

Al- Baraddouni's Poetic Sense: Insight of the Blind

Fatima Ali Al-Khamisi

English Dept., Nabhaniyyah College of Science & Arts, Qassim University, Nabhaniyyah Governorate, Post Code: 51991, Saudi Arabia,

Corresponding Author: Dr. Fatima Ali Al-Khamisi,

ABSTRACT: It is a matter of fact that the five senses are intimately bound up with any type of art creation. This is due to the fact that any creation process goes through and comes back to the five receptors. Since eyesight is the dominant sense, one can imagine how losing it can negatively affect the value of any creative production. The recent paper is an attempt to examine samples of Abdullah Al-Baraddouni, the Yemeni Arab poet, in order to check whether his poetic sense manages to substitute his lost eyesight and to evaluate his visual images' effectiveness. This paper hypothesizes that the poetic sense of Al-Baradouni enables him to satisfy his poetic purposes and implicitly compensates for his blindness. The study, also, supposes that his visual images are capable of clarifying, strengthening meanwhile supporting his attitudes. For the sake of examining the credibility of the paper's hypothesis some selected poems of Al-Baradouni are studied and analyzed in this paper. Analyzing the sample poems proves that Al- Baradouni's blindness sharpens and stimulates his highly genuine poetic sense which creatively deepens his poetic career and turns his explicit sightless into an implicit insight capable of achieving professionally any poetic purpose.

Key words: Al- Baradouni, Yemeni, Arab, sight, insight

Date of Submission: 01-11-2017

Date of acceptance: 23-11-2017

I. INTRODUCTION

What distinguishes living beings and nonliving beings is sensation or the five senses i.e. the ability to see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. These faculties enable living creatures, including human beings, to perceive and experience the world around them. The dominant sense, among these five, seems to be eyesight receptor. Thus, the person who manages to overcome the lack of this sense proves to be special.

It is not only sight that blindness affects. About half of the blind or half sighted in the world feel moderately or completely isolated from the world and suffer from depression. (Juma, 2017) What is sight and how does it work? Eye is the main component in the human visual system, the physical stimuli is received by the eye in the form of light and sent, by the eye also, as electrical signals to the brain and the brain interprets these signals as images. (Boundless.com, 2017)

The vision ability is one of God's gifts. The blind can see only Abyss they cannot see even blackness. "Visual perception begins once the eye focuses light onto the retina, where it is absorbed by a layer of photoreceptor cells. These cells convert light into electrochemical signals", (Brain HQ, 2017)

Visual perception, eyesight, sight, or vision can be defined as the resulting perception of 'the ability to interpret the surrounding environment using light in the visible spectrum reflected by the objects in the environment.' The various physiological components involved in vision process are referred to collectively as the visual system. (Wikipedia, 2017).

If eye sight can be affiliated to senses, poetic sense can be affiliated to human feelings and human creativity. And if majority of creatures experience visual sense, only few human can experience poetic sense. The question that seeks answer is: can poetic sense replace eye sight or perform its function?

Poetic sense can be defined as 'a meaning which is imminent in that object which is the poem or consubstantial with it, and which the reader intuitively perceives, perhaps after a dine of careful rereading, and either of intellectual concentration'. (Maritain, 2017). It is a double faced concept. It can be the exact feeling the poet aims at arousing in his readers or audience. It can, also, be the creative sense poets own which enables them to sensitively perceive the world around them and to arouse the feelings in their audience.

The Yemeni poet and writer Abdullah Al-Baradouni (1929–1999) in Arabic (عبد الله البردوني) is considered Yemen's most famous poet. He published twelve poetry books as well as six other books on such topics as politics, folklore, and literature. (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, 2017). In spite of being sightless, his works were read throughout the Arab world and translated into many languages.

Al- Baradouni's poetic works resounds with anger at Yemeni leaders who promised much yet delivered little. His arresting imagery: like "sweet bitterness", or "will weave from my blood her glowing eyes and lips" - harked back to the golden age of Yemeni poetry. (Joffe, 1999)

Objectives

This paper aims at attempting to identify visual sense via poetic sense and to examine whether poetic sense/insight can replace eyesight and to which extent it can satisfy the poetic purposes in the poetry of the Arab Yemeni sightless poet Abdullah Al- Baradouni.

Hypothesis

The paper hypothesizes that the poetic sense of Al-Baradouni successfully satisfies his poetic purposes and implicitly compensates for his blindness. To examine the credibility of this hypothesis some selected poems of Al-Baradouni are studied and analyzed in this paper.

Methods

The multidisciplinary approach is to be adopted in this study together with the analytical method in order to examine the credibility of the hypothesis of the study.

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Poets are highly sensitive people. To them "a touch is a blow, a sound is a noise, a misfortune is a tragedy, a joy is an ecstasy, a friend is a lover, a lover is a god, and failure is death". This over sensitivity is "the overpowering necessity to create" and without creating something meaningful such as poetry, music, books they do not feel alive. Because of some obscure inner insistence their existence is bitterly connected to pouring out creation. Pearl S. Buck. (Chauhan, 2013)

For those sensitive creatures lacking one sense organ means a lot; but the question is whether this lack affects their creativity and whether this effect is positive or negative. For the purpose of answering such questions some works of the sightless Arab Yemeni poet Al-Baradouni are to examine here.

