



The Artistic Imagery in the Poetry of Ka'ab bin Zuhair

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the use of creative imagery in the poetry of Ka'b ibn Zuhair, a prominent poet from the early Islamic era. The study begins with an exposition of the theoretical basis of the visual image, as examined by traditional Arab critics such as al-Jāhīz and Qudāmah ibn Ja'far. It stresses the importance of imagination, simile, metaphor, and rhetorical innovation in developing poetic expression. The study explores Ka'b's life, poetic upbringing, and eventual conversion to Islam. It places his work within both pre-Islamic and early Islamic literary traditions. The study discusses imagery relating to nature, light and darkness, love, and religious symbolism to show how Ka'b converted the traditional qasīdah into a means of spiritual expression. The study showed that Ka'b ibn Zuhair's poetry not only exemplified Arab eloquence but also helped establish Prophetic praise poetry as a prominent genre in Arabic literature.

Introduction

Definition

This study explores Ka'b ibn Zuhair's poetry and its use of creative imagery, such as similes, metaphors, allusions, and rhetorical innovations. It defines artistic imagery as a creative linguistic technique that employs imagination, cultural context, and rhetorical eloquence to elicit emotions and meanings that transcend the literal sense. The research situates Ka'b's poetry between the pre-Islamic poetic past and the emerging Islamic literary tradition, connecting two cultural eras.

The Significance

- Highlights Ka'b ibn Zuhair's contribution to early Islamic Arabic literature while preserving its literary merit.

- In the classic poem *Bānat Su‘ād*, creative imagery was used for persuasion, repentance, and praise, in addition to its stylistic value.
- Bridges the gap between pre-Islamic poetry traditions (which rely on themes of nature, love, and pride) and Islamic principles (repentance, loyalty, and faith).
- This study contributes to the discipline of Arabic rhetoric (*balāghah*) by demonstrating how classical methods evolved into prophetic praise poetry (*madīḥ nabawī*).
- Gives current scholars and students a framework for analyzing images as both art and a spiritual message in classical Arabic.

The Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that Ka‘b ibn Zuhair's poetry, especially “*Bānat Su‘ād*”, combines pre-Islamic literary conventions with Islamic spirituality, creating a new poetic model of Prophetic praise.

Supporting assumptions:

- Ka‘b's poetry employs creative imagery to enhance emotional impact and meaning.
- His use of similes, metaphors, and *kināyah* reflects classical eloquence and Qur'anic style.
- After converting to Islam, Ka‘b's iconography shifted from personal and tribal to religious devotion.

The Practical Aspects

- Provides analytical tools for analyzing Arabic poetry through imagery, allowing students of literature and translation to interpret works more deeply.
- Serves as a reference for comparative studies, demonstrating how creative imagery in Arabic literature can be related to imagery in other literary traditions.
- Provides applied examples of rhetorical devices (simile, metaphor, *kināyah*, *badī‘*) for teaching Arabic rhetoric and literary criticism.
- Emphasizes the historical shift of poetic functions, from tribal praise and satire to Islamic spiritual praise, which is relevant to both literary historians and religious scholars.
- Can be used in modern literary analysis, translation studies, and cultural heritage preservation projects since it shows how language expresses art and ideas.

Previous Studies

Poetic Picture in Ka'b ibn Zuhair's Poetry

Author: Muhammad Khudair Fayyadh Al-Hamdani

Source: Journal of the College of Islamic Sciences, University of Baghdad, Vol. 2016, Issue 45, pp. 172–201.

Publication Date: March 31, 2016.

The purpose of crossing this epilogue is a signal to the supreme of what i concluded it after fish for in formation this epilogue invites us to concentrate on the important results which is got to it whereas the researcher endeavor to:-

1. Analysis the poetic picture through its structure, pattern, and its root. The meaning of structure is to make systems embody through it the picture some of them is singular simple and another one is compound complex.
2. presented to us many kinds of pictures some of them is simile, metaphor, and cognomen and cleared that the simile picture. It is the supreme appearance of illustration. One of the supreme structures is the structure of simile.

Whereas kaab bn zuhair founded of using the device, variety of indications, also he used the letter (kaab) near to half of equality for usages of simile, then comes (kan), (mathl), (shabh), and (khal) as it came in the total simile in the second stage after the sending in kaab's similes.

3. Also the metaphors of kaab declarative, dissimilar in its deep and its purview.

The simile relationship was almost in a metaphor picture us it presented its structure in figure of simple singular picture, and compound complex and almost of it in separate verses, more than in collective verses and it chance of deep and i grap is less than it chance in clearness and simplicity and that return to the simplicity of kaab's fancy.

It appears to the researcher that kaab used cognomen to embody the meaning and personfice the empty and put it in sensible picture to distend its impact in the self of receiver.

The cognomen uses to figure the sensible.

As toe poet intend to use them to extend in adjective more than as termed to collect the plural adjective which collected to make mood which revealed by value. These are poetic picture's phenomenon in the kaab's poetry which its study demanded.

The Artistic Image in Ka'b ibn Zuhair's Burdah between the Arabic Original and Ottoman Turkish Translations: A Critical Study

Author: Yasser Ahmed Mohamed Mahmoud Qenawy

Source: Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Department of Oriental Languages, Faculty of Arts, Sohag University.

