

Stigmatizing Views of Ill Women in Kuwaiti Memoir of Arthritis

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Abstract: This study explored the portrayal of illness and disability in Kuwaiti author Kulthoum Dashti's memoir *Almost Faded: Rheumatoid Arthritis Journey* specifically focusing on how health-based thematic categorizations intersect with perceptions of the external world. Using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC-2015) software program, a corpus specific to the novel was analyzed, retrieving thematic categories and contrasting them with the psychologically validated lexica. The analysis revealed the author's strong authenticity in narrating her journey with arthritis, characterized by heavy use of function words contributing to reflective tone. Additionally, the marginal confidence and low emotional tone in the narrative reflected the author's intention to share experiences without asserting authority, while social, temporal, and spatial references centralized the lack of familial support and accurate depictions of locations, shaping the narrative's structure. This case study contributes to understanding how illness and disability are portrayed in Kuwaiti literature, shedding light on the psychological dimensions embedded within the disability narrative.

Keywords: disability, Kuwaiti memoir, LIWC, writing

1. Introduction

Research on disability memoirs investigates personal narratives, societal expectations, and commercial interests, providing a foundation for comprehending how these memoirs navigate multifaceted terrains. Drawing inspiration from seminal works like Donna Williams' autobiographies, disability memoirs are perceived as potent platforms capable of transmuting individual experiences into authoritative narratives, potentially empowering individuals through the shared journey of illness. Furthermore, scrutinizing narrative arcs and identity formation, as exemplified in graphic memoirs, offers insights into the portrayal of protagonists navigating the complexities of illness (Markotić 2018; Schulman 2023; Shevchenko-Hotsuliak and Casado-Gual 2024). Consideration of intersectionality further enriches this exploration, prompting reflection on how these memoirs address the intersecting experiences of illness within various socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, critical examinations of disability representation emphasize the imperative of authentic portrayal and the interrogation of oversimplified narratives.

In this vein, leveraging LIWC-based and/or analysis offers a novel avenue for exploring authorial voice and writer identity (Dobakhti and Hassan 2017). In

this case, Dashti's memoir is translated from Arabic to English, and the translator's choices play a huge and central role in the word choice. Safia Alkhatib translated the memoir, and it is the only memoir available in English discussing disability due to arthritis. Thus, the choice of memoir was to illustrate the common thematic elements found when writing about one's pain in societies that stigmatize women with disabilities and illness. Most Arabic literature does not include narratives of women's embodiment and disability. In her influential study *The Female Suffering Body*, Abir Hamdar (2014) addresses the absent figure of the disabled and/or ill female subject in Arabic literature. The Kuwaiti memoir of arthritis, employing a nonlinear narrative structure, illuminates the intersection of disability and cultural identity within Kuwaiti society, and daily management of functional limitations, all while adopting a first-person plural narrative voice to emphasize the universality of the illness experience. This memoir serves as one of the first memoirs discussing Kuwaiti women's experiences with illness, while there are other memoirs that deal with life experiences and disability written originally in English (Alshammari 2022). The memoir *Almost Faded: Rheumatoid Arthritis Journey* (henceforth: *Almost Faded*) as the title suggests is about the author's experiences of fleeting memories of illness, pain, and the social stigma and oppression faced within both the domestic space and society at large. *Almost Faded* is a memoir that sheds light on the stigmatization of ill women and their experiences in Kuwaiti society specifically and Arab culture at large.

2. Literature review

Analyzing novels and memoirs about disability entails investigating personal narratives and societal expectations and offering insights into disability identities and how people with disabilities must navigate societal frameworks influenced by diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2.1 Diverse narratives in disability literature

Disability literature spans various genres and perspectives, from classic novels to contemporary memoirs, each offering unique insights into the lived experiences of disability. There is no single, monolithic "disability identity" that covers everyone with a disability. Examples of disability writing can be found across various genres and time periods. Some classic examples include Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, which explores themes of isolation and prejudice through the character of Quasimodo, and Christy Brown memoir *My Left Foot*, which chronicles the Brown's experiences as a patient with cerebral palsy. Both have different narrative voices.

