



Between Mahmoud Darwish and Mohammed Al-Thubaiti a Textual Approach to “Now, in Exile” and “Consort”

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Abstract

This research aims at studying the affectivity and influence in Mahmoud Darwish's "Now, in Exile" from the collection *Almond Blossoms and Beyond* and Mohammed Al-Thubaiti's "Consort" from the collection *The Sand Position*. It also examines the image of the moon in both poems. Al-Thubaiti was consciously influenced by Darwish's experience with the moon, as they both harmoniously evoked the image of the moon / full moon in their poems, even though they had different attitudes toward it. The intertextuality between them and the story of Prophet Yusuf with al-'Azeez's wife was the point of convergence. Also the pronouns, (me and you), shift with their effect on the meaning as well as rhyme which was more prominent than any other style of rhythm in the poems. The study concludes that a relationship of similarity and convergence emerges between both poems in terms of vision and form.

Keywords: symbolic moon, intertextuality, pronoun shifts, rhyme

1. Introduction

The interdisciplinary study among contemporary poets is considered significant in the search for new elements that constitute the contemporary poetry movement. The problem of the study is that there is no comparative studies of the experiences of poetry in contemporary Arabic poetry, although I found it little. Another thing is that Mahmoud Darwish effected on the new poets in the Arab world, but the critics did not study this effect in a profound way.

Both Mahmoud Darwish and Mohammed Al-Thubaiti are considered to be among the poets who have adopted a stance on man and the universe. And despite the fact that Darwish had had an earlier and more common poetic experience, due to many considerations, the greatest of which is the connection of his poetry to the Palestinian conflict. After the contemplation of Al-Thubaiti's poetic experience, anyone finds that it is not less deep or less important than Darwish's, even if he belonged to the following generation. The first reading showed compatibility between both experiences that called for major research efforts, and so this research comes as part of the academic research that believes in influence. It studies two poems from their poetic collections; Mahmoud Darwish's "Now, in Exile" from the collection *Almond Blossoms and Beyond* and Mohammed Al-Thubaiti's "Consort" from the collection *The Sand Position*. Both poems rub shoulders in many areas, to which this research will refer to, as it would have never found these poems as if it was not for the constant revisions of their experiences and the correlations between them.

This research does not aim at favoring one poet over the other; however it aims at exploring the aspects of creativity and the influence of one experience on another through and the correlation of poetic methods. One critic attributed this to "varying levels; the first being fame, the second is the ability to understand the poet (relatively speaking), and the third is the ability to invest all this and turn it into genuine poetry which utters the name of the influenced poet" (Shaheen, 2007).

The scope of this research lies in the image of the moon between the two poets, the story of Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him) and the pronoun shifting in the presentation of meaning as well as between rhythm and rhyme. In order to be concise and avoid overlapping and confusion throughout this research, Mahmoud Darwish will be referred to as "Darwish" and Mohammed Al-Thubaiti will be referred to as "Al-Thubaiti." I did not come across the reading between the experiences of both poets within the limits of research and investigation, hoping that this study will inspire the recipient to search for clues of convergence and divergence between both poets within new topics.

2. The image of the moon between the two poets

There is no doubt that the language of poetry "is not indicative as much as it is poetic" (Fadl, 1992). For Darwish has returned to the "symbolic method for rejuvenating himself, emptying all his repressed emotions in his symbolic linguistic stock, which serves as a means by which he restores his psychological balance, and relieves him from his psychological pressure" (Eid, 1985). The image of the moon in Darwish's poetry is one of the images that took a new poetic dimension which deviated from its aesthetics and poetic' longing to meet it when it is the equivalence of the

beloved. The image of the moon also deviates in this poem, where it becomes a bad omen and a symbol for estrangement:

“A curious moon on the ruins,
Laughing like a fool
Don't believe that he is coming close to welcome you
He has, in his ancient task, as the new
March has, given back to the trees the names of longing
And neglected you.” (Darwish, 2005)

Here, the poet chooses a month that precedes spring (March), that holds all the beginnings of greenness, and so the fields await it, but it neglects them. The image of the moon is negative and so the image of March ends on a negative note. While Al-Thubaiti says:

“You and I have
Two stars and two signs in the balconies of astronomy
And we have one rain
Whenever it wet my forelock, it wet you
We cry on the grave like two reckless people
And lament a sun that has crumbled
And a full moon that has perished” (Al-Thubaiti, 2009)

