A Critical Stylistic Analysis of a Poem in Lamenting Al-Imam Al-Hasan (peace be upon him)

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Abstract

Language, as a means of communication, is a pivotal tool for influencing and persuading others as well as changing their ideologies and stances. This is the fulcrum of critical stylistics which addresses the issue of ideology in language. The present study, in this regard, is an attempt to pinpoint and set forth the sundry devices that manifest in a poem by Mehdi Janah Al-Khadimi in lamenting Al-Imam Al-Hasan (peace be upon him) and show how these devices reflect the ideology of the poet and contribute to the critical interpretation of the text. In other words, the study is based on the following research questions: (1) What is critical stylistics? (2) What are the obvious critical stylistic devices in the poem under perusal? (3) Are the lime lighted devices worthy for reflecting the poet's ideology and interpreting the poem critically?

Key words: critical stylistics, poetry, grammatical tools, stylistic tools, semantic tools, pragmatic tools.

دراسة تحليلية نقدية في رثاء الإمام الحسن (عليه السلام)

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الخلاصة

تعتبر اللغة وسيلة للتواصل وأداة محورية للتأثير على الناس وأقناعهم كما وتعتبر وسيلة لتغيير أفكارهم ووجهات نظرهم ومواقفهم. تعد هذه الوظائف نقاط ارتكاز في الدراسات التحليلية النقدية. لذلك تعتبر الدراسة الحالية محاولة لتسليط الضوء واستعراض الاستراتيجيات المختلفة التي تتجلى في قصيدة للشاعر مهدي جناح الكاظمي في رثاء الامام الحسن عليه السلام. بالاضافة الى ذلك تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى اظهار دور هذه الاستراتيجيات في عكس فكر الشاعر ودورها في التفسير النقدي لنص القصيدة. بعبارات أخرى، تبنى الدراسة الحالية على الاسئلة البحثية الاتية: (1) ما المقصود بالاسلوبية النقدية؟ (2) ما هي الاستراتيجيات الاسلوبية النقدية الظاهرة في القصيدة؟ (3) هل الاستراتيجيات المسلط الضوء عليها ذات أهمية في ايصال فكرة الشاعر وفي تفسير القصيدة تفسيرا نقديا؟

الكلمات الدالة: الاسلوبية النقدية، الشعر، أدوات نحوية، أدوات أسلوبية، أدوات دلالية، أدوات تداولية

1. A Background to Critical Stylistics

Stylistics is defined as the linguistic study of style wherein style is described as "a dress of thought"; "the way the writer conveys the message to the readers" [1, 13]. For Leech and Short [1, 13], the study of style is linked with the desire to explain something .Moreover, style is envisaged as an expressive, affective, or aesthetic emphasis added to the information conveyed by the linguistic structures without alternation of meaning. This means, as[2, 155] avers, that "language expresses and style stresses" .According to[3, 9] and[4, 54], the systematic study of style, which is the main concern of (critical) stylistics, varies in accordance with a number of factors including genre, context, historical period, and the writer.

Stylistics can implement changes in the feelings, opinions, and ideologies of the audience through the use of language which is embellished with figures of speech. In other words, stylistics is the way one could be persuasive, influential, and effective .This means that the stylistic use of language is intended to procure "the job of persuasion and instruction [5, 129]. Additionally, this brings to the forefront the notion of 'choice' wherein "a judicious choice in the lexicon and, to a lesser degree, in the syntax", as [6, 76] mention, can bring about certain affective and expressive qualities what gives stylistics the excellence of adapting language to make the communication of the subjective and non-conceptual aspects of thought possible.

To recapitulate, stylistics, as defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica[7], is "the study of the devices in language such as rhetorical figures and syntactical patterns that are considered to produce expressive or literary style". It arises from the possibility of choice among alternative forms of expression as, for example, between 'kids', 'youngsters', and the like, each of which has its own evocative value[7].