Using qualitative literary analysis, Van Goidsenhoven and Masschelein (2018) examined autism memoirs were, coining the term "autie-biographies," which intercedes between individual narratives, societal expectations, and commercial interests. Disability memoirs often blend personal narratives and therapeutic advice, offering readers insights into coping strategies while challenging identity and disability. Focusing on Jessica Kingsley Publishers, the coaching strategies employed to streamline the production of life writing were

investigated, with bestselling autistic women writers such as Donna Williams, Wendy Lawson, and Liane Holliday. The authors analyzed Williams' third autobiography, *Like Colour to the Blind: Soul Searching and Soul Finding*, to illustrate the quest, an underlying disability ethos. Despite toning down normalcy, Williams' autobiographies, poetry, and self-help books manifest the transformation of the "autism experience" into "autistic authority." (Van Goidsenhoven and Masschelein 2018).

Examining a different type of neurodivergence, Cressman (2019) probed Ellen Forney's hybrid graphic novel and memoir, *Marbles*, to explore how the Forney reconciled her dual identities. Forney's graphic memoir traces her diagnosis of bipolar disorder and integration of coping strategies. While condensing a narrative arc reflective of shared experiences, Forney's art style, which transitions from whimsy to exactitude, enthralls readers. By tethering Forney's artistic persona to her bipolar disorder, *Marbles* became a canvas where mental health, creativity, and personal struggle intertwined (Cressman 2019).

Transcending Scarry's primary thesis on the exceptional nature of pain, which shapes and dismantles a subject's identity, the author made inferences about how Stephen Kuusisto provides a firsthand narrative of navigating the world using the senses of sound and touch as a consequence of his congenital blindness. Following *Planet of the Blind*, Kuusisto's memoir *Eavesdropping: A Memoir of Blindness and Listening* revolves around being an "awake listener," which he relates to poet Walt Whitman, and navigating the world as a blind traveler. Kuusisto answers so by emphasizing adult travels with wit and intelligence and the essence of blindness through vivid sensory descriptions epitomic of listening, travel, and disability (Savarese 2022).

Medina (2023) also examines Theodore Taylor's novel *The Cay* and critiques representations of race and disability therein (Medina 2023). By scrutinizing the novel's use of blindness as a narrative tool to advocate for color blindness, the relationship between Phillip (the white protagonist) and Timothy (a black character) reinforces a narrative of racial reconciliation that favors white perspectives. Additionally, Phillip's blindness is used as a plot device that represents moral growth rather than a portrayal of disability experiences.

Frank's *At the Will of the Body* (1991) and Conway's *Ordinary Life: A Memoir of Illness* (1997) were analyzed for narrative empathy after surviving cancer. (Baena 2017) In Frank's memoir, the existential and emotional impacts of illness show how cancer disrupts one's sense of self and identity, highlighting the struggles, fears, and uncertainties patients face as they navigate the complexities of treatment. Conway's memoir sketches the emotional journey of living with cancer, candidly portraying the everyday vulnerability of illness. Conway captures the emotional toll of illness individually and consanguineously through personal anecdotes and reflections that explore resilience and acceptance to dismantle reductive cultural narratives surrounding fatal illnesses and their concomitant creeping disability (Baena 2017).

Téllez (2021) tackled Suzanne Berger's mesmerizing memoir *Horizontal Woman* to explore disorientation and its existential ramifications when veering

from an abruptly severe inability to sit to tentative mobility. The book captures the emotional turmoil, altered relationships, and surreal experiences that accompany physical transformation (ibid). The book highlighted the painful aspects of disability, and the black humor made readers wince rather than laugh. Therefore, the narrative compendium must juxtapose perceptive storytelling with engaging disability-focused writing.

Literary disability studies circumstantiate disability representation and experience on examining Civil War veterans, or the deaf/deafblind community (Krentz 2023; Watharow 2021) poverty, and societal change emphasized (Franzino, 2022), on linking disability to trauma (Venkatesan and Tolani, 2023), somatic distress and graphic memoirs with corporeal representation and without cognitive referencing (Altschuler, 2014; Quesenberry & Squier, 2016). The mere embodiment of disability applied Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory to map disability perception at the cognitive level (El Refaie 2014) yet the overarching cognitive-psychological focus remains unrepresented. The analysis of autobiographies and novels about disability in the Middle East is very sparse (Alshammari 2019, 2020).

While traditional literary analysis has revealed remarkable patterns in disability narratives, psycholinguistic approaches may offer new insights into these literary texts.

