

Stylistic Criticism by Shukri Muhammad Ayyad: The Dialectic of Conformity and Difference

النقد الأسلوبي عند الناقد شكري محمد عياد -جدلية المطابقة والاختلاف-

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Abstract:

This article introduces readers to the stylistic critical approach of the Egyptian critic Shukri Muhammad Ayyad, focusing on his analyses of select poetic texts. It explores the diverse intellectual influences that shaped Ayyad's stylistic critical framework, highlighting the significant impact of Arabic rhetorical and grammatical heritage on his work. The study concludes by addressing the notable divergence in Ayyad's stylistic journey between his theoretical perspectives and practical applications. Rather than fully aligning with either traditional rhetoric or modern stylistics, Ayyad aimed to establish a contemporary Arabic rhetoric, modernized and reimagined as Arabic stylistics.

Keywords: critical experience, intellectual references, stylistic criticism, stylistics.

ملخص:

يقف القارئ في هذا المقال عند التجربة النقدية الأسلوبية للناقد المصري شكري محمد عياد وذلك من خلال التحليلات النقدية الأسلوبية التي قدمها على بعض النصوص الشعرية حيث قمنا برصد مختلف المرجعيات الفكرية التي تشبع منها عياد والتي كان لها أثرا واضحا في تكوين مشروعه النقدي الأسلوبي والذي ظهر لنا في اعتماده على الموروث البلاغي والنحوي العربيين لنهني الدراسة بخاتمة وضحنا من خلالها الاختلاف البارز في المسار الأسلوبي لشكري عياد بين المقولات النظرية وبين ممارساته التطبيقية اذ أنه لم يجنح لا الى البلاغة ولا الى الأسلوبية بل يسعى الى بناء البلاغة العربية المعاصرة وتحديثها في صورة الأسلوبية العربية

كلمات مفتاحية: التجربة النقدية، المرجعيات الفكرية، النقد الاسلوبي، الاسلوبية

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1. Introduction

The reality of Arab critical discourse is witnessing significant growth and increased production of critical practices and academic research influenced by contemporary Western critical approaches. These approaches have provided Arab critics with a range of ready-made mechanisms and procedural tools for analyzing creative literary discourses. By reviewing, translating, and applying Western critical achievements and theoretical frameworks, Arab critics have sought to engage in a critical dialogue with literary texts—posing questions to both the text and the critic.

Among the prominent figures in this movement is the critic and academic Shukri Muhammad Ayyad, whose work deeply engages with the Arab critical landscape. Ayyad has actively aimed to develop a rooted and contemporary Arab critical theory. He emphasizes the need to rethink technical language and advance stylistics as a foundation for a broader Arab critical project.

Ayyad's notable contributions include several critical works, such as *Introduction to the Science of Style* (1984), which consists of two parts: the first addressing stylistic theory and the second offering applied studies of selected modern romantic poetry. Around the same period, Ayyad also produced an applied study titled *A Stylistic Reading in the Poetry of Conservation*, in which he aimed to implement steps associated with a "scientific study of literature."

Another of his significant works is *Trends of Stylistic Research: Stylistic Studies, Selection, Translation, and Addition*, through which Ayyad sought to place Arabic rhetoric within the broader map of stylistic studies, elevating Arab criticism to align with global intellectual thought. In his book *Language and Creativity: Principles of the Science of Arabic Style* (1988), Ayyad reinforced his earlier arguments, further solidifying his stylistic project.

Given the significance of Ayyad's work, we selected the topic of this article, titled *Stylistic Criticism in Shukri Muhammad Ayyad: The Dialectic of Conformity and Difference*. This study aims to examine the methodologies Ayyad employed in his critical work, particularly in *Introduction to the*

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Science of Style, and how he integrated various Western stylistic theories into his analysis of creative poetic discourses.

The research seeks to determine the extent to which Ayyad was able to translate theoretical stylistic frameworks into practical applications. To achieve this, we pose several key methodological questions that form the central focus of this study, summarized as follows:

- Did Shukri Ayyad fully apply the concepts and tools of stylistic criticism to the selected poetic texts?
- Can the stylistic critical works presented by Ayyad be considered the foundation of what is now referred to as Arab stylistic critical theory?
- How did Ayyad's intellectual influences and theoretical frameworks shape the development of his stylistic vision?
- Does the book *Revelation* address the issue of language or stylistics?

To search for convincing answers to these questions and explore the article's topic, it becomes necessary to rely on the approach of criticism of criticism. This method is essential due to its analytical and evaluative nature, which allows for a deeper engagement with critical discourse and prominent issues. It involves identifying the key pillars upon which Ayyad built his stylistic framework, both in its theoretical foundation and its practical application.

