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Poetic Language and Its Representations in *Layali 'Abir Sabil* by Ahmed Atiyah Al-Saudi

Asmaa M. Al Zuraigat
Department of Arabic Language, Faculty of Arts, Tafila Technical University, Jordan

***Abstract*—This study aims to identify a number of poetic elements in the biography *Nights of a Passing Traveler* (*Layali Abir Sabil*) by the writer Ahmed Atiyah Al-Saudi. The study focused on two of these elements, namely the poetry of the title and the poetry of language, which serve the writer's vision and raise issues and topics. The study revealed different aspects of the text's openness to poetry and the effect of this openness on achieving narrative poetry and presenting his vision in a way that serves the biography without undermining its specificity. The writer sought to write within an advanced poetic context, because poetry is a suitable tool for expressing the vision that the biography carried and wanted to express. The study shows that the biography reflects the author's passion for and love of the Arabic language, ever since he heard its melodious sounds in the poems of the archives in his elementary school. He understood the sweetness of its words, the magic of its rhythms, and was captivated by its beauty, so he took up his pen. He wrote many works on its eloquence, arts, and styles. The writer used concise, intense, and profound poetic language filled with shifts, artistic images, irony, similes, and allusions to express this. Readers of the biography, with their literary taste, can appreciate the writer's skill in expressing the stirrings of the soul, the whims of the mind, recalling events, and depicting characters and scenes that portray feelings and emotions and reflect the deep psychological suffering and difficulties the author faced in his life.**

***Index Terms*—poetry, poetic title, between title and text, poetic language**

I. Introduction

Poetic language is one of the most prominent stylistic phenomena that has contributed to the enrichment of modern narrative texts, as it is no longer confined to poetry but has transcended it to manifest itself in autobiographies and novels as an artistic tool that intensifies meaning and imbues the human experience with profound aesthetic dimensions. Hence, this study examines the manifestations of poetic language in the autobiography Nights of a Passing Traveler by Ahmed Atiyah Al-Saudi, as a narrative text open to the horizon of poetry, where subjectivity intertwines with art, and life experience with aesthetic linguistic formation. The significance of this study lies in its endeavor to uncover the mechanisms of poetic formation within the autobiographical text, highlighting its role in deepening the writer's artistic vision and reconstructing the subjective experience within an aesthetic horizon that transcends direct, reportage-style narration. It also contributes to bridging a critical gap regarding the study of poeticism in Arabic autobiographies, particularly in contemporary examples that blend historical documentation with creativity. The autobiography *Nights of a Passing Traveler* is a literary autobiography whose fragrance emanates from the Jordanian countryside, rich in scent and nectar, where its author was born, raised, and grew up. It is a creative work that makes a distinctive contribution to contemporary autobiography, following in the footsteps of distinguished writers such as Ahmed Amin's *My Life*, Tawfiq al-Hakim's *The Flower of Life*, Taha Hussein's *The Days*, Fadwa Tuqan's *A Mountain Journey*, Ibrahim al-Mazni's *A Life Story*, and Mikha'il Na'ima's *Seventy*.

This study has contributed to providing an analytical stylistic reading that identifies the poetic elements in the text by examining the poetics of the title, the poetics of language, and the resulting artistic images, semantic shifts, and expressive rhythms that help shape the text's aesthetic structure. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach, drawing on some modern critical concepts in the study of poetics, such as those of Jakobson, Todorov, and Gérard Genette, in their approaches to shift and irony.

The writer Ahmed Atiyah Al-Saudi belongs to a generation of writers who combined academic expertise with literary production; he was born in Jordan, and earned a doctorate in literature and criticism. He has worked at a number of Arab universities and contributed to enriching the cultural scene through his research, literary, and critical contributions. He has produced a diverse body of work in the fields of narrative and criticism, most notably his autobiography Nights of a Passing Traveler, which forms the subject of this study. Its language is characterized by a distinct artistic sensibility, combining eloquence of expression with the depth of experience, The events of this memoir are organized into successive nights spanning fifty years, beginning with the Nights of the Village, the Nights of Cyprus, the Nights of Amman, the Nights of Cairo, the Nights of the Barefoot Teacher, the Nights of Khartoum, the Nights of the Hijaz, and the Nights of Al-Ain, and ending with the Nights of the Peasant Writer. In these nights, we find rich language, enchanting eloquence, a fluent tongue, astonishing rhetoric, eloquent phrases, the power of poetry, precise and astonishing descriptions, and masterful narration; all presented to his readers in an artistic tableau of extreme precision and beauty.