2.2 Psycholinguistic analysis of literary works

The application of Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) analysis has revolutionized our understanding of literary texts, offering quantitative insights into psychological patterns. LIWC analysis has been used to explore complex phenomena embedded in written and spoken language, such as psycholinguistic patterns (Zasiekina 2020; Taraban et al. 2022; Zasiekin et al. 2022; Berezhna 2024), authorship attribution, personality traits of characters (Pinkerton, 2016; Yuan et al., 2018), and even societal stereotypes (Duggan, 2023). Integrating computational methods with traditional literary analysis opens up new avenues for understanding literary texts and even social media posts and for developing insights into human behavior, psychological processes, authorship attribution, and societal perceptions (Arenas and Essam 2018; Essam and Abdo 2021; Khalifa and Essam 2022).

LIWC analysis has been used to explore character psychologies, linguistic patterns across diverse literary contexts, and psychological insights in literature and even to discern author gender. Applying the LIWC-2015, Sketch Engine, and AntConc software tools to themes and linguistic patterns, it has also been used to explore the pornographic elements of Widad Benmoussa's poetry. Despite limited explicit usage, Benmoussa employs sexuality as a metaphor to express her longing for lost romantic love, and an LIWC analysis of her six poetic collections revealed constant analytical thinking, reflecting her critical worldview. Benmoussa's works diverge from traditional narratives, and the LIWC findings align with the textual patterns in her poetry. Integrating LIWC results with corpus tools thus enhances understanding of themes like sexuality and shows that Benmoussa explores these

themes in a quest to revive lost romantic sentiments (Arenas 2018).

LIWC-2022 software (Berezhna 2022) was also used to explore the portrayal of African women in poetry, which is a topic of increasing importance in contemporary literary scholarship. Specifically, the research focused on Maya Angelou's use of imagery and body-oriented metaphors in her poetry, comparing her perspective on the African female body with that of other African poets and focusing on her pessimistic tone in eliding societal power and weak family ties. Common metaphors found in her work include "Nation is a body" and "Body is a container for emotions." Through her distinctive writing style, Angelou effectively addresses the struggles faced by Black women and the paths they navigate in society. Renowned for her versatility, she has been acclaimed for her portrayal of the challenges of racism and oppression in America, notably in the poem "Still I Rise." She advocates for self-confidence and celebrates inner beauty, encouraging Black women to embrace their uniqueness, thus challenging the stigmatization of black women. Her poetry explicitly addresses the mistreatment of female bodies, framing them as vessels for the struggles of the Black community. This LIWC-based cognitive analysis interpreted Angelou's mental spaces, beliefs, and conceptualizations regarding confronting societal issues and the empowerment of marginalized groups (Khalifa and Essam 2022).

Luoto and van Cranenburgh (2021) investigated the discernibility of author gender in Dutch literary novels to uncover potential biases in text categorization. The researchers applied a combination of stylometric analysis, LIWC-based text categorization, topic modeling, and machine learning techniques to two datasets: the Riddle corpus, comprising 401 Dutch-language novels published between 2007 and 2012, and the Nominee corpus, containing 50 novels nominated for literary prizes. Their findings revealed the feasibility of accurately discerning author gender in texts, albeit with susceptibility to other influences, such as genre and target audience, highlighting the importance of meticulous variable control in corpus analysis to mitigate overgeneralization. They also provided valuable insights for refining corpus analysis methodologies and avenues for leveraging advanced computational literary analysis (Luoto and van Cranenburgh 2021).

Dean and Boyd (2020) explored the role of depression in the life and death of Edgar Allan Poe through an examination of his written language, applying computerized language analysis to Poe's corpora of 309 personal letters, 49 poems, and 63 short stories (Dean and Boyd 2020). Despite not discovering significant evidence to support suicide as the cause of Poe's death, they identified potential depressive episodes throughout his life, enriching the understanding of Edgar Allan Poe's psychological profile, demonstrating the utility of language analysis in capturing emotional responses, and even suggesting clinical applications in psychological evaluation and suicide prevention. Linguistic predictors of suicide related to individual self-references and communication patterns were also found in an LIWC analysis of approximately 300 poems from nine suicidal poets and nine non-suicidal poets, suggesting potential applications of textual cues in suicide prevention (Wiltsey and Pennebaker 2001).

Relatedly, Yuan et al. (2018) analyzed the psychology of characters in the

novel *Journey to the West* using automated text analysis, mapping them to the Big Five personality traits. They focused on dialogs from the novel and employed self-construal LIWCs. The study identified changes in the characters' personalities, particularly in neuroticism, openness, and agreeableness, which were correlated with narrative events.

