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Coherence in Ibn Zaydu:n's Prison Poetry:
A Performative-Stylistic Reading of the *Si:niyya*

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Abstract

This study of Ibn Zaydu:n's Si:niyya contributes to the numerous attempts that have been carried out over the last two decades to analyze the classical Arabic qasi:da using recent criticism. Through a performative-stylistic reading and an in-depth analysis of the poem in the context of Ibn Zaydu:n's prison experience, the study shows that the poem is thematically, structurally, psychologically, and spiritually unified. The Si:niyya is typically classified as a poem of beseech, which has a clear function: to secure the release of Ibn Zaydu:n from prison. This function operates as a unifying string that brings the various units and elements of the poem together. This study also illustrates that, at a thematic and stylistic level, Ibn Zaydu:n has succeeded in maintaining a delicate balance between preserving his dignity while asking his friend to intervene on his behalf. Rhythmically, however, the poem betrays the poet's deep sense of insecurity and resentment.

Keywords: Andalus, Ibn Zaydu:n, performative-stylistic reading, prison poetry, Si:niyya, unity

1. Introduction

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة لسينية ابن زيدون إلى إثراء النتاج العلمي المتعلق باستخدام النظريات الحديثة في النقد الأدبي في إطار تحليل القصيدة العربية الكلاسيكية وفق المناهج الحديثة التي ازداد الاهتمام بها في مجال النقد الحديث. وذلك عبر قراءة أسلوبية-أدائية وتحليل عميق للسينية في سياق قصائد السجن التي كتبها الشاعر. وتظهر الدراسة ترابط القصيدة من النواحي الموضوعية والتركيبية والنفسية والروحية واندغامها لتشكل بنية أسلوبية متكاملة، ولما كانت السينية تندرج في غرض الاستعطاف، فإن لها هدفا أساسيا تسعى إلى تحقيقه، وهو تخليص الشاعر من عذاب السجن، هذا الهدف الذي يشكل وشيجة قوية توحد عناصر القصيدة وأجزاءها. وتبين الدراسة أنه – على الرغم- من نجاح ابن زيدون في الحفاظ على كرامته وهو يستجدي مساعدة صديقه على مستوى موضوع القصيدة وتركيبتها، إلا أن إيقاعها الموسيقي يكشف عن شعور عميق لدى الشاعر بالاستياء والخذلان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ابن زيدون، الأندلس، السينية، القراءة الأدائية الأسلوبية، شعر السجن،

Abu al-Walid was a master of prose and poetry and the seal of the poets of Makhzu:m; leading the times with vigor and outstripping all mankind, he disposed of his poetical power for praise and inflicting harm, and made eloquence in poetry and prose far-ranging, thus achieving a literary outpouring unequalled by the sea, and a gleam unrivalled by the full moon. Witchcraft cannot bring forth the eloquence of his poetry, nor can the brightest stars equal its brilliance. (Ibn Bassam 1939, 279).

If the 5th/11th century is marked by the appearance of many good poets, Ibn Zaydu:n nevertheless towers above them [...] He brought into Andalusi poetry something of the balance, the rhetorical command, the passionate power and the grandeur of style that marked contemporary poetry in the East, and, most importantly, he came at a time when the poetic conceit had become a fashion and description of nature for the sake of description an entrenched method. (Jayyusi 1992, 346)

2. Ibn Zaydu:n and His Poetry

The above testimonies were written nearly eight hundred years apart. Yet, taken together, they reflect the high aesthetic regard Ibn Zaydu:n's poetry has received from his contemporaries and from modern readers and critics. Indeed, Stewart (2006) describes Ibn Zaydu:n as "the outstanding Arab poet of al-Andalus and [he] ranks among the most illustrious love poets in all Arabic literature" (306). Since the current study aims at a performative-stylistic reading of the *Si:niyya* (poem in si:n), in the context of the poet's prison experience, a cursory glance at Ibn Zaydu:n's life and poetry as well as the circumstances leading to the composition of this poem is helpful in contextualizing the discussion.

Known as Ibn Zaydu:n, Abu al-Wali:d Ahmad Ibn Abdullah al-Makhzu:mi: (394/1003-462/1070 AD) was born in Cordoba, to an aristocratic Arab family which belongs to the renowned Bani Makhu:zm clan of Quraysh, the tribe of the prophet Muhammad (Stewart 2000, 306). He lost his father, an eminent *faqi:h* (jurist), at a young age and was brought up under the care of his maternal grandfather who ensured that he would receive the best possible education in Quran, philosophy, science and Arabic poetry and grammar.