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II. Theoretical Background: Poetics of the Narrative

The concept of poetics is one of the most prominent modern critical concepts. It has been translated in many ways and defined in various ways, but perhaps the simplest definition is that it is “the science of poetry” or “the science of poetic style” (Matloob, 1989, p. 24). Poetics, as defined by Jakobson, is “language about language, challenging language and what lies beyond language, which is expressed by signs that do not appear in words but are hidden in their channels” (Jakobson, 1988, p. 31). Ali Al-Alaq considers it to be “a painful search for the new, an adventure in and with language. It is also a deviation from common and familiar modes of expression to a different horizon based on the pleasure of strangeness and the shock of surprise” (Al-Alaq, 2002, p. 30). It is "a function of the relationship between deep structure and surface structure, and this function is manifested in the absolute or relative correspondence between these two structures. When there is no correspondence, poetry disappears or diminishes to the point of near extinction. and when there is a disruption and divergence between the two structures, poetry emerges and explodes in direct proportion to the degree of disruption in the text" (Abu Deeb, 1987, p. 57).

Formalists in the field of contemporary criticism have focused on new criteria based on the availability of qualities and characteristics found in each literary genre, seeking to define its genre (poetic nature) or specific characteristics. Jean Cohen defined it as follows: “Poeticity is defined as the stylistics of the genre” (Cohen, 1986, p. 6), or as Todorov called it: “the general laws that govern the birth of every work” (Todorov, 1971, p. 23), or "the laws of creative writing" (Ezz al-Din al-Manasra, 1992, p. 31). Poetics embodies a textual form that takes the shape of a network of relationships that grow between primary components, such that each of them can occur in another context without necessarily being poetic” (Abu Deeb, 1987, p. 17).

To overcome the terminological multiplicity surrounding the concept of poeticity and to establish a practical framework governing the analytical dimension of this study, the research adopts a composite approach that integrates Jean Cohen’s structuralist perspective with Roland Barthes’s semiotic and interpretive insights. Accordingly, poeticity is not treated merely as a theoretical concept concerned with genre characteristics or as an autonomous field of stylistics; rather, it is employed as an analytical and procedural tool for examining the aesthetic and semantic mechanisms that shape the language of autobiography in *Layālī ʿĀbir Sabīl* (*Nights of a Wayfarer*). This approach operates through two complementary levels:

First: The Level of Deviation and Defamiliarization

This level focuses on tracing instances in which the narrative language departs from its direct referential and informative function toward an aesthetic and suggestive one. It examines the various forms of deviation and paradox that endow the autobiographical discourse with poetic density, drawing on Jean Cohen’s theory of deviation and Roman Jakobson’s conception of the poetic function of language.

Second: The Level of Structure and Interpretation

This level investigates how textual thresholds—particularly the title—are transformed into interpretive codes and reading units that actively participate in the production of meaning and guide the process of reception. Following Barthes’s perspective, which views the text as a network of signs and open-ended significations, these thresholds and textual structures do not merely record historical or personal events. Rather, they aesthetically reconstruct them, opening them to the realm of creative imagination and generating meanings that transcend their immediate referential reality.

This literary biography, distinguished in form and content, goes beyond a strict historical record to reshape the self—the writer's self—through intense poetic language. The writer does not present himself, nor does he narrate the events of his life in chronological order. Instead, he presents them through eleven nights filled with contemplative human experiences spanning fifty years, in which night is a symbolic time, and the settings for those nights are the nights of the village, the nights of Cyprus, and the nights of Amman... A living memory filled with different experiences.

III. Discussions

A. Poetics of the Title

The title is considered a poetic semiotic threshold, as it is the first text that the recipient encounters. The title in written language functions as the equivalent of the communicative situation in oral discourse in both temporal and spatial terms. Spoken texts usually do not require a title, whereas written texts necessarily call for one (Al-Ghufays, 2021, p. 373). The title may be a reason for acceptance or rejection, as it condenses and indicates the text. It is a key element in reception and interpretation, as meanings revolve around it and are linked to it. Through it, we can determine the identity of the text. The title plays an important role, as Barthes (1994) argues that it “whet the reader's appetite for reading” (p. 29) because it continues to refer to the writer's intentions and expresses his vision within the text. It is “a prior text that casts its shadow over the text and determines its identity” (Barthes, 1994, p. 30). On the other hand, the body of the novel continues to refer to the first threshold, “the title,” as it contributes to defining the objectives and intentions of the body and “suggests possibilities and visions that facilitate our entry into the world of the novel and gives the larger text a semantic value as a summary of the total work” (Barthes, 1994, p. 30).

The influence of the first text (the title) on the second text (the body), and vice versa, presents the reader with possibilities and interpretations, and provokes in the reader a process of interaction, conflict, and numerous shifts, where a set of interpretations and possibilities appear to us at the expense of others through the mutual interaction between the

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title and the body. The body provides us with new insights that take their place in relation to the title, ultimately determining for us the appropriate interpretation and the possibilities to which the title and body contribute together (Al-Rawashda, 2005, p. 134). The title is a semantic structure that interacts with the text and reproduces it in a condensed form. Therefore, the title of the biography, Nights of a Passing Traveler, is a fundamental interpretive key to the second text, the body of the biography, especially since those nights in the title are based on narrative passages, each of which is marked by nights that reached eleven nights of a passing stranger. The title, as a foundational semiotic sign, may prompt you to reread something that was familiar to you, something that is part of your culture, but it may tempt you to reread it because it unleashes new energies in you, as if the act of reading begins with the title, and then the act of interpretation.