Boyd and Pennebaker (2015) investigated the authorship of *Double Falsehood* through language and psychological analysis, statistically comparing it to works by Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Theobald. The play exhibited a psychological signature primarily resembling Shakespeare, with some influence from Fletcher and traces of Theobald (Boyd and Pennebaker 2015). Using LIWC for authorship attribution offers a simpler approach than machine learning algorithms, lexical analysis, and topic modeling, which require extensive training datasets and manual coding and may overlook stylistic changes or fail to effectively capture individual writing styles.

Luoto and van Cranenburgh (2021) examined 694 English-language novels and 451 Dutch-language novels published between 1800 and 2018, using LIWC software versions 2015 for English and 2001 for Dutch and generating extensive psycholinguistic data for analyzing psychological processes.

The relationship between spoken language and age in TV drama scripts has also been investigated. Drama scripts from Korean TV dramas were examined using LIWC analysis, revealing that younger characters use fewer cognitive and positive emotion-related words than older characters, challenging traditional views on aging, which supports that older people tend to use fewer cognitive words and reference fewer positive emotions than younger people (Lee et al. 2006): however, transcribing spoken discourse for LIWC analysis can be tedious, especially for large amounts of audio or video content due to the need for careful proofreading and correction, even with automatic speech recognition technology.

The studies outlined above used large text corpora, ranging from novels to personal letters and drama scripts, and applied LIWC, stylometric analysis, and machine learning methods. Through their analyses, they aim to uncover insights into diverse subjects, including psycholinguistic sexual dimorphism, author gender discernment, personality traits of literary characters, linguistic predictors of suicide, and the relationship between language and age in spoken discourse. Computational analysis tools have therefore proven valuable in identifying implicit patterns and psychological insights that traditional literary analysis would have missed. In this study, both approaches complement each other to investigate how female disability is tackled in Kuwaiti autobiography.

3. Feminist disability studies

Feminist disability studies (FDS) expand upon the conventional scholarship about disabled women to create an analytical framework that examines disability not as biological deficit, but as a sociocultural construct. This theoretical paradigm parallels the feminist critique of patriarchal systems by questioning normative assumptions about embodiment, capability, and human variation. It thus

conceptualizes disability as an interpretive system of social exclusions and power relations, analogous to gender and racial hierarchies, while examining its intersections with other forms of identity and oppression (Garland-Thomson 2014; Kasprzak 2019).

Prevailing representational schemas often reduce disabled women to tropes of irrationality, passivity, and exotic alterity. The “femme-enfant” archetype and imagery of possessed clairvoyants exemplify surrealist depictions of a feminized “otherness”. This reductive framing obscures the richly textured realities of disabled embodiment, diminishing its capacity for authentic self-expression. FDS also challenges the predominant narratives that frame disability through biomedical, sentimental, triumphalist, or catastrophic lenses, instead advocating for a reconceptualization of disability as a prototype of human diversity. In doing so, it examines how colonial and neo-colonial power structures have marginalized bodies that are deemed “non-normative.” Further, FDS reconceptualizes autonomy through an ethics of care, suggesting that independence does not entail rejecting societal support but rather that agency can be embraced by choosing and directing one’s care relationships. Finally, it proposes that disabled identities can be reconstructed by addressing disability rights and justice while acknowledging stereotypical oppression and resistance (Garland-Thomson 2014, 2002, 2005; Robertson 2014; McRuer 2019).

Disability studies encompass the socioeconomic, literary, artistic, and institutional domains and exposes how precarity, representation, and structural barriers overlap. For example, an examination of the impacts of precarity and employment on people with learning disabilities in England during austerity shows how proper support can enable effective work participation despite welfare cuts (Bates, Goodley and Runswick-Cole 2017), and even while at war, Russia can be observed to engage in horizontal solidarity and care practices (Zaremba-Kosovych et al. 2024).