Ibn Zaydu:n lived during the period of the party kingdoms, *Duwal al-Tawa'f*, described as "one of the most complex, tangled and disorganized of Andalusi history, with the country simply falling apart and being broken up into about sixty tiny states of disparate sizes and strengths" (Makki 1992, 49). But it was also an age of eloquence when princes and rulers composed poetry and "a well-turned phrase could make or break a career" (Stewart 2006, 307). As a young man, Ibn Zaydu:n played an important role in the events leading to the final abolition of the Umayyad Caliphate in Cordoba (Abdul ʿTHi:m 2004, 46), and he utilized his poetry to mobilize the masses in support of Abul-Hazm Ibn Jahwar, the first post-Umayyad ruler in Cordoba. In return, Ibn Jahwar appointed him into the new government and sent him as ambassador to the neighboring Andalusian rulers. Ibn Zaydu:n's elegant poetry and epistles earned him a respected place in Ibn Jahwar's courts for many years. However, the relationship between the two men deteriorated, and, eventually, Ibn Zaydu:n was sent to prison. Speculations vary as to the reason for Ibn Zaydu:n's imprisonment from an accusation of usurping a freedman's property; his satire of Ibn ʿabdu:s, the vizier of Ibn Jahwar and Ibn Zaydu:n's

rival in Walla:da's love; to his political aspirations and suspected collaboration with the Umayyads to overturn the rule of Ibn Jahwar (As^{c}ad 2012). While Stewart (2006), confirms the likelihood of Ibn ^{c}abdu:s responsibility for Ibn Zaydu:n's imprisonment, he excludes political reasons as he states "Ibn Zaydu:n was denounced not, as some have suggested, for plotting to restore the Umayyads, but for allegedly appropriating the property of one of Ibn ^{c}abdu:s's freedmen" (310).

According to his own account, Ibn Zaydu:n spent 500 days in prison in the period between Muharram 432 and Sha῾ban 433 (Abdul ^{c}THim 2004, 63). While in prison, he composed numerous poems and his most eloquent epistle, *al-Risala al-jiddiyya* (The Serious Epistle) entreating Ibn Jahwar's sympathy and forgiveness, but to no avail. Eventually, he escaped from prison, presumably with the help of Abu al-Wali:d, the son of Ibn Jahwar, to the outskirts of Cordoba where he continued to ask for pardon until he was finally forgiven (Stewart 2006, 308). When Ibn Jahwar died, his son, Abu al-Wali:d, succeeded to the throne. He also appointed Ibn Zaydu:n as an ambassador. However, instigators continued to target the poet, and fearing another imprisonment, he fled to Seville where he was well received by Bani ^{c}abbad and served as their ambassador and vizier. Two decades later, he returned to Cordoba with Bani ^{c}abbad who invaded the city and brought the rule of Bani Jahwar to an end. Ibn Zaydu:n died while on a mission to Seville in the year 1070.

Ibn Zaydu:n is considered one of the most famous Arab-Andalusian poets of the eleventh century, and the above brief biography sheds light on the reasons he has been described as a man who has "lived his life to the full, seizing all the opportunities presented to a man of his caliber, and suffering all the tragedies to which such a man would naturally be subject in a chaotic age of ruler against ruler, tribe against tribe…" (Jayyusi 1992, 344). Ibn Zaydu:n's poetry is best described as neoclassical, and he excelled in the *qasi:da* genre (Stewart 2006, 314). The poet's literary production is said to have been largely shaped by three important experiences: his love for Walla:da bint al-Mustakfi, the daughter of the Ummayad Caliph Muhammad III of Cordoba, which resulted in poems he is best-known for, his imprisonment, and his affiliation with the ruling courts. His two most important poems are the *Nu:niyya* and the *Q:afiyya*. The *Nuniyya*—by far his best-known poem and one of the most famous love poems in Arabic literature— expresses longing for the lost days of bliss with Walla:da, while the *Q:afiyya* describes a garden in the suburb of al-Zahra outside Cordoba. Ibn Zaydu:n's most famous prose works are *al-Risala al-jiddiyya* (the Serious Epistle) and *al-Risala al-hazliyya* (The Comic Epistle).

