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**Reflections of political discourse from the perspective of language and art -
linguistic/ semiotic study**

تجليات الخطاب السياسي من منظور اللغة والفن
-دراسة لسانية سيميائية-

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Abstract:

Arab culture is considered one of the most important cultures in the world, known for its simplicity and fluidity. It has ancient roots but has remained resilient over the centuries. This has made it a magnet for researchers and scholars, and semiotic studies have found their way to this culture, as it represents an infinite source of information useful to this field, enriching it with the richness of its diverse materials. This work attempts a semiotic study of Arab culture, emphasising research, analysis and interpretation in order to reveal the intricacies and symbolic meanings in its three phases: auditory, visual and written.

Keywords: Political discourse -Language -Art – Linguistic- Semiotic.

الملخص باللغة العربية:

تعدّ الثقافة العربية واحدة من أهمّ الثقافات في العالم، والمعروفة ببساطتها وسيولتها. لها جذور قديمة لكنّها ظلّت مرنة على مرّ القرون. وقد جعلها هذا نقطة جذب للباحثين، ووجدت الدراسات اللسانية السيميائية طريقها إلى هذه الثقافة، لأنها تمثل مصدرًا لا نهائيًا للمعلومات المفيدة في هذا المجال، مما يثريها بثراء مادّتها المختلفة. وعليه نحاول من خلال هذا العمل إجراء دراسة لسانية سيميائية للثقافة العربية، مع التركيز على البحث والتحليل والتفسير من أجل الكشف عن التفاصيل الدقيقة والمعاني الرمزية في مراحلها الثلاث: السمعية والبصرية والمكتوبة الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطاب السياسي – اللغة-الفن- اللسانيات-السيميائية.

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture represents a comprehensive composition of everything past and present, where individuals emerge based on the acquisitions left by their ancestors. Additionally, they acquire new experiences that contribute to progressing within their culture through cognitive accumulation. With the diversity of nations, the concept of cultural studies is created. Semiotic studies have been at the forefront of that as it surpasses language in spoken and written forms to signify semiotic meaning based on sensory perceptions beyond language¹.

2. The concept of semiotics in the West

Except for the classic definition of semiotics as the study of signs, which is considered a fundamental definition. However, semiotics scholars differ regarding the content encompassed by the term semiotics. Among the various definitions of this term, we find the statement of 'Umberto Eco' that semiotics "is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign"². Moreover, this indicates that semiotics is not only what is commonly referred to as signs in everyday discourse, but it encompasses everything that can be interpreted or replaced by something else. From a semiotic perspective, signs could be words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. Semiotic signs are studied as part of interconnected sign systems in the same way as a means of communication. Furthermore, large number of researchers have developed theories about signs and symbols emerging in branches of philosophy, among which is the work of 'John Locke'³.

Alongside the linguist Ferdinand De Saussure, semiotics was mentioned in his work published in 1916. He stated that "Language is a system of signs that express ideas and is comparable to a system of writing, the alphabet of deaf-mutes, symbolic rites, polite formulas, and military signals. However, it is the most important of all these systems. A science that studies the lives of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and, consequently, general psychology. I shall call it semiology"⁴.

Furthermore, Charles Peirce introduces semiotics as "Logic, in its general sense, is, as I believe I have shown, only another name for semiotic{sémeiōtiké}, the quasi-necessary, or formal, doctrine of signs. By describing the doctrine as 'quasi-necessary' or formal, I mean that we observe the characters of such signs as we know, and from such an observation, by a process which I will not object to naming Abstraction, we are led to statements, eminently fallible, and therefore in one sense by no means necessary, as to what must be the characters of all signs used by a 'scientific' intelligence, that is to say, by an intelligence capable of learning by experience"⁵. According to both perspectives, the semiotic for Ferdinand de Saussure is the science that studies the signs as a part of social life. In contrast, for Charles Pierce, semiotics is a field of study which is the formal aspect of signs, bringing it closer to logic.