The conceptual basis of each modern stylistic analysis is rooted in the discipline of critical discourse analysis with its focus on ideology. This brings to the limelight the notion of 'critical stylistics' which is generally defined as "a discipline that looks at the different ways in which ideologies are contained in language". It integrates the tools of the two disciplines of stylistics and critical discourse analysis to analyze and explain literary and non-literary texts and uncover the deep-seated ideologies of their writers (8, 6).It provides a toolkit of analytical apparatus for investigating textual ideologies with the aim of understanding the exercise in which texts may transmit, reinforce, or inculcate ideologies in their readers [8, 12]. He [8, 3] adds that the stylistic choices made by a text producer are "ideologically loaded". Ideology here refers to the ideas which are communicated, reproduced, constructed, negotiated, and embedded in the people's world outlook by using language in specific texts [8, 5].

Accordingly, the aim of most critical stylistic studies is to: (1) describe the formal features of texts, (2) show their functional significance, and (3) critically interpret them. The expressive means are the syntactic, semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic elements which exist in language for the purpose of logical and emotional intensification of the text.

2. Poetry

For [9, 54] and [10, 26], poetry is "an event in communication, which uses words just as painting uses colours and sculpture uses marble and stone". The main purpose of poetry is to express and convey its writers' ideologies. Since language is the crux through which poetry finds its manifestation, each poem will be conceived of as a linguistic construct composed of phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects. Accordingly, it is paramount to have a critical language-based perspective for the study of poetry through conducting critical stylistic analyses of poems aiming at evolving a composite outlook to the nature of the analyzed poems

with the assumption that such type of analyses is useful and insightful for analyzing poetry[10,27]. Style, as [11,14] assumes, is attendant here due to its pragmatic and purposive function (i.e., looking beyond words and structures to the potential effect of their message).

3. Model of Analysis

Critical stylistics is envisaged as an amalgamation of functional linguistics, stylistics, and critical discourse analysis. This means that it makes use of miscellaneous tools from these disciplines to fulfill its aims. Thus, the model which will be used as the basic method for analyzing the poem under investigation is eclectic; it is mainly based on [8]with some modifications to suit the present study. This model is divided into the following tools of analysis:

(1)Structural/ Grammatical Tools

These tools involve the following categories:

(a) Naming and describing: this includes the choice of certain nouns among others available in the language to refer to an entity or a person, the package of more information into the noun groups (i.e., modification), and nominalization (i.e., the process in which verbal processes are transformed into nominals). These tools have potential ideological consequences in that they help indicate the attitude and the ideological evaluation of their users: the choice of nouns, for example, indicates the text producer's opinion towards the referent, while the parceling up of information by noun groups and nominalization makes certain information more likely to be assumed and less susceptible to debate[8, 12].

(b) Transitivity: this tool involves the choice of verbal elements in the sentence to show how a speaker conceptualizes a situation (as an action, event, or state) as well as the ideological consequence of the transitivity choice for the discourse recipient. Transitivity choices can be ideologically significant in that such choices can promote particular representations of events at the expense of others[8, 15].

(c) Direct/ indirect citation of others' speech or thought: this encompasses the citation or representation of others' speech concerning a certain person, event, or state[8, 72]. Under this heading, the study utilizes citations from Quran (Quranic references) and Prophetic Hadith.

(d) Prioritizing: this tool includes devices through which text producer can prioritize or downplay the content of utterances through passivization, clefting, and the like[8, 88].

(2) Stylistic Tools

These tools are bipartite figures of speech- schemes and tropes- which can be grouped according to a phonological level (alliteration, assonance), lexical level (repetition of the same lexical item, repetition of synonyms, repetition of the same word but with a different grammatical function), syntactical level (parallel structures), and semantic level (metaphor, personification,and synecdoche)[8, 125].

(3) Semantic Tools

They involve analytical tools that can set up textual equivalence and contrast ranging from the level of words to phrases and clauses with the aim of creatively constructing context-based lexical relationships such as synonymies and oppositions that help enhance the ideology of the writer and, at the same time, help provide insight into the potential ideological influence of the text on its receivers[8, 100].

