

Article

Metaphorical Expression in Arabic Poetry

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Abstract: Arab poets have put their best to imbue their texts with creativity. One such tool is metaphor or visual structuring, which involves breaking the conventional structure of the poetic text to enhance its potential meanings. This phenomenon is significant in rhetorical studies, as it treats poetic text as a mode of expression that deviates from the norm. Metaphorical expressions in Arabic poetry attempt to replace literal expression with vivid imagery, evident in the frequent use of personification and the fragmentation of poetic verses into multiple rhetorical phrases. Metaphorical expressions in Arabic poetry, particularly Umayyad poetry, have not been thoroughly studied. This may be due to the assumption that its repetition in poetic themes diminishes its value. The true value of Arabic poetry, especially Umayyad poetry—lies not in its volume and frequency but in its depth, originality, and the creativity of the poet. Absence of comprehensive research in rhetorical writing and metaphorical expression in Umayyad poetry justifies this study. Current study has been designed to explore role of metaphorical expression in Arabic poetry in developing the recipient's rhetorical appreciation. This study adopts an analytical approach based on observation and analysis, with an in-depth and concentrated approach. Current research has been designed to bridge this gap.

Keywords: Arabic poetry; poets; rhetoric; metaphor; Umayyad poetry; audience

1. Introduction

In the evolving landscape of Arabic poetry, the text has transformed into both expressive form and emotional imagery. Every component of the poetic text, especially in the Arabic ode, helps attract readers (Abdul Mutalib 1995). Arabic poetry embodies change and innovation, responding to innovative thoughts and intellectual developments through phenomena like visual formation (Abdul Rahim 1953). The structural form of the poem is not just limited to linguistic and rhythmic aspects but also includes its typographical form, moving beyond the traditional vertical structure to a visual, written geometry. This change has made both poets and readers more conscious about the artistic frameworks and suggestive blank spaces of poetry. Thus, poetic text now transitions from mere verbal context to aesthetic meanings, blending language and imagery with linguistic contexts and poetic form. The act of reading has become a reciprocal process, moving from image to text and back, fostering deeper engagement (Al-Jurjani and Hellmut 1964).

Poets have addressed various poetic themes with artistic techniques in expression and rhetorical depiction without affectation or artificiality, demonstrating emotional authenticity. These poets produce art through metaphorical creativity, drawing from both imagination and real-world experiences—whether in their love for nature or passion for women—to craft metaphorical imagery. This imagery can be personified, synesthetic, or enriched with rhetorical embellishments, enhancing artistic depiction, and elevating poetic expression beyond mundane (Abdul Mutalib and Mahmoud 2000).

Metaphor enables poets to craft powerful imagery that reflects emotional and intellectual depth. It fuses thought and feeling in pre-structured analogies, evoking complex associations between internal experience and external phenomena (Hilal 1992). This technique moves the audience from literal understanding to intuitive and emotional engagement with the poetic vision. Metaphor has attracted the attention of linguists, philosophers, logicians, and psychologists due to its blend of emotion and thought in metaphorical forms (Al-Isfahani 2004). It leads the reader to engage intuitively in the underlying dimensions of the poet's vision and tangible sensory reality. Metaphor, thus, is a symbolic and suggestive artistic tool that activates the reader's inner experience. It is a product of imaginative visualization that achieves psychological and rhythmic clarity, even if it deviates from conventional linguistic norms, achieving mutual understanding among those who engage with it.

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As a driver of literary action, it represents the final product of imaginative process, creating an internal world that resonates with the reader's perception, compelling them to think and reflect through its rhetorical potential to animate both visible and invisible elements within the human psyche. The creativity of the writer manifests in the recipient's desire and mental efforts to uncover the missing link without elevating the language beyond its daily use. The ability lies in reshaping things anew in the imagination by cloaking the intended idea in an appealing language for an artistic purpose (Zainab Jasim 2004).

