THE AESTHETICS OF THE PARADOX OF PRESENCE AND ABSENCE IN SUFI POETRY UNTIL THE END OF THE SEVENTH HIJRI CENTURY

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Abstract
The importance of research lies in the distinctive nature of Sufi poetry characterized by the divine love. This characteristic has been considered the main source of Sufi poetry. Furthermore, the chosen timeframe for the research represents the era of flourishing Sufism, where its prominent figures, such as Al-Hallaj, Ash-Shibli, Tha'l-Nun Al-Misri, Al-Niffari, Ibn Al-Khayzani, and others, gained fame both in the East and the West. Therefore, the study of this poetry aims to uncover the paradox that surprises the reader by concealing the primary meaning and guiding them towards the secondary meaning and the intentions of the text.

Keywords: paradox, Sufi, poetry, presence, absence

INTRODUCTION

The paradox of presence and absence is considered one of the most significant issues that have occupied a wide space in both ancient and modern critical studies. This is due to its connection to the existence and being of humans. The presence of something implies its absence elsewhere. Presence is the opposite of absence, and the relationship between them is characterized by marginalization and affirmation. It affirms what is present and marginalizes what is absent [1].

In general, language has two sides, one internal and the other external. Every sentence should be studied from these two aspects. The first aspect expresses the thought and meaning, revealing forms of human thought. The second aspect represents the external form of the sentence as audible sounds. The first aspect translates and transforms the second aspect into ideas and meanings in the mind, turning them into clear words on the surface [2]. The first aspect is the absence or deep structure that is understood by the mind, while the second aspect. It is the presence or surface structure. There is a relationship between them, and this relationship can be likened to the relationship between the input and the output of a chemical reaction. The underlying structure in language is similar to the input of a chemical reaction, meaning the substances involved in the chemical reaction, while the surface structure in language is similar to the output of a chemical reaction, meaning the substances produced from the chemical reaction [3]. The aesthetic of literary texts, whether in poetry or prose, is enhanced by the presence of elements of absence. The more these elements of absence are present in the text, the more the reader is compelled to search for its hidden meanings and uncover its secrets through careful reading and interpretation. This process leads to a deeper understanding of the text's intentions [4]. This phenomenon of presence and absence holds true in poetry in general, and particularly in Sufi poetry. The surface structure, or presence, of a literary text can be defined as its overall structure, characterized by its comprehensiveness and the ratio of information within its

fabric [5]. On the other hand, the deep structure, or absence, is characterized by its limitation [6]. The surface structure encompasses the entire physical structure of the text, while the deep structure is latent within its core, granting it identity and uniqueness [7]. Absence, or the deep structure, refers to the meaning existing in the speaker's mind and is measured by what is known as linguistic competence, which is followed by what is known as speech performance. Speech performance is considered a translation of the deep structures present in the speaker's mind. The sentences spoken by the speaker and heard by the listener are merely surface manifestations of the deep meaning. Therefore, linguistic competence pertains to the deep structure, while speech performance pertains to the surface structure [8]. Abu Deeb drew on Chomsky's concept of surface and deep structure in establishing what he referred to as "the gap" or "the tension distance." He stated, "The concept of the gap, or the tension distance, can be crystallized initially within the framework of two fundamental concepts in language studies that Chomsky defined and developed, particularly in his generative and transformational studies. These concepts are the surface structure and the deep structure [9]." The poetic text is a text that is built on a gap, a tension distance between its surface structure and its deep structure. This gap represents a realm of possibilities, probabilities, shadows, allusions, and hidden tonalities, the world of tension existing between figurative language and metaphor, and direct descriptive language [10].

And we need the paradox of presence and absence in our study to delve into the depths of Sufi poetry because it carries two discourses, a manifest discourse and a hidden discourse, or an explicit and concealed discourse. We need to explore the depths of what is hidden and absent and bring it to the forefront and vision. With the surface presence and the deep absence, Sufi poetry embraces them both for its own reasons, revealing the dust in new dimensions in a language that we intend to be poetic to balance the paradox of Sufism.

The paradox of absence reveals the obscured, mysterious aspect within the human being. It highlights what the reader senses or thinks about without attempting to fully understand it, for one reason or another [11]. In doing so, it offers keys and means for insight into one's inner world and allows for a better understanding. As Ash-Shibli says, it provides the reader with a longer view, revealing what is hidden [12].