By centering their own narratives, disabled writers construct an authenticating praxis that challenges the hegemony of medicalized models. Their literary forms become vehicles for embodied knowledge production, offering multifaceted explorations of disability that elude the simplistic dichotomies of endorsement and rejection. Turning to literary analysis, the FDS framework was used to investigate Olive Moore’s 1930 novel *Spleen* and could identify a modernist appropriation of disability aesthetics and a reinforcement of eugenic understandings of disability through feminist and queer politics (Franks 2014). Within the same framework, analyzing Doris Lessing’s *The Fifth Child* reveals how maternal narratives intersect with disability, showing how a mother’s story gains authority because of her disabled child’s inability to tell his own (Clark 2011); Kathy Acker’s work, meanwhile, explores the intersection of autotheory with disability and sexuality studies (Hagaman 2022).

Considering fine art, an analysis of Pablo Picasso and Oskar Schlemmer’s work within the FDS framework has connected their designs with contemporary disability studies through the concepts of “misfitting” (Troughton and Casanovas

2023) and “alterlivability.” These ideas suggest a design philosophy that challenges normative urban ideals by focusing on the perspectives of disabled and marginalized people (Hamraie 2020). Finally, looking at examples from academia, cognitive diversity research argues for the inclusion of scholars with cognitive disabilities to reform knowledge production (O’Donovan 2010), while Finnish feminist ethnography has uncovered hidden discrimination in educational institutions (Lappalainen et al. 2023). In this study, FDS is used as a framework to interpret the findings retrieved from analyzing Dashti’s *Almost Faded*.

4. Methodology

We used reliable OCR software specifically designed for Arabic script, Sotoor (Sotoor OCR: <https://rdi-eg.ai/image-into-text-converter>), to digitize the Arabic novel. Manual correction was performed during post-processing to strip out any metadata not part of the text for both languages. The digitization of the English translations was easier and required less intensive manual correction. During text cleaning, we stripped out all metadata, removed or isolated footnotes and endnotes to prevent interference with the main text, and eliminated illustrations and their captions. Next, we normalized spaces, line breaks, and tabs across both languages to ensure consistency, and ensured consistent use of punctuation marks throughout the texts.

For formatting, we maintained uniform paragraphing and formatting for the English texts. For Arabic texts, we ensured proper text directionality adherence to its right-to-left writing system and decided whether to remove diacritics. We also normalized punctuation, taking into account differences between English and Arabic punctuation systems. In terms of normalization, we used UTF-8 encoded plain text file formats. For tokenization, we used Stanford NLP tools for Arabic and English NLP tools for English. We extracted categorized lexica-based nodes from LIWC-2015 software, with the output including counts and proportions of words in each category. We ensured that the categorization process accurately reflected the linguistic English and Arabic texts. An Arabic LIWC dictionary was used (Essam and Abdo 2021). A contrastive analysis was conducted to ensure cognitive matching and that the translation did not outsmart the original Arabic or undermine the cognitive load inherent in it.

5. Results

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) assesses four categories in a text. The software measures a text’s analytical thinking score based on a computational analysis of the use of function words. The more formal, academic, and reasonable the writer is, the higher the score. The clout dimension reflects a writer’s social awareness and confidence. On a centesimal scale, the clout score reflects a writer’s confidence in their ideas and assertion of status. The authenticity algorithm reveals the degree to which authors present themselves as honest. The more spontaneous an author’s style is, the higher the text’s authenticity. Finally, a text’s emotional tone indicates the positive and negative thoughts the author expresses, and offer

additional information about those positive and negative thoughts (e.g., which is more prevalent, what words express each, and how do they cluster). Tonal values > 50 tone indicate a more positive sentimentality.

Dashti's highest score across the four categories is authenticity (78.58), which reflects the author's strong self-reflection and consolidation of their identity, indicating the honest narration of her illness journey. The first-person personal pronoun consistently prevails (9.28) over other personal pronouns (3.82) in the book. Dashti's frequent use of the first-person personal pronoun is associated with temporal orientations, recurrently referring to the past (8.38) and portraying her bodily experience with motion (2.19) versus work (2.03). A focus on the present (4.62) is frequently associated with cognitive and perceptual processes. Dashti rarely refers to the future in her memoir. This is partly due to the fear of the future touched by disability and pain as she is informed that the disease is most likely to get worse and that physical deterioration is inevitable. Table 1 shows a sample of Dashti's references to the time and the other categories to which the words belong. Table 1 shows a sample of Dashti's references to the time and the other categories to which the words belong.

