A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE AESTHETICS OF LANGUAGE AND STRUCTURE IN T.S. ELIOT AND MAHMOUD DARWISH'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT: *This paper explores the insights and inspirations Mahmoud Darwish has received from other poets. The thematic and structural analysis the study conducts on T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and Mahmoud Darwish's "A Truce with the Mongols in the Forest of Oak" indicates that the two poems are narrated using a fragmented, ironic and symbolic language. Likewise, both purposefully repeat lexical items and syntactic structures, and abound with imageries and figures of speech.*

KEYWORDS: Language, Poetry, Eloit, Mahmoud, Forest of Oak, Poem, Speech

INTRODUCTION

The study compares poetic structures in Mahmoud Darwish's (A Truce with the Mongols in the Forest of Oak) and T.S. Eliot's (The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock) from an aesthetic stylistic perspective. It further attributes the innovation Darwish has introduced to the Arabic poetry to his influence by western poets and writers. The study as well contends that textual structures in Darwish's poetry are not a product of repetition, imitation or artificiality; rather, they unveil his open-mindedness and receptiveness to other cultures and civilizations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Roman Jacobson proposed a new theoretical and epistemological framework for the aesthetics of the literary discourse which he distinguished from the non-literary discourse. In the literary discourse, the emotive, informative, expository and communicative functions of language are subordinated to the aesthetics of utterances. The aesthetic function of poetry is accordingly not to convey facts and clear thoughts but to make the reader feel and interpret images based on the intentions of the poet, suggestions of the text or interaction between the text and its receiver.

Proceeding from Jacobson's theory of communication, the meaning of the poem can be distributed on the three axes of communication, namely: sender, message, and receiver. Because poetry is not primarily intended to deliver meaning or facts, it should be read for its aesthetic effects. The relativity and multiplicity of meanings should, therefore, be recognized.

Influence by other Poets

Darwish was influenced by Federico Garcia Lorca (1898 – 1936), Pablo Neruda (1904 – 1973), and T.S. Eliot. In a television interview (2003), Darwish disclosed that one is not born a poet or a writer; the poet is an extension of the accumulative poetic and artistic experience in the human heritage. Darwish indicated that he had been influenced by Jahili poetry, Abu at-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi and other world poets. The poet who taught him how to change the

functions of senses in the poetic image was the Spanish poet Lorca, with whom he was fascinated and charmed. Then, he got influenced with Neruda, T.S. Eliot and other great world poets.

Darwish considered Neruda the greatest twentieth century poet for the richness of the imageries and rhythms in his poetry. The Arabs viewed Neruda as a struggler; and it is for the advantage of the poet to be a struggler according to Darwish. Neruda is also known for his love and contemplative poetry in which he reflected upon the history of Latin America. He wrote a collection entitled *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*, 100 love sonnets, surrealist poems and historical epics. Darwish also considered Lorca the greatest lyrical poet in the twentieth century. He was influenced by his poetic plays as well as his lyrical poetry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hashim and Ahmed (2014) addressed the notion of home in Mahmoud Darwish's poetry. They argued that Darwish's conception of home undergoes three influential phases traversing his writing life of fifty years: Darwish's notion of home at home, remembering home from a distance and home as a process of articulation.

Ajjawi (2014) explored Mahmoud Darwish's endeavors to realize his existence through poetry. The existence attempts, according to Ajjawi, were voiced through the young poet's call to rebel and resist occupation. In a later stage of his life, the poet would contemplate on life and death and appreciate the meaning of his existence. The paper assumes that Mahmoud Darwish used imagery and symbolism to guide the Palestinians to the path of reconciliation with the world through his calls for action and demands for freedom and justice.

Al Areqi (2014) critically analyzed four of Darwish's poems addressing home and homeliness as well as identity and exile of the displaced people. The selected poems were analyzed to question the location of home, homeliness, exile and identity in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish. The paper further delved into the question of how the displaced would feel when they were detached of their homes and families. It also explored how Darwish's poetry effectively expressed his homesickness and homeliness. The foci of this paper lie upon both the thematic attitudinal structures and the aesthetics of using expressive words, symbols and images to manifest the poet's postcolonial identity.

