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Manifestations of Experimentation and Its Distinctive Features in Contemporary Algerian Poetry: A Reading of Fateh Allag's Divans

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Abstract:

Fateh Allag's poetic text is characterized by its departure from the ordinary and its embrace of the unconventional. This study aims to shed light on the distinctive features of his semantic structure, visionary dimensions, and aesthetic qualities. By analyzing the available divans, we will explore the key aspects of experimentation in his poetry. To achieve this, we will address the following fundamental question: What are the most significant aesthetic patterns that distinguished contemporary Algerian poetry through Fateh Allag's poetic experience? What are the primary features and manifestations of experimentation employed in his divans?

Keywords: Discourse, Poetry, Experimentation, Vision, Narrative.

الملخص:

تميز النص الشعري لفاتح علاق بالخروج عن المألوف وخلق المغاير، لذلك سنسلط الضوء على خصوصية البنية الدلالية والأبعاد الرؤيوية والسيمات الجمالية، وذلك من أجل الكشف عن أهم مظاهر التجريب في الدواوين المتاحة لدينا، من خلال الإجابة على الإشكالية الجوهرية التالية: ما هي أهم الأنساق الجمالية التي ميزت الشعر الجزائري المعاصر من خلال التجربة الشعرية لفاتح علاق ؟ وما هي أهم ملامح ومظاهر التجريب التي لجأت إليها الدواوين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطاب، الشعر، التجريب، الرؤية، السرد.

Introduction

The nature of true poetry has long been a source of fascination for me, particularly in this age of blurred lines and lost standards, where good and bad, poetry and non-poetry, intermingle. Can the essence of poetry truly lie in the ability to express the issues of life and existence? There are plenty of eloquent and articulate speakers, yet little true poetry. Does the essence then lie in expressing the unknown within the soul and the universe? There are even more philosophers and thinkers than

poets. Is it, as Eliot suggests, the transformation of ordinary emotions through objective equivalents? The spark of a text often extinguishes, its brilliance dimmed under the hammer of objectivity. Perhaps it's the reshaping of the real world through the use of masks and myths. Yet, many symbolic and mythical poems become cold images. Techniques like metaphor, mythologizing, transformation, and masks are not effective on their own; they are merely tools in the hands of an active and receptive self. Poetry can only erupt from this self, which is moved by a specific subject in light of a particular experience, enabling the use of certain techniques that transform this interaction into artistic value. The poetic self is the fire that melts aesthetic and non-aesthetic values together, pouring thought, emotion, and vision into the furnace of language, imagery, and rhythm, to create the nectar. Poetry is nothing but this nectar, produced by the interplay of many factors: intellectual, linguistic, and emotional. It arises from amongst the trees and rocks of the self, flowing from the waterfall of the soul[1].

The evolution of Arabic literature alongside the world's intellectual and social developments has been a compelling reason for a renewal movement. This has touched Arabic poetry at all levels, introducing technical and formal changes aimed at depicting the complexities of contemporary life and its transformations. By breaking down established norms and disrupting accumulated layers, these renovations in Arabic poetry have had a diverse range of effects on Algerian poetry. This ongoing influence followed its creative paths, giving poetry new characteristics that set it apart from its familiar forms. The break declared by contemporary Algerian poets, influenced by the contemporary poetic movement in the East (Mashreq), was an illuminating factor for raising awareness of the reasons for change and transformation in a time that no longer accepts complacency and satisfaction. This resulted in a departure from the traditional structure of Arabic poetry[2].

A close look at contemporary Algerian poetry reveals the dedication of its creators in their tireless pursuit of crafting a truly Algerian poem with entirely innovative dimensions and details. One can perceive the influence of Eastern poetry through borrowing and imitation, as well as the development of the lexical and conceptual structure that utilizes symbols and myths. The use of myth in poetry allows the poet to approach popular participation[3].

This modernization has led to the development and enrichment of the poetic structure through mastery of its artistic tools and stylistic methods inspired by contemporary culture. These methods highlight the poet's abilities, leading some poets to favor clarity over obscurity. Algerian poetry continues to flourish with a unique character that embodies their creativity, expressing everything that surrounds

them within and beyond their homeland while employing all the new and established rules in the poetic arena.