Table 1. Exemplary time references and their categorical associations in Dashti's *Almost Faded*

| Temporal reference | Lexical units | Category | Context |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Past (8.38) | walked, came, came, drove, exercised | Motion | I <i>walked</i> and <i>exercised</i> for thirty minutes after lunch. |
| Present (4.62) | Know, analyze, think, want, find | Cognitive process | I <i>know</i> it was high... |
| Future (0.74) | Shall, may | Cognitive process | I <i>may</i> need to go back to sometime. |

Dashti's concatenating of function words (55.93) adds precision and accuracy to her writing and increases her work's analytic tone (63.92) accordingly. This also manifests in the complex subcategory of cognitive processes (10.38). Dashti signals cognitive processes to content and function words. Besides analyze, idea, and information, she usually refers to the causes of events, as well as infers and compares events with variable certainties, presenting herself as an analytical thinker. Table 2 displays a sample of the cognitive processes in Dashti's *Almost Faded*.

Table 2. Exemplary content and function words expressing cognitive processes

| Context | Cognitive process | Overall incidence |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| This book does not <i>analyze</i> , discuss, affirm or deny the validity of my own <i>decisions</i> | Insight | 2.36 |
| Most of which was <i>because</i> of my tooth-ends | Causation | 2.08 |
| I <i>could</i> not find myself between the pages | Discrepancy | 1.34 |
| I <i>almost</i> forgot I was “healthy” one day. | Tentative | 1.91 |
| rheumatoid patients <i>must</i> avoid salty food | Certainty | 1.15 |
| <i>But</i> the furniture was such a shame | Differentiation | 2.76 |

Dashti's confidence and status orientation are not as dominant (clout: 30.98) as analytic thinking and authenticity. She narrates and critically exposes her experience without making absolute judgments or positioning herself in a leading position, manifested through the overuse of negation words (1.42), before declaring certain opinions or expressing some stances, as a patient who lives with a chronic illness. Dashti offers an authentic image of a person experiencing a painful disease who wants to share her insights with other people to help challenge negative views of disabled women and their lives. Table 3 exemplifies some instances of low clout in Dashti's book. Table 3 exemplifies some instances of low clout in Dashti's book.

Table 3. Sample of representative use of negation words

| Subcategory | Example |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Negation words | It should <i>not</i> be a reason to draw an impression on me. |
| | .. write a whole informative, scientific, and medical book which was <i>not</i> my area of expertise. |
| | I could <i>not</i> find myself between the pages. |
| | It was <i>not</i> my intention to annoy or embarrass anyone |
| | I would <i>not</i> know what to do with myself |
| | ..this book does <i>not</i> analyze, discuss, affirm or deny the validity of my own decisions |

By making an emotional connection to her readers about the negative emotions and pain that is a result of rheumatoid arthritis, Dashti's emotional tone (20.90) is extremely low. The concordance of the low emotional tone relates to specific authorial choices about cognitive framing and perception of her inner conflicts regarding the pain and concomitant lifestyle-impacting factors. Dashti

expresses a mixture of anxiety, sadness, and anger in her narration, which are mainly connected with either the disease itself or the relevant health and social consequences. Most people can understand pain to some extent, but few people understand the frustrations of having to self-advocate for ordinary things like a door having a knob that hurts an arthritic wrist to turn rather than a lever handle that does not require a wrist movement to work. Table 4 displays instances of the negative words used by Dashti.

Table 4. Exemplary negative emotion words

| Negative emotions | Score | Examples |
|-------------------|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anxiety | 0.42 | I was <i>embarrassed</i> , waiting <i>impatiently</i> for the bus to pick me, ignoring its <i>threatening symptoms</i> |
| Anger | 0.29 | The Last <i>Battle</i> , and that was <i>annoying</i> , it was my <i>revenge</i> when someone <i>annoyed me</i> |
| Sadness | 0.62 | I used to <i>cry</i> with no <i>tears</i> shed! My <i>miserable</i> state of illness, I feel <i>sad</i> |

Despite Dashti's remarkably negative narration, occasional positive emotions are shown when eliding her familial and medical support or childhood memories, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Exemplary positive emotions are expressed in Dashti's *Almost Faded*

| Subcategory | Example |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Positive Sentimentality | The first dedication is for the one who <i>honored</i> us |
| | the ones who took <i>care</i> of me |
| | It is <i>funny</i> that this motivation for writing made me this perfectionist |
| | all of which is in the <i>best interest</i> of the rheumatoid patient |
| | I <i>smiled</i> |
| | constant <i>charity</i> |
| | singing and swaying just like the <i>party</i> organizers planned |
| oh <i>pretty</i> kids, drink milk for <i>good</i> health and <i>strength</i> | |