Through analysis, this study identifies three main visual structuring rhetorical elements namely metaphor or visual structuring or personification and embodiment (*al-Tashkhiṣ wa al-Tajṣīd*), synesthesia or sensory interplay (*al-Tawẓīf al-Badī'ī*) and rhetorical embellishment or creative employment (*al-Tawẓīf al-Badī'ī*) used by poets in building rhetorical expression.

2. Metaphor (*al-Tashkhiṣ wa al-Tajṣīd*)

Personification and embodiment are an expressive and suggestive technique that reflects the poet's creative experience. It adds aesthetic value by transforming abstract ideas into emotionally charged artistic images (Abdul Mutalib 1994). Personification shifts the relationship between signifier and signified, crafting a poetic world designed to evoke the reader's emotions through seemingly real sensory constructs. By attributing human qualities to objects or ideas, poets such as Al-'Arji convey emotional states with striking immediacy and artistic richness (Miftah 1985). Examples from his work illustrate how personal despair and romantic longing are visualized through animated metaphors that fuse the psychological with the sensory. By attributing human traits to tangible and material entities or assigning characteristics of living beings to objects, the poet perceives them as having life (Zayed 1978), like all living beings.

For instance:

*O ruins whose people have departed—
Where are your dwellers? Can you answer me?
You've become deserted, lonely, and empty—
If only you could speak, you'd surely testify.*

Here, the poet emotionally interacts with the ruins, assigning them human attributes by using the second-person pronoun "you." The metaphorical image bridges the abstract pain of loss with a tangible setting, thus enhancing the depth of meaning and aesthetic impact. The repeated use of address pronouns emphasizes the poet's denial of joy in days and nights when separated from the beloved, reflecting the poet's ability to depict abstract emotions and mental meanings (Al-Baghdadi). The external image elevates the inner perception, achieving both productivity and descriptiveness. In another vivid sensory depiction, the poet conveys the recipient into their inner world, laden with intense tension, embodying elements of their social reality with conscious poetic perception (Al-Tai and Rashid 1965), blending existential irony between sorrow and joy:

*I'll repay her loyalty with abundant affection,
When fickle love wanes and withholds.*

Here, multiple personifying expressions create a psychological atmosphere for the metaphorical image. The poet personifies "love" as something that can be measured and returned like a commodity—imparting physicality to an abstract emotion, making it more relatable clear and simple to the reader reflecting the poet's artistic ability to extract aesthetic values. In another instance, Al-'Arji presents his metaphorical relationships to create a poetic efficacy contributing to the transfer of poetic experience from the realm of tangible reality to the realm of psychological suspense in rhetorical significations (Aliwi 2005; Al-Sai 1984), saying:

*Perhaps the watchful eyes over our affection
Are lying or asleep and thus inattentive.*

In this verse, the poet refers to the suffocating crises his beloved experiences in trying to meet him away from the eyes of slanderers and watchers (Mohammed Hassan 1981). He conveys this through poetic imagination that expresses the intensity of fear, anxiety, and hope—emotions that clash within the beloved's heart due to the watchful eyes. He attributes the act of lying to the eyes, thus creating an initial personified image that embodies anxiety and reflects the suffering that his beloved, Layla, endures.

The psychological dimension of the metaphorical image lies in its artistic suggestion, which portrays the movement of the soul and its emotions, and the interrelations it holds in a way that anticipates the essence of the self intuitively. The artist is one who describes visible things in such a way that the reader does not know whether he is reading a verse of poetry or watching a beautiful scene. The reader feels as if he is speaking to himself and conversing with his conscience, as the poet ignites the cells of imagined reality in a communicative process that illustrates the fusion of souls (Al-Saleh Nafe 1986). Thus, we find Al-'Arji showcasing his artistic capabilities in personifying abstractions, bringing them to life before the recipient so they affect him emotionally (Abbas 1975). He says:

*I have committed no sin, nor have I brought you wrath,
So why are the paths blocked between you and me?*

Negation in this verse sets the appropriate psychological atmosphere for the poet to express what he intends to convey. He illustrates his positions, characterized at times by gentleness ("I have committed no sin") and at other by confrontation ("nor have I brought you wrath"). He portrays the balance and strength of his self-resolute through a metaphorical embodiment by attributing to "sin" which is an abstract concept—a tangible sensory quality ("harvesting fruit"), a process typically associated with living beings (humans).