The experimental tendency arising from the modernist vision in literature has taken an upward trend in the Algerian literary scene. Stemming from the idea of distinction, renewal, and difference, it has moved towards transgression and transgression, exploding and demolishing all that is old. It has become a haven for poets weary of those ready-made molds, leading them to rebel against all the basic foundations of the Arabic poem and venture into unexplored territories.

The new generation of poets is committed to exploring modernist experimentation. This involves challenging and transgressing established forms, particularly among young people who have been exposed to the spirit of modernity due to globalization brought on by the technological revolution. The term "experimentation" itself is quite broad and can be ambiguous. However, it can be seen as an attempt to capture the rapid changes in poetic texts and offer fresh interpretations of many concepts.

Experimentation is a critical term in modern literary studies, applied to poetry, novels, plays, and other art forms. It signifies the liberation of poetry from rigid, pre-defined molds, the subversion of established patterns, and a rebellion against the familiar.

The changes in Arabic poetry, particularly in Algeria, have been marked by creativity and innovation. Language has broken free from convention in poetic structures, introducing novel compositional and imagery techniques interspersed with innovative artistic methods. It has pushed forward the boundaries of modernity, not merely content with what is discovered but constantly seeking the new – an openness to a vast new visionary landscape and modern stances. This is evident in the new poem with its groundbreaking linguistic beauty, drawing upon a vision and employing music, words, and imagery in fresh ways[4].

If modernity is an expressive transition embodied by image, language, and rhythm, then it becomes necessary to seek what gives it its visionary and real dimensions, being a partial sensory view of things that stand on external appearances. whereas vision transcends the apparent to the inner to reveal a new relationship in the light of which things are rearranged and a new world is placed[5], with displaced worlds and liberated linguistic creation that determines the fate of the poem in a visionary form that chants the beauty of speech and the credibility of expressing existence, thus the creator can formulate and embody his world in an innovative artistic way, whose foundation is the vision as the essence of creation and individual creativity based on the backgrounds of life and personal experience, as Adonis links

it to liberation from the prevailing and the familiar, as it is a transcendence of the prevailing concepts and a change in the system of things and in the angle of looking at them.

Modernist poets have utilized surprising structures and unorthodox compositions, acting as keys that unlock multiple pathways into the poetic world. This is the focal point of the poetic vision, as it shapes the course of this renewal. The world, in its objects and relationships, becomes a new field of action. The image itself becomes the foundation for surprise and wonder within the poetic work[6].

Conventional imagery based on rhetoric has been unable to achieve this change with all its artistic dimensions. Modern experimentation is a distinct poetic approach built upon a fundamental reevaluation of the concept and function of poetry[7]. This is what modernist poets strive for. They do not experience life superficially; instead, they attempt to delve into the anxieties of humanity and contemporary issues, making their poetry resonate with the human spirit.

The new poetic experience is an artistic vision built on feeling, emotion, and ongoing linguistic creation. It takes the form of a creative movement that aligns with life's constant changes, not confined to a specific period. Whenever our lived experience transforms, our view of things changes. Poetry swiftly responds by expressing this through unconventional means[8].

Modernism incorporates various concepts like truth, imagination, and presentation, allowing them to erupt into an inexhaustible source of linguistic creation. This has opened creative channels within the hearts of poets, liberating their silence and quenching their thirst in the Arab world in general and Algeria in particular. Algerian poetry, after all, is connected to its counterpart in the Eastern Arab world, having gone through similar stages of development.

Poetry is no longer just ordinary writing about ordinary things in ordinary ways. New sciences and arts have emerged, along with numerous literary genres that compete with poetry. Consequently, poetry's space in the horizontal sense has become limited. It was therefore necessary to carve out new openings in the vertical dimension, opening doors and windows, particularly in the realms of vision and form. It draws on various arts and sciences to revitalize its methods and develop its forms. Poetry is no longer merely a collection of words, rhetorical embellishments, or an outpouring of emotion and intellectual association. It has entered a struggle with other cognitive, artistic fields, and literary genres. It seeks to assert its existence and confirm its unique function, differing from and surpassing others to justify its continued presence in life. Poetry is not just attached to the human self but also to the very depths of life and existence. Wherever there is depth, there is poetry. Wherever

there is human richness and bounty, there is poetry. Poetry is the depth, canvas, and transparency of human beings and their far-sighted vision into the truths of the universe and existence. Poetry is the essence, depth, and fragrance of things. In the beginning, there was poetry, and poetry will continue as long as humans inhabit this life[9].