"Al-Burda" by Ka'b ibn Zuhair has been translated into various languages, including Turkish and English, as well as Latin, French, German, Italian, and Persian. This study investigates the

semantic changes in the figurative language of "Al-Burda" in its various translations, as well as the extent to which the translators were successful in rendering the poetic imagery, including similes, metaphors, and other rhetorical devices, as well as the musical rhythm of the original Arabic text. The study also compares the original Arabic text of "Al-Burda" to Ottoman Turkish poetry translations by Harimi al-Brousi, Abu Adham Muhammad Fayez, Abd al- Baqi ibn Ahmad, and Kamal Efendi, in chronological order. The study takes a descriptive, analytical, and comparative method, employing linguistic tools to assess the translation of figurative language in "Al-Burda," comparing the Arabic text to the Turkish translations to better comprehend their linguistic and stylistic structures. The central question of this study is: to what extent did the translators succeed in conveying the meaning, structure, aesthetics, and essence of the figurative language, given their choice of literal translation, meaning-based translation, or explanatory translation?

The Concept of the Artistic Image

The Term "Image"

Language

Arab rhetoricians and critics were interested in studying the image, analyzing its components, and clarifying its functions through their study of the Qur'anic style, which relied on the image to express its religious purposes, and Arabic poetry, which was replete with it, to the point that almost every poem is devoid of it. We see that their opinions about the image were influenced by the opinions of linguists and philosophers who seek to define the meaning of a word in form rather than content.

It is stated in the comprehensive dictionary "şūrah" (image) with ḍammah means form or shape, and its plural is *ṣuwar* or *ṣūrat*. One may say *ṣawwara* (to form) so it became *taṣawwara* (to take form). The word "şūrah" is also used to mean type or attribute. The word "şūrah" is a verbal noun derived from a quadrilateral verb (*ṣawwara* – to shape, form), and its standard verbal noun is *taṣwīr* (forming, shaping).

Allah Almighty said:

"On the Day when the Trumpet is blown" (Qur'an, 39:68).

It is said that *al-ṣūr* is the plural of *ṣūrah*, like *sūr* and *sūrah*; meaning, the blowing will be in the forms of the dead—that is, their souls. It may also mean the face of a human being and his outward appearance in form, condition, and attribute.

Terminology

The term image has been used in many ways since Aristotle until today. Aristotle used it in a distinct sense, and then it became popular thanks to the Surrealist movement in particular. However, the linguistics revolution was the reason for pushing this term to the margins in favor of the concepts and terms of inherited rhetoric. To the extent that the relationships between the two close realities are distant and honest, the image is strong and capable of emotional influence and achieving poetry.

Critics have differed in defining the concept of the artistic image, and this has made it very difficult to come up with a comprehensive definition of this term, since it is one of the established terms, which has no roots in Arabic criticism. We see that the artistic image always

appears in the literary dictionary as defined by what falls under the science of rhetoric and eloquence, such as simile, metaphor, metonymy, etc., and they are among the methods of artistic depiction. We see that imagination comes essential, that is: it has a primary position, integrated with feelings, conscience, culture, and skill, to create something non-existent in which the real artist creates. Language plays a major role in the thought of the creator (or artist), arousing in him a new image, which is that artistic image, and this is what we wanted to reach, and from here we also arouse in the recipient's self from his emotions and feelings.

We see that the artistic image that the recipient savors is not a used image that has been worn out by that circulation, and is a special image, highlighted by the poet or artist in a special linguistic mold. This means that the reader-recipient does not savor that image except through his interaction with its features and characteristics and his contemplation of it with a noble contemplation that stimulates his

imagination and stirs within him that inner feeling, especially in those feelings that move the course of the partial image.

The meaning of which changes from one person to another, as each has his own character, experience, and culture, that is, through which he understands how to contemplate the poem. That is, the recipient of poetry should only be fascinated by what he senses in its image, not by occupying himself with what the poet meant or intended by that image. Perhaps this is what Al-Amidi wanted to convey when he said, "Work on the speaker's intention, but rather work on directing the meanings of his words."

The artistic image in the opinions of critics

The employment of the artistic image according to Al-Jahiz

The meanings are presented in the way, known to the Persian and the Arab, the Bedouin, the villager, and the city dweller. The matter is in establishing the meter, choosing the word, ease of articulation, and abundance of water, in the correctness of the nature, and the quality of the casting. Poetry is an industry, a type of weaving, and a genre of imagery. It seems that Al-Jahiz means by imagery the skillful formulation of words, aiming to present the meaning in a sensory way, and shaping it in a visual manner. He refers to three critical principles, which are:

1. Poetry has its own style of formulating meanings or ideas, which is characterized by arousing the recipient's emotions and urging him to adopt a certain position.
2. Poetry has a style of formulation that is often based on presenting meaning in a sensory manner.
3. The sensory presentation of poetry makes it a counterpart to painting, similar to it in the method of operation and formulation.

The Use of the Artistic Image by Qudamah ibn Ja'far:

Meanings are presented to the poet, and he may speak of them as he pleases and prefers, without being prohibited from a meaning he desires to speak about, since meanings are for poetry like the material placed, and poetry is like the image, as is found in every craft, in that there must be something placed that accepts the influence of the image on it, such as wood for carpentry and silver for goldsmithing.