Nassar (2011) explored the concept of resistance literature in Darwish's poetry as it is eloquently expressed in the four consecutive collections: *Awraq al-Zaytoun* (Olive leaves, 1964), *Ashiq min Filasteen* (A lover from Palestine, 1966), *Akhir al-Layal* (At the end of the night, 1967), and *al-Asafir Tamutu fi al-Jalil* (Birds are dying in Galilee, 1969). Nassar observed that Darwish frequently refers to the land and landscape, soldier, refugee, martyr, anguish of exile, anger, blood of the wounded, rifle, tank, fire and so forth in his resistance poetry.

Dhillon (2010) examined the complex use of poetry, identity, myth, and history as a subaltern strategy of resistance through literature. Dhillon argued that Mahmoud Darwish's poetry used identity, myth, and history to emblematize a collective Palestinian voice. The paper considered Darwish the epitome of Edward Said's conceptions of culture and imperialism as

he resisted both separatist discourses as well as the hegemonic structures of Israel and the West through his poetry.

Al Jazzar (2000) organized his study into four chapters. He examined the musicality and language structures in some of Darwish's poems. He as well analyzed imageries in the poetry of Darwish and concluded with an investigation of symbols and myths in Darwish's poetry.

Title

The title usually provides the keys to reading and understanding the most ambiguous, ironic and symbolic texts of poetry. The function of the title is not only to enlighten the darkness of the text but also to guide the reader through the text. Like any other genre or literary text, textology classifies the various stages of the production of poetry into the pre-textual stage, the textual stage and post-textual stage. The title of the literary text has gained more interest and consideration during contemporary and modern ages than in the past when the text used to have no title. The title is perceived as a chain of connection between the pre-textual stage and textual stage. Though the title can be considered as an independent text, it is followed by a text with which it is tangled.

The complete syntactic and linguistic structures of the sentence signify the pre-textual stage though their conceptualization by the reader leads to the textual stage. The semantic content of the sentence gets complete only when its motivation is figured out. In this context, motivation refers to the interrelation between the sentence and the text. This sentence or title would not have been brought into being unless the text had evoked it.

Two aspects explain why the title in Darwish's poem maintains a strong relation with the text. First, the title sums up and reduces the structure of the poem. A careful reading of the poem would reveal that the text explains and elaborates upon the title. Second, the title is repeated in the poem for emphatic purposes. A search for the components of the title in the text yields the following results:

كائنات في السنديانْ	-	- Creatures in the oak
في كائنات من السنديان	-	- In creatures of the oak
في غابة السنديان	-	- In the forest of oak
سوف ينتصر النسر والسنديان	-	- The eagle and oak will conquer
فلابد من هدنة للشقائق	-	- There must be a truce for the windflower
كائنات من السنديان	-	- Creatures of oak
في شبح السنديان	-	- In the ghost of oak
في عقدة الرمز في السنديان	-	- In the symbolic knot of oak
في غابة السنديان	-	- In the forest of oak
وعن ورق السنديان	-	- About the leaves of oak
نخب لأرملة السنديان	-	- A toast for the widow of oak

- فأن المغول يحبون خمرتنا	- The Mongols like our wine
- وأن يقطعوا شجر السنديان	- To cut the oak tree
- المغول يريدوننا ،أن نكون...	- The Mongols want us to be
- خلف أغنية السنديان	- Behind the song of oak

The title of Eliot's poem is as ironic as the title of Darwish's poem. While Eliot's poem expresses the speaker's inability to love women and make decisions, Darwish's poem negatively represents the Mongols as the treacherous monstrous people who have wreaked havoc on the human civilization, shed blood and disrespected truces and agreements. The negative image of the Mongols is metaphorically extended to the Israelis on the account that both disrespect truces. The poem further emphasizes the absurdity of peace when it is discharged of affectivity and balance:

- لـم نجـدْ أحـداً يقبـلُ السِـلْم .. لا نحـنُ نحنُ ولا غيرُنا غيرُنا	- We found no one to accept peace; neither the other nor we is the same.
- البنــادقُ مكســورةٌ .. والحمــامُ يطيـرُ بعيداً ۞ بعيداً	- The rifles are broken … Pigeons are flying away.
- لم نجد أحداً ههُنا..	- We found no one there.
- لم نجد أحداً..	- We found no one.
- لم نجد غابة السنديانْ !	- We did not find the oak forest.