To present and refine the vision of this article's content, we structured it as follows: an introduction outlining the study's scope and significance, followed by a presentation of the central problem and the objectives we aim to achieve. The main body of the article focuses on the critical application of stylistics, showcasing the analyses provided by Shukri Ayyad on selected poetic works, which, to the best of our knowledge, represent the essence of his critical stylistic experience. The article concludes with a summary of findings and a comprehensive list of the references and research sources consulted.

Readers of the critical approaches presented by Shukri Ayyad on the stylistic method and its relationships with various contemporary critical frameworks will notice his frequent reliance on "historical research." He often compares the perspectives of contemporary Western stylistic critics

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with the classical rhetorical heritage of the Arabs. This approach reflects Ayyad's belief that the tools and theoretical procedures of stylistic criticism are rooted in the "science of rhetoric." As he acknowledges, he strives to "lay the foundational blocks for establishing what can be called the constants of style in the Arabic language."

Ayyad's works often bridge translations of Western stylistic pioneers with the writings of ancient Arab scholars. However, this duality may leave the reader—particularly students—feeling lost or methodologically confused by the views Ayyad provides regarding the stylistic approach. In this research, we focus on identifying the tools and principles Ayyad uses to approach literary texts from a stylistic critical perspective. Our goal is to uncover the aesthetic intelligence embedded in the texts he analyzes, transform these insights into mechanisms for text interpretation, and assess the extent to which Ayyad successfully applies theoretical stylistic principles to his analyses, ultimately extracting his critical vision of style.

1. Stylistic Critical Reading:

Shukri Ayyad explicitly acknowledges that the science of "method" is a modern discipline, with its origins rooted in the "science of rhetoric." A comprehensive understanding of Ayyad's stylistic project can only be achieved by examining the various applications and readings he has conducted on poetic texts. (شكري ص 07) For Ayyad, theoretical tools, principles, and statements must become habitual practices in reading. This approach shifts literature back to the study of texts themselves, moving away from excessive theoretical abstraction. He emphasizes that theorizing must work alongside practice to ensure literature retains its artistic essence, expressing its literary and poetic nature authentically.

When conducting a stylistic reading of poetic texts, Ayyad insists that the text under study should be both sensory and linguistically accessible to the reader or student of stylistics. (شكري ن) Only then does the text merit analysis from its various stylistic and technical perspectives.

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Ayyad sought to establish his stylistic approach by examining the concept of style in the works of three prominent Arab poets: Abu al-Qasim al-Shabi, Ibrahim Naji, and al-Mutanabbi (راجع ص 17).

2. Levels and Principles of Stylistic Analysis:

The process of stylistic criticism and analysis of poetic discourse involves delving deeply into the text to reveal its artistic essence, presenting it to the reader in a manner distinct from a superficial or initial reading. Stylistic critics have not reached a consensus on specific rules and mechanisms for analysis that can be uniformly applied to texts. This is because literary discourse inherently defies boundaries and limitations; it is a limitless entity, and this characteristic sets stylistic studies apart from rhetorical analysis.

The success of a stylistic analyst lies not only in identifying sound, morphological, compositional, and semantic levels but also in explaining their coherence and interrelation. This analysis must be guided by a heightened aesthetic sensitivity, which is crucial for any critical reading (ناظم). A stylistic critic must have the ability to infer appropriate critical mechanisms directly from the text itself, providing readers with tools to uncover the subtle nuances and aesthetic intelligence within the text. Unlike methods that impose predefined mechanisms on texts, stylistic analysis seeks to identify the various stylistic stimuli inherent in the text (عبد الرزاق ص 213), which influence the critic's taste and prompt an examination of its stylistic structures.

The stylistic analyst examines how these structures cause shifts across different textual levels, starting from the sound level to compositional and semantic dimensions. This includes analyzing elements such as rhythm, frequency, and repetition, while always keeping in mind the objective of stylistic analysis. Michel Riffaterre describes this goal as creating an "illusion" in the reader's mind, wherein the stylistic analysis uncovers layers of meaning that are inseparable from the linguistic framework of the text.

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Applied stylistic studies have shown that each reader has unique reasons to focus on certain stylistic elements over others. Thus, our approach seeks to identify the key procedural tools that Shukri Ayyad employs when analyzing poetic discourse, shedding light on the strategies that distinguish his stylistic methodology.

