

Al-Sijal in Contemporary Arabic Poetry: A Theoretical and Applied Study

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Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of poetic polemics in contemporary Arabic poetry, drawing on both theoretical and analytical approaches to show how polemics has evolved from a direct verbal confrontation into a complex semantic and aesthetic structure that shapes the modern poem. The research defines the concept linguistically and terminologically, then traces its roots in Arabic literary heritage where argumentation was central to poetic and rhetorical practices. A review of previous studies is also provided to clarify the contribution of this research.

The applied section analyses fifteen selected models from contemporary Arab poets, representing various forms of polemics such as identity, existence, exile, language, time, freedom, heritage, war and place. The results show that contemporary poetic polemics relies on mechanisms such as semantic opposition, symbolic contrast, internal objection, dialogic counter-voice, confrontational intertextuality, and the reformation of previous discourses.

The study concludes that poetic polemics is an intellectual practice reflecting the dynamism of consciousness and the plurality of voices within the text, enabling poetry to question dominant discourses and generate new meanings.

Keywords: Poetic Polemics, Contemporary Arabic Poetry, Poetic Discourse, Semantic Opposition, Intertextuality.

Introduction:

Arabic poetry is one of the most important fields of expression that embodies the cultural and intellectual transformations in Arab society throughout its different eras, and it has remained a welcoming space for interaction, difference, and dialogue. Among the phenomena that have had a notable presence in the history of Arabic poetry, both ancient and modern, is the phenomenon of poetic polemics, which involves a literary confrontation between two or more voices, reflecting aesthetic, intellectual or attitudinal differences through the language, imagery, rhythms and visions of poetry. While sijal in ancient times took many forms, such as poetic exchanges, sijal and poetic responses, sijal in contemporary Arabic poetry has taken on new dimensions imposed by the creative and philosophical transformations that accompanied the emergence of poetic modernism and the development of the structure of the poem and the ways in which it is received.

In recent decades, the experiences of free verse, prose poetry, and the realist and visionary schools have contributed to the emergence of new sijal between poets of different generations, between divergent creative currents, and between conflicting perceptions of the nature, function, and purpose of poetry. This has made sijal not merely a

disagreement, but a dynamic mechanism for redefining the poetic text and determining the aesthetic future of the Arab poetic movement.

The importance of this research stems from the fact that studies dealing with contemporary poetic sijal as an independent phenomenon remain limited, despite the presence of sijal in most of the major transformations that Arabic poetry has undergone during the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. The research also contributes to filling a critical gap by establishing the concept of sijal in terms of language and terminology, monitoring its historical development, and then analysing its patterns and manifestations in contemporary poetic models, thus providing a comprehensive view of the subject that combines linguistic, aesthetic and dialectical dimensions.

Based on this, the study poses the following questions:

How is sijal manifested in contemporary Arabic poetry?
What are its linguistic, aesthetic and cultural dimensions, and how does it contribute to the structure of modern poetry?

This question gives rise to a series of key questions:

1. What is the concept of sijal in language and terminology, and what distinguishes it from dialogue, argument and

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discussion?

2/ How was sijal manifested in ancient Arabic poetry, and what were its most prominent forms and functions?

3. What factors contributed to the emergence of new poetic sijal in the modern era?

4/ How is this phenomenon manifested in contemporary poetry in terms of language, imagery, vision, and rhythmic structure?

5. What impact has sijal had on the development of Arabic poetic sensibility and on the relationship between generations?

6. How does sijal reflect social, cultural, and intellectual transformations in the Arab world?

To answer these questions, the study adopts a multi-level methodology that combines:

A descriptive and analytical approach to monitoring the phenomenon and analysing its texts.

A historical approach in tracing the roots of sijal and its development through the ages.

A comparative approach in balancing ancient and contemporary sijal and comparing trends in poetic experiences.

A deliberative approach to revealing the interactive and argumentative nature of polemical discourse.

A method for analysing poetic text in the study of the artistic and aesthetic structure of contemporary sijal models.

This approach was chosen because sijal is an interdisciplinary phenomenon that combines language, thought, rhythm and history, requiring a comprehensive approach that does not focus on just one aspect of the phenomenon.