To consider Qudamah's words is his taking a new step forward from al-Jahiz's imagery, as he mentioned the image explicitly and made poetry a material represented by meanings, which are available to the poet. The image is the formulation of the word, provided that the craft is of the utmost perfection and quality. Qudamah addressed the components of the image in poetry, and in this approach he was not satisfied with the correctness of the word, the correctness of the structure, and the soundness of the meter and rhyme until he examined the factors of poets' brilliance and their ability to create

The image was manifested in similes, metaphors, and metonymy, and this may extend to playing with language and exploring its possibilities, as the ancients placed their images of the image within the framework of rhetorical arts. If the rhetorical images of similes, metaphors, metonymies, symbols, and others that fall in their direction were the predominant image in the ancients' concept of the image and their reading of the meaning and their revelation of it, then among the moderns it expanded to include to these artistic rhetorical methods, myths, superstitions, local or popular heritage, (folkloric) and general heritage symbols, and others that fall in their direction. While the ancients placed their conception of the image within the framework of rhetorical arts, the moderns went beyond that. The best thing the moderns have offered in this regard is novelty and innovation. They prefer one image over another, if no one has preceded it, and if it is characterized by astonishment and surprise. Perhaps this is what created intellectual positions within the artistic framework of poetry in general and Arabic poetry in particular.

Imagination plays a major role in forming the image, and with imagination, which is the head of metaphor, it is possible to depict what is finite with what is limited and finite. The beauty of poetry lies in highlighting the truth with a bit of imagination by personifying abstract meanings in images that bring together their elements to form an integrated unit. Imagination plays a major role in forming and creating an evocative poetic image.

Ka`b ibn Zuhair and his life

His name and lineage:

Ka`b ibn Zuhair ibn Rabi`ah, known as Abu Salma ibn Rabah ibn Qatar al- Harith ibn Mazen ibn Thawr ibn Hudmah ibn Lam ibn Uthman ibn Madinah, his father is Zuhair ibn Abi Salma, his brother is Bajir ibn Zuhair, his sister is Salma bint Abi Salma, and Ka`b has a son, Uqbah, who is al-Mudrab ibn Ka`b, and Uqbah has a son, who is al-Hajjaj ibn Dhi al-Ruqaybah ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Uqbah al- Mudrab, and his nickname is Abu al-Mudrab, and his grandson is al-`Awam, all of them are poets.

Umm Ka'b was a woman from Banu Abdullah ibn Ghatafan, and she was Kabsha bint Ammar ibn Adi ibn Suhaim ibn Ghatafan, and she was the mother of all the children of Zuhair. He married Umm Awfa out of a desire to have a child, which aroused Umm Awfa's anger and made her jealous, so he divorced her, regretting it, but there was no time for regret. Ka'b was

nicknamed Abu al-Mudrab. The poet Ka'b ibn Zuhair lived in the Muzaynah tribe, and his lineage from it is Muzani, and Muzaynah is a tribe of nobility and honor.

His birth and death

His date of birth was unknown, and opinions and statements conflicted among historians of Arabic literature about determining the year of Ka'b ibn Zuhair's death. Some of them mentioned the year 24 AH, i.e. 644 AD (2), others mentioned the year 26 AH, i.e. 645 AD (3), and others specified the year 24 AH, i.e. 662 AD, based on the Burda incident and Mu'awiyah's desire to purchase it, as his caliphate extended from 660-680 AD.

His upbringing

Ka'b ibn Zuhair lived among the Banu Ghatafan tribe, to the point that he was almost attributed to them. In fact, some historians attributed him to them. He grew up among them as if he were one of them, sharing in everything they did in war and peace. The elegy of Rabi'ah ibn Mukram for his mother's tribe was estimated to be due to his lack of reference to his origins and tribe. Ka'b grew up in this poetic environment. He heard poetry as a child and recited it as an adult, and he recited it as a young man. He was the eldest of Zuhair's sons, so his father took special care of him, refining his taste and reciting it as poetry.

When he wrote poetry while he was young, he did not produce poetry that did not rise to the level that people saw in this poetic family, whose poetic glory began before Islam with that Mu'allaqat (poem) written in gold and hung on the curtains of the Kaaba, signed by Zuhair ibn Abi Salma. It was established with that poem that bequeathed its reciter Ka'b ibn Zuhair salvation in this life and the Hereafter and the Prophet's cloak were inherited by the family before being transferred to the houses of Islamic rule, generation after generation, until they reached the Ottoman ruling house, reinforced with that honorable, sacred aura.

His life before entering Islam

Ka'b took a hostile stance in Islam at first, especially after his brother Bujayr ibn Zuhair converted to Islam. Ibn Ishaq said: When the Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, arrived in Taif, Bujayr ibn Zuhair wrote to his brother Ka'b informing him that the Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and his family and grant them peace, had killed men in Mecca who had satirized and harmed him, and that the remaining poets of Quraysh, Ibn al-Zubayri and Hubayrah ibn Abi Wahb, had fled in every direction. If you have a need in yourself, break your fast with the Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, for he does not kill anyone who comes to him repentant and Muslim. If you do not do so, then flee to your safety.

And according to the custom of the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era, the tribes formed an alliance, the Muzaynah tribe, with the Aws against the Khazraj and Juhaynah tribes, and we see from this that when Ka'b praised the Ansar, he did not praise them all, but rather excluded the Khazraj in his praise when he said:

“Whoever delights in life's generosity shall ever remain in favor with the righteous of the Ansar”.

Ka'b ibn Zuhair's conversion to Islam

As for Ka`b's life in Islam, it begins with the story of his conversion to Islam.

This was as a result of Bujayr's conversion to Islam. When Ka`b learned, he said:

“Go, convey to ‘Ubay ibn Jubayr a message:

What gain have you in the words you whispered in secret? Show forth the proof, if you are not the one who acted— Upon what else, then, did you direct such reproach”

When the Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, returned from Taif, Bujayr ibn Zuhair ibn Abi Salma wrote to his brother Ka'b ibn Zuhair, informing him that the Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, had killed a man in Mecca who had insulted and harmed him. Among the poets of Quraysh were Ibn al-Zubayri and Hubayrah ibn Abi Wahb, who had fled, like their peers, from every direction. So, if you have a need in your soul, break your fast with the Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, for he does not kill anyone who comes to him repentant. If you do not, then escape on earth.