This excerpt reveals Darwish's distrust of the Mongols or the Israelis who abide by no truce at all. A truce with the Mongols, for Darwish, is equivalent to a friendship with a wolf. Thus, what the title ironically suggests being a love song of a passionate lover turns out to be a pessimistic view a depressed speaker communicates to the reader or to a potential lover; and what the title ironically suggests being a reconciliation poem turns out to be a poem of resistance.

The title of Darwish's poem is as independent and informative as the title of Eliot's poem. Syntactically, the words "هدنة/truce" and "love" are the predicates of elided subjects in nominal sentences. The subjects of the two sentences can be respectively presumed to be as follows: this is a truce with the Mongols in the forest of oak; and this is the love song of J. Alfred Prufrock. The sentence constituting the title of Darwish's poem has two propositional phrases, namely "with the Mongols" and "in the forest of oak", whereas the sentence constituting the title of Eliot's poem has only one propositional phrase, namely "of Alfred Prufrock". These phrases give the titles their complete semantic frames.

Accordingly, there is no doubt that the semantic weight of Darwish's poem lies in the title as well as in the purposeful repetition of the word "oak" with which the poem opens and ends. The symbolic structure of the poem indicates that it may denote something and connote something else. The speaker as well indirectly unveils his intentions. He tends to make the reader feel his words but not to understand them. This tendency signifies the aesthetic communicative values which the reader oriented theories have introduced and engendered.

Language

Lexically, many words and lines are repeated throughout Eliot's poem. For example, the word "time" is repeated 26 times throughout the poem. The speaker as well repeats the following lines for several times:

- In the room the women come and go

- Talking of Michelangelo.

- And how should I presume?

- And would it have been worth it, after all,

- Would it have been worth while,

- Should say: "That is not what I meant at all;

- That is not it, at all."

This repetition has the aesthetic functions of creating an irregular pattern of internal rhymes and end rhymes, speeding up the flow and rhythm of the poem and rendering it more familiar to the reader or addressee.

Syntactically, the poem features both run-on-lines and end-stopped lines as well as caesuras. In run-on-lines, the sentence carries over into the next line as shown in the following examples:

- When the evening is spread out against the sky

  Like a patient etherized upon a table;

- In a minute there is time

  For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

- I know the voices dying with a dying fall

  Beneath the music from a farther room.

- Then how should I begin

  To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?

- Am an attendant lord, one that will do

To swell a progress, start a scene or two,

While run-on-lines are aesthetically used to speed up the rhythm, end-stopped lines are aesthetically used to create suspense and slow down the rhythm of the poem as shown in the following examples:

- No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;

- I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.

- I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

- Shall I part my hair behind?   Do I dare to eat a peach?

- I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Like in Eliot's poem, the columnar poem of Darwish comprises several stanzas with nominal sentences which often run on to the next line as the following quotation shows:

الضحايا تمرّ من الجانبين، تقول كلامًا أخيرًا وتسقط في

عالمٍ واحدٍ. سوف ينتصر النسر والسنديان عليها، فلا بدّ من

هدنةٍ للشقائق في السهل كي تخفي الميتين على الجانبين، وكي

نتبادل بعض الشتائم قبل الوصول إلى التلّ. لا بدّ من

تعبٍ آدميّ يحوّل تلك الخيول إلى..

كائناتٍ من السنديان

In comparison, Darwish used verbal and nominal sentences in his poem. While verbal sentences signify renovation and action, nominal sentences signify stability and steadiness. Though Arabic prefers verbal sentences to nominal sentences, Darwish's usage of nominal sentences is more dominant. The predicates of these sentences are either verbs or syntactic units replacing them such as present participles. The speaker of the poem, for instance, states

- كائنات من السنديان تطيل الوقوف على التل	- Creatures of oak lingering on the hill
- أننا صاعدون الى التل كي نمدح الله .	- Climbing the hill in praise to Allah
- كل شيء يدل على عبث الريح .	- Everything manifests the absurdity of the wind
- الضحايا تمر من الجانبين	- Victims are passing from both sides
- الصدى واحد في البراري	- Echo in wilderness is one
- كل حرب تعلمنا أن نحب الطبيعة اكثر	- War teaches us to love nature more
- ليت أعداءنا يأخذون مقاعدنا ...	- We wish our enemies would take our seats
- الحروب تعلمنا أن نذوق الهواء	- Wars teach us to taste the air
- كل قلب هنا لا يرد على الناي ...	- Every heart that never responds to the flute

These nominal sentences are located at the beginning of each stanza to support the dominant tendencies of declaration and statement and communicate stable uncontroversial semantic constants.