The first scene in which both poems intersect is the scene of the moon which was expressed by Darwish as (moon), while it was expressed by Al-Thubaiti as (Badr) to demonstrate the state of the full moon. However Darwish questioned the moon and its behavior, for he described it as curious on the ruins, calling it foolish (Laughing like a fool), in the sense that it is not aware of the passing of time around it, or the movement of things as well. And so, Darwish takes it out of the circle of innocence when he closes the scene with (And neglected you). This image is reminiscent of the Darwish's stance on the moon in general as he was not in harmony with it since the dawn of his creativity, for he said in another collection of poems:

“The Moon was
The same -since we were born- cold
Grief flowing on its forehead
Tributaries... Tributaries
Near the fence of a village
It collapsed sad
Distracted.” (Darwish, 1989)

While Al-Thubaiti had some sort of partnership between him and (the full moon), as the movement is clear between him and the consort in the combination of things, for them having: two stars, two signs, one rain, one sun and one full moon. This means that there is harmony between his spirit and the consort's spirit (the other half), in the sense that they share one fate and one end, but that was not completed because the moon full perished, and a negative image took over the scene. In this, Al-Thubaiti was in agreement with Darwish:

“We cry on the grave like two reckless people
And lament a sun that has crumbled
And a full moon that has perished” (Al-Thubaiti, 2009)

3. The story of Prophet Yusuf (111)

In both texts, there are two stanzas that appear as if they were written at the same time, and in the same place. Even though the researcher believes that both stanzas present two different experiences, they are still harmonious. Darwish holds a dialogue with the self in exile caused by the occupation, while Al-Thubaiti holds an intellectual dialogue with the consort that adheres to him in his exile within society. Darwish writes:

“Tell life - as is worthy of an experienced poet:
Walk slowly like women so confident of their charm

1. There is a number of studies that tackle intertextuality in the poetry of Darwish, yet not in this poem. These studies include: Ali Salimi, Reza kiani, **A Critical Review of Koran Intertextuality in the Poetry of Mahmud Darwish and AmalDonqol**, Studies on Arabic language and Literature, issue 9, 2012, Semnan University, Iran. Ahmad Zuhair Rahahleh, **Revelations of Intersexual Relationships in the Last Divan of Mahmoud Darwish Titled “I Don't Want this Poem to Come to an End”**, Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences, issue 2, volume 42, 2015, Deanship of Academic Research. IbtisamAbusharar, **Historical & Religious Intertextuality in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish**, Master's Thesis, Hebron University, 2007.

And their schemes. Each with an invisible call:

Come, you / you are so beautiful!" (Darwish, 2005)

While Al-Thubaiti writes:

"Distance separated us for some time

Then it gathered our scattered alienation

On a dark spot

You told me:

Come, you

Come, you

I followed your steps, dragging my steps like the poor

I did not ask you" (Al-Thubaiti, 2009)

There is no doubt that there is clear intertextuality between the two texts and Surah Yusuf (peace be upon him), as this intertextuality is based on a "mosaic of other texts that were incorporated into it using different techniques" (Miftah, 1985), as both texts were not a burden on the Quranic text, they were in harmony with it, despite the differences in the message. In Surah Yusuf (peace be upon him), al-'Azeez's wife fell in love with the honorable Prophet Yusuf (And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him. She closed the doors and said, "Come, you." He said, "[I seek] the refuge of Allah. Indeed, he is my master, who has made good my residence. Indeed, wrongdoers will not succeed"). The visions of Darwish and Al-Thubaiti were different, however. Darwish refers to the life that is nearing the end, in his perspective, in the shattering of the glass, yet there is contiguous with the verse in mentioning the women that are so confident of their charm, which is an explicit reference to two traits of al-'Azeez's wife. He then singled out the call for each one, and wrote (Come, you) only once, as if each one says (Come, you) on her own, and he ended the stanza with (you are so beautiful!), which is a clear derivation from the beauty of the holy Prophet.

