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A Stylistic Study into the Poem “The Lost Alternative” By the Poet: Nizar Abu Naser

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Abstract: This study was performed based on the poem “the Lost Alternative” by the poet Nizar Abu Naser. This poem is part of the divan “the Lost Alternative.” To conduct the study, the stylistic method was adopted. Thus, the title, as well as the stylistic levels such as the language, combinations, visualization, and rhythm were studied. That is, the role of different styles in enriching the text and its semantic and aesthetic aspects were investigated.

Keywords: The Lost Alternative; Stylistic study; Stylistic levels.

1 Introduction

On the Method:

As their founder, Bally, argues, stylistic studies (also known as *stylistics*) investigate the expressions of affects that originate from sensitivity [1]. Stylistics, therefore, aims at studying a style that is a human, inner signification. To this end, it employs expressive mechanisms and methods that distinguish a technical speech from other kinds of speech [2]. Consequently, stylistics “aims to uncover those word combinations that convey emotional charges and their aesthetic manifestations. In this case, poetic styles and casual speech will be differentiated based on the inspiration rule and its causes, indirect expression and its prerequisites, and the tone mechanism and its causes, which in turn determine the individuation of the poet and his aesthetic awareness [3].”

On this basis, critics categorized stylistic studies into various levels such as: Vocal, syntactic, morphological, and rhetorical. Each level comprises a set of axes that determine the poet’s special style which differentiates him or her from others. Therefore, poem, as Qabani views it is “the engineering of letters and sounds by which we construct in others’ psyches a world similar to ours, and poets are engineers each having a certain manner by which to construct letters [4].”

In this study, we will uncover the most important styles that the poet employed, including the phonemic, rhythmic level, the combinatory level, or the suggestive, semantic level. Moreover, we will describe the stylistic phenomena in a poet and the role those styles play in increasing a text’s aesthetics, and we will also uncover the origins of those aesthetics.

On the Poem:

The poem *the Lost Alternative* is included in a divan that belongs to the Arab poet Nizar Abu Naser; the poem’s title is the same as the divan’s title. Many poets chose this poem because it has the divan’s title, because they considered this poem properly represents all the other poems, or because they believe it to link the divan’s poems.

Published by Sharjah Department of Culture in 2019, the divan contains 129 pages in which there are two-couplets and dactyls. Poems are either on personal or general matters. The poem presented in this study is a divan, which was developed by the poet in 36 couplets that are based on the Basit (Arabic: بسيط) [extended] meter. The poet, even if divided a couplet into several poetry lines to manipulate the reader that the poem changed his focus from a couplet to a line, he nevertheless did not escape the Basit meter. This means lines deserve attention also, as evident in the poet’s language and confession.

Title:

For title introduces us to the main text, we have to investigate it carefully. A title “throws light on a critical point in a text and shows the weight an author attaches to it, thus it contains a valuable mental signification that helps the critic to study the work and to analyze the mentality of its creator [6].”

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The title is a combination of two words (*the lost + alternative*) and given that this annexation is indefinite, it implies characterization not definitiveness. This combination is more similar to something definitive and may indeed be so. In other words, the word *alternative* was an adnominal yet could be an adjective. The latter possibility is likely, though it is more likely that this word be an addition as it better matches what it signifies. It is as if the two words are one word signifying only one thing.

Alternative means something unoriginal taking the position of the original. That is, the original is lost, requiring the poet to create an alternative version. In the adnominal sense, the poet deliberately employed an agent noun to denote a participle. Arabs frequently, though sometimes implicitly, use this technique. No example is more explicit than the lampooning of Hati'a to Zabarqan bin Badr in the era of Omar bin Khattab:

Let virtues not be purposeless And seat as you are the coverer feeder

For this reason, Zabarqan raised a complaint against Hati'a to Caliph Omar, and the latter argued: "Aren't you satisfied with being a coverer feeder?" "In lampooning," Zabarqan replied, "nothing is more severe than this." Thus, Omar called Hassan bin Sabet to explicate the problem. Hassan replied in a tough tone: "This is a bitter lampooning, because the *coverer feeder* are participle nouns not agent nouns, meaning that Hati'a likened Zabarqan to women who reside at home and feed and cover [7]."

2 Declarative versus Interrogative Sentences

Linguistics categorize sentences under two headings: declarative and interrogative. Declarative sentences are those that present a piece of information that can be true or false: e.g. the weather is hot, the child slept. Al-Sakkaki has defined declarative sentences as follows: "A sentence which declares something by denying or confirming it (8)." Therefore, a declarative sentence conveys a piece of information or perhaps implies a state of mental, emotional stability in the poet.

Absolute sentences, however, do not present a piece of information. They include several forms such as ordering, prohibiting, asking, calling, wondering, wishing, begging, admiring, and blaming. Linguistics categorize absolute sentences under two headings: positive and negative. Broadly, both these states imply a changeable state of feelings and emotions that a poet feels and that influence the poem's tendency.