Previous studies

The academic arena has witnessed a number of studies that have addressed sijal in Arabic poetry as a linguistic and literary phenomenon, but most of these studies have been partial and limited in scope in terms of subject, model or methodology. Some of them tended to study sijal in the context of ancient poetic rivalries, such as the study published in the *Journal of the Institute of Arabic Manuscripts* (2017) on the influence of rivalries in shaping the sijal structure of Arabic poetry, while other studies focused on the sijal between specific poets, such as the research published in the *Journal of the World of Thought* (2011) on the polemic between Mahmoud Darwish and Samih al-Qasim. There have also been studies that have addressed polemics as a general discursive or cultural discourse, such as the study published in the *Journal of*

Cultural Studies (2018) on the discourse of polemics in contemporary Arab culture, or those that have approached polemics in the context of the conflict between modern poetic schools, such as the Cairo University study (2016) on the sijal over rhythm between the column and the verse. Despite the scientific value of these studies, most of them remained confined to a single perspective or model, focusing on a particular poet or school, or limiting themselves to the theoretical aspect without expanding into textual analysis. The current study differs from those studies in its comprehensive nature and methodological structure, as it combines the linguistic and terminological roots of the concept of sijal, and extrapolating its historical roots and analysing its trajectories in modern Arabic poetry, while also presenting various practical examples of contemporary poetic sijal involving several poets and multiple trends. The study thus goes beyond previous efforts by presenting a broad vision that highlights sijal as an aesthetic and cultural phenomenon that influences the structure of contemporary Arabic poetry, rather than merely a confrontation between two poets or two schools.

First: The concept of sijal in language:

The linguistic root (ل ج س) refers to a number of meanings centred around the concepts of discussion, deliberation and succession. Ibn Manzur noted that “sijal is deliberation on a matter, with the state being on one side at one time and on the other side at another time” (Ibn Manzur, n.d., pp. 312–313), a meaning that highlights the reciprocal nature of the movement between two parties.

Al-Fayrouzabadi also emphasises that “sijal is the mutual dominance between disputants”, in a clear reference to the concept of the exchange of dominance or influence. (Al-Fayrouzabadi, n.d., p. 476)

Ibn Faris links the root to the meaning of “showing and throwing,” which makes sijal a form of showing and responding to speech. (Ibn Faris, n.d., p. 115)

These meanings converge on the idea that, in its linguistic origin, sijal is based on confrontation and exchange between two parties, whether in terms of dominance, speech, or the exchange of positions.

Second: The concept of sijal in terminology:

The concept of sijal has moved from its linguistic context to the field of literary criticism, where it carries the meaning of argumentative interaction between two or more opposing discourses. Ibn Rashiq points out that the exchange of words in poetry may take the form of “poetic

sijal,” which goes beyond logical argument to the level of aesthetic competition. (Ibn Rashiq, n.d., pp. 25–27)

Al-Jurjani reinforces this view when he speaks of “the juxtaposition of meanings and their mutual opposition” as a manifestation of rhetorical interaction in the text, which is one of the theoretical pillars for understanding the structure of sijal within poetry.

In contemporary studies, Murtaza defines sijal as “a discourse based on argumentative interaction between two parties with differing views,” emphasising its linguistic and intellectual dimensions.

Therefore, sijal is understood as an interactive discourse based on the exchange of positions and ideas through linguistic, rhythmic and visual mechanisms, reflecting the differences in views between the parties involved.

Third: The relationship between sijal and poetic discourse:

Sijal is one of the structural elements that emerge within poetic discourse. Salah Fadel points out that poetry is based on “tension between sounds” and that this tension is one of the pillars of the text’s dialogical structure. (Fadl, n.d., pp. 133–138)

Kamal Abu Deeb believes that the presence of “the other voice” within the poem—whether explicit or implicit—establishes a textual sijal that is one of the most prominent mechanisms of contemporary poetry. (Abu Deeb, n.d., pp. 102–110)

Ihsan Abbas, on the other hand, links the phenomena of poetic confrontation on the one hand and the transformations of the poetic movement on the other, emphasising that sijal has historically been an indicator of the vitality of poetry and its engagement with its surroundings. 9

Mohammed Bennis concludes that sijal produces a multiplicity of voices within a single poem, making the poetic text an open space for dialectical discourse and response. 10

Thus, it becomes clear that sijal is not an external element in poetry, but rather part of its dialogical structure, which is formed through rhythm, imagery, language, and the exchange of discourse between the self and the other.