The title constitutes a poetic and semiotic threshold that plays a crucial role in establishing the identity of the text. As Gérard Genette argues in his theory of paratexts, the title functions as a "paratext" that stimulates the reader's desire to engage with the work and provides an initial framework for approaching the main text. It serves as a mediating space between the text and its readers, guiding interpretation and shaping expectations before the act of reading begins.

Within a similar semiotic framework, Roland Barthes, in S/Z, attributes to the title a deconstructive and interpretive dimension. He states that "we take the title as a first reading unit… the title here inaugurates a hermeneutic code" (Barthes, 1994, p. 31). This hermeneutic code constitutes the primary interpretive key through which the text generates meaning. The title thus becomes a condensed semantic nucleus that directs the process of reception, unlocks the text's aesthetic intentions, and enables entry into its fictional world through multiple possibilities of interpretation rather than through a single, fixed meaning.

If we look closely at the components of the title of this biography, we find that it consists of a concise nominal sentence composed of three units, the first of which is (Nights). The title of the biography (Nights) suggests a dense collection, of an unspecified number, where experiences accumulate, knowledge expands, and it is well known that the word (night) in our Arab culture is associated with disclosure, confession, storytelling, and contemplation. It is a major irony and a semantic shift that prompts us to uncover those nights, to determine their meanings and dimensions in the text. The second of these units is "transient," which is a verb that carries in its lexical meaning the sense of passing, instability, existential alienation, and proximity to loss, while the word "path," the third unit that makes up the title, has a religious and cultural meaning open to multiple meanings related to destiny, choice, the way, and striving. Thus, the title is formed from the dialectic of accumulation and extension (nights), instability and transience (passing), and the tension of time and the road (path). The first text from the dialectic of accumulation and extension (layali), instability and transience (abir), and the tension between time and the path (sabil). This tension remains active throughout the nights of the biography, reaching its conclusion in the last two pages.

On the other hand, there is a poeticism that combines the plural in (Nights) and the singular in (Passing Way). This aesthetic is achieved through irony, where the writer's life multiplies its nights, and the writer's self passes through those nights without possessing them, as if the second text/body of the biography is built on a central question: How can a person be a passerby at a time that insists on remaining? Therefore, the "nights" in the body of the biography come as independent narrative units, because each night has its own place (the village, Jerusalem, Amman, Khartoum, Cyprus, the Hejaz, etc.), and each of those nights has its own circumstances, its own story, its own symbolic meaning, and its own emotional weight. Thus, the relationship between the title/the first text and the body/second text is articulated through existential pauses in a passing journey, indicating that those pauses and stops are transit points, not points of stability, and each of those nights is a rewriting of the writer himself, as if the writer/narrator did not narrate to chronicle events and record them, but rather to reshape himself, so that the recipient finds himself faced with an incomplete autobiography, facing intermittent nights in different places for a man exhausted by fatigue, who never stopped passing through. The nights are for pain and the accumulation of experiences, and the expansion of human experience. It is a literary biography (Layālīhā) that emphasizes the poetic, aesthetic, and contemplative aspects over the historical and documentary aspects, while (Aabir Sabeel) mitigates the ego that may appear in any autobiography, giving the narrative an aesthetic dimension and transforming the writer's modest self into a mirror reflecting a collective experience filled with wisdom gleaned from those nights.

B. Poetics of the Cover

When looking at the cover page, the reader finds that there is a clear harmony between the title of the biography and its cover, and a complementarity between the title icon and its cover, where we see an image of night and moon, an image of an ancient city, and another image of an elderly man sitting on a concrete bench with his back against a wall, his posture indicating his contemplative gaze at the place where he is sitting. This is a semiotic reference, as the title and cover are largely consistent with each other. The visual symbols on the cover of the biography (the night and the moon refer to the time of narration, contemplation, and revelation of what is in the soul, and an elderly man indicates the weight of those nights, and his contemplative sitting posture indicates his temporary pause before continuing on his way). This is strongly consistent with the meaning of the title/verbal text. and the image/visual text on the cover of the biography confirms the strength of the relationship between them, where we read the night as a space for contemplation and wisdom and a new way of writing life itself, and the crossing as a human destiny filled with different experiences in nights that have reached the age of fifty, for the writer himself—the humble self—who preferred the wisdom gleaned from the experiences of the nights to the heroism proclaimed in any other biography. This mitigated the ego in this biography and gave it a great deal of aesthetic and poetic value.