(4) Pragmatic Tools

Such tools involve presuppositions which are assumptions built into the text to build 'consensual' reality. These involve definite noun phrases which generate

existential presuppositions; change of state verbs, factive verbs, iterative, and comparatives to trigger logical presuppositions. Moreover, pragmatic tools include rhetorical questions, deictics and other space builders such as inclusive pronouns[8, 153].

Conclusively and substantially, the above discussed model can be schematized and concretized in the following figure:
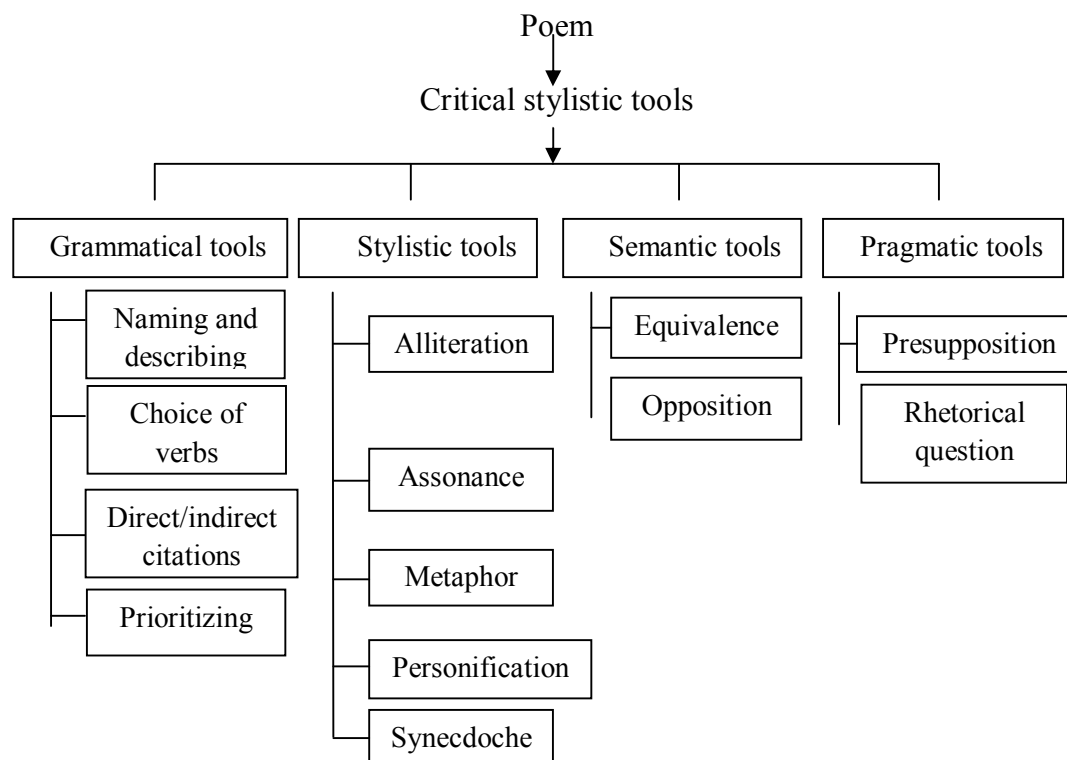

Figure (1): A Model for a Critical Stylistic Analysis of Poetry

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The poem (**أبكي بني العلياء بالدمع والدم**)is enriched with various structural/ grammatical tools that shed light on the ideology of the poet Mehdi Janah Al-Khademi and reflect his adherence or loyalty to Ahlul Bait in general and Al-Imam Al-Hasan in particular (as the currently analyzed poem is intended to lament him). Among these tools, the following ones are present in the poem:

- As for naming and describing, the poet is successful in choosing the suitable nouns and the opportune descriptions via noun phrases to rightly refer to the Prophet Muhammad and his Progeny with a special mention of Al- Imam Al-Hasan, and at the same time, name and describe their enemies. This is evident in the following examples: (بني العلياء), (شبل طاها), (شبل نار الطور), (شبر), (وريث المصطفى), (وارث حيدر), (كف)

is (بني العلياء) wherein the first expression (النبراس) and, (منار الدين), (اماما), (الله وبحره الاكبر) a reference to Ahlul Bait all together, while the others are references to and descriptions of Al- Imam Al- Hasan. Conversely, the poet exploits the following expressions (الطاغوت), (مروان الخساسة), and (الفتن) to phrase his ideas about Bano Omaya. The choice of words, here, is intended to mirror the inner mind of the poet by depicting the probity and the Imamah of Al-Imam Al-Hasan, on one hand, and the extortion and villainy of Bano Omaya, on the other hand.