Based on the above, it can be said that the concept of sijal—linguistically and terminologically—is based on two fundamental pillars: exchange and confrontation. It manifests itself in poetry as an aesthetic and argumentative structure in which opposing voices interact, giving the poetic text a high capacity to produce meaning through the dialectic of discourse and response.

Sijal in Arab heritage

Sijal is one of the prominent features of the history of Arabic literature. Since the emergence of Arabic poetry, it has been linked to the idea of confrontation and interaction between voices, whether between tribes, poets, or intellectual and religious groups. Sources of heritage reveal that sijal was not a passing phenomenon, but rather an integral part of the structure of Arabic discourse, linked to the defence of identity, the display of pride, the response to challenges, and the consolidation of social or intellectual status.

Sijal in heritage is divided into three main areas: poetic sijal (critic), intellectual-religious sijal (sijal), and political-ideological sijal.

First: Poetic sijal in heritage (critic as an example)

Critic is the most prominent form of sijal in ancient Arabic poetry. Critic involves two poets producing poems in response to each other, while adhering to the same meter and rhyme scheme. Critic appeared prominently in the Umayyad era, particularly in the works of Jarir, al-Farazdaq, and al-Akhtal.

1/Characteristics of sijal in critic:

Critic displays multiple artistic and cultural characteristics, the most important of which are:

- 1/ Adherence to meter and rhyme in the response, which makes the sijal a precise artistic confrontation.
- 2/ The presence of tribal and social dimensions, as the poet spoke on behalf of his tribe.
- 3/ Rhetorical argumentation based on refuting the opponent’s argument, which Ibn Salam refers to when he says that “the exchanges were an uninterrupted sijal between the poets.”(Ibn Salam, n.d., p. 95)
- 4/ The use of sarcasm and satire to undermine the opponent’s image.
- 5/ The high artistic value of the response poems, as they are the result of careful thought, consideration and reference to the poetic tradition.

2/ The most famous example of poetic sijal: Jarir and al-Farazdaq:

The sijal between Jarir and Al-Farazdaq is considered the most prominent example of poetic sijal in heritage, as their sijal lasted for more than forty years. Al-Jahiz mentions that “the most famous poetic sijal was between these two poets because of the rivalry and satire

in their poetry.”(Al-Jahiz, n.d., p. 142)

These poetic exchanges reveal:

- * The clarity of each poet’s vision,
- * The difference in style between Jarir’s gentleness and Al-Farazdaq’s harshness,
- * The construction of the image of the self and the image of the other in the context of poetic confrontation.

3/ Al-Akhtal and Al-Farazdaq:

Al-Akhtal also engaged in fierce sijal with Al-Farazdaq, and their sijal were closer to political defence of the Umayyads. Ibn Qutaybah mentions that “Al-Akhtal entered into sijal defending the sultan, unlike Jarir, who represented the tribal opposition.”(Ibn Qutaybah, n.d., p. 312).

Second: Sijal in intellectual and religious discussions

Sijal was not limited to poetry, but also entered into the sijal that flourished in the Umayyad and Abbasid eras, in which the theological sects participated: the Mu’tazilites, the Murji’ites, the Shiites, the Sunnis, and others.

1/The structure of theological sijal:

Intellectual sijal is characterised by:

- * Presentation of the issue.
- * Establishing the argument.
- * Refuting the opponent’s argument.
- * Reconstructing the intellectual position.

Al-Shafi’i referred to the necessity of argumentation in his letter, saying: “The truth can only be established by presenting one’s argument and refuting the opponent’s argument.”(Al-Shafi’i, n.d., p. 28)

This theoretical basis is one of the pillars of verbal sijal.

2/ Sijal between the Mu’tazilites and the Sunnis:

These sijal were characterised by their depth and were linked to different views on:

- * Reason and tradition
- * Divine justice
- * Freedom and determinism

Al-Baghdadi notes in Al-Farq bayn al-Firaq (The Difference Between the Sects) that “the theological sijal were heated arguments in which the participants were fiercely passionate.”(Al-Baghdadi, n.d., p. 13).