Title Analysis in Shukri Ayad's Stylistic Criticism:

In Shukri Ayad's approach to stylistic criticism, the title of a literary work is considered not just an introductory label but a central element in understanding the text's aesthetic and expressive value (شكري ص74). The title serves as the first point of contact between the reader and the text, holding within it a complex array of meanings and connotations that guide the reader's interpretation of the entire work. For Ayad, the title plays a crucial role in shaping the reader's experience and framing the emotional and psychological landscape of the poem (شكري ص74).

Ayad acknowledges that the title is often the last part of a poem to be written, emerging only after the text is complete. This process highlights its intrinsic connection to the text—it is not an arbitrary addition but a deeply integrated component of the literary work. The title, as Ayad suggests, carries its own unique pressure on both the critic and the reader. It is laden with multiple layers of meaning, often deeply intertwined with the poet's emotional state and creative intentions.

In his analysis of Ibrahim Naji's poem "Thoughts of Sunset," Ayad demonstrates how the title, in its harmony between the words (عبد الرزاق "thoughts" and "sunset," ص213) encapsulates the mood and psychological state of the poet at the time. The term "sunset" evokes a time of transition and reflection, symbolizing a moment of emotional fatigue or inner turmoil. The choice of words in the title thus aligns perfectly with the poet's emotional experience and provides an entry point for understanding the stylistic choices that follow in the text.

Ayad further explores the role of the title in framing emotional contrasts, particularly in his analysis of the title "Storm of the Spirit." In contrast to the more harmonious and reflective title "Thoughts of Sunset,"

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"Storm of the Spirit" evokes a more turbulent emotional state, suggesting internal conflict or a clash between opposing forces—fear versus security. This tension is reflected in the structure and vocabulary of the title, revealing the complexity of the poet's emotional landscape.

Ayyad's analysis reinforces the idea that the title is more than a mere label; it is a guiding mechanism that shapes how the reader engages with the text. (شكري ص 75) The title not only illuminates the emotional core of the work but also directs the process of reading and interpreting it. The stylistic features of the title thus become a vital tool for understanding the underlying emotional and psychological dynamics of the poem.

In conclusion, for Shukri Ayad, the title is an essential element of stylistic analysis, offering insights into the creative process and the emotional depth of the literary work (شكري ص ص 76-77). It serves as a key to unlocking the broader aesthetic and thematic fabric of the text (شكري ص 101), guiding both the critic and the reader toward a deeper appreciation of the work's style (شكري ص 103). The differences in titles across various literary works reveal the distinct styles of individual authors (عبد الرزاق ص 113), and the title's critical role in shaping the reader's understanding cannot be overstated.

Language Structures in Shukri Ayad's Stylistic Analysis :

In Shukri Ayad's approach to stylistic analysis, language construction emerges as a pivotal element in understanding and evaluating a creative work. The critic's ability to dissect the language choices made by the poet forms the foundation of a deeper reading of the text. Ayad, however, acknowledges the complexity involved in analyzing language structures, as readers and critics often struggle to determine the exact nature of the linguistic elements they are studying (شكري ص 138). Specifically, he poses questions about the origin of language in a poem—whether it should be considered in terms of vocabulary or sentence structure, and what criteria should be used to classify these elements. This uncertainty requires the

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stylistic critic to engage deeply with each linguistic feature on its own to fully grasp the text's stylistic nuances.

A-Vocabulary:

In the poetic texts studied by Shukri Ayad from a stylistic perspective, he explores the technique of placing and constructing words and vocabulary within sentences, particularly in light of the fact that in poetic construction (text), the word loses its specific weight and musical rhythm, transforming into something with a different nature (السعدني ص 69).

Shukri Ayad emphasizes that the complete separation of words (vocabulary) from phrases (sentences) is impossible, as the reader cannot fully comprehend a sentence or phrase without understanding the individual words it consists of. In poetic or narrative discourse, the word harmonizes with other words to convey meaning and significance. Moreover, some words form common associations in meaning, which is known in semantics as the "semantic field". This refers to a group of words whose meanings overlap and are grouped under a general word that unites them. The meaning of a word, therefore, results from its relationships with other words within the semantic field. (عمر ص 79)

In his analysis of this element, Shukri Ayad examines the poem In the Shadow of the Valley of Death and asserts that the most prominent and influential relationship in the poem's overall structure is the "relationship of opposition" between two sets of words. The first set represents joy, happiness, and the enjoyment of life, while the second set represents sorrow, decay, suffering, and wilting. Ayad notes that the first part of the poem contains the first set of words, the second part contains the second set, and the third and fourth parts combine both sets in an intertwined manner. The connection between these two sets of words forms what is called the poet's "poetic ability." (شكري ص 122) Abu al-Qasim al-Shabi, the poet, plays with vocabulary, creating new meanings from words that transcend their original dictionary definitions. This phenomenon is not found in narrative works. The combination of opposites is a characteristic that distinguishes poetic discourse from other forms of discourse.