Social (7.66), temporal (6.43), and spatial (6.37) references are central to Dashti's narration. Dashti refers to several people in her social circles through a variety of content and function words. Dashti depicts family members (0.67) considerably more frequently than friends (0.08): her use of female-indexing words (1.50) is also slightly higher than her use of male-indexing words (1.11). Macro- and micro-level time references are also dominant in *Almost Faded*. At the macro

level, Dashti prescribed most of her chapters in specific time as explicated in the titles (i.e., “The Beginning of the Journey,” “1993,” “Years of Adapting,” “After Medication Period,” and “The Last Battle”). At the micro level, time references are recurrent at the sentential and paragraph levels. Dashti’s orientation to the spaces is detectable in her accurate descriptions of locations and sizes, as displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Sample of Dashti’s social, temporal and spatial references in *Faded*

| Subcategory | Example |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social | my <i>grandmother</i> reheated the leftovers, so my <i>maid</i> used to sprinkle me with water, <i>She</i> put <i>everybody’s</i> need before hers, My <i>grandfather</i> started complaining, I am around <i>kids</i> |
| Time | ...meeting my doctor for more than twenty <i>years</i> , it was the <i>beginning</i> of roughness, <i>After</i> I saw the alternative medicine doctor in <i>2004</i> |
| Space | My mom took me to the clinic <i>nearby</i> , <i>where</i> the doctor checked, It was like a <i>small</i> hotel in <i>front</i> of the hospital, paintings that were stocked on its <i>sides</i> and in the <i>middle</i> , I took it back to the <i>center</i> |

Finally, Dashti’s reference to the biological category (5.72) centers on the domain of health (3.49). The representations of pain, illness, and physical discomfort are well documented in *Almost Faded*, urging the author to dedicate chapters to specific turning points in her therapy, such as “The Surgery and Transitional Joint”. Each chapter is a further progression into illness and the difficulty of healing. Through a circular narrative, we arrive at a sense that the author is slowly fading from her life, with only illness at the forefront.

6. Discussion

Although psycholinguistic analysis of literary work aims to reflect personality and ideology on writing, many studies used qualitative analysis to investigate, for example, narcissistic personality disorder in the writings of Henry Kissinger (Falk 2015; Keys and Yorke 2019; Krasnyak 2021). These studies do not choose a period of Kissinger’s life, summarize what he published during that period, and compare it to what he wrote at the end of his life and how others criticized him and his work. Computational analyses can aid in identifying specific features in the narratives, especially when they use LIWC (Biggiogera et al. 2021; Khare et al. 2023; Tóth and Abdelzaher 2023). LIWC, however, can be used with qualitative analysis to offer insights on probing what is unusual in writing.

Life narratives that specifically deal with illness are about re-claiming voice. This interruption in one’s life narrative calls for an act of re-claiming the ill person’s voice, re-writing the narrative to include the presence of illness and its chaotic entrance into one’s life. Medical doctors and family members may not listen to the ill person’s voice, which Arthur Frank terms as “medical colonization” (Frank

2013). In the same vein, women's struggle to be heard is compounded with medical colonization. The only way to re-claim agency over one's narrative of illness is to write against the dominant narrative of disabled and ill women as voiceless, spoken for, and shunned. For Dashti to be writing about her illness in a society that does not explore these topics as worthy of writing about, this is an act of agency over one's disabled body. The conflicts explored within the memoir include a struggle for self-acceptance and navigating life through the difficulties of a failed body (Frank 2020). Dashti's struggles include difficulties pondering her authorial reasoning for penning this memoir. To illustrate, she writes:

This illness has always been the center of my life, and there are two reasons that drove me to write about it: the first one is the Prophet Mohammed's saying "When a man dies, his deeds come to an end except for three things: constant charity, a knowledge which is beneficial, or a virtuous descendant who prays for him." I cannot have kids, so I'm left with charity and knowledge...However, this is my turn to speak in a heard voice and achieve the goal that I kept dreaming of for years. I need to do it, for myself this time (p.7).