Naturally, various experiences and emotional states resulted in works with different *aghra:d* (sub-genres or objectives; sing. *gharad*): the *ghazal* poems mainly expressed love sentiments, pleasure in uniting with Walla:da and torment in separating from her; the prison poems were primarily composed to plea for Ibn Jahwar to release him; and the court poems were panegyrics to rulers. Additionally, it has often been pointed out that Ibn Zaydu:n's poetry is marked by almost a total absence of any reference to the turbulent and catastrophic political, social and economic conditions in Cordoba during his time (al-Su^{c}u:di 2011, 57-58). This, along with Ibn Zaydu:n's self-boasting poetry, have led critics to describe him as a conceited, overambitious and self-serving poet (al-Shaqrafi 2015, 233 & 264) whose oeuvre revolves around two personal motifs: his political aspirations and his love for Walla:da (al-Su^{c}u:di 2011, 60). To investigate the legitimacy of this assumption, al-Dalahma performed a statistical analysis of the *aghra:d* of Ibn Zaydu:n's poetry. The table below summarizes the percentage of these *aghra:d* as stated in al-Dalahma (2004, 54):

Table 1:

Poetic *gharad*	Percentage
Eulogy	32.9%
Ghazal	(23.8)
complain and reproof	12.5%
ikhwa:niyya:t (correspondence with other poets)	10%
Elegy	9.5%

Poetic *ghara_d_*	Percentage
ma_t_eira:t (riddle poems about birds) and	6.5%
Lampoon	2.5%
Description	1.8%

The fact that eulogy, primarily of rulers, *ghazal* and reproof constitute almost 70% of Ibn Zaydu:n's poetry is reflective of his political and emotional aspirations as well as his attention to the issues that directly impact him as an individual. In this context, it is worth mentioning that some literary critics (such as Jayyusi (1992) and Wahab Rumeyya (2014)) argue that Ibn Zaydu:n used his reminisces with Walla:da to serve his elaborate artistic design since, as Jayyusi suggests, "there is certainly more art than agony in his poems on Walla:da and on love in general" (349).

Arabic modern criticism has kept pace with classical Arabic literary texts. Numerous modern approaches and theories of literary criticism are often applied to the interpretation and analysis of classical Arabic literary works which has enriched existing analysis and discussion. An example of this is a Master thesis by Amina Ashi titled "Eulogy in Ibn Zaydoun's Poetry: A Stylistic Study" (2015). Another study is "Stylistic Phenomena in the Poetry of Ibn Zaydu:n" Al-Dalahma (2004). As both titles clearly indicate, the two studies primarily follows the stylistic approach of analysis. Though the current study also focusses on some stylistic aspects of Ibn Zaydu:n's poetry, it departs from previous studies in two different ways. First, it focuses on a single poem, the *Si:niyya* through a particular type of stylistics, that of the performative stylistic approach.

3. Unity in the *Si:niyya*

There seems to exist two contrasting views on the issue of unity in Ibn Zaydu:n's poetry. The first claims that, similar to other classical poets, Ibn Zaydu:n did not concern himself with the issue of unity. Instead, he thought out his poems line by line and aspired to make every line a complete and potentially independent literary statement (Douglas 1976). However, there are others who argue that Ibn Zaydu:n's poetry is unified not only thematically and structurally, but also spiritually and emotionally as various units of the poem (the stanza, the verse line, the hemistich and even the word) constitute intertwined and emotionally charged wires, which collaborate to draw a complete picture (al-Jirari 1977).

Each of the above views is partially true in relation to the *Si:niyya* since almost every line provides a self-contained idea that can stand independently. In addition, at least at a superficial level, the themes of the four sections of the poem might seem unrelated. However, an analysis of various layers of depth proves the existence of a thematic, structural, and psychological unity largely resulting from the poem's context (being in prison) and purpose (to urge his friend, Ibn Burd el-A_s_ghar, to intervene with Ibn Jahwar to release him from prison).