This story is the starting point of Ka'b's conversion to Islam at the end of the seventh year of the Hijra. Ka`b became a poet of the call to Islam and one of those who defended Islam. Thus, Ka'b ibn Zuhair clearly declared his conversion to Islam and announced his repentance. Ka'b began his poem flirting with his beloved Su'ad, in the style of pre-Islamic poetry, and from there he proceeded to the entire poem, praising the noble Messenger and his Companions in a manner that resembled a reversal of everything he had written. There are also some poems apologizing to the Prophet Muhammad, peace upon him:

“And every friend in whom I placed my hope once said: Expect me not—I am distracted, far from you.”

So I replied: Leave my path, away with you all!

For whatever the Merciful decrees shall surely come to pass”.

His Life and Poetic Culture

Ka'b ibn Zuhair belonged to the second class of pre-Islamic poets and is regarded one of the Companions. The poet lived in an era when poets were revered, and Ka'b ibn Zuhair was both the product of this atmosphere and a part of it. He hailed from a family known for poetry due to its numerous poets. Ka'b was raised there till he was born with the ability to create poetry, which honed his literary talent, which was visible from an early age.

Ka'b ibn Zuhair lived in an environment that produced poetry from men and women. In Ka'b's house, there were eleven poets from the lineage of Abu Salma, Ka'b ibn Zuhair's grandfather. His father did not skimp on wisdom and literature, so Ka'b grew up to be an eloquent and wise poet. No poet achieved fame as Ka'b ibn Zuhair did.

Ka'b ibn Zuhair is one of the famous veteran poets. It is enough to know that Al-Hutayyah, one of the most well-known senior poets, was the Zuhair family's narrator and begged Ka'b to mention his poetry. Khalaf al-Ahmar, a poetry expert, once said, "If it hadn't been for Zuhair, I would not have favored him over his son Ka'b."

His poems were known as "al-Hawliyyat." He would not publish a poem until he had revised, refined, pruned, and refined it for a full year. Then he would release it with his own tongue or

with the tongue of his mistaken narrator, so much so that his daughter became his narrator. Since his youth, his tongue moved with the writing and composing of poetry. His father tried to prevent him until he perfected his characteristic and ability, and he was so strict with him in this that it was said that he beat him all of this out of fear That his poetry had not matured, so he was told what was not good about it. In addition to beating, it was said that he imprisoned him, so he remained silent for a few days, then returned to writing poetry.

The poetry collection of Ka'b ibn Zuhair contains many pieces composed on the themes known in his time, such as praise, love poetry, and lamentation. However, his poem "Banat Su'ad" remains the best and most famous, and it is called "Al- Burdah" in reference to the Prophet's award he deserved for it. He dealt with this poem extensively, explaining, interpreting, categorizing, and translating it as well. Ka'b began his poem flirting with his beloved Su'ad in the style of pre-Islamic poetry, before moving from the verses of love in a beautiful way to describing the she-camel that carried him to his deceased beloved. From there, he arrives at the entire verses of the poem, where praise is given to the Noble Messenger and his Companions, in what appears to be a reversal of everything he had written. There are also some poems apologizing to the Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace.

Ka'b ibn Zuhair has poems and pieces of high quality in form and content, which has elevated Ka'b to the second rank according to Ibn Salam al-Jumahi in the ranks of the most prominent poets. The subjects of his poetry are like other subjects of pre-Islamic poetry, ranging between pride, praise, satire, elegy, love poetry, description, and some wisdom. Kaab is one of the poets of the Awsiya School, that is, it is based on the doctrine of poetry craftsmanship, so its poems do not appear except after revision and scrutiny, so there is no poem except with the integration of its elements and images until it gives the general meaning of the poem, and the poem comes out in one image that is the most comprehensive and general.

Types of Imagery in Ka'b ibn Zuhair

Images of Nature in Ka'b ibn Zuhair

Death and Fate

Each poet had a particular vision through which he expressed the topical issues of his time, and each of them had a vision for expressing some general issues. The idea of death was represented in the image of the donkey: it returns water, and how does a wild donkey fall prey to a hunter? It often ended with the death of the wild donkey and the end of the event, as in Abu Dhu'ayb al-Hudhali's poem 'Aynayna', and in Aws ibn Hajar's poem 'Fayya'. The donkey was a symbol of the available fate that controlled people's necks. This idea came from Ka'b in contrast to what others had, as he made life the origin. For Yahya, the donkey, despite the dangers it faced from the hunter, did not place death around its neck.

Ka'b says:

“Gentle, like the steadfast stone of flint, not deceived, by watch or fear, while resolute he stands.

A comrade of relentless pursuit, as though,

if no prey is struck among beasts, he deems himself in loss. He turns over small creatures and selects an arrow, fletched with feathers where the wing-tips are bound.

If I were to marvel at anything, it would be this,

the striving of a youth, while destiny lies hidden for him”.

Elderly and youth

Ka'b depicted gray hair as if it were a continuation, while black hair was the origin. He denigrated the new arrival, making him a new guest who did not deserve respect or welcome, as if he would return and weaken his strength, making him cry, and making him sad and regret what had passed, until he wished for the impossible, that is, he wished for youth to return as an ally that would never leave him. Then he compared gray hair, which is the enemy of the new youth, and his wife, who showed him no affection, tenderness, or kindness. This philosophy became so clearly apparent that it became his own philosophy.