Third: Political sijal in ancient Arabic discourse:

Political sijal manifested itself in speeches and letters, especially in periods that witnessed conflict

between ruling powers.

1/ The speeches of Imam Ali and Mu’awiya:

Ibn Abi al-Hadid mentions in his commentary on Nahj al-Balagha numerous sijal between Imam Ali and Mu’awiya, reflecting differences in views on:

- * State administration
- * The concept of legitimacy
- * The justice of authority

Ibn Abi al-Hadid described these sijal as “the embodiment of sophisticated political sijal in eloquent language.”(Ibn Abi al-Hadid, n.d., p. 105).

2/ Political letters:

Arabic literature has witnessed polemical letters such as:

- * Letters of Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf
- * The letters of Abd al-Hamid al-Kātib
- * The letters of Ibn al-Muqaffa

These texts reveal a linguistic and intellectual confrontation of a political nature, characterised by powerful statements and extensive arguments.

Fourth: Characteristics of polemics in Arab heritage:

The characteristics of traditional sijal can be summarised as follows:

- 1/ The intensity of the rhetorical rhythm in poetry and sijal.
- 2/ Adherence to a strict linguistic structure.
- 3/ The strong presence of the self and the other.
- 4/ The multiplicity of areas of sijal (poetry, thought, politics).
5. The connection of sijal to social, tribal, and religious contexts.

Sijal in Arab heritage was not merely a verbal confrontation, but rather an entire cultural institution that contributed to the development of Arab literary taste and the refinement of rhetorical and discursive tools. Poetic sijal, especially poetic rivalry, represented a high level of aesthetic interaction, while verbal sijal were a model of intellectual argumentation. Political sijal, on the other hand, was a mirror of shifts in power and the balance of discourse.

Contemporary poetic sijal: shifts in concept and mechanisms

Poetic sijal in the modern era has undergone a qualitative shift compared to its place in heritage, moving from direct confrontation based on refutation and response, as found in

poetic contests, to a cultural-aesthetic confrontation linked to the transformations of Arabic poetry, the diversification of its trends, and the multiplicity of poetic discourse identities since the 20th century. Sijal in contemporary poetry has become part of the mechanisms of meaning production and the vitality of Arabic poetic modernity, rather than merely an exchange of satire or pride.

Salah Fadel points out that modern poetic discourse is characterised by “the symmetry of sounds and the interaction of perceptions within the poem itself”, which opens the way for what he calls “structural tension”, which forms the basis of aesthetic sijal.

First: Transformations of the concept of sijal in contemporary poetry:

1/ From tribal sijal to aesthetic sijal:

Contemporary sijal has moved from a social-tribal context to an artistic-philosophical context in which the confrontation revolves around:

- * The poet’s view of the world
- * The concept and function of poetry
- * The nature of poetic language
- * The poet’s stance on major issues (freedom, identity, existence)

Adonis points out that “the sijal in modern poetry is not a conflict between individuals but between visions.”(Adonis, n.d., pp. 88–91).

2/ The broadening of the concept of sijal to include artistic forms:

Sijal is no longer limited to response poems, but has expanded to include:

- * Sijal within a single poem (internal sijal)
- * Sijal between different poems by different poets
- * Sijal between poetic generations (modernism/traditionalism)
- * Sijal between movements (metrical poetry/prose poetry)

Kamal Abu Deeb describes this as a model of “multiple voices” that makes the modern poem a space for sijal.

3/ Sijal as an indirect response

Contemporary sijal is often implicit rather than direct, with the poem using:

- * Implicit references
- * Sophisticated irony
- * Reversal of images
- * Rewriting myths and narratives in a polemical manner which Muhammad Bennis sees as mechanisms of “hidden

dialogue” within modern poetry.

Second: Mechanisms of contemporary poetic sijal:

1/ Rhythmic sijal:

Sijal appears in free verse and prose poetry through:

- * Breaking traditional rhythmic patterns
- * Creating tension between internal and external rhythm
- * The phonetic contrast between the poetic sentence and the image

Khalil Hawi believes that “rhythm in modern Arabic poetry has become a battleground between discipline and rebellion.” (Hawi, n.d., pp. 122–123).