As such, the author feels the need to explore her decisions in narrating the disabled body, speaking of a subject matter than be "annoying or embarrassing" for others (p.7). She speaks directly to the reader at many times during the narrative; the authorial intrusion technique is used whenever she feels the need to justify narrating bodily pain and presumed failure. While there is a definite feeling of social stigma, there is also a clear feeling of self-deprecating and stigmatizing views that the author is working through throughout this narration of the body. As the narrative continues and the disease progresses, there is a daunting realization that she confesses: "I prepared myself not to feel sad or regret anything I gradually lost...Later on, it turned out that what I trained myself on turned into cruelty. Cruelty I practiced on myself all that time" (p.78). This "cruelty" is mentioned as an aside, but the consequences of the disease are apparent and self-alienating. As she navigates the debilitating effects of the disease, Dashti holds on to her memories of the disease's progression, the medicalization of the body, and the difficulties in finding solace anywhere. Feeling unheard by doctors throughout her journey, she desperately asks: "Why are the doctors still secretive toward their patients, especially the ones with chronic autoimmune diseases? They might be disabled in the future!" (p.82). Feeling unheard and dissatisfied with the medical community is a common theme in illness narratives and this frustration relates to the title itself, feeling almost 'faded', gone, and almost invisible both to the medical community and society. Dashti's memories begin to slip away, and her sense of self is threatened as the disintegration of the self happens while the disease progresses.

Nonetheless, paradigmatic expansion of the conventional FDS was inferred in the characterizing the narrative of Moore's *Spleen*, complementing the assumed consistency between physical abnormalities and their pain-driven narratives. Moore's modernist aestheticization of bodily differences paradoxically reinforces eugenic ideologies even while using avant-garde formal techniques. Moreover,

FDS's conceptual framework was used for explaining maternal–child disability relationships in Lessing's *The Fifth Child*. It also fits Dashti's autobiographical work, albeit through different mechanisms, with the issues arising from the ontological statuses of the mother figure and the disabled child in liberal humanist notions of autonomous selfhood. The findings retrieved from the psycholinguistic analysis of Dashti's *Almost Faded* complement the theoretical tenets of FDS's conceptualization of disability narratives when applied to non-Western epistemologies; it also reveals how disability identity is authenticated through cultural concepts of honor, family reputation, and gendered expectations—which amount to contingent disclosure matrices—while providing a template for how Kuwaiti women with disabilities can articulate their experiences with both personal truth and cultural acceptability. *Almost Faded* shows how disabled Kuwaiti women's support systems are primarily feminine and family-based and highlights both their strength and the potential limitations of depending solely on familial support structures. Dashti's focus on specific locations and social interactions also suggests that improving the lives of these women requires attention to both physical infrastructure and social attitudes, particularly in how public and private spaces accommodate disabled bodies.

Another important aspect of the psychological stress placed on Dashti in this memoir is the presence of the male figure, the father figure in her life's narrative. The father, serving as the patriarch of the household, places stress on her emotional wellbeing and instills a deep sense of shame and self-hatred. She confesses: "Living in a house like ours is a challenge on its own, after the illness of course. I can describe my misery/ stress as follows: 1- my father. 2- the progression of the disease. 3- Cortisone side effects. Yes, my father is on top of that list. He is so good at putting us under the pressure when he thinks that something is right" (p.102). There is no place for Dashti within her own household and environment. Society's barriers are not simply exclusive to the larger society at whole, but in fact, it starts within the patriarchal home, a place that instills fears and shame within the young girl's psyche. In the same vein, the social and the medical model of disability both are inextricably linked to the reading of Dashti's memoir, highlighting the oppressive effects of society and its individuals, as well as the medical community's limited reductionism of the body (Martinez 2019; Savarese 2022; Lawrence 2024). Dashti's memoir places the author in an oppressive body, environment, and a voice that is constantly stifled. It is a voice that is barely audible and is fighting to be heard, *Almost Faded*, not clear at all, yet trying to challenge society's stigmatization of illness be more easily understood than others, while specific variants possess unique characteristics.

7. Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the illness narrative found in translation from Kuwaiti literature about illness and disability and has found that the society's stigmatization of the disabled body and ill women are a result of ableism and expectations of womanhood. The disabled author tries to narrate her failing body through eliciting her memories of the disease's progression and the various medical techniques

applied to her body, including surgeries, medications, and physiotherapy. All along, the author continues to try and voice her experience, re-claiming her voice from the darkness and silence of being largely ignored by society and the medical community. More research on illness narratives in the Arab region will help elucidate an understanding of common tropes and patterns in these narratives.

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