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Therefore, the relationship between the title of the biography and its cover is a semiotic and aesthetic one. The title, in its compound form, *Nights of a Passing Traveler*, evokes a nighttime that is rich in meaning, associated with contemplation, memory, and revelation. This is reinforced and confirmed by the cover image: a night scene with a dark sky, scattered stars, a clearly visible crescent moon, and dim, yellowish lighting.

C. The Title and the Text of the Biography

Readers are accustomed to linking a writer's literary works with the titles he chooses for them, which highlight the content, visions, and ideas addressed in those works. Therefore, it seems to us that the title chosen by the writer highlights the hidden and implicit meanings of the literary text and its visions. It seems to us that this biography, in terms of its title/first text and the structure of the second text/body, achieves an organic relationship between the nights and their meaning within the text, and there is a clear harmony between them. The writer says: I rode those nights, drank from their nectar and honey, and counted them as Ibn Ma'mar counted them in times past: I count the nights, night after night, and I have been counting the nights for ages! (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 5). How counting the nights and turning over their pages drew me to sail in their crashing waves, to recall memories, and to shed precious tears, as Zain al-Shabab Abu Firas had done before: When night enveloped me, I stretched out my hand of love and shed tears from its creatures, the great ones! (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 6).

From the first page of his biography, the writer declares that he counted those nights, and turned them over, drinking from their nectar and bitterness, their sweetness and sourness, and shedding his precious tears. He does not present his biography as a linear narrative of events, but rather announces the deconstruction and dissection of time into eleven nights based on recollection and condensation. The writer says: "These nights gathered together, piece by piece, light and dark, pulling at each other, some taking hold of each other's necks, until their honeyed juice was poured out. This is the story you hold in your hands, dear reader, mixed with the bitterness of suffering and hardship, infused with the fragrance of learning and perseverance, and embellished with amusing situations, until its memory faded and its fruit ripened" (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 6).

These are nights that have gathered and intertwined, joking with the sweetness and bitterness of the nights, with the bitterness of hardship and suffering, enriched with great lessons and strong perseverance, and embellished with amusing situations. Each night has its own space and story, and they are emotional milestones in the life of our writer, evoking sadness, joy, nostalgia, and memories. This is very much in line with the meaning of “transient,” which has nothing of the past except moments of standing still, reminiscing, and contemplating. The writer's statement, “How much the counting of nights has dragged me down,” makes each night a psychologically inflated time, in which pain accumulates, memories overlap with sorrow, and a consciousness weighed down by experiences is suggested. The writer no longer passes through time in a fleeting manner, but is keen to count the nights with all their memories, turning them into a space for contemplation, raising this documentary biography to the level of a literary biography with an interpretive dimension.

Thus, the relationship between the title of the biography and its text is complementary. According to the semiotic system, it is a relationship based on the transition of the signifier from the threshold of the title to the text, and the production of the signified through the repetition of the word “nights” throughout the pages of the biography. This repetition reinforces the presence of night as a constant time, within which the writer's experience is recounted from multiple angles according to different experiences in different places that are not presented as geographical spaces, but rather as semiotic signs and symbols that are read through the writer's personal experience. The places are transformed into something resembling an emotional space where memories and emotions are concentrated, and the place is reproduced within the semantic structure of the text in accordance with its vision. Likewise, the relationship between the title and the structure and vision of the nights is a deep and interactive one. The nights are not merely a temporal framework, but a structure that produces the vision and subject matter of the biography, liberating the text of the biography from the traditional model to a refined literary and poetic model, as those nights are an intense human experience of transition, recalled through memories.

D. Between the Title of the Biography and the Conclusion of the Nights

Writers have paid attention to titles because they create an expectation and anticipation in the reader. As the reader progresses through the text, they search for the connection between the text and its title, which in this case may match their expectations, or it may contradict it, and it is possible that it may break that expectation and reveal meanings and possibilities that the reader did not expect. The title contributes to guiding the reading and building the horizon of reception and expectation, and when it interacts with the text, it becomes an active element in producing the vision and overall meaning of the text. The nights prepare the reader to enter the world of the text, and after a life of joy and sorrow, sweetness and bitterness, and the accumulation of experiences that the writer went through during fifty years of his life in eleven nights, the conclusion of the nights comes to break the reader's expectations and anticipation. The conclusion does not end the nights with an event, but rather the writer's vision shifts from a narrative of suffering and pain to gratitude to God Almighty and an awareness of the blessings He has bestowed upon him. The writer says: “I never imagined that the waves of the nights would carry me from the desert of Sham and the heart of Africa to the coast of the Gulf, where a tree of honey and dates would grow for me, and the doors of the world would open to me, after I had tasted its bitterness and lived in its darkness!” (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 321). After a long account of the vicissitudes of life, poverty, waiting, suffering, illness, and long hours of work, the conclusion of the nights comes to say: These nights are not evil, but rather

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a test that leads to satisfaction. Here, the aesthetic semiotic convergence between the title of the biography and its conclusion is realized. The nights are a long path that the writer has traveled, and the conclusion is his awareness of what he has accomplished on this path fraught with suffering and the vicissitudes of life.