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- Regarding transitivity (the choice of verbs), the coming next verbs are used in the poem: (قبلت), (ينعاكا), (بكاك), (قضيت), (أحيا), (أتاها), (يثنيه), (يأخذ), (تهدى), (تجري), (أبكي),
(أشرق) and (قضينا), (أطفى), (أشعلوا), (أحرقوا), (أغرسوا), (سموهم), (تصافح), (رمى), (سدد), (تبقى)
to create an atmosphere of previous and constant action. They are ideologically employed by the poet to express certain ideas and to promote the intended representation of events. The poet, for example, uses negatively loaded verbs to evoke the poet's negative evaluation and the negative representation of the actions and the bad and odious deeds of Bano Omaya as in:

– (سمه الطاغوت بالغدر)، (مروان الخساسة سدد السهما)، (رمى جسد النبوة)، (سموهم بالزور أصـــحابا)،

(ومن بعد السقيفة احرقوا البابا)، (هم أشعلوا النيران).

Moreover, the poet, in an attempt to reflect his positive views, employs positively loaded verbs to illuminate and limelight the dignity and status of Al-Imam Al-Hasan as in:

– (أحيا السنن صبر الحسن)، (أطفى الفتن صبر الحسن)

Over and above, use is made of dynamic verbs indicating the continuity of certain actions. Such verbs are deliberately exploited either to pinpoint the poet's belief concerning the permanence of Bano Omaya's oppression and disbelief (مازالت قريش)

(تصافح الظلما)or to indicate eternity and continuance of Al-Imam in the hearts and minds

of believers (بكاك الحلم والتوحيد ينعاكا), (تبقى منار الدين صدقا وعدلا).

- Direct/ indirect citation or representation of others' speech or thought in the poem involves indirect citation from the Quran. Indirect Quranic reference means incorporating some words from the Quran with some modulation (addition or omission) for poetic necessity. The only employed citations to support the poet's idea is (مروان تبت) (تبت يد الطاغوت..... تبت يدا " which is basically based on the Quranic verse "

"أبي لهب وتب (Al-Masad Sura) and (كواكب الله له سجدا) which is basically derived from

(verse 4) Yusof Sura (أذ قال يوسف لأبيه يأبت أني رأيت أحد عشر كوكبا والشمس والقمر رأيتهم لي)

(ساجدين) to shed light on the idea that the stature of Al-Imam Al-Hasan is just like the stature of the sun in relation to other planets.

Stylistic tools shine in the poem. They are schemes and tropes which are categorized phonologically, lexically, syntactically, or semantically. Again, the use of such tools affirms what is evoked by the poet and enhances his beliefs in different ways.

- At the phonological level, alliteration is made use of three times in the poem:

–(بالدمع والدم)، (قتلا قضوا بالسيف والسم)

Alliteration is a schematic figure of speech in which the same sound appears at the beginning of two or more consecutive or close words in the text to convey an idea or emotion and to focus readers' attention on the poet's ideas that is why its use is ideologically based. Moreover, the use of alliterative words does not only engage others' auditory senses, but also provides insights into the words of the poet [12]. As for the current poem, the poet is not accidentally using the aforementioned alliterative words. The alliterative use of (بالدمع والدم)is intended to convey the poet's fizzy feelings concerning the fate of Ahlul Bait. He is wailing them with tears and blood. He, then, uses the alliterative words (قتلا قضوا بالسيف والدم) to convey his feelings and ideas concerning the same topic (i.e., the atrocious murder of Ahlul Bait.