Algerian poetry has embarked on a remarkable creative adventure, navigating its way through various stages in search of new mechanisms and techniques that set it apart and ensure its profound engagement with the heart of Algerian society and its rapidly evolving issues. Contemporary Algerian poetic texts have embraced the notion of adventure and transformative transgression, giving rise to modernist texts open to multiple interpretations

1. Experimentation and the Dissolution of Genre Boundaries in Contemporary Poetry (Fateh Allag's Poems as a Model):

While it is impossible to definitively determine which came first, experimentation or the dissolution of boundaries between literary genres, whether experimentation, as an inherent tendency to break free from the norm and the familiar, led to the demolition of these boundaries, or vice versa, both practices converge in their transgression and violation, and together they aspire to a form of freedom. We tend to consider experimentation as the origin, as the dissolution of genre boundaries falling under the umbrella of experimentation, which stems from a philosophical vision that undermines old assumptions, considering them as obstacles to exploring new horizons in writing.

In the pursuit of dissolving boundaries, the classification of literature into two genres (poetry and prose), as has prevailed for a long time, is no longer applicable. Instead, the boundaries have blurred to the point of invisibility due to the overlap, as Austin Warren states, "Most modern theories tend to obscure the distinction between prose and poetry[10]."

The presence of narrative and scenic imagery is a prominent feature of the new sensitivity in Algerian poetry, which has sought to breach the boundaries between literary genres, relying on critical calls for rebellion against the purity of the literary genre. In this section, we will attempt to trace the extent of the transgression that has occurred between poetry and prose, through the poet Fateh Allag's use of narrative techniques such as dialogue, event, story, scene, dramatic structure, and autobiography.

There is no doubt that the Arabic poem today raises several problems related to poetic writing, given the overlap between what is poetic and what is narrative, which we see as increasing the openness of the poetic text to artistic horizons that grant the

possibility of breaking down the boundaries between what is narrative and what is poetic. Then, the poem in this form goes beyond the aesthetic aspect associated with the form to what achieves its poeticity, and this is done through the work of language alone, because the latter imposes the existence of the language of poetry, and seeks the characteristics that constitute it[11]. In other words, poetry and narrative share in the use of language that is consistent with the nature of the subject matter for both of them, and therefore this overlap between poetry and narrative will be present and inherent, in one way or another, within the fabric of the poem. In addition, each of them represents a beautiful formation in language, in addition to being a human activity that reflects the movement of a social and historical reality[12].

It is crucial to differentiate between poetry, characterized by its density, suggestion, metaphor, and conciseness, and narrative, which possesses its distinct characteristics: clarity, ease, and communication. However, this does not negate the intricate relationship, if one can call it that, between the two. Narrative, whether in the form of a novel or a poem, represents a fundamental structure in literary discourse. The human desire to narrate is an innate one that reveals our perception of things and defines our relationship with the world. It is a desire for catharsis, expression, and reconfiguration of the world in a state of manifestation. The presence of narrative elements in poetic texts also exemplifies the flexible and intertwined nature of their relationship. We observe this interaction in various forms within a structure characterized by realism and aesthetics while carrying a philosophical, social, or psychological vision in a form that blends poetry and narrative[13].

Contemporary Algerian poetic texts abound in intergenericism, as there is hardly a single poetic text void of narrative features, and with various uses. This implies that every poetic text is a story or a message that narrates a personal journey[14]. Additionally, the relationship between poetry and narrative can be interpreted in another way, suggesting that poetry is the foundation for all literary forms, which are considered less eloquent and distinctive than it[15].

The deconstruction of the poetic form structure is a prominent theme in contemporary Arabic poetry. This involves shaking up the established order and reconstructing contemporary epistemological and existential issues to form a uniquely conflictual poem[16], worthy of existence and poetic being. consequently, the poem in our current era cannot acknowledge boundaries to the extent that it aspires to create a poetic text open to all genres. Perhaps this is an affirmation that contemporary poetry draws from both the self and the world as a whole.