In the body of the biography, the night is associated with fear, sleeplessness, reflection, anticipation, and anxiety, but in the conclusion, the night is associated with the remembrance of God Almighty, gratitude for His blessings, and satisfaction with what He has decreed for His servants. The author says: "Do not be surprised, my friend, for the world is in the hands of its Owner, who gives it to whom He wills, takes it away from whom He wills, changes the circumstances of its inhabitants, and turns their hearts. Their worth is not known by the extent of their worldly possessions, but by their deeds and piety: In the blink of an eye, God changes one's condition from one state to another! (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 321).

The experience was fraught with suffering, but it turned into light and contentment, and acceptance of what God Almighty had decreed. This profound poetic transformation is rarely achieved except in mature literary texts, as the text of the biography is based on a tight circular structure. The nights began with the difficult nights of the village, burdened with poverty and suffering, and ended with a description of them as a blessing from God Almighty and apparent and hidden blessings that God Almighty bestowed upon our writer. The writer says: "Bakh, Bakh, Abu Mujahid, you have scooped from the dust of this world and tasted its delights. so beware, beware of leaning on it, for it will cover you with its dust and make you one of its seekers. For this world, if it accepts you, it will spoil you, and if it ripens, it will wither, and if it turns green, it will harm you!" (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 324). This conclusion does not depart from the title, but rather returns to it and deepens its meaning, as if we have reinterpreted the title through the conclusion of the nights. The beginning of the nights was wisdom and suffering, and their end was contentment with the will of God Almighty, great favor from God Almighty, and praise for the blessings of God Almighty. The nights reach their climax when they end with gratitude and acknowledgment of God's grace. The author says: "Well done, Abu Mujahid, for God has given you His grace and taught you what you did not know, and He has done you good by healing you of malaria and brought you from misery and hardship to bliss and prosperity; to test you, whether you would be grateful or ungrateful. It is incumbent upon you to acknowledge His favor and praise His blessings, to thank Him and not be ungrateful, and to repeat throughout the night and at the ends of the day: “My Lord, inspire me to be grateful for Your blessings which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to do righteous deeds that please You. And make my offspring righteous. I have repented to You, and I am one of the Muslims” (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 324).

This Qur'anic intertextuality, with which *Nights of a Passing Traveler* concludes, is a reference that adds a moral and spiritual dimension to the experience of the nights. Thus, the conclusion of *Nights of a Passing Traveler* succeeded in interpreting and explaining the title, transcending it, and finally returning it to the reader in a deeper and purer form, thereby achieving organic unity between the title of the biography and the conclusion of Layali, and contributing to the production of a text that is coherent in terms of poetry, aesthetics, structure, and meaning.

E. Poetics of Language

Language is a complex mechanism at the heart of the relationships that exist in a novel, as literary works are formed from the combination of words, their arrangement into meaningful sentences, and then the combination of these sentences into a complete linguistic structure. Through language, we arrive at the writer's vision and the depth of the reality he wanted to express. Language becomes “a tool for communication between people, due to the social nature of human beings, and it carries expressive images from the speaker in the form of stylistic energy” (Bakhtin, 1987, p. 84).

Language is like a mirror that reflects the features of linguistic reality at its multiple levels, and prose literary texts are often not devoid of poetry, as language achieves multiple features that bring the language of prose closer to the language of poetry, such as displacement, imagery, conciseness, implication, and condensation.

In this biography, the author has managed to use concise, expressive language that is extremely profound and focused. This linguistic depth comes from the concise rhetorical charges, poetic imagery, and harmony of meanings in the biography, through language that delves into the depths of humanity and is charged with profound psychological suffering. The reader who examines the biography finds poetic language based primarily on displacement, imagery, and irony, which are among the strongest pillars of poetic imagery. The poetic nature of the biography is also enhanced by the poetic texts that the author has drawn from his cultural repertoire or intellectual output and employed in his biography in a precise and conscious manner that serves his vision in his nights, supports the biography, and gives it depth, poetry, and beauty.

(a). Displacement

Linguistic displacement is “a violation of the laws of language, and it alone provides poetry with its true subject matter” (Cohen, 1986, p. 42). Jean Cohen considered it the element that “constitutes the essential characteristic of poetic language” (Abu Deeb, 1987, p. 108). Metonymy is one of the important elements in expressing strong emotions, as it is “the natural language of tense situations and excitement, because it enables humans to express with concentrated violence the heightened level of the violent situation that arouses them” (Lewis, 1982, p. 113).