3. The concept of semiotics among Arabs

The emergence of semiotics in the Arab world relied on four fundamental matters: cultural assimilation, exposure, translation

of works published in Europe, and apprenticeship under semiotics professors in Western universities. It emerged first in the Arab Maghreb countries and then in some other eastern Arab countries. Initially, in the late twentieth century, professors delivered lectures, publishing books, studies, and articles introducing semiotics. Among them were Professor 'Samir Al-Marzouki' and Professor 'Jameel Shakir' in their collaborative work "*An Introduction to the Theory of Story: Analysis and Application*" alongside Professor 'Awad Ali'. Then came the translation processes in which several professors participated in introducing semiotics in the Arab world, including 'Antoine Abi Zaid' in his work *The Symbolic Approach to Khalil Hawi's Poetry* and the translator 'Sami Suwaydan'.

Articles also played a significant role in paving the way for the emergence of semiotics, especially among general readers including magazines such as 'Alam Al-Fikr' in Kuwait, 'Alamat Al-Naqd' in Saudi Arabia, and 'Fusul' in Egypt who contributed to this. Finally, the role of theses and university dissertations emerged, which worked on approaching literary, artistic, and political texts 'based on semiotic approach.

4. Arab Culture

Researchers or recipients often tend to focus on topics related to Arab culture from a historical perspective. This is because it is a deep-rooted culture, with its roots extending to ancient times, reflecting a symbolic image of authenticity in the human mind. Due to its historical depth, Arab culture stands out for its richness and diversity in thought and practice. And this diversity is also

distinguished by the significant influence of Islam, which emphasizes external dealings and learning from others. As the Prophet peace be upon him said "O People! Certainly, your Rabb is one, your father is one. An Arab has no virtue over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have virtue over an Arab, a red skinned person is not more virtuous than a dark-skinned person nor is a dark-skinned person more virtuous than a red skinned person except through Taqwa"⁶.

Moreover, Arab culture encompasses literature, arts, and sciences, reflecting interaction among various Arab peoples. History showcases distinctiveness in poetry, architecture, and philosophy, making it unique in its influence and embodiment of values and traditions. Arab culture has evolved with contributions from various civilizations, spanning the ancient, mediaeval, and modern eras. Its heritage includes architecture, the visual arts, and literature, with Arab scholars and philosophers contributing to advancing science and philosophy during the mediaeval ages. As for values, the prominent traits in Arab culture include tolerance and generosity, essential values that are reflected in distinctive social relationships and ethics in Arab societies. In addition, Arab art reflects the richness of heritage, featuring various architectural elements such as mosaics, coloured glass, and geometric patterns as distinctive components expressing aesthetic and spiritual sensibilities in Arab culture. In literature, the Arabic culture is also characterized by diversity in traditions and social customs. Many values and traditions in Arab societies symbolize family and social solidarity, while celebrations and festivals prominently express cultural

identity. This diversity and variation within the unified 'Arab culture' can be noted in regional differences, such as those between the Arab Maghreb and Middle Eastern countries, resulting in diversity in customs and traditions within the broader Arab culture. External cultural influences have significantly enriched Arab culture, from ancient civilizations to the Islamic period and European colonialism. These diverse influences have contributed to a rich cultural heritage in the Arab regions.

Diversity is evident in the arts and literature, with variations in visual arts, literature, and music. Each country has unique artistic and musical characteristics regarding visual expression, sculpting, and literary works. -Linguistic diversity exists despite the unity of the Arabic language, with various dialects contributing to internal cultural richness within Arab culture. Indeed, this diversity reflects the richness and depth of Arab culture, enriching cultural interactions and exchanges.