Narrative discourse has become a prominent feature in contemporary Algerian poetry, reflecting changes in the perception of poetic writing. It is no longer confined

to a closed structure but rather, in all cases, escapes from all genres with fixed meters and rhythms, allowing it to reveal the collective experience more comprehensively.

Since the poetic text encompasses all the pillars of the novel in the traditional sense of the term, it contains the event, plot, conflict, space, time, and characters. Or is it a play? With acts, dialogue, drama, scenery, and furniture? Or is it a long poem in which the poet conveys his personal experience? It has what a poem has in terms of meters and rhymes, transgressions and displacements, and poetic language that captivates the reader with its music and rhythms before affecting them with its meanings and connotations.

Perhaps a contemplative observer of the poetic discourse of the poet "Fateh Allag" will notice that it is a discourse rich in transcendental experiences that contribute to the development of Arabic and Algerian poetry in particular, and open it up to stylistic elements that have enriched Algerian poetic discourse, but rather distanced the poem from the rhetorical spirit. What distinguishes it is that it expresses a sense of purpose, beauty, and art stemming from the depth of vision and the authenticity of experience. All of this plays an important role in enriching the discourse of the poem, and perhaps this experience opens up areas of passage for intergeneric overlap.

2. Manifestations of Poeticity and Narrative Subtlety in the Poetic Text of Fateh Allag:

The exploration of poetic-narrative interfusion, as one of the most prominent mechanisms and phenomena of experimentation in poetic texts, leads us to investigate the manifestations of events, dialogue, time, space, narrator, characters, and all this without compromising the poetic essence of the text, which arises from displacement and the attempt to break down the boundaries between poetry and prose genres.

The narrative structure of the poetic text is characterized by the presence of the narrator's voice, which presents events and depicts situations according to a specific vision and perspective. The poem becomes a space for storytelling, observing the movements of characters, and portraying events, places, emotions, and time. All this is done without sacrificing its poeticity for the sake of declarative narration. The poet says:

As the mighty wave surges forward,

Patience is a virtue I must possess,

To craft a vessel or a rose for this poem's address.

With my gaze, I fold the heavens in embrace,

Reshaping stars and constellations' grace.

This cloud, my life, ventures on its endless flight,

A gentle rain is all it needs to take its flight.

Awakening from its slumber, my garden shall arise,

And in this dream of beauty, it shall forever thrive.[17]

In his poetic text, the poet Fateh Allag employs narrative techniques, telling us the story of his poetic vision. This text includes two main characters: the poet and nature. It also hosts some characters that the poet often represents as the opposite. Many poetic passages also present the technical dialogue, representing a scene that is closest to a very short film, as appears in the poet's words:

How will my side know your footsteps

When the grave has claimed your earthly head?

How will my heart still hear your voice

When winds have swept you, without choice

To ocean's depths, where shadows lie?

... Death weaves its nest 'neath boundless skies

...The coffin speaks, where valleys lie

The land proclaims, with steadfast might

Death to the jailer, lost from sight.

The sea's deep voice in a mournful tone, Echo the words

"Death to the throne."[18]

3. Delving into the Narrative Tools of Fateh Allag's Poetry

This essay delves into the narrative tools that permeate Fateh Allag's poetic verses, examining how they intertwine with the poem's structural elements – events, characters, setting, time, and dialogue.

3.1: The Uniqueness of Events in Fateh Allag's Poetry

Events stand as a cornerstone of narrative[19], and Allag masterfully employs them to weave a tapestry of sequential happenings, driven by characters, set within a specific time and place. These events form the backbone of the narrative, shaping the reader's experience.

In Allag's poetry, events unfold through the power of language, sometimes transcending into the realm of myth. They interact with reality, yet retain an air of separateness[20]. Events, inextricably linked to time and place, can exist in the present, the past, or the realm of anticipation and possibility.

In his poem "Shrapnel (Hunting Trip), " Allag asks a poignant question:

Driven by vengeance, or the hunt's allure?

Oedipus, at the journey's rise, the beast seeks pure answers.

Of man's dark heart, he inquires in vain.