Al-Awabdeh argues that deviation "elevates poetic texts toward the aesthetics of expression and the poeticity of literary discourse. Naturally, deviation is not confined to poetry; it is also employed in prose because poetic language does not simply mean the language of poetry, but rather language that departs from ordinary communicative usage. Its features include similes, metaphors, and artistic imagery" (Al-Awabdeh, 2023, p. 4). Furthermore, Al-Hajjami states that

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"deviation is the writer's use of language in a manner that departs from the conventional. Through this departure, the writer achieves individuality, creativity, and the ability to captivate the recipient by attracting attention through the disruption of linguistic norms with aesthetic patterns" (Al-Hajjami, 2021, p. 136).

Jean Cohen provides a comprehensive account of the mechanism underlying both semantic and syntactic deviation under the term "semantic deviation" (Déviation Sémantique), particularly in his discussion of metaphor as its most prominent form. He states:

> Metaphor is a semantic deviation based on the violation of the law of compatibility. It is not limited to destroying the logical meaning of words; rather, it reconstructs a new meaning. It transfers the word from its original contextual domain to an imagistic space that grants the expression an emotional and aesthetic dimension unattainable through referential language. (Cohen, 1986, p. 143)

He further explains:

> The function of metaphor is to destroy the familiar material properties of things in order to endow them with new properties that correspond to the creator's emotional state. (Cohen, 1986, p. 147)

Within this framework, deviation may occur not only at the level of individual lexical items but also in the relational structure between words, as Cohen notes:

> The violation of the norm may occur at the level of the isolated word, and it may also occur at the level of the relationship between words, that is, in their combination within a structure. (Cohen, 1986, p. 49)

This conceptualization clarifies that semantic deviation does not merely disrupt linguistic norms but actively reconstructs meaning through metaphorical transformation.

Al-Saudi clearly relied on displacement in all its forms and shapes in his biography. The writer says in *Nights of Deprivation/The Three Lean Years*: "I said before: Days and nights passed, and months went by without the promises being fulfilled, and now I say: Three harsh lean years have passed in which I have not achieved my goal at any university, and I have remained lying at their doors, hanging on their walls, as if with reproachful tongues saying: Is it not time for this knight to dismount! Is it not time for this young man, who has traveled the length and breadth of the country, whose papers have filled the drawers of universities, to find a job worthy of him, or to enjoy a meal that satisfies him and his children? These lean years have reduced my financial reserves to below zero, emptied my young children's refrigerator of its meager contents, worn out their clothes, and faded their colors and beauty!" (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 248). The shift in this passage of the biography contributes to a clear breach of semantic and syntactic norms and helps to achieve the poetic nature of the text in a way that serves the writer's vision. In the writer's words, "The days and nights passed, and the months passed without the promises being fulfilled." The temporal symbols (days, nights, and months) have shifted from their true meaning to another meaning associated with psychological and social connotations, represented by disappointment, betrayal, and long waiting. These temporal variables are also among the phrases that reflect the weight of the writer's experience, which affected him psychologically and expressed the extent of his suffering during three long years of deprivation. Here, time deviates from its natural course and does not bring about any positive progress in the writer's life. It transforms from a temporal value into a symbol of drought, hunger, and despair, giving the passage an aesthetic poetic dimension based on irony and suggestion.

The writer continues to describe his suffering in this passage, which is reflected in his question: Is it not time for this knight to dismount? Repeating this question, which does not await an answer, shifts the question away from its original meaning and function of awaiting and seeking an answer. It is as if the question carries a connotation of reproach, silent objection, fatigue, and physical exhaustion. This kind of shift/pragmatic shift has achieved a symbolic poetic function based on protesting the writer's situation, even though he deserves a position and work befitting his status as a distinguished university professor. Here, language reveals the writer's deep suffering in a poetic, displaced form that expresses the long wait, helplessness, and loss of dreams. Language becomes an emotional space that conveys the writer's pain and engages the reader in his experience. This gives the text a moving poetic and emotional dimension, deepening the writer's critical view of social reality based on fragile promises and the disappointment of serious, ambitious people in the face of difficult living conditions based on connections and favoritism. The writer confirms this when he says: Days and nights passed, months went by, and my attempts to cross the walls of universities were unsuccessful, despite the many promises I received and the sympathy I enjoyed. but I benefited from it as little as a hungry man benefits from a delicious story about a lamb stuffed with rice and pine nuts on a round table at a resort in Hawaii" (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 246).