4.1 Semiotics and Arab culture

The contemporary Arab world has embraced semiotic analysis since the mid-1970s, influenced by the works of several professors mentioned earlier. This approach began to crystallize in the Arab world, particularly in the Arab Maghreb, leading to a fusion between the contemporary Arab literary movement and the emerging semiotic methodology. This integration prompted critics to embark on theoretical and applied receptions of this new approach. Critics later fell into the same confusion prominent Western figures like 'De Saussure' and 'Peirce' previously experienced. This confusion and conflation of concepts in defining the semiotic field occurred for two main reasons: first, the multiplicity of semiotic

concepts, and second, the broad and adaptable nature of semiotics across various disciplines.

The field of semiotics has been known among Arabs since ancient times, under different names and uses in various domains. Arabs historically used semiotics as a science of divination, fortune-telling, and magic. People believed that through semiotics, one could harness 'jinn', decode letter symbols using the semiotic square used for calculations, and attempt to transform base metals into precious ones. Ibn Khaldun mentioned this in his *Mukadimah*, stating that 'Jabir ibn Hayyan' was among the great Witcher, studying the books of the people of his sect and using the craft as his hobby. He delved into alchemy, considered a derivative of chemistry, attempting to transform substances from one state to another through psychological processes rather than innovative craftsmanship, and this was part of his magical practices.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun elaborated on alchemy in his discussion, considering it a branch of the science of semiotics. He stated that "This is a science that studies the substance through which the generation of gold and silver may be artificially accomplished and comments on the operation leading to it". The (alchemists) acquire knowledge of the tempers and powers of all created things and investigate them critically. They hope that they may thus come upon the substance that is prepared to (produce gold and silver). They even investigate the waste matter of animals, such as bones, feathers, hair, eggs, and excrement, not to mention minerals.

Alchemy, then, comments on the operations through which such a substance

may be transformed from potentiality into actuality, as, for instance, by the dissolution of bodies (substances) into their natural components through sublimation and distillation, by the solidification of meltable substances through calcification, by the pulverization of solid materials with the help of pestles and mullers and similar things. The (alchemists) assume that all these techniques lead to producing a natural substance, which they call 'the elixir'. When some mineral substance such as lead, tin, or copper - which can be prepared for receiving the form of gold or silver - is heated in the fire and some quantity of the elixir is added to it, that substance turns into pure gold. In the technical terminology that the alchemists use for purposes of mystification, they give the cover name of 'spirit' to the elixir and that of 'body' to the substance to which the elixir is added"⁷.

As for the actual beginning of this field, it took place after the emergence of Islam, transforming from a corrupt science to a "beneficial one. And The term " (semiotics) was mentioned in the Quran based on the concept of signification or symbol. In Several verses, such as: {الْفُقَرَاءَ الَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَافًا وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ} البقرة ٢٧٣

Charity is for the needy who are too engaged in the cause of Allah to move about in the land for work. Those unfamiliar with their situation will think they are not in need of charity because they do not beg. You can recognize them by their appearance. They do not beg people persistently. Whatever you give in

charity is certainly well known to Allah (Al Bakarah 273).

{زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَتَابِ} آل عمران ١٤

The enjoyment of 'worldly' desires—women, children, treasures of gold and silver, fine horses, cattle, and fertile land—has been made appealing to people. These are the pleasures of this worldly life, but with Allah is the finest destination (Ali' Imran 14).

{وَنَادَىٰ أَصْحَابُ الْأَعْرَافِ رَجُلًا يَعْرِفُونَهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ قَالُوا مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْكُمْ جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ} آل عمران ٤٨

Those on the heights will call out to some tyrants in the Fire, who they will recognize by their appearance, saying, your large numbers and arrogance are of no use today (Ali 'Imran 48).