Not only was Al-Thubaiti different in performing the same role through his dialogue with the consort (the other), his contact with the language of the Quranic text was more distant from Darwish's, as he did not refer to women or their beauty, but incorporated her in the experience of distance and alienation which was gathered after some time on a pitch-black land. This idea gives way to deduction and expression. Does the idea of blackness refer to the darkness of life today, or the limitation of the correct idea in the minds of a few human beings who strive to circulate it, thinking it is the only correct path, or is the idea of life and death and are the paths of the inevitable ending? Trying to distinguish between the phrases (Come, you) and (you are so beautiful!) in his text, with which he intersects with Darwish, he consciously separated them; to show the great contrast between the human desire to break free from constraints and the fact that reality binds all freedoms, without straying away from a glimmer of hope:

"I iterated:

God, how beautiful you are"

In all this, his poetic stance was clever and surpassed the naive statement that is confined to adopting Darwish's language and rhyme, to the point that it diverged a little bit from the Quranic text and at the same time from the attraction of Darwish's text. So, he came up with a text that is independent and has his mark.

4. The pronoun shifts in the presentation of meaning

A creative individual always looks for a special combination to present an old or a new meaning, but using his own forms and methods. This combination usually highlights one creative individual more than another, as all what one hopes for is one sentence to convince the recipient or what was previously known as "And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him (to do an evil act), and she closed the doors and said: 'Come on! O you" he said: I seek refuge 'In Allah (or Allah forbid)! Truly, he (your husband) is my master! ' he made my living in a great comfort (so I will never betray him) verily, the zalimun (wrong and evil- door) will never successful"(translation of meaning of The noble Qur'an in English language, surah Yusuf 23) There is no doubt that there is a strange relationship between both poems that lays in the shifts of pronouns, where it is reflected in the poets' use of the pronouns (you and I). It began when Al-Thubaiti writes (Me and you have), and ends when Darwish writes (for me and you), with a great harmony between the subjective visions of life and time, and the existence of a special experience for each.

Pronouns show a state of movement in the poetic text, which is usually embodied in the shifts, where the meaning of moves from one side to the other. At the very beginning of Al-Thubaiti's poem, he announces a condescence between the pronoun shift (me - you):

"Me and you have

Two stars and two signs in the balconies of astronomy

And we have one rain

Whenever it wet my forelock, it wet you” (Al-Thubaiti, 2009)

It is noticeable that the pronoun (I) is the owner of the initiative (I have), then comes the addressee (you) in (you have). This runs throughout the whole poem, and once this duo, which suggests that two enemies standing opposite each other is complete, then the poet resorts to the pronoun union (we) again:

“And we have one rain

Whenever it wet my forelock, it wet you”

Even though this union drowns in the subjectivity of the transient soul in the imagination and the static soul that is embodied in the soul of the poet (Al-Thubaiti), but the consort undoubtedly adheres, as s/ he has ample space to learn things, because s/he comes from a different world than ours. Yet the poet tries to tear down the gap between him and his consort when he says (And we have one rain). This does not mean that he is referring to the consort itself, as much as he is referring to an internal dialogue that appears to happen between the two on the outside, but it is, in fact, happening in one person. The same scene is repeated in the second and third stanzas, as he starts the second stanza with the pronoun (we) to share the apparent affliction and separation (separated us, our alienation), and then he starts to separate the one soul through using the pronouns (you, me), but he opposes the first stanza in the direction of the pronoun shift, as he starts it with (you, me). In other words, he maintains the real presence that he wants inside through the continuation of the dialogue with the switching between roles:

“Distance separated us for some time

Then it gathered our scattered alienation

On a dark spot

You told me:

Come, you

Come, you

I followed your steps, dragging my steps like the poor

I did not ask you” (Al-Thubaiti, 2009)

In the third stanza, however, he restores the original fabric of pronoun shifts (me, you) that is represented in (I stood, and I found, my hermitage, then your house). We can only imagine the difference between the hermitage and the house; the hermitage acquires dimensions of abandonment and loneliness, while the house where he will find warmth and comfort. Here, he addresses the concern that he will be facing due to the progress of days:

“In the morning

I stood carefully

And I found my hermitage in your house” (Al-Thubaiti, 2009)

The pronoun shift in Darwish’s experience starts with the pronoun (you) in a unique way as the poet expresses to himself (Now, in exile); which means that now you are in exile. Perhaps the below lines can demonstrate this (for you, so rejoice, with utmost, to you, and deferred you)

“Now, in exile... Yes at home

In the sixties of a swift age

They light candles for you

So rejoice, with utmost silence,

Because a reckless death lost the way to you

In the heavy crowds... and deferred you.” (Darwish, 2005)

The shift in the pronoun (you) expanded throughout the poem before arriving at the end with a simple entry of the pronoun (he) in the moon scene: (a curious moon on the ruins, laughing like a fool), but it is an opposed entry that contributes to the overall image in the last scene:

“Walk slowly, oh life, so that I may see you

With all the incompleteness around me. How much have I forgotten you in

Your midst, searching for me and for you? And whenever I realized

One of your secrets, you answered harshly: You are so ignorant!