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- At the lexical level, repetition is present. It involves repetition of the same lexical items as in (بالدمع والدم) which are repeated twice to emphasize the poet's grief about the terrible fate of Ahlul Bait; (صبر الحسن)which are repeated seven times in the poem to bring to the limelight the patience of Al-Imam Al-Hasan; (الطاغوت) which is repeated twice to refer to the despot Marwan Ibnul Hakam; (نزف) to affirm the sufferance that Shiite face because of their love and loyalty to Ahlul Bait. Moreover, repetition involves repeating synonyms to assert certain values, usually of the person described. Examples of repetition of synonyms are the following expressions which are all used alternatively to refer to Al-Imam Al-Hasan and simultaneously mirror the poet's beliefs about Al-Imam through the chosen nomenclatures (شبل طاها), (شبل نار) (المقتول) and , (أخي المذبوح بالسيف), (كف الله وبحره الأكبر), (وارث حيدر), (وريث المصطفى), (الطور بالحيف). Besides, similar words but with different grammatical functions are repeated on purpose, that is laying emphasis on certain ideas and events (سمه السم), (صبر اصبر), and (نبات السوء أنبت).

- At the syntactical level, parallel structures are utilized to improve coherence and consistency. Parallelism, in fact, is a schematic device in which "parts of the sentence are grammatically the same or are similar in construction"[13]. As a persuasive tool, its repetitive nature makes the idea easier for the speaker to catch. In literature, parallelism is used with the grander intention of conveying messages and emphasizing ideas [13]. As for current poem, the poet uses the following parallel structures:

–(الدمع والدم)، (الشفع والوتر)، (كف الله وبحره الاكبر)

– (سلاما أيها المقتول بالحيف..سلاما ياأخي المذبوح بالسيف)

One common type of parallelism, particularly in literature, is 'antithesis' which means putting two opposing ideas together in a parallel construction to affirm their opposition as in the following line wherein (هم) is a reference to Bano Omaya:

– (هم أشعلوا النيران ألفا وألفا..لكنما الرحمن للنار أطفى)

- Semantically, the poem is enhanced with tropes which are considered as paramount stylistic tools that are essential in reflecting the poet's doctrine. These tools include personification, metaphor, and synecdoche.

Personification,[14, 61] states, is a figure "in which an abstract and inanimate entity is described or referred to using a word or phrase that in other contexts would be used to describe a person". It is the attribution of a human quality to an animal, object, or abstraction. Examples of personification in the poem are: (أبكى الزمن), (بكاك) (يحكي لك المسمار), (أطفى الفتن صبر الحسن), (الحلم والتوحيد ينعاكا). In the above examples, objects and abstractions are deliberately given human attributes. The major aim is to deliver and transmit an idea by making descriptions more vivid to urge readers understand the intended meaning and react emotionally. By personifying non-human objects and portraying them as human beings, the poet intends to transmit the idea that even non-human objects wail and sympathize with the calamity of Al-Imam Al-Hasan. Thus, personification is not merely a frilly device, but it serves the aim of giving deeper meaning to texts by letting us look at the world from a human perspective.

Metaphors, for[15, 32], are ways of thinking and ways of shaping the thoughts of others. Thus, for them, metaphor is something conceptual. They are not merely stylistic but are cognitively important as they are types of conceptual substitution. A metaphor can be described as a comparison that shows how two things are similar in another important way[15, 32]. In other words, a metaphor is a description of one person or thing in the terms of another in order to deepen the readers' experience of the character described and enrich the portrait being constructed. In the poem, three metaphors are made use of (كف الله انت وبحره الاكبر), (وريث المصطفى ياوارثا حيدر), and (مروان الخساسة), the first and the second of which are intended to enrich the description of Al-Imam Al-Hasan and crystallize the poet's beliefs about the solemn status of Al-Imam, while the third one is intended to bring to light the vile, villainous status of Marwan Ibnul Hakam.