To complete his image, the poet attributes the action of "bringing" to another intangible concept, "wrath," transforming the idea from its conceptual realm to the realm of tangible reality within the framework of the metaphorical image charged with elements of suspense and excitement (Badawi 1972). These elements gather distant truths into a rhetorical form, making it not just a rhetorical embellishment but the very essence of literary style. Al-'Arji used personification to support his metaphorical image, granting nature the traits and emotions of humans (Ahmed 1975), as in his verse:

*Dark-eyed one, if one day you looked at a stone,
You would instill sickness in that stone.*

In this verse, Al-'Arji weaves a conceptual image with psychological impact, revealing a sense of sorrow and pain that leads him to lament, aided by the dimension of personification through afflicting the stone with sickness. The attentive reader can note that the image is intensely impactful of the poet's emotional wounds, making the beloved medium between him and his pain.

The metaphor here moves within an imaginative realm, allowing the recipient to perceive the poet's sadness even in moments of joy, benefiting from the suggestiveness the image evokes—sorrow mingled with irony—reflecting the depth of his suffering. This, in turn, testifies to Al-'Arji's ability to craft artistic expression with emotionally charged imagery with emotional affect, for language is a spring in the poet's hands, overflowing with his linguistic ability into rhetorical images (Awad Muhammad 2001).

3. Synesthesia or Correspondence of the Senses (*Tarāsul al-Hawāss*)

Synesthesia—blending different sensory experiences—adds depth and suggestiveness to metaphorical imagery. By describing sounds with visual terms or associating tactile sensations with emotions, poets enhance the expression power of their language. This creates a poetic experience that transcends literal meaning and enters the realm of impression and psychological resonance. Synesthesia is a key element in shaping metaphorical imagery, indicating discordant relationships that transcend certain words to others nearby in meaning, evoking stronger emotions and deeper connotations. It transcends the literal meaning to establish another more suggestive meaning, adding expressive energy by dissolving artistic boundaries between sensory and non-sensory element (Al-Hamawi 1957).

When poets delve into the depths of the psyche, they draw from their artistic reservoir to express specific emotions, thoughts, or psychological states, creating a unique poetic vision that reshapes reality. Perhaps the beauty of the synesthetic image lies in seeing the analogy for building the metaphorical image, making beauty a feeling for the more perfect psychological world of the soul. It is the elevation of the abstract meaning to the rank of the human and the release of the image into a new context in a creative moment shaded by the embodied conceptual framework with psychological suggestions. We read him saying:

*The lightning flash cleared in its place of disappearance,
And brought down upon the cheeks a cold that sang praises.*

The interplay of touch (al-bard - cold) and hearing (muḥallilan - singing praises/tahleel) creates a synesthetic image, moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar, disrupting the recipient's expectations and enhancing the image's impact through sensory interplay. Cold is not heard but perceived by touch. This conveys the synesthetic effect in the image, making it more suggestive and impactful on the recipient by breaching the familiar into the unfamiliar, thereby upsetting their mind and their established understanding of the function of each sense. Indeed, the senses guide artistic creativity in forming the metaphorical image, given their evocative elements that can create a gap of tension. After a sudden shock to the reader, and subsequently a familiar poetic image brings back the reader's astonishment to comprehend the unfamiliar with a mental impact. Another image captured from Al-'Arji's artistic shelves, says:

*The fire cooled for them when it withdrew,
Desiring to devour them, and I protect its sanctuary.*

Al-'Arji excelled in this verse through an artistic fabric unfamiliar to the recipient, as the question arises: Is fire touched or seen? From this, synesthesia occurred without the recipient feeling it.