Al-Baradouni, the poet who can precisely be described as contemporary revolutionist, democracy defender and woman right advocator, is sightless poet lost his eyesight at the age of seven because of smallpox. Even though, his poems seem to mirror perfect moreover colourful image of the world. To examine this together with the hypothesis of the paper the poems: *Spring Charm*, *Sun*, *The Outsider*, and *Wife of the Deceased*, are selected to analyze here after translating them by the researcher.

The poem *Spring Charm* is a good example to start with. In this poem, the poet describes the charm and beauty of spring. He imagines spring a person comes to spread love. He starts the poem by addressing spring, which he affiliates to love, to spread beauty, charm and brightness all over the world: 'Inlay the world with songs and poetry, spring of love,/And outburst wine/ Stretch light and dew over the earth/ Ripple charm and lure in the space/ Hope met you, spring of love,/ And drink the glamour of your air.'

Each image is pregnant with another. For him, spring cannot only spread beauty and love; it is the source of inspiration for poetry, singing dance and happiness: 'Groom of poetry claps for singing/ and dance proudly on the beach of poetry.' Spring gives life to poetry since its beauty inspires poets: 'spring unveiled life to poetry/ like a virgin unveiled to a deprived lover'. That is why everything in the world is celebrating spring arrival: 'Here birds are singing and/ Here is a bank, highly and innocently, sowing songs/ Daughters of dawn are, in the lap of light, /spreading happiness and inspiration.'

This happiness is reflected on nature which is accordingly singing cheerfully: 'The green plains are singing and /Hills are chorus singing green young melody/ the air is like drunken music playing/ and the soft cheerful life is drunken/The basil has fragrant singing/ Spreading aromatic tune in the breeze.'" The poem presents sheet music i.e. words carefully selected to play musical piece meanwhile describing instrument of the natural music celebrating spring arrival.

The singers of this natural musical ensemble are gardens which are poets, from the point of view of the romantic poet Al-Baradouni, creating melody of flowers: 'As if happy gardens are poets creating melody of flowers'. Then, he compares the passionate feeling of nature to the hot souls of lovers: 'And prickly roses are like souls covered with the flaming coals of love/ And the dawn of the hills' flowers is like hot fragrant breath kiss'.

Not only does spring arrival influence flowers, fragrant plants and gardens; it can spread love among stones, too, in case if they have any sense of life: 'You spread love among stones/ just if stones have livers and chests'. Then the poet goes on flirting the beauty of spring that overwhelms every aspect of life and everything under the sky because: 'It is the earth's secret which the sky feeds/ And turns it into white and dark fascination/Narrated by art(poetry)melody for love/And cups of flowers distribute it as wine.' He ends his poem

by the conclusion that spring's charm is everlasting because spring is: 'a view created by the art of the sky/ And decorated by the secrets of verses and eternity'.

In spite of the fact that audio images seem to be dominant; the poem is pregnant with images addressed to all senses including vision. Images like the 'green plains', 'hills' flowers', 'gardens', 'prickly roses', 'white and dark fascination' and the 'cups of wine' being distributed are all visual images. These images are professionally mastered and employed to perform audio, visual, tasted, and touchable view skillfully overwhelms our feelings and involves us in the celebration of spring arrival.

The poem *Sun* is another example to discuss. As a blind man, he is not expected to experience colours. He neither sees the golden rays of the sunrise nor enjoys the orange red purple view of the sunset. However, he seems to be powerful describing the beauty of such natural views and drawing their colourful picture. He affiliates the sun to the sky: 'Daughter of the sky raised over horizon/ coated with dewy rays/ She ornamented the space's rug /with brightness and golden flame/ And gifted her heavenly light/to the hill's tops and down land's clod/ to the mountains and stooped/ Arched plain/ to water, mud and stone/ to cave, palace, cradle of richness/ to market, prison and temple/ She spread light over the world/ she is generous to both slave and master/ Generous to affluent and afflicted/ Beggars and givers/ Performs her message freely/ to the closest and the furthest world/ Her fairness goes on generously to the good and the bad.'

Then, the poet affiliates the morning to the sun. The daughter of the sky is the mother of morning whose spending increases her saving: 'Mother of morning spent light/ Thus, increases her richness into domination/... Her continuous generosity made/ her bright reign endure new everlasting rebirth/ And her extravagance increased her immortal luxury.' Sun for him is an ideal example for generosity.