Imageries

Eliot's poem is abundant with figures of speech. The speaker, for instance, personifies the evening and the waves which he respectively compares to a patient etherized upon a table (Line 3) and to old people combing their white hair (Line 27). In one metaphor, the speaker likens the yellow fog and yellow smoke to a cat rubbing its back or muzzle upon the window-panes, licking its tongue into the corners of the evening and lingering upon the pools (Lines 15 – 25). In another metaphor, the speaker compares himself to a scavenger or a crab scuttling across the floors of silent seas (Lines 73 – 74).

Allusion is another figure of speech used in Eliot's poem. For example, the speaker alludes to Prince Hamlet (Line 111), the attendant Lord Polonius (Line 112) and the Fool (Line 119) in Shakespeare's play. He further alludes to Lazarus (Line 94) and to Michelangelo (lines 14, 36). These allusions signify the speaker's self-depreciation as he compares himself not to Jesus, Prince Hamlet or Michelangelo but to Polonius, Lazarus or the Fool.

Similarly important are the sensory images and symbols the poem abounds with. Unlike abstract images, sensory images provoke man's senses of sight, taste, smell, touch or hearing. For example, sawdust restaurants (Line 7) can be seen, and smelt; squeezing the universe into a ball (Line 92) and settling a pillow (Line 96) by one's head can be touched; the soot falling from chimneys (line 19) and yellow fog (line 15) can be smelt; seawater can be tasted (line 129); and the singing of mermaids (Line 124) can be heard. These images contribute to providing a physical rather than abstract description of the setting, especially that the poem is set in several places such as half-deserted streets (line 4), cheap hotels (line 6), sawdust restaurants (line 7), the beach, the sea… etc.

Darwish contrarily draws the reader into the atmosphere of the poem by means of abstract images whose significations can be decoded based on their semantic and syntactic context. This deviation from personification to abstraction marks his creative imitation of other poets as it is evident in the following examples:

- كائنات من السنديان تطيل الوقوف على التل .	- Creatures of oak lingering on the hill
- يصعد العشب من خبزنا نحوها إن تركنا المكان.	- Grass would grow from our bread towards it if we left the place.

Other lines and stanzas of the poem are abundant with abstract symbols and images which lack personification like in the following stanza:

- والصدى واحدٌ في الحروب الطويلة : أمٌّ ،أب , ولد , صدقوا	- Echo is one in long wars: the mother, father and son believe
- إن خلق البحيرات خيلاً تعود إليهم مطهمة بالرجاء الأخير	- Creatures of lakes are horses filled with hope
- فاعدوا لأحلامهم قهوة تمنع النوم ...	- For their dreams, prepare coffee that would keep sleep away.
- في شبح السنديان	- In the ghost of oak

In this poem, the speaker avoids personification in favor of abstraction and symbolism to emphasize the similarities between echo in the past and present, enemies of the past and present and wars in the past and present. In another abstract image, the speaker assumes the truthfulness of the claims the family made about the horses it used to have behind the lake. These horses are assumed to be filled with hope.

The speaker neither searches for material correspondences nor uses figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, allusions and personification; rather, he relies on abstraction, symbolism and irony. It can, therefore, be assumed that the family the speaker describes is a symbol of any Palestinian displaced or dispossessed family; behind the lakes is a symbol of the Arab World; and the horses belonging to them are symbols of the support they are awaiting the other Arab nations to offer. The horses filled with hope signify their difference from the horses of war.

In an irony, the speaker demands to "prepare the coffee of sleep for their dreams". The speaker in this irony prefers staying awake to having unrealistic dreams during sleep which provokes dreams that never exist. His sensations of desperation and pessimism, consequently, get worse.

CONCLUSION

The comparative study we conducted on the language and structure of Eliot and Darwish's poems reveals that the latter innovatively incorporated the poetic traditions of the west into his poetry. Like in English free verse, Darwish used the nominal sentence instead of the predominant Arabic verbal sentence, repetition as well as internal rhymes instead of end rhymes, run-on-lines instead of end-closed lines, and irony instead of satire or sarcasm. Yet, he creatively used abstract images and symbols instead of the sensory images the English poetry abounds with. Darwish's adoption of the traditions of English poetry has contributed to the flourish of modern Arabic poetry and resistance poetry of which Darwish was a pioneer and innovator.

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