We can notice the declarative sentences are present on both hemistiches of couplet 1 through 13, though the first hemistich of couplet 1 is a declarative sentence and the second hemistich is an interrogative sentence. The domination of declarative sentences implies that the poem sprung from a mature experience, which emphasizes a state of emotional stability in the poet's thought and soul. In the first hemistich of the 14th couplet, there is a declarative sentence (Is the absence) yet in the second hemistich there is a wondering question. That is, in the second hemistich the poet employed an interrogative sentence which is on the surface a question and from inside a surprise:

Who will remain at home if all are outside?

3 Results:

However, in the six couplets that follow, in both hemistiches, the poet does not employ a declarative sentence. Only in the 21st couplet does he return to the declarative sentence by an order: "Say..." This shift from a wondering tone to an ordering tone implies an inner revolution that explodes by an order. The next two couplets, namely couplet 27 and 28 contain interrogative sentences that give order, and couplet 31 and 28 also contain a wish, followed by declarative sentences (i.e. making request) that finalize the poem:

Say hello to her...

Say hello to her...

Table 1: The reader who tracked the declarative and interrogative sentences of the poem can find them following the order mentioned in the table below:

Couplet	Declarative	Interrogative	Kind of interrogation (if any)
1	√	√	Asking
2-13	√	-	-
14	√	√	Asking
15-17	√	-	-
18	√	√	Prohibiting
19-20	√	-	-
21			
22-23	√	√	Ordering

24	-	√	Calling
25-26	√	-	-
27	√	√	Ordering
28	√	√	Wishing
29-30	√	-	-
31	√	√	Wishing
32-34	√	-	-
35	-	√	Ordering
36	√	√	Ordering

As can be noticed in the table above, there is a fluctuation between stability and emotionality, which can be implied in the fluctuation between declarative and interrogative sentences. This means the poet interchanged between the declarative style and the interrogative style, making the reader at the same time calm and iconoclast. That is, “the style is reconstructed through the reception process and in response to the style the poet chooses.”

4 Discussion

In this research it was shown that the poem contains many artistic forms and figurations, to the point that no couplet can be found to lack a simile, metaphor, irony, or trope. This is evident in the expressive form that displays a set of shifts throughout the poem, namely from the first couplet to the last couplet. The poet showed these shifts through visual, animated images that rose with the rising of emotions and dropped with the dropping thereof. Using a minor point, for example, the poet developed an active animated picture in the text. Therefore, you will inevitably notice those pictures before you get immersed in the poem. To exemplify, if there is a scratch on a door handle, your eyes will notice it before you get inside a room. The pictures and the poem follow the same example also. Among many of these pictures are the following:

Vivid memories, confession ray, their sea's concern, days' boat, dawn's lumberjack, like the plant of sorrow. All these pictures are similes and metaphors that display a kind of confession.

This poem is based on the Basit meter, which consists of 8 feet with each line comprising 4 feet. The poem is premised on the following example:

Mostafalon, faelon, mostafalon faelon (مستفعلن، فاعلن، مستفعلن فاعلن)

Mostafalon, faelon, mostafalon faelon (مستفعلن، فاعلن، مستفعلن فاعلن)

This meter, which is among the meters that have many feet, has been named so for its length. Some of the forms of this meet contain fluctuations that give rhythmic integrity that is harmonious with one's feelings. In this regard, Khalil argued, “the relation between rhythms and psychical conditions is noticed only in some samples of the traditional Arab poems [10].” However, no absolute evidence has proven the existence of this relation in old poems. Ancient figures “did not consider for these topics a specific rhythm or a specific meter from among the old meters [11].” Even if there is no reason to believe the meter is appropriate for the topic, we should nevertheless consider the fact that in-depth studies suggest that the relation between rhythms and psychical conditions is relative. Moreover, those studies suggest that the rhythm resulting from the fluctuations influence the emotional and affective aspect of the author while writing.

Basit meter conveys a strong rhythmic structure. What distinguishes the rhythm of this meter the most is that its foot “*Mostafalon*” must come before the two feet of prosody and tempo, provided that “*Motfaelon*,” “*Mostaelon*,” or “*Moftalon*” not be provided. This rule in turn has provided the meter with a rhythmic shape [12].”

The first two feet, therefore, have a changeable rhythm whereas the foot *mostafalon*, which came in the final part of each line, remained constant. Moreover, *faelon* or *falon*, which are two different forms, were also present in the poem. This choice of the meter by the poet seems to be prudent. He points out in the 30th couplet:

I said your choice of Basit meter for it

Had a latent rhythm where sand spread out in it

The poem *the Lost Alternative* was entirely adherent to this rhythm, where the poet interchanged between the feet *mostafalon* and *faelon* using their two forms. However, the main foot, namely *mostafalon* came before the two feet of prosody and tempo. Moreover, the poet used the foot *faelon* in each couplet.