His poem *The Outsider* conveys the deep grief of the highly patriotic poet, Al-Baradouni, who feels himself stranger in his own home. Being one among few educated people who are free from constraints of benightedness he comes to recognize the big amount of loneliness and alienation that surround him. No one can understand the demands of such free person who devotes his life for defending the rights of his people. The lack of such mutual understanding throws the poet away from the borders of his country and leads him, consequently, to feel himself outsider among his people. Such suffering starts to demolish his creativity as a poet: 'Songs concealed in my mouth/ And my melody died in the throat of my music/ my poetry has vanished, my sense has slept/like the sleep of night over deserts.' Killing his creativity is the worst revenge he can hardly endure. It is death for him: 'I am a hungry tomb in darkness/ Bare in the arms of silence/ I am the only stranger though/ my people around me left and right/ I am captive in my blood/ Homeless in my homeland, my thoughts are drilled/ my dignity is wounded, my hopes are assassinated/ Outsider in my nation, among my people./ everything around me angry at me/ Seeking revenge from me for no reason.'

The poem is well crafted to convey the depression the poet suffers. Actually, the poet's insight is talking to us in this poem. Every single word is selected carefully to draw the picture of the one who is outsider in his homeland and among his people.

The poem *Wife of the Deceased* regarded as one of the most expressive poems whose images employed to colour the photo of the sad lonely nostalgic wife of a deceased fighter. The monologue device is used in this poem as means to listen to the wife's whispers to herself: 'Why don't you come back? Every fighter has come/ Dragging about his rank of/ Captain or major/ You have come; but, oh,/ It is mere remains of expectations I collected out/ Of the beats of your ghost or greenness of my promises/ My strong expectation of your return/ get my eyes to disturb the rest sleep of the silent road/ I have been waiting you for a whole season/ a new season, clothed in spiteful smoke, has started.' The following lines present multi-meaning metaphor: 'The mountains mount spitting their ages/ Their blood digging for cold mortal winter.' The mountains can stand for the fighters who victimize their blood seeking death i.e. no victory expected out of their sacrifice. Mountains themselves mount searching for those dead fighters, 'cold mortal winter', who sacrifice their blood in vain. The wife, herself, may mount or climb the mountains looking for her husband who must be dead.

However, the afflicted wife does not want to lose the hope of finding her missed husband: 'One morning when the last procession came back/ I smelt your steps in the thunder of the crowd/ I collected your character and features out of each face in that gathering/ When I became close each one had gone home/ But I searched hopelessly.'

In spite of the bitter agony she suffers; she does not stop asking: 'Who saw you? Where are you? Since neither echo nor returning one's reply signify you?' She does not want to believe that her missed husband is not coming back anymore that is why she tries to find him in a form of a bird: 'To the waiting home you came back/ As a worried bird swinging in single wing.'

She does not want to confess his missing because this adds more and more to her unbearable suffering: 'You sun, Don't put out: forests of darkness/ Go on eating my face, swilling my peace/ I am awakened and the walls go on listening like me/ They cough as wounded insomniac/ The roof goes on asking my cheeks: whose are they?/ Whose my mouth and my arrogant prominent chest?'

Not only do the walls and roof of her house increase her torment; nature represented by rain duplicates her agony: 'The rain's spindle kneads the sticky streets/Whose stones made of hard soil.' He seems to find identification between the tears of the distressed strong lady and the rains' effect on the hard stony soil of the street. She goes on listening to the returning steps of her husband: 'I go on listening to your steps /and feel them come close and far as stray ghost/ something is telling me that you have never come back yet/ But; seek refuge from the whispers of the Satan.'

Pretending that her husband is still alive; she seeks a relief in talking to his ghost: 'Will you come back to me? Who is for me?/ Do you know? I call you my eyes and arms/ I am here telling my story to your ghost/ It understands and heavily breathes as a putting out candle/'

She is completely alone i.e. her husband together with her family left her behind: 'You left me behind alone/ my father and my sister had left too/ With the increasing funeral I lost my mom/ Ah mom, open your eyes and look at me and watch!/ I buried my people and only graves are my people: my affectionate mother and father / But; you were amazed or you may be/ Victimized and I stayed alone in cold emptiness.'

What is important is that the wife of the deceased husband is still hopeful till the end of the poem. She cannot live without hope that is why she is still awaiting the arrival of her husband eagerly: 'will you come back to me/ Let my night drinks its shades and shouts loudly where are my stars?'. The poet wants to teach us not to lose our hope we should defend our hopes till the end of our life because no life without hope.

Due to the fact that: "poets are not normal people", the harsher the life is, for a poet, the more creative and effective his production will be. So, losing any of the poets' senses deepens their sensitivity and accordingly increases their creation. Al-Baraddouni is not exception to this fact. The hardship of his life including losing his eyesight, sharpens his sensibility and consequently strengthens his creativity.

Contemplating his poems, Al-Baraddouni proves no evidence of his blindness or lack of poetic communication. His images serve his poetic services perfectly and map out his philosophy professionally. They reflect different shades of colours and several rays of light and brightness in a way many eye-sighted poets are unable to master. His poetic creativity is a new sense replace and substitutes his lost eyesight and turns him from sightless man into a poet of high insight. As if missing his sight gives birth to his insight which is one of the characteristics that distinguish him among his contemporaries.

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Fatima Ali Al-Khamisi Al- Baraddouni's Poetic Sense: Insight of the Blind." *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, vol. 22, no. 11, 2017, pp. 14-17.