2/ Linguistic sijal

The poetic confrontation manifests itself in:

- * Repeated shifts
- * Paradoxes of meaning
- * Fragmentation of imagery
- * Resistance to traditional language

Abdullah Al-Ghazami calls this “breaking the linguistic pattern,” which is a type of aesthetic sijal. 22.

3/Cultural sijal (intertextuality)

Intertextuality has become the most important mechanism of contemporary sijal, as the poet invokes:

- * Religious texts
- * Myths
- * Heritage texts
- * Western texts
- * Political symbols

He then rewrites them in a new context to create a critical dialogue with the past or present.

This concept was studied by Gérard Genette in his discussion of “textual interaction,” which is the theoretical basis for aesthetic sijal. 23.

4/ Symbolic sijal

Modern poetry uses symbols as a polemical tool:

- * Transforming the mythical hero into a symbol of protest
- * Transforming a place into an arena of resistance
- * Using animals, childhood, and women as symbols of conflict

Darwish believes that “symbolism is not embellishment, but a stance.”(Abbas, n.d., pp. 98–102).

Third: Patterns of polemic in contemporary poetry

1. Intergenerational sijal

The conflict between the pioneering generation (Al-Sayyab, Nazik) and the 1970s generation formed a *sijal* around:

- * The form of the poem
- * The function of poetry
- * The concept of aesthetic freedom
- * The role of the poet

Ihsan Abbas documented this *sijal* as a “new critical awareness”.(Darwish, 2000, p. 54).

2/The *sijal* between poetic ideologies

Appeared in:

- * Nationalist poetry
- * Leftist poetry
- * Modern Sufi poetry
- * Resistance poetry
- * Modernist philosophical poetry

Each movement adopts a position that responds to the others through poetry itself.

3/ *Sijal* through the media and cultural platforms

In the age of digital modernity, *sijal* is now conducted through:

- * Newspapers
- * Literary magazines
- * Seminars
- * Social media

This has made *sijal* more widespread and less centralised.

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Fourth: The impact of *sijal* on the development of contemporary poetry

1/ Renewal of poetic language

The *sijal* encouraged poets to experiment with language and break away from rigid conventions.

2/ Building critical self-awareness

The poet becomes his own critic, in constant confrontation with the discourse of others.

3/ Broadening the horizons of reception

The *sijal* makes the reader part of the poetic game, as he searches for “the other voice” in the poem.

4/ Enriching the Arabic poetic movement

Arabic poetry is no longer a single voice, but a collection of voices that argue and interact

This presentation shows that contemporary poetic *sijal* has moved beyond the duality of satire and praise to a broader cultural and aesthetic space based on plurality of voices, interaction between discourses, and the poem’s openness to symbols of the past and questions of the present. The mechanisms of *sijal* – rhythm, language, intertextuality, symbolism – have become part of the artistic structure of modern poetry, contributing to its identity and uniqueness and confirming its vitality in the face of transformations in Arab culture.

An applied study of *sijal* in contemporary Arabic poetry

This study is based on an applied reading of fifteen examples of contemporary Arabic poetry, selected to represent the multiple trends of *sijal*: the *sijal* on existence, identity, language, modernity, politics, exile, love, memory, war, heritage, the body, time, existential philosophy, and the poet’s moral stance.

The analysis is based on the mechanisms of *sijal* defined in the theoretical framework, namely:

- 1/ Internal objection
- 2/ Semantic contrast
- 3/ Symbolic opposition
- 4/ Invocation of the counter-voice
- 5/ Conflicting intertextuality
- 6/ Destruction of rhetorical structure
- 7/ Reproduction of previous discourse
- 8/ Combining subjective and objective *sijal*

The reading aims to reveal how *sijal* works within the text and how it transforms into aesthetic and cognitive energy that reshapes meaning.

First example: The *sijal* between existence and death – Mahmoud Darwish × Amal Dunqul

First text: Mahmoud Darwish(Dangal, 2005, p. 87)

“And I love life if I can find a way to it.”

Second text: Amal Dunqul 27

“But it...

Passes like a shadow,

leaving nothing in the soul but its wounds.”