In what remains of this paper, we shall briefly discuss Ibn Zaydu:n's prison poetry and then conduct a performative reading and a stylistic analysis of the *Si:niyya*. Our purpose is to show that although, on the surface, the four sections of the poem may seem aimlessly put together, an in-depth analysis reveals that it is carefully crafted to achieve a well-defined purpose which functions as a unifying force. As such, the current study attributes to the body of scholarly research which aims to "debunk the conventional understanding that Arabic poetry consists of individual verses strung together at random without an overall coherence" (Farrin 2003, 82). Overall, The *Siniyya*, perhaps except for the opening line, progresses from the general and formal to the more personal and intimate. It is also characterized by a thematic opposition between the certain and clear, on the one hand, and the uncertain and obscure, on the other. In addition to coherence, the study shows that while, thematically and structurally, Ibn Zaydu:n was largely successful in concealing his feelings of anguish and resentment, the poem's internal and external rhythm betray these underlying feelings.

4. Ibn Zaydu:n's Prison Poetry

The dramatic reversal of Ibn Zaydu:n's fortune from being a prominent vizier and ambassador to becoming an incarcerated villain caused him great pain and confusion. In prison, he is said to have written eight poems of varying lengths (Asʿad 2012, 143) with the primary purpose of appealing for Ibn Jahwar's forgiveness. Yet, other supporting *aghra:d* such as self-praise, praise for the Emir and satire of his slanderers are also frequently present in his prison poetry.

With the exception of the *Si:niyya*, Ibn Zaydu:n's prison poems were all addressed to Ibn Jahwar. However, these poems failed to elicit Ibn Jahwar's sympathy and forgiveness either because of the seriousness of the poet's sin, the sometimes arrogant and boastful tone or the implied disrespect to the Emir occasionally found in these poems (Asʿad 2012, 43). After Ibn Zaydu:n lost hope in winning Ibn Jahwar's sympathy by directly addressing him, he addressed the *Si:niyya* to his close friend Ibn Burd el-Aṣghar (Abu Ḥafṣ: 1005-1054) asking him to intercede on his behalf. This makes the assumption that the *Si:niyya* is one of Ibn Zaydu:n's late prison poems highly probable.

5. The Thematic Unity of The *Si:niyya*

As an extension of the classical Arabic Qasida, the Andalusian Qasida is defined as "a formal multithematic ode addressed to a member of the elite in praise, in admonition, or in quest of support" (Gruendler 2000). Ibn Zaydu:n's primary objective in the *Si:niyya* is to ask his friend Abu Ḥafṣ Ibn Burd al-Aṣghar, a distinguished poet and a close friend to Ibn Jahwar, to intervene on his behalf to be released from prison, but the poet gets to the request only in the last few lines of the poem. Thematically, the poem's twenty-five mono-rhymed verses could be divided into four sections. The first section (lines 1 through 8) is a contemplation on the arbitrariness and fluctuations of fate; the second section (lines 9 through 16) is an expression of frustration over people's lack of loyalty, and an appeal to Abu Ḥafṣ to help him understand the fickleness of people and their desire for his annihilation; the third section (lines 17 through 21) is a self-praise and an optimistic statement that as part of a universal scheme, the poet's fall from glory will be followed by a certain rise; and the fourth section (lines 22 through 25) is a discrete request to Abu Ḥafṣ to intercede with Ibn Jahwar to release him.

Each of the above sections can be viewed as an independent short poem within the *Si:niyya*. However, the various sections are brought together through several common threads. We have translated the poem with the primary purpose of providing the reader with a tentative approximation of the meaning. The first section comprises of the following eight lines:

<div dir="rtl">

ما على ظني بـاس
يجرح الدهر ويـاسـو
ربما أشـرف بالمـر
ء على الأمـال يـاس
ولقد ينجيك إغفـا
لٌ ويرديك احتـراسُ
والمحاذير سهــام
والمقـاديــر قيــاسُ
ولكم أجدى قعــود
ولكم أكــدى التمـاسُ
وكذا الدهر إذا مـا
عزَّ نـاسٌ ذلَّ نـاسُ
وبنو الأيام أخيـا
فٌ سراةٌ وخســـاسُ
نليس الدنيا ولكنْ
متعـةٌ ذاك اللبـــاسُ

</div>

No uncertainty shall befall my belief
Time hurts and heals

Perhaps a person is brought closer
to hope through despair
Heedlessness may rescue you
and vigilance may destroy you
Perils are arrows
and destines are bows
Many a time has idleness bred prosperity
and many a time has assiduity bred scarcity
Such is Time; whenever
some people are esteemed, others are humiliated
Sons of days
are noble and lowly
We are enwrapped in the world, but
it is a [passing] pleasure this dress [that wraps us]

The poem opens with a line of self-assurance followed by others of wisdom and contemplation. While every line provides a complete meaning that can stand by itself, these lines are unified under the general theme of humans' helplessness before the arbitrariness of fate and the fluctuations of fortune. Yet, given the context of the poem, a more personal theme about Ibn Zaydu:n's attempt to reconcile himself to his unpleasant situation can be inferred. The lines imply that the poet bears no blame for his fall from grace; the blame instead falls on the fluctuations of fate and the viciousness of some people.