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When reading Abu al-Qasim al-Shabi's poem *The New Morning* ("I scattered tears for the winds of nothingness"), it becomes evident that the poet stylistically manipulates language to create an atmosphere of sadness that pervades the text. Shukri Ayad views this skillful construction of vocabulary, which conveys both pain and hope, as a form of literary boldness that no other discourse, except poetry, can achieve. (شكري ص ص 130-131)

B- Sentences:

The critic Shukri Ayad, in his stylistic readings presented in his book *An Introduction to Stylistics*, places significant emphasis on the element of sentences. He explores the syntactic relationships that contribute to sentence construction and highlight the poetic image for the recipient. Ayad observed that the poem *Khawatir al-Ghoroub* (Thoughts of Sunset) follows the traditional model of the unity of the verse (independence of the verse), meaning that each verse is independent in meaning from the next, with the end of each verse coinciding with the conclusion of each sentence. This is evident in the poet's words:

"The scent of its perfume intoxicated my soul ××××× and spread through my veins as it pleased."

In this line, we notice that the end of each sentence coincides with the end of the verse's hemistich and tail (شكري ص 82). However, in other verses of the poem, a different structure emerges, where the verse is connected to the following one, as shown in the poet's words:

"I told the sea, if I stand in the evening ××××× how long I have been standing and listening."

In the first half of the line, the statement requires further clarification, which comes later in the following line (شكري ص 85).

Through our reading of Shukri Ayad's stylistic analysis of sentences, it appears that he does not address the feature of "fronting and postponing" in the construction of phrases and sentences, possibly due to oversight. For example, when the poet says:

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"You remain, and we are the war of nights ××××× torn apart and turned to dust."

The poet should have said, "and we are torn apart and turned to dust by the war of nights." This inversion creates a surprise for the recipient, disrupting their expectations and stirring their psyche, as style is ultimately a creative act by the writer and a process of retrieval by the reader.

The final element that Shukri Ayad focuses on in his stylistic readings of poetic discourses is the poetic image, particularly in the poems of Abu al-Qasim al-Shabbi and Ibrahim Naji. Ayad views the poetic image as a fundamental element in shaping the "poetic meaning." He emphasizes the expressions contained in the images in the poem *Khawatir al-Ghoroub*, where he identifies various differences in the poetic images that emerge in the verses when the poet invokes the sea (شكري ص79). This personification of the sea forms what is called a metaphor. A similar issue is explored by Ayad in the poem *Istiqbaal al-Qamar* (Welcoming the Moon), where the poet addresses the moon as though it possesses life and is capable of understanding and responding to the one who speaks to it. Ayad suggests that this is not a new phenomenon; rather, the poet's romantic inclinations and pessimism about the harsh reality are evident. The poet as signs the moon qualities such as "your noble procession, your holiness, your throne." (شكري ص91) The poetic image here emerges through the personification of the moon, which reflects the poet's attempt to escape the distress of his reality. In the poem *As-Sabah al-Jadeed* (The New Morning) by the Tunisian poet Abu al-Qasim al-Shabbi, Ayad continues with the same analysis of the various images embedded in the title. He points out that poetry combines contradictions to express its ideas, and this connection, as mentioned earlier, can only be found in poetic discourse. The poet's creative abilities enable him to transcend the ordinary.

C-Rhythmic Structure:

What stands out in Shukri Ayad's stylistic analysis is his relatively limited attention to music (rhythm) compared to other elements of literary discourse. In his analysis of the poem *Khawatir al-Ghoroub* (Thoughts of Sunset) by Ibrahim Naji, Ayad explains that the meter used in the poem is the

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Khafif meter, which is known for its flexibility. As Ayad states, "it lies between the stately meters and the lighter meters." (شكري ص77) Ayad then shifts to another type of musicality in his stylistic analysis, this time in the poem As-Sabah al-Jadeed (The New Morning) by Abu al-Qasim al-Shabbi. In this case, the poet selects a meter that aligns with the intense emotions he deeply feels. Ayad notes that the meter used is Al-Mutadarek, a meter characterized by movement and energy. Furthermore, Ayad connects external music (prosody) with internal music, which includes rhetorical tools such as jinas (pun), tibat (antithesis), tasri' (rhyming), and muqabala (parallelism).