Then, Muslim philosophers played a significant role in establishing this field. They were the pioneers who studied the fundamental elements of signification, which served as the fertile ground laying the foundation for modern semiotics. During this period, the study of signification was generally confined to advanced philosophers like 'Al-Farabi', 'Ibn Sina', and 'Al-Ghazali', focusing primarily on linguistic signification. Their definition closely follows Aristotle's concept, where, in their view, signification encompasses both language and the psychological impact, known as mental imagery and the external aspect. Writing, undoubtedly, comes under consideration as it signifies words. Thus, calligraphy serves as a sign for the word, and the word, in turn, signifies mental

imagery. The word and mental imagery exist simultaneously, whereas the line is a sign with no specific meaning. Building on this, Salah Fadl defines semiotics as “the science that studies symbolic systems in all indicative signs and how this signification works”⁸. In this definition, Salah Fadl insists that well-thought-out signs must have significance because semiotics studies the significance of these signs. Here, the influence of the approach taken by Arab philosophers, particularly the emphasis on the philosophy of language, is evident in Salah Fadl's work.

4.3 Examples of Semiotic studies on Arab culture

The Arab culture contains rich semiotic materials. Those interested in conducting a semiotic study will find an immense number of aspects that can be analyzed using this approach. To give the reader a closer look, we choose to examine three examples in this study, covering the auditory, visual, and written levels.

A- The semiotic features in President Abdelmajid Tebboune's speech on the Palestinian issue:

As was reported by Al Jazeera in his latest speech on the 20th of September 2023, The President Abdelmajid Tebboune expresses:

إن الجزائر التي تعي جدا ثمن انتزاع الحرية لن تتخلى عن مساندة القضايا العادلة ودعم الشعوب المضطهدة التي تكافح من أجل التحرر، ومن هذا المنطلق سعت على الدوام إلى دعم القضية الفلسطينية لتمكين الشعب الفلسطيني الشقيق من حقوقه الغير القابلة للتصرف في إقامة دولته المستقلة على حدود 4 من جوان 1967 وعاصمتها القدس الشريف.

Algeria, fully aware of the cost of attaining freedom, will never abandon supporting just causes and standing by

oppressed nations struggling for liberation. In this context, it has consistently worked to support the Palestinian cause, enabling our Palestinian brothers to exercise their inalienable rights in establishing their independent state within the borders of June 4, 1976, with its capital in the holy city of Al Quds⁹.

Listening to this speech, immediately realizes that these words stem from lived experience. The opening statement, “Algeria, fully aware of the cost of attaining freedom” is symbolic of transcending the self and moving towards the other. Life experiences are not arbitrary; they are the key to wisdom. One becomes wise by being affected, gaining knowledge of others' situations. Algeria itself, when it faced adversity, resisted, and through this, it developed a wise perspective, understanding that the Palestinian cause is an experience it shares.

The emphasis on the word ‘freedom’ is noteworthy, indicating that the issue's fate is indisputable—it is freedom. This affirms a fundamental aspect of Arab-Islamic culture, which is freedom. The condemnation of the method of ‘depriving freedom’ becomes evident, echoing the words of Umar ibn al-Khattab, “When did you enslave people, though their mothers born them as free?” The second statement of the speech, “will never abandon supporting just causes and standing by oppressed nations struggling for liberation,” carries a positive connotation to the term ‘support’. However, despite its positive nature, there is also negative support, where the occupying force also receives assistance. The speech clarifies the type of support sought, emphasizing support for oppressed nations fighting for liberation.

Positioning the speaker on the side of good significantly influences the listener, making them more receptive to the speech. In conclusion, the final part of the speech emphasizes ongoing efforts to support the Palestinian cause, aiming to enable our Palestinian brothers to exercise their inalienable rights in establishing their independent state within the borders of June 4, 1976, with its capital in the holy city of Al Quds.