Tell absence: You have reduced me

And I came... To complete you!” (Darwish, 2005)

It is noticeable here that the characteristics of Darwish's pronoun shifts, which I mentioned in the introduction to my research is represented in his use of the feminine pronoun (you) at the end of his poem; and here a turning point in his vision as he mentions life explicitly; and so his attitude towards life is more confrontational than Al-Thubaiti's, but he keeps the dialectical relationship between them through using absence:

"Tell absence :You have reduced me

And I came... To complete you!"

The analysis of pronouns is as follows:

Tell: you		reduced me: me
And I: me		To complete you: you

It should be noted here that the Al-Thubaiti was a conscious recipient of the use of pronouns and their removal from the circle of psychological burden, and in dealing with them on the basis that they are a big component in textual output, as seen by Darwish in his experience. In this sense, we now have a new concept of pronouns in contemporary poetry, and its ability to contribute to the formation of texts.

5. Between rhythm and rhyme

Recent studies were devoted to rhythm and its relationship with rhyme, as one of the critics sees it as "vocal resonance that is issued by the same utterances used" (Ismail, 1992), while another sees it as "an action that is transmitted to a highly-sensitive recipient feeling the presence of a vital, growing internal movement that gives actions in progress a deep, melodic unit for by imparting certain properties on the components of the kinetic mass" (Abu-Deeb, 1981). We look at both poems here using the lens of imagination and not the extent of sincerity of one poem and the insincerity of another, So it seems that this imaginary romanticism is enveloped by a rhyme that is the most influential feature in the psyche of the recipient in both poems .This makes the study revolve around the orbit of verb pattern and rhyme closely, but the result is that both poems belong to different meters, for Darwish's poem follows the Kāmil meter:

Mutafā'ilun Mutafā'ilun Mutafā'ilun**Mutafā'ilun Mutafā'ilun Mutafā'ilun

While Al-Thubaiti was inspired by the Mutadārik meter:

Fa'ilun Fa'ilun Fa'ilun Fa'ilun**Fa'ilun Fa'ilun Fa'ilun Fa'ilun

Both meters are vastly different from one another, where the Kāmil meter is the most complete of the meters, while the Mutadārik meter is one of the most marginalized meters in ancient poetry, and a lot of controversy surrounded its name, but it has become one of the most important meters in free verse. What matters here is that both poems share the same rhyme which is (kāfsākinah), and perhaps the rhythm of the rhyme upon hearing the text has the greatest impact on the recipient in the identification of the poetic meter especially in modern poetry. As one critic says, "music raises internal emotions to show musical poetry or painting poetry in us" (Cohen, 2000). Studying the rhymes of both poems reveals that it consists of (kāfsākinah) by (lāmmutaḥarrīka), and this is the first feature of similarity between both poems. The number of rhyming words is close; as Al-Thubaiti's rhyme has nine words, and Darwish's rhyme has eight, while the percentage of rhyming verbs was inversely proportional, as Darwish's poem contains five rhyming verbs: (deferred you, welcome you, neglected you, carry you, complete you), and Al-Thubaiti's poem contains four rhyming verbs: (wet you, perished, pursued, ask you). If we are to study the movement of verbs through rhyme between both poems, we find that Darwish clearly tends to use the present tense (welcome you, carry you, complete you). He also uses negative verbs; as he focused on using the verb (welcome you), not to reflect hospitality and honor, but to reflect the magnitude of the abandonment and disinterest, in the negative image of the moon that Darwish did not leave since his early beginnings. The verb (carry you) carries another negative connotation in the unknown tomorrow, for if you look for equality or compromise, you are not going to find it:

"At sixty you will not find the remaining tomorrow

So that you may carry it on the shoulder of a hymn... and so that it may carry you"

And so is the case in the verb (to complete you) where it compensated for the strange shortfall caused by absence, with all its tools, in its alliance with time:

"Tell absence: You have reduced me

And I came... To complete you!"