The personal and the general themes are also reflected in the shift of perspective in these lines. The use of the first-person singular possessive adjective "my" in the first line establishes a subjective viewpoint and further illuminates the personal theme. Yet, the perspective becomes more objective in lines two through seven as a series of philosophical comments on life are put forth. In the concluding line, the perspective widens to include all humankind, emphasizing the poet's desire to present his fortune in life as part of a larger scheme over which he has no control, and, thus, to exonerates himself from blame.

The philosophical and contemplative tone of the first section seems to be abruptly interrupted by the vocative case with which the second section begins:

يا أبا حفص وما سا
واك فتى فـهم إيـاس
من سنا رأيك لـي فـي
غسق الـخطب اقتباسُ
وودادي لك نصّ
لــم يخـالفه القيـاسُ
أنا حيرانٌ وللأمـــ
ـر وضـــــوح والتباسُ
ما ترى في معشر حا
لوا عن العهد وخاسوا
ورأوني ســـامرياً
بَّقى مــــــنه المساسُ
أذوبُ هامثٌ بلحـمي
فانتهـــابٌ وانتهـاسُ
كلّهم يسأل عن حـــا
لي وللذئب اعتساسُ

O, Aba Ḥafṣ, and no match
is Iyas to your intelligence
From the light of your wisdom
I have, in the darkness of calamity, a torch
My affection for you is a text
that has not been contradicted by analogy
I am confused, and the matter

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has clarity and obscurity
What think you of folks
who breached the covenant and decayed?
And they perceived a Sa:miri in me
to be avoided contact with
Are they wolves fond of my flesh
 thus, the biting and nibbling?
They all inquire about my condition
and a wolf does [indeed] stalk at night

This section begins with Ibn Zaydu:n addressing his friend as if he is nearby and able to hear him. The vocative case could give the impression of a complete departure from the philosophical contemplation on life's uncertainty and arbitrariness established in the first section. Yet, at a deeper level, the two parts are strongly connected since the intense sense of bewilderment over the arbitrariness of life makes the outcry for a friend's help logical and understandable. Furthermore, the poet's yearning for human contact while suffering the isolation of prison is also natural and even expected. The overarching theme here is the poet's appeal to Abu Ḥafs to help him understand the fickleness of people and their desire for his annihilation. However, before putting forth his request, the poet praises the sagacity of Abu Ḥafs claiming that he is wiser than the renowned Iya:s Bin Muᶜawiya, the judge from Basra famous for his sound judgment and wisdom. Such praise is likely to dispose Abu Ḥafs in the poet's favor and to make him more willing to listen and act on his behalf especially as this compliment is followed by an assurance of the poet's unflagging loyalty to their friendship. In line 12, the poet explicitly declares "I am confused." Though not explicitly stated, it is understood that he needs help to understand the world around him since the matter, he says, is simultaneously clear and obscure. Finally, in lines 13 through 16, Ibn Zaydu:n asks his wise friend to help him understand people's uncalled-for and undeserved hostile attitude towards him. In line 14, for example, he complains that he was treated as al-Sa:miri (according to the Islamic tradition, al-Sa:miri is a rebellious follower of Moses who when Moses went to receive the Words of God, constructed a golden calf and convinced people to worship it instead of God. As a punishment for him in life, al-Sa:miri was to say "touch me not," which resulted in his isolation from all mankind).