Ka'b said:

“Youth has departed, and old age has drawn near, and I see no return for youth once it is gone.

The black has turned to white upon the temples,

never to return, that once-feared color now lifted away. There is no return of youth once it departs from us,

yet would that some of what has passed might come back again”.

Light and Darkness

The triangle of natural phenomena of light, darkness, and other light sources were worshipped by different groups of people, and during different periods of time. They knew fire as a deity, lightning and thunder, and the planets of the sun, moon, and stars. Then these phenomena became part of rituals. Pre-Islamic poets, including Ka'b ibn Zuhair, included some of these rituals in their poetry in a primary capacity, sometimes as the focus of the poetic image, and another time in a secondary capacity, complementing the poetic scene, intertwined with various poetic purposes. The duality of light and darkness in pre-Islamic poetry had different religious connotations, such as life and death, innocence and sin, and good and evil.

Ka'b says:

“I still traverse the desert in haste,

while the wings of darkness and the garment of night are let down.

The poet describes his journey as crossing the deserts at night, wearing full war armor, under the cover of darkness.

“Is it from Nuwār that you recognized the dwelling, worn and bare—

when nothing departs from the depths of the heart but leaves a parting trace?”

The poet between brought out Nawar, and it seems that he brought her out from the depths of the mirage of the caravans to follow with her the path of the journey, and where she settles and departs, then we see him intend to sever his relationship with Nawar because she changed towards him and he goes on a long journey making the conflict between his camel and the harshness of nature, and then the pursuit of the hunters. Creation: The student of the ruins of his covenant with the companion. Hence, nature was and still is the primary inspiration for masters of art, especially poets, including Ka'b ibn Zuhair. This is because nature accompanies the poet with its manifestations throughout his life, and from it he draws the elements of his poetic experience.

The description of nature in ancient poetry was a topic explored by most poets, and the scope of it expanded, and no collection of their poetry was without it. Poets, including Ka'b ibn Zuhair, dealt with nature in different eras, and they delved into describing its manifestations with various descriptions and epithets. Ka'b ibn Zuhair perceived the features of beauty in the nature of his environment, which enabled him to innovate in describing and depicting its manifestations. He described death and

fate, gray hair and youth, light and darkness, night and day, and others. The pre- Islamic poet's ability to harness the manifestations of nature in his creativity is vast and limitless, as he skillfully exploits the image of nature according to his psychological state and the nature of events, producing creative images that are almost artistic paintings that he masterfully drew, infusing his experience with them.

The Artistic Image in Ka'b ibn Zuhair

The Beauty of the Artistic Image in Ka'b ibn Zuhair's Poetry

Simile

It is a pillar of the rhetorical image and is one of the literary styles not only in the Arabic language, but in all languages. The Arabs were concerned with it and made it one of the standards of literary excellence. It means attaching a matter in a meaning to a tool of simile. The first matter is the simile and the second is the simile to, and the meaning they share is the point of similarity to a tool of simile, whether it is a noun, a verb, or a letter. Similes are so common in the speech of the Arabs that if someone said it, it would not be far-fetched. It is one of the things that rational people have agreed upon as being noble and magnificent in the art of rhetoric, and that following meanings with it weakens their power to move souls toward their intended purpose, whether complete praise or blame, boasting, or something else.

The importance of simile lies in its being a manifestation of imaginative expression, as it does not suffice with the distinction and clarity between things, but rather establishes a comparative or similar relationship between the two parties of the simile, the simile and the simile to which it is compared, which strengthens the relationship between them on the one hand, even if it does not deviate from its artistic nature on the other hand, the poet employed multiple similes in his poetry.

Ka'b says:

“Why did you not ask, while you are no ignorant one-

For the cure of the tongue-tied is to question about what is obscure”.

The poet's use of a simile to explain the extent of his condition reveals a general knowledge about the simile, which was known in its quality before the simile. The simile explains the extent of this quality, and this poetry describes blindness. So the cure for blindness is to ask about blindness. So the simile is known by its quality, and there is no doubt about anything, so its lack after it explains the extent of the blindness.

Explanation

The poet was addressing his beloved, saying: Why did you ask while you were certain about the thing you asked? The medicine or cure for a person of doubt is to ask about it and obtain the answer until he knows the circumstances of doubt regarding that thing; because at the heel of life, one must be optimistic and not wander around with doubts:

“Su‘ad has departed, and my heart today is pierced, enslaved by love for her, shackled, never released.

And Su‘ad, on the morning of parting, when they departed,

was but a graceful one—soft-voiced, with downcast, kohl-lined eyes. She reveals teeth like pearls when she smiles,

as though they were a spring, mingled with wine”.

Explanation

When Suad left him, his heart was dying and love was overwhelming him. After that, he became like a prisoner who is being cut off for ransom to free him from captivity. He remains in a state of captivity. When Suad left early, she would turn away from him in the garden of Al-Ain, a black gazelle, whose teeth were adorned with the brilliance of teeth when she smiled, as if the water of the first drink was mixed with wine, then the second drink. So Ka'b ibn Zuhair resumed his verse as if he were addressing his beloved, but in the Islamic era, the poet turned to his love for Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (may God bless him and his family and grant them peace).

The poet says:

“And Su‘ad, on the morning of parting when they departed,

was but a graceful one—soft-voiced, with downcast, kohl-lined eyes”.