Through this, we understand the true employment of the synesthetic image that the poet intends, which is to demonstrate his artistic ability in capturing an image from the details of his surrounding reality and what feelings it arouses in his soul to express his stances towards his people (Qutb). In the context of the art of synesthesia, we must mention this synesthetic image, in which he says:

*If you try to conceal your passion,
An eye will be stirred against you, speaking your secret.*

The incursion of the synesthetic metaphor into the context of personified metaphor in this verse, converting the function of the sense of sight (see) to the function of the sense of speech (speak), aroused a cognitive meaning forming an objective relationship between forms of sensory reception. Thus, the synesthesia here appears familiar, as if it were an echo of the meaning as an expressive tool for the image whose task is to link the symbol and its referent, saying:

*I did not feed sleep until dawn I guarded it,
As guards take turns fearing nakedness/guard.*

The metaphor created by the poet in this text occurred when the action of the sense of unconscious feeling and loss of awareness (sleep), a non-tangible sense, transformed into the action of the sense of taste (eating), a tangible sensory feeling. Synesthesia here allowed the poet to choose words that grant harmony between two distant elements through predicative deviation (al-inḥirāf al-isnādī), creating strangeness in the image and then destabilizing the recipient's expectations, increasing the image's depth and thus its artistic value. Another personification where the poet employed two means to depict the bitter struggle between man and the forces surrounding him, giving them the attribute of fate. Through the dialectic of this painful struggle, the wheel of life turns, and man's pleasure is to live through sad, painful atmospheres, saying:

*And if you cut me off me, I will not see fate's pleasure
In anything, nor will I find joy or happiness.*

Here, the poet depicts the struggle that man experiences in his search for happiness, but he does not achieve it as fate stands in his way. The poet personified fate and then employed the action of the sense of sight (see - arā) with the action of another sense, the sense of taste (pleasure - laḥdhah). Two means intertwined in shaping this personified writing. However, the role of the recipient and their search for the creator's innovative aspects is paramount in influencing the image and stimulating it in their imagination.

4. Rhetorical Embellishment (*al-Tawẓīf al-Badīʿ*)

The art of rhetoric (*al-badīʿ*) is an important tool poets use to build their artistic images, granting the text vitality to convey meaning and its connotations. This flexibility allows for multiple interpretations, reflecting the poet's artistic focus. Rhetorical tools like antithesis, repetition, parallelism, and pain, are used to reinforce and highlight metaphorical expression. These help convey emotional tension, intellectual complexity, and aesthetic harmony. Al-'Arji skillfully merges figurative language with rhetorical sophistication, creating intricate poetic structures that engage the reader on multiple levels. The poet blends personification with rhetorical tools like antithesis (*al-ṭibāq*) as he says:

*And I see the day when you are distant as long,
And the nights when you draw near as short.*

The antithesis (long vs. short, far vs. near) expresses emotional intensity toward the beloved, adding psychological and objective depth to the image, ensuring coherence through the interplay of rhetorical and poetic elements.

The audience is considered an important party in the success of the metaphorical process and creating an atmosphere of compatibility between its parts, because the metaphorical image is the product of the fusion of types of structures, rhetorical and embellishing styles, and their synergy in that structure and its formation to present the idea in its final form to the recipient within a framework that aligns with his aims of maintaining the element of suspense in his metaphorical formation. Saying:

*As if his ascending place
Was magic upon which
Musk was struck –
From clouds struck.*

The repetition of (*ḍarb* - struck) in these two verses created an emotional atmosphere by clarifying the rhetorical structures represented by paronomasia (*jinās*) (*ḍarb, ḍarb*; striking, "striking"). It was as if he signed his phrase with a special signature to infuse the soul and convey it unconsciously, , urging the mind to seek a common meaning towards which both words apply. This verbal harmony worked to link the ideas and bind them psychologically to each other to create high suggestive energy and spiritual communication between the text and its recipient, leading to suggestion.