5 Rhyme and Rhyme Letter

The rhyme is known to be the tone that consists of the last letter of the couplet, the first vowel before this letter, and the

letter before the vowel. To explicate, the rhyme is as follows:

The last letter in the couplet → The first vowel before this letter → The letter preceding the vowel

In the poem *the Lost Alternative* the rhyme consists of “*Lan Faelon* [لَنْ فَعْلَنْ]” and “-b b- [-ب ب-]”.

For the rhyme letter is the main letter in the rhyme, linguistics pointed out that the rhyme is the last letter in the couplet upon which the poem is premised and named. The tilde and *H* [هاء] preceding the rhyme is not a vowel letter. For this reason, scholars divided the rhyme based on the rhyme letter into two parts: absolute and restricted. The absolute rhyme consists of a vowel letter and the resulting fulfillment (13) and the restricted has a real, constant vowel letter. The rhyme has three types:

1. Lacking *Radf* and *Tasis*: In other words, there is no *Tasis* letter *a* nor is there *radf* (*a, w, y* [Arabic: ياء، واو، ألف]).
2. Preceded by a *Radf*
3. Restricted and established: In this case, the rhyme precedes the outsider letter, and the outsider letter precedes the *Tasis a*.

Because the poem is based on the vowel rhyme letter (*l* [Arabic: لام]), which is a genuine letter restricted by a vowel, and because there is no *Radf* or *Tasis*, the poem is based on a restricted rhyme lacking *Radf* and *Tasis*:

The wakeful are like fine rain (tal)

Without debris (talal)

As can be seen, *l* is not preceded by a *Tasis a* or a *Radf*. Moreover, before the rhyme letter is *a*. We believe this is because the poem's pace is in an ascending tone that it does not stop. Should there be a stop, this stop would imply the stop of life which is in fact being dealt with in the poem. This kind of rhythm, especially in this meter, is less common than poets used the absolute rhyme that implies the fulfillment of motion.

6 Leonine Verse

Arab poets attached weight to the outset of their poems, especially in terms of the rhythm and sound. The leonine verse therefore predominated the Arab poems, especially the great ones. This is also true for the Mu'allaqāt (Arabic: المعلقةات) and other great Arabic poems. “What is meant by the leonine verse is the rhyming of the first hemistich. It has been said: rhyming of a poem's couplet makes its prosody similar to its flap [14].”

The poem *the Lost Alternative* attached much value to the rhythm. That is, its rhyming is at its outset, so it interests the ears and the hearts:

Pooled the main door's handle and appeared

And recalled the vivid memories like fine rain

Although both hemistiches imply one integrated meaning, and the first hemistich is not like a lock but an entrance to the next phrase, the meaning is nevertheless in harmonious with the listeners' and readers' hearts.

7 Repetition

Repetition is among the important stylistic phenomena. It originates from the poet's feelings and emotions that in turn stem from a deep psychological dynamic. Repetition emphasizes patterns so as to further clarify the meaning. It also emphasizes the current moment in the poem. Most frequent is the repetition of a word. “Perhaps the primary rule of such a repetition is for the repetition to be harmonious with the general meaning of the context. Otherwise, this repetition would be useless and unacceptable [15].”

The poet repeated the keyword by which he started his poem: *pooled the main door's handle*. He then repeated the word in the second couplet: *Pooled the impressions*. We can also find various repetitions that are known in stylistics as: **epanalepsis**. For example:

Negligence is in it..... Who inspired by *negligence*
Leaves the *cave*..... Hugs the *cave*
May reach *abandonment* Beyond *abandonment*
She loved you *She* was in the morning

When she was blazed When she claimed

If I did not amuse her If I did not exchange with her

Marwa is here If Marwa was here

Say hello to her Say hello to her

Beside the repetition of words, there is also the repetition of phrases which “increases one’s understanding about the poem to an extraordinary level. This repetition immerses the reader in the intensity of the poet’s emotionality [16].” There are examples of this flap, such as the outset of the last two couplets:

Say hello to her...

Say hello to her

We also can find the repetition of nominal connections such as pronouns that transfer the meaning by making a connection between words and speech elements. These connections have their own sounds, rhythm and, occasionally, emotionality. “Moreover, these connections are being increasingly used in our modern poem [17].”

The poem intentionally repeated several parts because the repetition of a part has “some simplicity and beauty that are evident in the psyche. In other words, the integrated rhymed lines imply in the poem emotional and spiritual aspects. These aspects are manifested in the repeated words in such a way that trigger surprise [18].”

8 Conclusion

The present study investigated a number of stylistic manifestations that had a significant impact on the poem’s structure. These manifestations at times increased emotionality and at others decreased it. Moreover, there was a fluctuation between declarative and interrogative sentences, which increased with the emotional tone and decreased with the vowel that limits the rhyme. The degree of visualization and imagination was also constant over the text, despite the fact that it also contained interesting variations. In addition, the rhyming with which the general framework of the meter, rhyme letter and rhyme was also constant. Plus, the leonine verse and repetition added a stylistic theme in the whole poem.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict regarding the publication of this paper.

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