The second half of the verse is a form of imaginative simile. He likened Suad to a gazelle, following the Arab custom of using similes to describe a girl's beauty. It is well known that gazelles are well-known animals in the desert, and the Arab poet knew their appearance, so he used it in the simile. He used the simile in a style that indicates exaggeration and emphasizes the intended description, which is beauty. A powerful simile. He likened Suad to slender, and also to weak-willed, so he omitted the simile tool and the point of similarity:

“Slender-waisted when she comes, full-hipped when she turns away, in her neither shortness is faulted, nor excessive height”.

The poet says:

“She reveals teeth like pearls when she smiles, as though a spring, intoxicated with wine”.

The simile is figurative because the point of comparison is an image extracted from multiple things. The point of comparison is to the wine, which is defective. The simile here, other than the letter ha, refers to the word (injustice). The simile is (a watering place), and the tool of comparison is (as if).

So the Prophet Muhammad (may God bless him and his family and grant them peace) is compared to a sharp sword and a majestic lion, by way of an eloquent simile.

“Surely, the Messenger is a sword by which light is sought, a finely forged blade, drawn from the swords of God”.

In this verse, the features of creativity are evident in the poet’s success in achieving the highest thing with which he loves to praise the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace). Indeed, the Messenger is a sword by which people are illuminated. He is the light that overflows upon the worlds, meaning like a cutting sword in repelling and destroying falsehood. In following his example, he brought clear light and manifest miracles, and called people to him, guided by his light.

May God be pleased with him, when he reached this verse in his recitation, the Prophet Muhammad (may God bless him and grant him peace) threw him a cloak he was wearing, and Muawiyah offered him ten thousand dirhams for it.

He said: I would not prefer the cloak of the Prophet Muhammad over anyone.

Metaphor

Metaphor is one of the first fine arts of expression in the Arabic language. Metaphor is: “One of the most important phenomena of linguistic expression in the language of daily life and literary texts.”

The concept of metaphor according to ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī is: “that the original word should be in a well-known linguistic context, with evidence indicating that it has been confined to that meaning at one time, then the poet or another transfers it to something other than that original sense and applies it to another context without any necessity thus becoming figurative (metaphorical).”

The importance of metaphor lies in the fact that it is “the finest form of marvel and the first gate of rhetorical creativity.” It is not merely a decorative element of poetry, but rather one of its true beauties, and among the rhetorical devices that enhance the eloquence of speech when used properly. It also works to “refine meaning and display it in a beautiful form that captivates the soul,” even if this comes at the expense of leaving aside the literal truth.

Thus, we may say that poetic metaphor is the transfer from a language of denotation to a language of imagination, moving from the first level of language to another, more expressive one. The best metaphor is one in which a particular expression loses its literal sense in order to achieve a richer figurative meaning.

Metaphor is, in essence, a branch of simile, but differs from it in that metaphor, unlike simile, does not explicitly mention the comparative particle (“like” or “as”). For example, instead of saying, “You are like a lion in courage,” one simply says, “You are a lion.”

The poet may thus speak of the tongue as a sword, or footsteps as thunder, or movement as flowing water—these being explicit metaphors—while in implicit metaphor (*makniyyah*), the resemblance is hidden but implied.

Ka‘b said:

“The slanderers walk with their tongues and their words ...

Indeed, O son of my mother, Salmā will be slain for what was said.”

This is a metaphor. The act of the slanderers “walking with their tongues” is likened to beasts that walk with their bodies, while the act of walking itself is omitted and replaced with their tongues, thus personifying slander. This metaphor achieves vividness and conveys that these words carry the force of something alive moving upon the earth.

Explanation

The word *washāh* (slanderers) is the plural of *washī*, used to describe someone who spreads gossip and slander. So, “the slanderers walk with their tongues” means they go about speaking maliciously about Su‘ād, mentioned by Ka‘b, with no aim except to ruin the messenger’s mission. It is as if their tongues themselves were moving about, embodying their wicked intent, a strong warning given by the Prophet ﷺ.

Ka‘b also said:

“So let them leave my path, may they perish!

For whatever the Merciful decrees shall surely come to pass.”

This is an explicit metaphor: the tightly woven hopes of his companions are likened to an obstructed path (*ṭarīq masdūd*). The path is mentioned explicitly, while the act of walking (the basis of the simile) is omitted.

Beauty of the metaphor: It clarifies meaning and intensifies expression.

Explanation

His saying “*lā abā lakum*” (may you perish!) is a declaration of rejection and dismissal, with no regard for the slanderers. His comments emphasize reliance on God’s decree, emphasizing that hopes in anybody other than God are futile. Thus, the metaphor intensifies his stance against his enemies: no one can change the course of fate, neither their scheming nor their threats.

Ka‘b said:

“They do not scatter when the spears reach their bodies, but advance together, tightly joined, when battle flares.”

This is a metaphor: the spears are likened to human beings striking others, while the act of striking is omitted and what is implied remains.

Explanation

When they are attacked, they do not scatter; when enraged, they do not falter. It is as though they embody the verse of Allah the Exalted: “So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will

be superior if you are believers” (Qur’an 3:139). They endure hardship with patience, despite being few in number compared to the many enemies, and they face dangers with courage. Here “do not scatter” is a figurative expression for not succumbing to fear.

Ka‘b also said:

“The thrust of spears never misses their throats,
nor do they retreat when the battle rages in its fiercest waves.”

This too is a metaphor: death is likened to water surging in a pool, while the resemblance is implied, and its actual wording omitted.