The pages of *Nights of a Passing Traveler* are filled with displacement, which the author uses extensively to embody his pain and suffering and express his feelings, sorrows, and worries with great depth. The author says: In the midst of my arduous search for universities, enduring the hardships of travel and transportation and being deprived of good food and nice clothes, in the midst of all that, an incident occurred that shook my being and disrupted my life, had it not been for God's mercy and generosity. I felt a change in my vision, and I saw with my own eyes—on my eyes—balls, threads, and small lights that flashed on and off. I felt that the horizon was beginning to recede and fade, and that the darkness had drawn its tail around me. The images of people and buildings began to shake and grow darker... The colors of my eyes flowed before my eyes like watercolors flowing on a sketchbook (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 254). There is a clear shift in this passage from *Nights of Deprivation/Third of the Three*: It is pitch black, as colors do not actually flow, and the metaphor here embodies visual disturbance, as if the medical problem had turned into a visual scene, with the colors of his eyes flowing before his eyes like watercolors on a sketchbook. The author then says: My eyes became two dark chambers,

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devoid of any ray of light connecting them to this vast world, which narrowed until it became as small as the eye of a needle...!" (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 254). His eyes had been transformed from living organs into dark, lifeless chambers, a shift that deepened his sense of loss, deprivation, and suffering. The author makes the loss of sight something tangible. In contrast, after this intense suffering and the successful operation, the author says: Then, on the morning of the following day, the doctor removed the bandage that had been tied over my eyes, and light crept back in after its farewell. Joy filled my being and my limbs danced, as if the entire universe were dancing to the beat of my heart and my chirping!" (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 255). Light is a living being that returns, not just a reflection, as if light here carries the meaning of salvation, and then the outside world around him becomes a mirror of what is happening to him. The whole universe dances, and in this is a diagnosis of the image of a man dancing in expression of joy and happiness at the return of his sight.

The aesthetic function of displacement in Al-Saudi's work stems from the depth and authenticity of experience, not from the embellishment and ornamentation of language. The text is displaced because reality itself is displaced: the text conveys the sensory experience as felt by the writer, then transforms the suffering into an aesthetic text that is open to contemplation. The vision is disturbed, the light is treacherous, then it returns, and the eye transforms from a window to a wall, then back to a window. It is a shift that writes pain and suffering, then illuminates this pain. What deepens the aesthetic and poetic function of the shift are the rhetorical sentences that came in a meaningful poetic form. The writer says: “I muttered contentedly, counting my blessings: Praise be to God in all circumstances. O God, I ask you to restore my sight. O God, do not burden me with poverty, deprivation, and loss of sight” (Al-Saudi, 2010, pp. 254, 255), and he says: I praised God Almighty for removing the darkness from my eyes and revealing the third veil from my mind" (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 256). It is a sincere religious supplication in which sincere emotional relief is intertwined with religious belief and personal experience.

(b). Irony

Irony is “a rhetorical linguistic expression based primarily on the mental relationship between words rather than on the melodic and morphological relationship” (Ibrahim, 1981, p. 132), and is “a linguistic deviation that leads to an elusive, unstable, and multi-meaning structure” (Shabana, 2002, p. 46). Irony is one of the elements that most contributes to the aesthetics and poetic nature of a text, and Al-Saudi relied on profound poetic language in the formulation of his biography as the main tool for expressing his ideas and visions. In The Nights of the Barefoot Teacher/Catching the Wind, the irony of expectation and disappointment is evident, as the text begins with a positive expectation. The author says: After graduating from university with top honors, I aspired to complete my higher education, so I rushed to the dean of graduate studies, my heart filled with hope and my imagination running wild: I saw myself as a teaching assistant at the university, then as a professor giving lectures and receiving respect and appreciation!" (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 123). The text begins by referring to academic excellence, first place, and great ambition to complete graduate studies and then teach at universities. However, this positive outlook is met with disappointment. The author says: When I met with the dean and expressed my desire, he shocked me by saying, ‘No, the repeat system has ended.’ I argued with him and turned the situation around, but he insisted on what he said. His words were not true, as the teaching assistant position is awarded to the student who achieves the highest grade, which I had achieved, and the system had not yet been abolished, but he had saved it for the lucky one with “connections”! My pleading with him was of no use" (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 123). The dean's sudden decision to end the retake system shatters our expectations, and the irony is manifested in its harshest and most unjust form, because the writer's entitlement to be a teaching assistant at the university is an entitlement that must be deserved, as he has fulfilled the conditions for retaking the exam. However, the matter is decided by those with connections, and the poetic irony is evident in its transition from an individual situation to a collective one in which justice is destroyed, and no specific person is held responsible, but rather the method itself is condemned and rejected.