Synecdoche is a tropic figure of speech in which "a term for a part of something refers to the whole of something or vice versa" [16]. It is considered as a "class of metonymy, often by means of either mentioning a part for the whole or conversely the whole for one of its parts" [16]. In the poem, the poet uses the following part-to-whole (مروان، الطاغوت) and whole-to-part synecdoches (قريش); the first is intended to refer to all Bano Omaya, whereas the second is meant to refer not to all Quraish tribe but to some of them (particularly those who stood against Ahlul Bait). The function of synecdoche in poetry is to pinpoint the poet's ideology by emphasizing specific aspects of the thing or person that the synecdoche represents and minimizing their importance.

With regards to semantic tools, they represent semantic relationships of equivalence and opposition. The relation of equivalence is evident in the poem in terms of the relation of synonymy which is defined as semantic relation that exists between words with closely related meanings to enhance certain ideas in the text[17]. This is evident in (أبكي، نعى), (بكى، نعى), (أدمعا تجري) which indicate (with different words having near meanings) the sadness of the poet concerning the death of al-imam. Antonyms, on the other hand, is a semantic relation of opposition indicating the contrast between two words [17]. Antonyms are present in (أشعل، اطفى) in :

(هم أشعلوا النيران ألفا وألفا لكنما الرحمن للنار اطفا)–

At the pragmatic level, certain tools are used by the poet including rhetorical questions and presuppositions; both of which highlight the ideological implications of the poet:

- Rhetorical questions are used twice in the poem (فمن أزكى جنانا منك من أصبر) and (كم من نبات السوء في الارض أنبت) to emphasize a point and reflect an idea. A rhetorical question is a grammatical question which is not meant to be answered because its answer is already obvious. Rather, it is made to draw readers' attention to a point the poet wants to assert. Therefore, a rhetorical question functions as a statement whose real meaning is not directly said but implied. Critically, it functions as a highlighter concretizing the poet's dogma and ideals. In the present poem, as well as, in all literary works, a rhetorical question is used as a 'thought-provoking tool'. The poet uses the first question to assert the fact that no one is more patient and more immaculate than Al-Imam Al-Hasan, and uses the second one to emphasize the fact that there are many tyrants worldwide from the time of Marwan Ibnul Hakam till now as if tyranny is vegetated or implanted in the land.

- A presupposition, according to [18, 179], is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance. Presuppositions are classified into various types: existential, lexical, structural, factive, non-factive, and counterfactual. Only lexical presupposition will be defined here because it is evident in the data under scrutiny. Lexical presupposition is the use of one form with its asserted meaning to presuppose that another non-asserted meaning is understood as in (David's car is new) which presupposes that David exists and he has a car) and (You are late again) which presupposes (You were late before) respectively.

In the current poem, the following lexical presuppositions are present in (بكاك الحلم والتوحيد ينعاكا) which gives the presupposition that lamenting and wailing Al-Imam is continuous from the past till now; (تبقى منار الدين صدقا وعدلا) to presuppose that Al-Imam Al-Hasan was and still the representative of Islamic values such as truthfulness, sincerity, and justice; (ومازالت قريش تصافح الظلما) which presupposes that Omay'a grandsons are tyrannous, iniquitous, unfair, and oppressive as their fathers were. In the previous examples, the poet resorts to lexical presupposition as a valuable tool to guide the readers of the poem to an intended meaning which is not said but implied in the text. This means that presuppositions often convey ideological meanings.

5. Conclusions

Depending on what has been discussed, the present study ends up with the following conclusions:

1. Critical stylistics is a branch of stylistics which deals with the issue of ideology (that is, reflecting the ideas of the poet/ writer). A critical stylistic analysis is applicable to the analysis of literary as well as non-literary texts.
2. There are various critical stylistic devices through which literary works, particularly poems, can be analyzed. These devices are syntactical/ grammatical, stylistic, semantic, or pragmatic. All these types of devices are present in the analyzed poem.
3. All the used devices are worthy for the critical interpretation of the poem because they are paramount in reflecting the beliefs of the poet about Ahlul Bait in general and Al-Imam Al-Hasan in particular as well as his ideas about Bano Omaya and their bad deeds towards Ahlul Bait.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS
There are no conflicts of interest

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Appendix

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