The beginning of this part of speech 'In this sense' was based on the freedom of the persecuted. Then follows the mention of the intended purpose of this speech, which is the state of Palestine first, as a recognition of a country bearing this name and its right to be an independent nation, and secondly, to introduce this issue and declare it to the world. It is another aspect of Arab culture; Arabs are known for their frankness, as seen in the pre-Islamic era as in the story of Abu Sufyan before he embraced Islam with Heraclius, said, "swear, if it were not for shyness preventing them from lying about me, I would have lied about him" (Narrated by Al-Bukhari). Then follows the mention of the date 'June 4, 1967' where numbers are not just a figure but carries palpable memories relevant to all Arab nations in the alteration of the borders of the State of Palestine due to the imposed partition by the occupying force. The purpose of mentioning it here is a message and a reminder, as Dr. Mustafa Al-Fiqi stated, "History does not forget or forgive, but it always exposes the truths. The glitter of drama sometimes drives some to distort facts, and the memory of peoples does not succumb to whims".

B- Semiotic features in the Poetry
Gathering Evening A Poem by Ali Al-Fa'our as an Example:

Under the slogan 'Culture is Resistance', three poetry evenings were organized at the Jordanian Cultural and Arts Center, with the participation of various poets, including the poet Ali Al-Faour. The poets did not only direct the poems towards the dire situation in Palestine but also criticized the policies adopted by some Arab leaders, expressing evident dissatisfaction with their approach to the Palestinian issue on the other hand".

Poet Ali Al-Faour delivered a poem titled 'Gaza', which is laden with many reflections, particularly political ones, embodying the spirit of absolute patriotism. He said:

أي شعر وغزة اليوم تحكي قصة المجد والعلل بالدماء
وحدها الآن والملايين نمل وغناء يثي بطول غناء وحدها
الآن والإذاعات بوق أرعن الصورة مختنن بالرغاء أشرب
الصبر من كؤوس المنيا نشرب الخمر في كؤوس ضياء
وننادي سيوف من ذبحونا وتمادوا منا لذل النداء.

What poetry, and Gaza today tells a tale of glory and elevation with blood alone now. It stands while millions are ants and dry grass, signalling long scum. Alone now, the radios are light-hearted trumpets circumsised with foam drink patience from the cups of tribulations, sipping wine from the cups of despair. We call upon swords from those who slaughtered us and persisted in the sweetness of the call.

C- Semiotics aspects at picture of a press conference amid the bodies of martyrs at Al-Muamadani Hospital:



The Palestinian issue is one of the most compelling cases, portraying scenes unimaginable in human history. In an era of intellectual and technological advancement where humanity considers itself a conscious being at its highest capacity, in specific corners of this land, the sanctity of this consciousness is still violated as humans descend to an animalistic or savage level, carrying within them the meanings of destruction and ruin. Today, Palestine suffers from this degradation imposed by the forces of relentless aggression. For every action of this aggression, there has been a reaction from Palestine, carrying with it a meaning of determination and resolve, a proof of worthiness and entitlement to the piece of land that unites the people. Men and women, young and old, each contribute to claiming freedom.

The image representing a conference held amidst the rubble of the bombed hospital conveys many profound meanings, departing significantly from the ordinary and creating a concept of breaking the norm. It becomes one of the most controversial images, prompting the question: How can a person in war, surrounded by the ghosts of terror that pervade the place, gather the courage to hold a conference in the presence of bodies from that horrific bombing? This can only happen through an individual who has reached a level of wisdom surpassing logical calculations.

In calculation, it seems impossible for any ordinary person to take such action, as the equation states that a higher chance of destruction comes with increased danger. However, through wisdom that often transcends mere calculations, individuals like those depicted in the image emerge despite the

physical destruction of Al-Muamadani Hospital; its symbolic meaning persists, embodied in the attire of doctors and nurses ready to resume work. It symbolizes the continuity of dedication, even in the worst conditions. Similarly, those individuals holding the martyrs of this bombing participate in the conference, attempting to convey the meaning of patience and affirming a fundamental aspect of faith- the acceptance of good and bad fate. In doing so, they radiate a sense of reassurance within themselves and those around them, a state that challenges even the most skilled psychologists in the world.

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