Explanation

It means they plunge into battle, never retreating, even when death itself seems to engulf them. They meet the thrust of spears directly in their throats, standing firm in the thick of combat. Ka‘b emphasizes: there is no delay in facing death’s tide, nor in confronting the spear; indeed, they face it head-on without flinching.

Al-Kināyah (Metonymy / Allusion)

Kināyah: is to speak of something while intending something else, such that the utterance implies it without stating it directly. It is indirect speech, covering what is meant, so that the phrase has a surface meaning, but the real intent lies beyond it. The earliest scholars of rhetoric defined kināyah as “speech in which the name is not mentioned directly, but is intended indirectly.” It is thus a form of expression where the apparent meaning is not the real one; rather, it suggests something nearby of rhetorical significance. An example is the Qur’ānic verse: “Or [those who say] ‘an old woman advanced in years’” (Q 11:72), where the expression points to something other than its literal form.

Thus, kināyah combines both allusion and resemblance. The role of kināyah in rhetoric is crucial, as it contributes to the shaping of poetic imagery. ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī defined it as: “when the speaker intends a meaning through an expression,

yet does not state it explicitly, but instead relies upon an associated indication or a related idea.”

Hence, the subject itself is not directly named, but rather expressed through what accompanies it, either as evidence of it or as a symbol pointing toward it.

Kināyah often functions as a form of rhetorical refinement—a way of avoiding crude, ugly, or indecent wording—while still expressing what is meant through pleasant and subtle language. Kināyah has the advantage of allowing for allusive suggestions, which rely on implication rather than outright proclamation. This achieves the rhetorical principle of *itnāb fannī* (artistic elaboration) by using subtle emotional clues, refinement, and elegant suggestions. Kināyah’s technical beauty lies in its ability to bring depth by re-creating the literal with grace, vividness, and increased rhetorical strength, rather than just replacing.

Ka‘b said:

“So let them leave my path, may they perish!

For whatever the Merciful decrees shall surely come to pass. Every son of woman, though long he may live in safety,

one day shall be borne upon the shoulders to the grave.”

These verses contain multiple instances of kināyah (metonymy/allusion):

“Every son of woman” → a kināyah for the human being. “to the grave (ālāt ḥidā’ maḥmūl)” → a kināyah for death.

“leave my path (khalī sabīlī)” → a kināyah for distress or hardship.

“Whatever the Merciful decrees” → a kināyah for submission and contentment with God’s will.

Explanation

Ka‘b addresses his companions, who had urged him to seek forgiveness, saying: “We implore you, do not deliver yourself to destruction.”

But Ka‘b responds that he will not escape what God has decreed. He emphasizes that death is inevitable: “Every soul shall taste death.” Neither evasion nor delay can prevent it. Death comes for everyone, and no one escapes its grasp. This kināyah emphasizes the need of surrendering to God's will and recognizing the futility of fear or hesitancy in the face of death.

Ka‘b said:

“Slow down, for what God has granted you is a bountiful gift, in which are exhortations and detailed lessons.”

This contains a kināyah (metonymy):

“What God has granted you of the Qur’an” → a kināyah for the Qur’an itself, which is the described object, bestowed by God Almighty.

Explanation

The poet urges one not to neglect the Qur’an and what God has revealed within it of admonitions and exhortations. The word “mahā” (slow down, wait) is in the accusative case, used as an imperative of restraint. “Nāfiqah” (abundant) comes from the root n-f-q, meaning increase and abundance. Thus the verse is a kināyah for the Qur’an, described as a precious, overflowing treasure, containing guidance, wisdom, and divine lessons.

Al-Badī‘ (Innovation / Rhetorical Novelty)

Badī‘ refers to something that is created in an unprecedented manner—an innovation, an invention. It means to produce something without prior model. In rhetoric, badī‘ signifies the novel and the new. Al-Jāhiz used the term badī‘ to describe the finest qualities of eloquence and style, as well as the ability to introduce new imagery and expressive techniques. It represents the rhetorical capacity to coin fresh expressions, weave vivid imagery, and create linguistic beauty beyond the ordinary. In literary criticism, badī‘ refers to the enrichment of meaning and beauty through novel forms, unexpected changes of phrase, and appealing imagery.

Ka‘b said:

“Do not let promises deceive you—

for hopes and dreams are but delusions.”

This is an example of direct address, in which the poet addresses the human self as if separating it from another person and warning it about false promises. He underlines that dreams and foolish hopes only lead to deception and loss. The verse's appeal resides in its imaginative style: the sentence "Do not let promises deceive you" interrupts the flow with stunning power, combining imagery with clarity of meaning. The phrase "hopes and dreams" (al-amānī wa-l-aḥlām) reinforces the warning that both are equally false and deceptive. The poet therefore sends a forceful reminder: do not believe hollow promises, for they are nothing but illusions that fade into shadows.

Ka‘b also said:

“A body massive, yet delicate in form—

in its creation, strength and permanence were perfected.”

This line demonstrates the rhetorical device of *jinās nāqīṣ* (paronomasia / partial pun), in his words: “muqaddam fī khalqihā famuḥkamatuha” (“massive in front, perfected in its creation”).

Here the resemblance between *muqaddam* (massive, advanced) and *muḥkam* (perfected, firm) creates phonetic harmony, while their meanings differ, producing rhetorical beauty. The verse uses contrast between external appearance (grandeur and size) and inner perfection (strength and balance). Ka‘b's rhetoric is elegant and precise, combining meaning, sound, and picture to attain artistic wholeness rather than just rhyme.

Ka‘b said:

“They walk with the gait of tall camels in their pride, striking when the spears of black fate are hurled.”