We pause at another example of irony, a beautiful verbal irony between the apparent and the implied meaning of the words, in *Layali al-Ayn*/Ahwataak al-Ayn. What is apparent to us from this phrase is that it means supplication and protection of a person from falling into envy. The writer says: I remember once when I finished my lecture and they gathered around me as usual, one of them said to me, “I protect you with my eyes, Doctor.” I said, “Thank you.” He repeated what he said, and I thanked him again. I believe that what he meant was: God willing, he is praising me and praying that I will be protected by the eyes of those who love me, not those who envy me!" (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 263), where the meaning of the irony is reversed from its apparent meaning to another meaning intended by one of the writer's students in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, specifically in Al-Ain, as the writer's response reveals his lack of understanding of the student's intention in his spoken Emirati dialect, as he meant: They told me that he invites you after work to take you for a drive in his car in the city of Al Ain. I said, “How wonderful! Now I understand the meaning of your caution, and I have solved the riddle of the pun that caused me confusion in the word Al Ain! How beautiful is caution in Al Ain!” (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 264). It is an aesthetic linguistic irony that reveals the depth of the spoken Gulf dialect and the beauty of what we might consider ordinary and simple.

In another irony from Nights of the Eye/A University Professor, he recounts what happened to our writer in Nights of the Barefoot Teacher, who was disappointed and let down when he was appointed as a teaching assistant at a university, saying: "The happiest day of my academic life was when I entered the university, Ajman University, and gave lectures on literature and criticism, after waiting several years for this blessed day and knocking on every door until I was

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exhausted. When I was exhausted, they spoke to me, or as Al-Farazdaq said, boasting of the company of Abu Amr ibn al-Ala: “I kept opening and closing doors until I came to Abu Amr ibn Ammar!” (Al-Saudi, 2010, p. 12).

IV. Conclusion

Thus, this research may have revealed different aspects of the openness of the biographical text to poetry, and demonstrated the impact of this openness in achieving the poetic nature of the narrative and presenting its different perspectives. As a creative and experienced academic writer, the author has sought to write within a distinctive poetic context. We are dealing with a prose text whose refined language is very close to the language of poetry. The features of poetic language are evident in the author's distinctive attention to the title and his extensive and intensive use of displacement, sensory imagery, irony, description, and other devices. He was able to imbue language, structures, and images with his various feelings of suffering, sorrow, harsh circumstances, and pain. He was able to enrich his meanings and enhance the evocative power of his words with his command of language and its expressive and aesthetic energies. Therefore, his words were a sincere expression of his concerns, feelings, and emotions, and his entire biography became imbued with his constant suffering and many hopes, embodying his convictions and satisfaction with the many blessings God had bestowed upon him despite what he had suffered in his life. Therefore, the technique of poetic language is a suitable technique and tool for expressing the vision that the biography carried and expressed in a way full of possibilities and many interpretations.

At a broader critical level, the scholarly significance of this study extends beyond the analysis of a single autobiographical text to contribute to the reshaping of contemporary critical understandings of the structure of Arabic autobiography in general. The autobiographical experience of Ahmad Atiya Al-Saudi demonstrates that autobiography is no longer merely a historical document or a linear record of life events; rather, it has evolved into a parallel aesthetic and poetic space that transcends straightforward narrative reportage through the transformative power of poetic language.

This stylistic openness, grounded in the interplay of poeticity, paradox, and deviation, opens a new horizon within contemporary Arabic autobiographical writing, where the voice of the self moves beyond the narrow confines of personal confession to engage with broader human and existential concerns. Such engagement is achieved through textual thresholds and narrative structures charged with suggestion, symbolism, and interpretive possibilities.

Accordingly, the study recommends re-examining modern Arabic autobiographical works through stylistic and deconstructive critical perspectives that move beyond their purely historical content. Instead, attention should be directed toward the aesthetic mechanisms embedded within language itself, as these constitute the primary source of the modern narrative text’s identity and its continuously renewed interpretive potential.

Declaration of the Use of AI

The manuscript was originally composed in Arabic and translated into English using the free version of DeepL Translator. The authors confirm that the translation was subsequently reviewed and edited for accuracy and linguistic consistency. The work contains no AI-generated content beyond the use of machine translation for language conversion.

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Asmaa M. Al Zuraigat is an academic and Jordanian researcher holding the rank of Associate Professor in Modern Literature and Criticism. She was born in the city of Irbid on 23/11/1980. She has an extensive academic and research career in higher education and applied critical studies. She received her advanced academic training at Mu'tah University, where she obtained a BA in Arabic Language and Literature (2002), followed by an MA in Modern Literature and Criticism (2004) with a thesis entitled *"Mahmoud Seif al-Din Al-Irani as a Critic."* She later earned her PhD from the same university in 2012, with a critical dissertation on contemporary feminist narrative structures titled *"Vision and Form in the Novels of Laila Al-Atrash."* She has a substantial research record comprising 12 peer-reviewed studies and articles published individually and collaboratively in prominent local, Arab, and international journals, including publications in the United States, Australia, India, and Egypt. Her research expertise spans contemporary Arabic narrative criticism, the semiotics of time, space, and intertextuality, stylistic formation in modern fiction and poetry, as well as a strong specialization in linguistic and Qur'anic pragmatic studies. Her work focuses on applying theories of textuality, discourse analysis, and the impact of context on the semantic interpretation of cohesive structures in the Holy Qur'an.

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