I will diminish what is in me, and it is vast
***** And I will restrain my abundant tears within you
And I have tears, if I were to shed some of them
***** Oceans would overflow, one after another
Graves of the world lie beneath the soil, and to desires
***** Men have graves beneath their garments
I will weep with eyelids that speak
***** And I will yearn with glances that point to you

The hidden contradiction, when it emerges, carries a rich sense of emotion that emanates from the creative powers of language, deepening the feeling of the idea. It is predominantly a carefully and profoundly drawn image, born from the movement of radiant rhetorical devices, employing all its expressive, structural, rhythmic, and semantic potential. The poet utilizes artistic and creative techniques, infusing them with his own emotions and feelings. As a result, the image becomes effusive and radiant with connotations and meanings, imparting shades of sentiment and psychology to the text [13]. This is manifested in the words of Ibn al-Kayyisani (the rhythmic structure is composed) [14].

Oh, my solace, with his memory,
***** And his absence makes me desolate.
And from my heart, a stance
***** To obey and follow his command.
Look at the tormentor,
***** Devoid of patience and beauty.
He left, overwhelmed by desire,
***** Entrusting his thoughts.
And his ailment lies with those who torment him,
***** Standing with his excuse [15].

The presence in this text is a temporal support. With the presence of companionship and remembrance, loneliness and separation vanish. The dual significance of presence and absence in this text represents the presence of God in the heart of the Sufi and His absence manifested in distance and separation. The adept bestowed upon these words artistic touches that enhanced their radiance and splendor, contributing to the enrichment of the Sufi experience. When the poet uses sensory words in their various forms, he does not intend to depict a specific array of sensations, but rather he aims to represent a certain mental perception with its symbolic and emotional value. The inherent value of sensory expressions lies in their ability to stimulate and ignite the senses [16]. The absent images come to express differentiation and achieve an artistic representation that stimulates and activates the recipient's mind, leading to emotional engagement. They also reflect an internal revolution due to the profound connotations they evoke in Sufi poetic texts. The issue at hand is not merely the combination of opposites, but rather the construction and manifestation of meanings in a specific expressive form that is more capable of conveying the intended message [17]. Therefore, this technique is abundant in contemplative, philosophical, and Sufi poetry. As Al-Naffari says in his book "Al-Kamil," [18]. The eyes of every learned person were blinded,
***** And the hearts of the knowers soared to the heavens.
So, their gates opened and they were carried
***** By the wind of nearness from the sky to the sky.
They saw a veil that does not unveil for the seer,
***** And they saw disclosures that do not reveal speech.
They wrapped themselves in ignorance with a radiant eye,
***** Drinking from it a cup that increases their thirst.
They saw a shining darkness, smiling,
***** And they saw a dark day, accumulating.
They do not settle or raise themselves
***** Above this discourse or convey this protection.

The reader leaves the surface meaning to delve into the depths in search of what is hidden. In the first verse, it seems that the poet has juxtaposed knowledge with ignorance in his saying, "The eyes of every learned person were blinded." Because knowledge is light and blindness is ignorance. In the second verse, he combines "the sky" and "the heavens," which signify elevation and sublimity, due to the association of the sky with high ranks. Similarly, there is a contrast in meaning in his saying, "a veil / disclosures," and a departure from the usual in the fourth verse with "drinking / thirst." If they drank from the cup, how did their thirst increase? Likewise, there is a juxtaposition in the fifth verse between "darkness / light" - "dawn / darkness" - "smiling / accumulating." Such a unique experience emerges from

a deep sense and intense feeling that seeks to manifest in linguistic symbols with a distinct structure, naturally departing from the conventional meaning and functional structure. Through interpretation delving into the depth of the text, we can understand that it speaks of black lips, and the Arabs refer to them as "Lama." The aesthetic of the absence paradox embodied by the Sufi poet in these verses paints an evocative image with expressive connotations of their condition [19].

In addition, emotions or constant contemplative emotions converge with imagination in providing the poet with artistic images [20]. Emotion, after the cessation of instant reaction, reaches a certain limit and requires the power of imagination to come alive, glow, and be artistically formulated. The Sufi poet, in general, benefits from emotions and imagination in conveying his experience. As Hallaj says in "Al-Khaleef" (The Light) [21].

The sun of the day sets with the night,

***** But the sun of hearts does not vanish [22].

The use of contrast in this verse has intellectual and artistic beauty. It combines the positive contrast between "day" and "night" and the negative contrast between "sets" and "does not vanish." Such a combination in literary devices leads to a mental movement in the recipient, seeking the intentions of the creator. In the Sufi experience, the night carries multiple meanings. It serves as a veil that allows one to see beyond things, where distances vanish and elements merge. However, it does not compare to the clarity of the day, which aligns with the laws of reason in perceiving things illuminated by the light of understanding. Moreover, the night is a time for divine manifestation. On the other hand, light expands and radiates throughout the universe. The metaphorical use of "sun of hearts" by the poet in this verse achieves the contrast of absence, ascribing hearts to the sun, which is beyond the ordinary.