This verse emphasizes the contrast (*muqābalah*) between the grandeur and majesty of the *Muhājirīn* (stature, dignity, and beauty) and the weakness and inadequacy of their foes. The construction accentuates their towering presence, both physically and spiritually. Ka‘b emphasizes the greatness of the Prophet's ﷺ companions, setting them apart from their opponents. Ka‘b also said:

“They do not scatter when the spears strike their bodies,

but remain firmly joined when battle flares in its fiercest waves.”

Here, too, the contrast is obvious. On one side are the comrades' steadfastness and valor, who never flee fight; on the other, there is the insinuation of cowardice and fear among their enemies. Ka‘b used the method of antithesis to emphasize the companions' strength, loyalty, and oneness. The rhetorical effect is achieved by increasing the imagery: their ranks do not break or scatter even when struck with the most powerful blows. The words, styles, and images all converge to shape the intended meaning. Ka‘b, in describing the *Muhājirīn*, brings together spiritual, physical, moral, and religious qualities. All of these revolve around courage,

boldness, facing dangers, confidence, and steadfastness. By mentioning one quality, he implicitly refers to a collection of others.

These are the same attributes once prized among the Arabs, over which they competed: eloquence, generosity in hospitality, mercy, affection, kindness, and tolerance. Such virtues became hallmarks of the Muslim community even before the Hijrah in Mecca. Ka‘b’s depiction is thus both sincere and profound, reflecting not only his emotions but also his precision in conveying the very essence of the meaning he aimed to express.

Conclusion

Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr ibn Rabī‘ah al-Muzanī, commonly known as Abū Sulmā, was the son of Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā and brother of Bujayr ibn Zuhayr. His lineage goes back to Mazin ibn Ghailāna of Muzayna. The exact date of his birth is unknown, and historians of Arabic literature differ concerning the year of his death: some say he died in 24 AH, while others suggest 26 AH.

Ka‘b grew up among the Banū ‘Uthmān tribe, in a poetic environment rich in verse, for he inherited poetry from his father, a great master of the art. Alongside his brother Bujayr, he composed poetry and competed with his peers. When Islam emerged, Ka‘b initially opposed it and was hostile, especially after his brother Bujayr embraced Islam. Eventually, Ka‘b himself converted in the late seventh year after the Hijrah. Ka‘b soon rose to prominence as a poet of Islam, celebrated for defending the new faith through eloquent verse.

He is classified among the second tier of pre-Islamic poets—those who came just before Islam. Ka‘b was known for his eloquence and refined style, always revising his poems. His poetry exemplifies outstanding workmanship, flow, and balance, as well as clear diction and vivid imagination. His compositions were passed down orally and maintained by narrators like his daughter, ‘Umarah, who protected his dīwān. This collection contains many short pieces on traditional poetic themes: praise, love, satire, and elegy.

His most famous poem, however, is the celebrated qaṣīdah Bānat Su‘ād (“Su‘ād Has Departed”), also called al-Burdah. It earned him the Prophet Muḥammad’s (peace be upon him) pardon after Ka‘b recited it before him, expressing sincere repentance and newfound faith. The Prophet honored the poetry by placing his cloak (burdah) atop Ka‘b, as per tradition. This poem became landmark in Arabic literature, praised for its artistic merits and regarded as one of the best works of early Islamic poetry. This poem is regarded as one of the first examples of madīḥ nabawī (prophetic praise poetry). In it, the poet follows the classical qaṣīdah structure of the Jāhiliyyah (pre-Islamic period), though he reshapes it to fit the new Islamic context. Despite the traditional framework, its purpose is clear and unified: to seek forgiveness, repentance, and pardon. Thus, it combines the originality of classical poetry with the sincerity of religious devotion.

The qaṣīdah comprises four primary sections. At first glance, they may appear distinct, yet in reality they form a cohesive whole, expressing both structure and meaning.

- The poem begins with an amatory prelude (nasīb), which expresses the poet's sadness over love and separation.

- In the second section, Ka'b asks for forgiveness and seeks refuge with the Prophet ﷺ.
- The third section focuses on praising the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ for his merits and magnificence.
- The last section is panegyric, emphasizing the strength, loyalty, and courage of the Prophet's companions.

Thus, the poem's unity is kept despite its transitions, resulting in a harmonic structure.

Ka'b's poetry excellence resides in his mastery of eloquence and rhetorical artistry—drawing on similes, metaphors, and *kināyah*—while always expressing deep sincerity. His admiration for the Prophet is genuine and reflects faith and submission, rather than flattery. The poem highlights Ka'b's deep connection to the Qur'an. Its rhythm, style, and imagery are consistent with Qur'anic diction, and his affection for the Prophet and his followers reflects Islamic principles of loyalty, sacrifice, and courage.

Ka'b successfully converted the traditional *qaṣīdah* form into a vehicle for Islamic mysticism. His poem embodies a blending of artistry and piety, making it both a literary masterpiece and a testimony of repentance and faith. Critics note that the poetry of Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā was distinguished by wisdom and a constant call toward reform and the spreading of noble morals. Ka'b, in composing his celebrated poem, followed the same path as the well-known poets of his era—whether in beginning with the traditional lament over abandoned abodes, evoking tears and longing, or in describing beloved ones and their dwellings.

Ka'b, however, excelled in skillfully employing imagery, so much so that his verse became a powerful tool of persuasion, capable of moving the listener, changing their stance, and ensuring continued engagement with his plea. All praise is due to God, Lord of the worlds. May blessings and peace be upon our prophet Muḥammad, and upon his family and all his companions.

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