsen (2018).
10. For an overview of witness poetry, see Luger (2017).
11. Serup echoes Goldsmith who writes about the cool method and the passionate content in his book (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 87).
12. As I have mentioned above, Bazeghi was just a child during the war, so in this sense she does not write from the position of a woman at war. What I want to point to here, is how she engages in this binary opposition between gendered spaces, extending the place and time of war by feminizing it.
13. Although it is not Bazeghi's concern, it is important to acknowledge that some women, too, worked with programming during the war stationed in offices in Teheran.
14. "(. . .) kornblume/og jeg brænder konstant//maden på for tiden".
15. "[10] her stinker af røg og uforløst nat/drømmene gror ud af dit hår//jeg vågner under sengen/med en fælles smerte og blod i ansigtet//det er århundredets blodmåne/siger du".

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