That was from the angle of the present tense which is the most used tense in the movement of rhyme. The movement of the past tense, on the other hand, is presented in the two verbs that carry the same negative visions: (deferred you, neglected you). By negative, I do not mean opposite, but I mean the hesitation when talking about the unknown (death). Al-Thubaiti deals with the movement of past tense closely, as he uses the past tense in all his rhymes: (wet, perished, pursued) except one (ask you) which is in the present tense. The first rhyme expresses a sense of equality between both people:

“And we have one rain

Whenever it wet my forelock, it wet you” (Al-Thubaiti, 2009)

He also gave the rhyme a negative connotation, just like Darwish did, when he devoids the image of the luminous full moon, which is praised by poets, from all positivity and described it as perished:

“We cry on the grave like two reckless people

And lament a sun that has crumbled

And a full moon that has perished” (Al-Thubaiti, 2009)

Even the word (pursued) ,which reflects freedom, does not reflect this anymore in the current context because the path is no longer a path, for alienation becomes clear through the use of (the fever of the sand):

“And we were both blurred by the fever of the sand

So none of us knew which winds we received

And which path we pursued”

The strangers marches gloomily into the unknown, with hesitation that is clear because of the use of the present tense (ask) in (I did not ask you) and the past tense (did not) as well, in (I did not ask you):

“I followed your steps, dragging my steps like the poor

I did not ask you”

He identifies with the image of poor people whose miseries are repeated throughout; therefore, he relies on the present tense that negates asking, in order to be always in the shoes of the people who are patient to their suffering. If one was to take a closer look at the rhyme, s/he will find Darwish to be more elevated, even though Al-Thubaiti has mastered it as well.

6. Conclusion

With that being said, the research concludes with a set of findings and recommendations outlined as follows: This research does not aim at favoring one poet over the other; however, it aims at highlighting the points of convergence and divergence in the influence that Darwish had on Al-Thubaiti’s experience.

Al-Thubaiti is considered one of the Arab poets that have had a complete poetic experience; however, studies revolving around his experience are not as many and as thorough as the ones revolving around Darwish’s experience. There is convergence between Darwish and Al-Thubaiti in many aspects, even though the poems are not considered one of the poets’ long poems. Al-Thubaiti was consciously influenced by Darwish’s experience with the moon, as they both harmoniously evoke the image of the moon / full moon in in their poems, even though they had different attitudes toward it. Darwish related it to negativity in (Laughing like a fool) and cunningness in (neglected you), while Al-Thubaiti had some sort of association with the full moon, for the movement between him and the consort is clear in the combination of things like: (two stars, two signs) and the sharing of things like:(one rain, a sun, a full moon).

Darwish influenced Al-Thubaiti’s intertextuality, for the story of Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him) and al-'Azeez’s wife was a point of convergence between them. However, they varied in their inspiration, for Darwish focused on overcoming the latter half of life, while Al-Thubaiti focused on desire and truth; the desire for intellectual freedom and the seizing of life by truth and reality. Both Darwish and Al-Thubaiti were harmonious in evoking the pronouns (me and you), as it started with Al-Thubaiti’s (me and you have), and ended with Dariwsh’s (searching for me and for you). Both their movements played a major role in the transition and circulation of meaning within the same poem, even though Al-Thubaiti’s movement ended on a negative note that was beyond his control in (a full moon that has perished). Rhyme was more prominent than any other style of rhythm in the poems, as the rhyme was mostly sākinah(serenity). The influence that Darwish had on Al-Thubaiti is clearer here in a way that highlighted the intertextuality between them. He even came really close to the number of rhyming words used by Darwish; where he used nine words, while Darwish used eight. Verb patterns were diverse in both poems, as Darwish’s poem follows the Kāmil meter, while Al-Thubaiti’s follows the Mutadārik meter.

There are many poetic and artistic features in both experiences that need a closer look and further and further examination to determine the extent of influence that Darwish’s experience had on Al-Thubaiti. In addition, there are thematic and artistic aspects in Al-Thubaiti’s experience that have not been studied and need thoroughly a careful research. These aspects include: alienation, imagery, intertextuality, rhythm and irony especially because it did not receive the necessary attention from critics yet.

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