However, this verbal harmony between the segments of the image (upon it, musk, clouds, magic) led to the approximation of abstract ideas in addition to creating a harmonious and beautiful musical concordance. The value of paronomasia is determined artistically when formal transgression leads to meaning by arousing emotions within the context connected to the overall image of the situation. Furthermore, it is a set of worthy artistic effects that connect the creator's feelings with the recipient in the shortest possible time to understand his literary text and achieve his explanatory goal. Among the rhetorical styles employed by Al-'Arji is the style of returning the end to the beginning (*radd al-'ajuz 'alā al-ṣadr*), which has a suggestive function supporting its semantic function for the image, linking it to the emotional and intellectual situations the poet seeks, saying:

*So my praise of you is the best praise,
Whether you draw near or a land takes you far.*

Al-'Urji, through the style of repetition – complete paronomasia (*thanā'ī* - my praise, *thanā'* - praise) – created a depictive atmosphere reflecting his ability and creative potential in portraying his emotions before the recipient. Thus, aesthetic pleasure was achieved in the way the recipient interprets the literary work. Here, the poet's skill entered in launching his text into many diverse productive processes that engage the reader towards intellectual and formative activity in a certain way, prompting them to understand the speaker's text. However, the transformation of mental and emotional meanings into tangible images creates a new meaning that the context arouses. Thus, Al-'Arji employs rhetorical styles to express his artistic talents in painting his metaphorical images, saying:

*My days grew long, and my nights are longer,
And blame reproached my love, a stern reproof.*

The repetition (*al-tarṣīʿ*) in this embodied image is manifested in the accumulation of the consonant *Lām* (L). Repetition grants deep meanings that appear on the surface of the text, allowing the recipient to understand the text and thus the poet's intentions with ease and simplicity. Furthermore, the aesthetic study of rhetorical discourse necessitates knowledge of the hidden subtle meanings hidden in the mind, relying on the novelty possessed by the creator and his generative ability, along with the harmony of mental movement in a creative achievement that allows for the pictorial anticipation of the general meaning.

Al-'Arji addressed the themes of poetry and treated them with artistic methods of expression and rhetorical depiction organically. He is a naturally gifted poet with an emotional style, creating art with expressive ingenuity. He employed imagination, with the help of external reality, to foster a love for nature and passion for women, thereby creating rhetorical images, especially metaphorical ones. These appeared sometimes personified and embodied, and sometimes through synesthesia (correspondence of the senses), interwoven with rhetorical embellishments (*al-muḥassināt al-badīʿiyyah*), granting us an artistic image that competes with its peers in creativity, quality, and skilful execution.

5. Conclusions

The research showed that rhetorical writing (*al-kitābah al-bayāniyyah*) significantly impacts in conveying meanings because the personification style brings abstract meanings closer to the mind, giving them life to be more effective in performing their artistic function. Rhetoric (*al-bayān*) personifies inanimate objects and draws imagined images for them when transferring them from the literal meaning to the metaphorical meaning. Metaphor expresses the intended meanings and their impact on the soul. Synesthesia helps elucidate the personification, arising from depicting the rational meaning in the form of the sensible, and the conceptual with the sensory. Rhetorical embellishments convey meanings and clarifies the image by antithesis and creating concordance of words and their effect in directing souls towards the meaning carried by the phrases, and through the vocal coordination it creates. This

enriched personification (*al-tashkhiṣ*), creating an artistic atmosphere that has the merit in clarifying the importance of the meaning and entrenching it within the recipient's spirit. Personification and abstraction (*al-tashkhiṣ wa al-tajrīd*) came in two types: The first is the personification and abstraction of living and silent nature by attributing sensory (material) qualities to inanimate, non-living objects. The other type was attributing sensory qualities to abstract ideas (conceptual), with the latter being artistically superior.

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