In Sufi symbolism, the meanings are more intricate because they are not easily comprehended by the minds without guidance, nor can they be attained by effort or asceticism. Instead, they require divine inspirations for one to see what they have not seen before and to know what they have not known, revealing things that cannot be expressed in words. Therefore, logical boundaries do not apply to the Sufi imagination [23].

As Hallaj says, "The mystical experiences are multifaceted, as they are not grasped by minds except through guidance, and souls do not attain them through effort or asceticism but through divine inspirations, allowing humans to see what they have not seen before and to know what they have not known, and to manifest things that cannot be categorized [24]. The logical limits do not apply to the Sufi imagination."[25]

Your spirit blended with mine,

***** Like wine mixes with pure water.

So, when something touches you, it touches me,

***** For you are me in every state.

This is an unfamiliar image that requires mental exertion to grasp the deep hidden meaning portrayed by the poet. The poet surrenders himself to divine love, and he is like a new language that builds and invents expressive means for itself, varying according to its own meaning [26]. He combines two contrasting worlds: a realized world that he lives within himself, his essence, and his consciousness, and an artistic world that only embodies imaginary images within the limits of this world, without extending beyond it. He manipulates the resources of language based on his linguistic and cultural heritage of Sufism, which he has armed himself with. His style is characterized by a divine self-love [27]. He does not stop at the mere superficial framework of words, but surpasses it to the deep,

hidden layer. This image possesses a radiant poetic power that breaks through the barriers of texts, attempting to escape into its poetic world [28].

And indeed, those who are familiar with the books of the Sufis and the expressions contained therein observe their unique semantic thought that they have developed. Their meanings and purposes have become different from the familiar and commonly understood ones. Most of the Sufi expressions have social, emotional, psychological, and spiritual meanings that have emerged from their experiences. They have used a splendid language filled with imagery [29].

Poetry, in general, is the escape of humans from themselves and their world, a retreat from the present to the absence, from reason to imagination. Poetry is a spiritual experience and infatuation that transcends the limited to the absolute [30]. We can observe this in the words of the Egyptian poet Dhul-Nun: "... Poetry is a language that speaks when tongues fall silent, and it is the expression of souls when words fail." [31].

If their understanding finds solace,

***** In tongues that conceal their secrets from people before them [32].

Indeed, (intimate conversation) does not require understanding, but rather it aims for (declaration or manifestation), because intimate conversation between a servant and their Lord is exclusive and usually happens in secret and without a voice. However, this intended and declared conversation seems like the intimate conversation of Anas and Samer, and this requires publicity to be fully occupied, and it is met with an opposite form (in tongues that conceal). This is a complete contradiction because tongues are a voice, manifestation, and declaration. How can they be concealed unless the intention is contrary to intimate conversation? So, they made intimate conversation public and kept the supplication with concealed tongues to create an unfamiliar contradiction that can only be understood by those with deep thinking.

The language of Sufism, in its distinct beauty, creates an artistic unity, and from there, it ascends to emotional and intellectual realms that elevate feelings. It expresses a unique mystical experience, revealing meaning with delicate and sensory conscious awareness, based on an openness to a conception that is highly personal. It is the language of the Sufis, which they invented, characterized by its gentleness, simplicity, and diversity, with a particular derivative significance [33].

CONCLUSIONS

From what has been discussed, we can conclude that the contradiction of (presence and absence) represents the impact of the bitter life that the Sufi poet was living. He was constantly in conflict with life and people, appearing absent in the midst of presence and, conversely, appearing present in absence with great force. He gave significant importance to presence and absence by playing on the sensitive string of word meanings, causing them to dance between the lines, achieving a paradoxical beauty with a philosophical touch. The structure of presence and absence formed a contradiction, as it occupied space in manipulating meanings, extracting the lexical meaning into an unfamiliar and unexpected meaning. It is in this surprise that the fascination of the contradiction lies.

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[7]   See: Same source: 4.

[8]   Quoting from: The Deep Structure and Its Significance among Arabs: 11.

[9]   And the gap or tension distance according to Abu Dib: a concept whose effectiveness is not limited to poetry but is the foundation of the entire human experience. However, it is a distinctive characteristic or a necessary condition for artistic experience or, more precisely, for poetic observation or vision as something distinct from - and may be contrary to - ordinary daily experience. See: In Poetry: Kamal Abu Dib, Arab Research Institute, Beirut, 1st edition, 1987: 20.

[10]   In Poetry: 57.

[11]   Same source: 58.

[12]   Arabic Poetry: Adonis, Dar Al-Adab, Beirut, 1st edition, 1985: 75.

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