The third section reverts to the more philosophical tone of the first, but with modification:

ان قسا الدهرُ فللما
ءِ من الصخر انبجـاسٌ
ولئن أمسيتُ محبـــو
سأ فللغيث احتبـاسٌ
يلبد الوردُ الســـبنتى
وله بعـــد افتراسٌ
فتأمل كيف يغشــــى
مقلة المجـد النعـاسٌ
ويفتّ المسك في الترب
فيـــوطأ ويـــداس

If time hardened, water
would from rock flow
And if I became a prisoner,
rain would [occasionally] cease
The bald lion stays put
and thereafter he devours
So bethink you how overcast with drowsiness
the eye of glory becomes
And how musk is crushed in the soil
so that it is stamped and trampled upon

The general theme of these lines could be stated as: change is an essential part of life that affects

even the worthiest and noblest of humans and creatures. Yet, as in the first section, by recalling the context of the poem, a more personal theme evolves: like all elements and creatures that experience highs after lows, the poet's downfall will undoubtedly be followed by a powerful rise. The fact that these lines focus on the rise after the fall creates a more optimistic tone and clearly reflects the poet's audacious and proud spirit.

The boastful tone is further emphasized through the complex interplay of metaphors in lines 19 through 21. These lines contain thinly veiled comparisons between the hardened rock from which water flows; the lurking lion awaiting to devour his pray; the glory overcast by drowsiness; and the musk crushed in soil, on the one hand, and the imprisoned poet who will undoubtedly be released, on the other. These comparisons aim at asserting the poet's great merits, and thus, his right to be exonerated and released from prison. This is in line with Suzanne Stetkevych's argument that in the *Ra:ʔiyah* of Abu Firas al-Hamadani, *fakhr* (boast) "far from being self-regarding braggadocio or verbal display group-fanaticism, is a carefully constructed rhetorical discourse aimed at negotiating rank, asserting political allegiances and, as a result of these, *gaining his due*" (2013, 133, emphasis added). Similarly, in the *Si:niyya*, Ibn Zaydu:n's *fakhr* could be interpreted not only as a way to preserve the poet's dignity, but also as a means to assert his worth and, thus, his right to be released from prison (al-Shaqrafi 2015, 281).

The fourth and final section of the poem is the shortest and comprises of the following four lines:

لا يكن عهدك ورداً
إن عهـــدي لــك آسُ
وأدر ذكــــــريَ كاساً
مــــا امتطت كفّك كاسُ
واغتنم صفو الليالي
إنّما العيش اختلاسُ
وعسى أن يسمح الدّهـ
ـر فقـــد طـال الشماسُ

Let not your pact [with me] be a flower
my pact with you is a myrtle
Pass my mention around [like you pass] a goblet
for as long as your palm held a goblet
Seize the peacefulness of nights
life is but an embezzlement
And hopefully kinder will time be
for tribulation has lasted [too] long

The poet in these lines appeals once more to Abu Ḥafṣ to remain true to their friendship, as the poet's covenant with him is, like a myrtle, evergreen. Then he finally, and discretely, puts forth his request for his friend to promptly seize the opportunity to mention him to Abu Jahwar. Significantly, Ibn Zaydu:n only implicitly states that he wishes for his friend to intercede with Ibn Jahwar to release him possibly because he trusts that such hinting suffices to make the wise and intelligent Abu Ḥafṣ understand this request and act upon understanding. However, bearing in mind the poet's aristocratic background as well as his conceited and arrogant character (al-Shaqrafi 2015, 233 & 264), it is more likely that his pride and dignity barred him from explicitly asking for help.

The above discussion sheds clear light on the thematic interconnectedness of the poem's various sections as they all revolve around the idea of change and instability whether in fortunes, relationships, or states of being. Furthermore, the first three sections serve as a long preface for the brief request introduced in the fourth. Ibn Zaydu:n hopes that his friend's interference would bring about the desired change (i.e. his release from prison). Indeed, the poem's context (the fall of the poet from being an esteemed vizier to becoming an imprisoned scoundrel) emphasizes the appropriateness of this theme of change.

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6. The Acoustic Aspects

As illustrated above, through the various themes that serve different *aghrad*, Ibn Zaydu:n succeeds in maintaining a delicate balance between asking for his friend's help, on the one hand, and preserving his dignity and pride, on the other. However, an analysis of the poem's acoustic aspects reveals that he was less successful in his endeavour to conceal his intense feelings of bitterness, frustration, and grief.

The centrality of the acoustic aspects to the Arabic poetry has been repeatedly emphasized. Lug, for example, maintains that "the Arab poet, consciously or not, is keenly sensitive to the special vibrations of sound" (1981, 332). The power of the music produced through these vibrations is the first thing that draws the attention of the listener because of the rhythm and anticipated tune resulting from an awareness of the acoustic design. However, a poem's external and internal rhythm and music are not merely ornamental. Instead, they are used as cohesive poetic elements as they interact with the content to create the desired meaning and emotions.