Laius, at the journey's wane

The beast's question echoes cold and stark

Disappointment greets him, as life's thread leaves its mark

By Oedipus' hand, the final, fateful blow.[21]

Events in Allag's poetic world take shape through a lyrical language that flows like prose, exuding spontaneity and flexibility. This language carries within its images both real and imagined, transforming the poem into a living collective memory, exploring existence and questioning its truths. In his poem "The One-Eyed Imposter" from the collection "Shrapnel from Sea and Memory Mirrors, "Allag writes:

Close to your heart, the story dwells,

Whisper it soft on the wind's swift swells.

Let gentle words, like balm, go down,

And soothe all hearts that know no end.

In life's vast shade, where shadows creep

Unfurl the tales your spirit keeps

A mournful cry, a teardrop's gleam,

From rock and sea, a shared, soft stream.[22]

Allag's crafting of events manifests through an epic structure that inherently gives rise to a poetic form characterized by displacement and deviation. The narrative plays a pivotal role in this structure, driven by an interplay of movements, sounds, and a proliferation of verbs, transforming the poetic text into a narrative scene and a dramatic structure, with Allag as the weaver of his threads.

3.2 The Art of Dialogue in Fateh Allag's Poetry

Poetic discourse has transcended the confines of a single voice, embracing the technique of polyphony – a hallmark of contemporary narrative following Goldman's illumination of the concept of ideological plurality and the multiplicity of voices arising from the presence of diverse characters.

Allag's poetic texts thus embody a dialogic structure with multifaceted perspectives, conveying human emotions and sentiments. Contemporary poetry,

particularly in Allag's works, is characterized by its rich dialogue, a tool employed by the poet to convey his complex experiences and his desire to construct a text that transcends superficiality, directness, lyricism, and excess, moving away from a singular voice and embracing a multiplicity of voices alongside others to unveil diverse stances and varying perspectives[23].

Dialogue in Allag's poetry serves as a profound existential document, teeming with questions and dialogues with the self and the other, ensuring that the presence of the self remains illuminated and radiant[24]. The poetic text represents a narrative scene where internal dialogue emerges, as the poet declares:

Where does this endless desert start?

Where does this boundless ocean part?

No bird breaks the horizon's line

No water in this barren sand-confined

Death soars above, an eagle's flight

Circling me like winds in endless night

Grounded to earth, my spirit years

Guiding my heart where fate returns [25]

Through his text, Allag seeks to shake the foundations of the established and the dominant, through continuous experimentation and relentless pursuit of the maturity and completion that writing demands. This inclination towards disruption and dismantling of the prevailing order is underscored by the recurrent references in his text. Thus, we meet the protagonist, a fusion of narrator and poet, who consistently breaks down the barriers between literary genres, barriers that he perceives as illusory, requiring merely words to disturb their tranquility.

As the poet employs narrative description, dialogue, and time, and instead, he declares:

In the dawn's embrace, in twilight's glow

Enter my heart, like a butterfly's flow

You are the essence of joy's embrace

Time's gentle touch, a radiant grace

Oh, do not steal the moments we share

As my heart yearns for love's tender flare

Leave not the bird to sing alone

Its melodies on branches still unknown

Within my heart, time knows no bound

Nor space, nor limits, nor any sound

Be my eyes, my guiding light

In this realm of love, both day and night [26]

Returning to the previous poetic experience, we observe a narrative characteristic based on dialogue. This dialogue serves as a means to express the self's internal conflict and its sense of sorrow in this life. Perhaps the path of dialogue reveals the true nature of the self's tragic feeling in its relationship with the world and life. Here, the poet narrates the self's ordeal with itself, allowing space for a psychological outpouring built on internal debate. This draws the reader into as a fellow human being, sharing in the heartbreak, the emotional fluctuations, and the desire for expression. Through this dialogue, the self affirms its active presence.

Fateh Allag has utilized the technique of dialogue in his poetic texts to construct a contemporary poem that avoids superficiality. Dialogue fulfills a critically important narrative function within the poetic structure, solidifying its position as a constantly active narrative element.

In conclusion, through the analysis presented above, we can deduce that the movement of poetry for Fateh Allag has consciously steered towards revolutionizing the boundaries between literary genres, aiming to dismantle them. This is done to benefit from the possibilities offered by various narrative techniques. Consequently, his divans (collection of poems) are furnished with most of the components of narrative – story, dialogue, characters, events, and conflict. This contributes to the removal of boundaries, the dismantling of centralities, and the breaking up of the purity and distinctness of the genre.

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