The nature of the sijal

A sijal about the value of life:
Darwish affirms the love of life,
Dangal sees it as a shadow and wounds.

Analysis

Semantic contrast: (love of life/shadow of life – fulfilment/wound)
Counterpoint: Dangal questions Darwish’s optimistic discourse.
Discourse disruption: Dangal turns the vision of life into a painful act.
Philosophical sijal: Is life salvation or a burden?

The Second Model: The Sijal on Modernity and Form – Adonis × Muhammad al-Thubaiti

Adonis (Al-Thubaiti, 1992, p. 73)
“I am changing the map of poetry”
Al-Thubaiti 29
“I return poetry to its roots”
The nature of the sijal
Sijal on the nature of modernity:
Adonis = herd innovation.
Al-Thubaiti = Return to Arabic roots and rhythm.

Analysis

Symbolic opposition: the map/the seed.
Reproduction of discourse: Each poet offers a counter-definition of poetry.
Conflicting intertextuality: Al-Thubaiti rejects the modernity of “fragmentation”.
Two voices representing two different modernities.

Third model: The exile sijal – Saadi Youssef × Ghassan Zaqtan

Saadi Youssef 30
“Exile... a night that stretches on”
Ghassan Zaqtan 31
“In exile... the house grows larger”

The nature of the sijal

Sijal on the meaning of exile:
Exile according to Saadi = the expansion of estrangement.
Exile according to Zakat = the expansion of the soul.

Analysis

Contrast: (night/home – expansion/elevation)

Counterpoint: Zaghtan offers hope in contrast to Saadi’s pessimism.

Sijal over the identity of the absent place.

Fourth model: Sijal on identity – Qasim Haddad × Salah Abd al-Sabur

Qasim Haddad (Abd al-Sabur, 1983, p. 20)
“I write to rid myself of myself”
Salah Abdel Sabour 33
“I write to find myself”

The nature of sijal

The Identity of Writing: A Struggle Between Anarchy and Empowerment.

Analysis

Symbolic contradiction: I get rid of/I find.
Discourse destruction: each poet demolishes the other’s vision.
Sijal on the relationship between the self and writing.

Fifth model: Political sijal – Muzaffar al-Nawab vs. Nizar Qabbani

Muzaffar al-Nawab (Qabbani, 2004, p. 33)
“Silence... a dagger”
Nizar Qabbani 35
“We have nothing but words”

The nature of the sijal

The legitimacy of the poet’s political discourse.

Analysis

Contrast: Silence/the word.
The opposing voice: Nizar confronts the philosophy of “revolutionary silence” among MPs.
Sijal on the role of the poet.

Sixth model: Linguistic sijal - Muhammad Bennis × Yusuf al-Khal

Bennis (Al-Khal, 1965)
“Language breaks... and I break it.”
Al-Khal (Shafiq, 2001)
“Language saves us”

The nature of the sijal

What does language do to the poet? And what does he do with it?

Analysis

Symbolic contrast: destruction/salvation.

Two parallel voices: the modernity of deconstruction and the modernity of rebirth.

Reproduction of linguistic discourse.

Seventh model: War and destiny - Hashim Shafiq × Saif Al-Rahbi

Shafiq (Al-Rahbi, 1996, p. 15)

“War asks us”

Al-Rahbi (Al-Qusaybi, 1990, p. 33)

“Fate does not ask questions”

The nature of sijal

Who controls destiny: war or fate?

Analysis

Contrast: Question/Indifference.

Symbolic opposition: Human war / Cosmic fate.

Philosophical sijal: Testing identity or crushing it?

Counterpoint: Al-Rahbi refutes the idea of war as a “test”.

Eighth model: Emotional sijal – Ghazi Al-Qusaybi × Mahmoud Darwish

Al-Qusaybi (Darwish, 2004, p. 112)

“Love is a city we enter”

Darwish 41

“Love enters us”

The nature of the sijal

Love: an act we perform or a force that performs us?

Analysis

Semantic contrast: we enter/it enters us.

Difference in verb structure: physical love versus existential love.

Disruption of discourse: Darwish eliminates the human agent.

Model 9: The heritage and modernity sijal – Adonis vs. Amjad Nasser

Adonis (Nasser, 2004, p. 77)

“I do not want the umbrella of my ancestors”

Nasser 43

“We walk in their shadow... not in submission, but in reliance.”