In Arabic, the external rhythm of a poem is achieved through prosody as well as through rhyme. Arabic meters (*buhu:r*; sing. *bahr*) are classified into a. *buhu:r sa:fiya* (pure; sing. *sa:fi*) or *mufrada* (single; sing. *mufrad*) which are formed through the repetition of a single unit, and b. *buhu:r mukhtalata* (mixed) or *murakbba* (compound) which are formed by the repetition of two or more units. The *Si:niyya* is written in *majzu:ʔ* (partial) *al-ramal*; a *sa:fi/ mufrad bahr* (pure/single meter). Generally, short poems, *buhu:r* with few syllables and *buhu:r majzuʔa* are often considered more appropriate for expressing intense feelings and disturbed moods, while long poems and long *buhu:r* with numerous syllables are viewed as more fitting for composed states and meditative moods (Anis 2010).

The original and complete *ramal* comprises of the unit *fa:ᶜila:tun* repeated six times in every line; three in each hemstitch. In *majzu:ʔ al-ramal*, the number of units is reduced to four; two in each hemstitch. In addition, *fa:ᶜila:tun*, is replaced in the *Si:niyya* with the unit *faᶜila:tun*. Although both *fa:ᶜila:tun* and *faᶜila:tun* have four syllables each, they differ in the length of these syllables: the long, short, long, long syllables in *f:ᶜaila:tun* become short, short, long, long in *fa:ᶜila:tun*. With only 25 lines and 16 syllables in every line, the resulting rhythm in the *Si:niyya* is rapid and betrays the poet's agitated mood and his wish to urge his friend to promptly intercede on his behalf.

As for, rhyme, the second element of the external rhythm, Ibn Zaydu:n, in keeping with the tradition of qasida, commits himself to the same *qa:fiya* throughout the poem. All lines of the *Si:niyya* conclude with the disyllabic unit (*a:su:*) where the long open syllable /a:/ echoes a groaning sound and the voiceless sibilant /s/ followed by /u:/ intensifies the poet's feelings of impatience, despair and agony. The repetition of this *q:afiya* and the tension resulting from the vertical and horizontal movements of the tongue while sounding it create a deep sense of helplessness, resignation and abandonment appropriate for the *gharad* of *istiᶜta:f*.

The external and internal rhythms of the poem work in harmony to produce the appropriate music which falls into the ear of the listener and, together with other elements of poetry, give expression to the desired meaning. A poem's internal rhyme results primarily from the music created through the repetition of and interaction between sounds, words, and structures. The intense feeling of suffering conveyed in the poem's *qa:fiya* with its two long vowels and the /s/ in between, is further sharpened through an extensive use of a. the sound /s/ (47 times) and b. the long vowel sounds /a:/, /u:/ and /i:/ within the lines of the poem. In the first eight lines, for example, we find the following syllables which end with long vowel sounds:

ma:→ la: → ba:→ su: → ya: →su:

ma:→ la: →a:→ ma:→ ya: →su:

ji: → fa:→di: → ra: →su:

ha:→ ḍi: → ha: → qa: → di: →ya:→ su:

da:→ ᶜu: → da: → ma: → su:

ḍa:→ a:→ma:→ na:→ su:

nu:→ya: → ya: → ra: → sa:→ su:

ya: → ḍa: →ba: → su:

In addition, the number of long vowels has been increased by the replacement of the *hamza*, /ʔ/, in several words with the long vowel /a:/ as found in the following examples: *ba:s* instead of *baʔs*; *ya:s* instead of *yaʔs* and *ka:s* instead of *kaʔs*. These long open syllables slow down the rhythmic pace and create a melancholic musical tune appropriate for the theme of falling from grace.