D-Format and keywords:

Shukri Ayad acknowledges the critical role that context (or, as he refers to it, the "system") plays in shaping style. This is why the poet's distinctive stylistic and expressive structures, which form their creative text, stand out. A key observation in Ayad's analysis is his focus on the internal level of the text, specifically the elements that the creator consciously selects for their work. Ayad argues against attributing the system solely to the archive of the text (i.e., the external context) or the circumstances surrounding speech. Instead, he asserts that the internal context is reflected through the creator's linguistic choices (شكري ، اللغة و الإبداع، مبادئ علم الأسلوب العربي ص129), which distinguish the work and leave a lasting impression on the reader.

Ayad believes that the system, as a fundamental component, is more significant than context in the formation of stylistic aesthetics (شكري ، اللغة و الإبداع، مبادئ علم الأسلوب العربي ص ن).

Ayad also delves into the concept of the "key word," offering a concise definition: "A key word is a word that appears significantly more frequently in a particular work or by a specific writer than in ordinary language." He notes that literary works vary: some texts are dominated by multiple key words, while others may lack them altogether. Ayad suggests that researchers and stylistic critics should not limit their analysis to these key words but should instead seek out the words that form the "stylistic signature" of the

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author. These words are crucial as they connect to the stylistic influences that shape the poetry and ensure its lasting impact.

Shukri Ayad acknowledges that context—referred to as the "system"—plays a crucial role in shaping style, distinguishing the poet through their stylistic and expressive structures that make up their creative text. What we observe in Ayad's approach is his emphasis on the system related to the internal level of the text, meaning the elements the creator selects in their work. Ayad rejects attributing the system solely to the text's archive (i.e., the external context) or the circumstances of speech. Instead, he argues that the internal context reflects the creative linguistic abilities of the author, which distinguish the work and impose themselves on the reader.

Ayad believes that the system holds greater significance than context and is the fundamental element in shaping the aesthetic of style. He further elaborates on the concept of the "key word," offering a concise definition: "A key word is a word that stands out due to its frequency in a particular work or by a specific author, to a much greater degree than in ordinary language." Ayad notes that literary works differ (شكري ، اتجاهات البحث الاسلوبي ص119), with some texts dominated by multiple key words, while others may lack them. He stresses that researchers and stylistic critics should not restrict their analysis to these key words alone but should explore the words that construct the "stylistic signature" of the writer. These words are tied to the stylistic influences that define the poetic nature of the text and contribute to its enduring quality.

In conclusion, Ayad's critical analysis of stylistic techniques in various poetic texts reveals that his approach does not follow a fixed methodology. Each poetic text has its own artistic features that must be addressed stylistically. Ayad's critical readings are a contemporary contribution to shaping the distinctive characteristics of the poem. He focuses on certain aspects while leaving others aside, based on his critical perspective and the stylistic approaches he applies.

Shukri Ayad sets himself apart from other critics by frequently relying on classical rhetorical analysis and integrating its tools into a modern stylistic framework, grounded in objectivity and a scientific interpretation of the

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literary creative process. His stylistic analysis spans various directions, including phonetic, expressive, statistical, and functional levels.

Ayyad's stylistic perspective can be seen as an extension of traditional critical thought, bridging classical rhetoric and contemporary critical practices. The intellectual influences that shaped Ayyad's work are evident in his reliance on Arab rhetorical and grammatical traditions. However, this did not prevent him from exploring Western stylistic theories, drawing inspiration from them to form his own vision of contemporary Arab criticism.

Ayyad's proficiency in foreign languages allowed him to translate Western stylistic works, particularly articles, which contributed to the development of his critical perspective. Through our analysis of Ayyad's stylistic journey, we observe a noticeable difference between his theoretical statements and their practical application. He is predominantly influenced by the concept of "authenticity" in his work. He frequently employs classical rhetorical analysis tools, focusing on the concept of the "system" more than context, as well as the search for the key word.

Ayyad stresses that stylistic research goes beyond modernist applications. He believes that stylistic research should focus on the aesthetics of language in literary discourse, given that literature is a special use of language. Each writer has their own distinct language and style. Ayyad does not limit himself to rhetoric or stylistics; instead, he aims to build a contemporary Arab rhetoric and adapt it into what might be called Arabic stylistics.

What stands out in Ayyad's work is his balanced approach. While he follows stylistic research trends, he does not commit to any single methodology. His approach draws from both heritage and contemporary critical theories. His critical experience, enriched by exposure to both Western and Arab criticism, makes him a significant figure in literary studies. As a scholar fluent in European languages and culture, Ayyad has developed a well-established school of thought that will influence future generations of scholars, offering a unique blend of authenticity and modernity.

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