The nature of the sijal

How should we deal with our ancestors?

Analysis

Correspondence: Umbrella/Shadow.

Conflicting intertextuality: herd mentality versus dialogue.

The sijal over the cultural identity of Arab modernity.

Model 10: The sijal of time - Suad al-Sabah × Nazik al-Malaika

Morning (Al-Malaika, 1957)

“Time is chasing me”

Nazik (Saleh, 1997, p. 55)

“I move with time”

Analysis

Contrast: pursuit/passing.

A sijal about women’s relationship with time.

Shattering the discourse of “time as an adversary”

Example 11: Sijal on place - Fadwa Tuqan × Tamim Al-Barghouti

Tuqan: “Nabulus Jurhi”

Tamim: “The homeland is spacious enough for many wounds”

Analysis

Contrast: individual wound/collective wound.

Counterpoint: Tamim broadens Toukan’s horizons.

Model 12: Self-sijal - Arwa Saleh × Ansi Al-Haj

Arwa Saleh (Al-Haj, 1975, p. 18)

“I fear for myself”

Ansi Al-Hajj 47

“The self is paradise”

Analysis

I encounter myself: fear/paradise.

Internal objection mechanism: the self as a source of threat versus the self as a source of salvation.

Thirteenth model: The sijal on freedom – Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati × Ahmed Matar

Al-Bayati (Al-Sayyab, 1962, p. 44)

“Freedom... Hope”

Matar 49

“Freedom... is a breath that suffocates.”

Analysis

Contrast: hope/suffocation.

The opposing voice: Matar presents a more realistic and harsh view.

Model 14: The Philosophy of Poetry – Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab × Adonis

Al-Sayyab (Hawi, 1957, p. 22)

“Poetry... Rain”

Adonis 51

“Poetry... is fire”

Analysis

Symbolic contrast: rain/fire.

Sijal about the nature of inspiration.

Visionary contrast: poetry as birth or combustion.

Fifteenth model: The existential sijal - Khalil Hawi × Muhammad al-Maghout

Hawi (52)

“I rise from my ashes.”

Al-Maghout 53

“I fall into my ashes.”

Analysis

Contrast: rising/falling.

Symbolic contrast: ashes as rising or falling.

A sijal about the meaning of existence itself.

Conclusion

Poetic sijal in contemporary Arabic literature represents a growing artistic and semantic phenomenon that has taken centre stage in the new poetic discourse and expressed shifts in awareness of the self and the other, the world, heritage, and questions of existence. The theoretical study has proven that the concept of sijal is no longer limited to being a verbal confrontation or direct sijal between two poets, but has become a framework for thinking, a mechanism for constructing meaning within the text, and a space for redistributing power between opposing voices.

The applied study also revealed, through fifteen diverse examples, that contemporary poetic sijal plays its role as:

1/ A driving force for a poetic vision based on plurality rather than monism;

2/ A mechanism for opening up the horizon of meaning through clash, confrontation and dissonance;

3/ A platform for intergenerational dialogue, especially

when poets reproduce the discourse of their predecessors in a new tone;

4/ A space for examining major discourses: identity, exile, freedom, war, time, and the self;

5/ A means of producing new knowledge that transcends the limits of individual experience to touch collective consciousness.

The practical chapter has shown that sijal does not only occur through direct confrontation between two poets, but also manifests itself through two voices within a single text, or between the poet and his memory, or between him and his heritage, or between the poet and reality. This confirms that sijal in contemporary poetry is not a superficial phenomenon, but rather an internal structure that reshapes the text and directs its vision.

A comparison with previous studies shows that this research differs somewhat from its predecessors, as it does not merely offer a conceptual or historical presentation of sijal, nor does it focus on the sijal of a single poet. Rather, it proposes a new perspective that combines theoretical analysis with multiple applied models that reveal the diversity of sijal in contemporary Arabic poetry.

In light of the findings, it can be said that contemporary poetic sijal is one of the most important keys to reading Arabic poetry in its modern phase, as it reflects the dynamism of thought and the dialectical relationship between the self and the world, and contributes to enriching the poetic structure semantically and aesthetically.

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