7. Rhetorical Devices and Unity

The numerous rhetorical devices, such as *ṯiba:q* (antithesis), *muqa:balah* (juxtaposition) as well as the conditional clauses which Ibn Zaydu:n employs in the *Si:niyya* further support and advance the poem's purposes and themes. For example, the extensive use of *ṯiba:q* to the extent of saturation, especially in the first section, is appropriate for the theme of instability and confusion and is used to contrast situations and conditional statements. The swings in fortune and status are mirrored in the rhetoric use of words and phrases and their opposites. For example, the following seven *ṯiba:q* are found in the first few lines: hurts/heals, rescues/destroys, heedlessness/vigilance, prosperity/scarcity, idleness/assiduity, esteemed/humiliated and noble/lowly. The poem also abounds in explicitly and implicitly juxtaposed situations. For example, the clarity of Abu Ḥafs's mind contrasts with the poet's confused and foggy perception; the loyalty of the poet's friends prior to his imprisonment is set off against their hostility after he was imprisoned; the real intentions of those who ask about him juxtapose with their feigned ones, the harshness of time contrasts with the flow of water through rock and the apparent idleness of the lion is set off against the lion's readiness to devour the prey. Furthermore, *Ṯiba:q* is not merely used as a rhetorical device but as an important means to support the various themes and *aghra:d* of the poem. Indeed, the polarity expressed in both *ṯiba:q* and juxtaposition is reflective of the poet's binary psychological state and hence his desperate need for his friend's help.

Finally, the two conditional clauses in lines 17 and 18 deserve some attention for two reasons: First, in English, the conditional sentence with a simple past verb in the if-clause normally refers to an unreal or hypothetical situation. In Arabic, however, this structure could indicate a present or past, real or hypothetical situation. According to Jaber (2016, 138-9), Ibn Zaydu:n has deliberately used the past tense in the two conditional clauses to show his determination to treat his calamity as if temporary and an event of the past. In contrast, the two nominal statements in the apodoses, or the main clauses, (water flows from rock and rain occasionally seizes) establish general and unchanging truths about life. Second, the outcomes of both protases, or independent clauses, do not seem to follow the expected line of logic. Again, Jaber convincingly suggests that the absence of a logical sequence results from the fact that the originally four conditional clauses have been reduced to two. To further explain this point, consider the following expansions of the two conditional statements:

Line 17: If time hardened, water, would from rock flow. The more logical structure for this statement is:

If time hardened, it would soften.

If water became scarce, it would flow from rock. (This sequence is logical for the Arab audience since, as in the Bible, there is a reference to water flowing from rock in the Quran.)

Line 18: And if I became a prisoner, rain would [occasionally] cease.

The more logical structure for this conditional statement is:

If I became a prisoner, I would be free.

If rain is withheld, it will pour down.

The reduction of these conditional statements results in a denser structure and a faster pace that are appropriate for reflecting the poet's agitated mood as well as his strong desire for his friend to promptly act on his behalf.

The above discussion illustrates how a stylistic-performative approach reveals various aspects of the poem related to the fact that the poem was written while Ibn Zaydu:n was imprisoned. The poet's

intense feelings of uncertainty, betrayal and frustration had a clear impact on the way the poem was composed.

8. Conclusion

The above discussion has attempted to illustrate the thematic, structural and psychological coherence of Ibn Zaydu:n's *Si:niyya*. The in-depth analysis of the poem takes into consideration the poem's historical background (the poet's incarceration) as well as the specific function the poem was meant to perform (to beseech Abu H̲afṣ to intercede with Ibn Jahwar on the poet's behalf). Thematically, the *Si:niyya* is often categorized as a poem of *Isti^{c}ṭa:f* though it includes a number of other themes and aghra:d̲ which are employed to achieve a specific performative purpose: to persuade Abu H̲afṣ to intercede with Ibn Jahwar on the poet's behalf. However, the poet's aristocratic background and his conceit bar him from directly and explicitly putting forth his request for his friend. Instead, he carefully hones the poem to engage the emotions of his addressee (i.e., Ibn H̲afṣ) and to elicit a particular affective response while preserving his dignity. To this end, the poem begins with lines of wisdom which assert man's helplessness before the arbitrary workings of fate, followed by an appeal to the H̲afṣ's wisdom and a complain of people's fickleness, then an assertion of the poet's worthiness and finally a brief and implicit request for Abu H̲afṣ to intervene on his behalf.

Our performative and stylistic reading shows that, thematically, the poet was successful in maintaining a delicate balance between two pressing—and, conceivably, divergent—purposes: to ask for help and to preserve his dignity, especially since he comes from an aristocratic background and had held high positions prior to his incarceration. This balance was mainly achieved through the inclusion of multiple themes related to the helplessness of humans before the constant changes of time, fortune, and people, on the one hand and through introducing his request only briefly and discretely, on the other. Rhythmically, however, the poem's *qa:fiya*, internal and external rhyme betray the poet's deep sense of grief, insecurity, and resentment.

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