



**Research Article**

**THE IMAGE OF JERUSALEM IN THE CONTEMPORARY PALESTINIAN POEM A SEMIOTIC READING IN THE POEM "THE MIRRORS, JERUSALEM AND NEGOTIATIONS" AS A MODEL**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to present the image of Jerusalem in the Palestinian poetry through the poem "The Mirrors, Jerusalem and Negotiations" in the book of poems "We are still being washed by the departure". by the poet, Jamal Salsa'a.1

This study also figures out the self-fragmentation and division regarding its views of the exhausted Jerusalem between both the Israeli occupation on one hand and the freeze and stalemate of bet and negotiation on the other hand. However, the poet relieves this image from its tiring atmospheres through replacing it by a revived, poetic and optimistic image, which is linguistically snatched from the surrounding and direct political atmosphere. That is the fact about Jerusalem which keeps waving to the horses undeterred by the disgusting usurpers.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Due to the loads of critical studies, which were written about the image of Jerusalem in the Palestinian poetry since Jerusalem is regarded as the focal point of the religious and political conflict, the researcher will choose the above – mentioned poem as the focus for the consequent textual discussions for the following considerations:

- Time of the study: For example, Trump declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which totally sabotages the peace agreement, in which the two-state solution was signed. This, in turn, makes the study more realistic and vivid.
- The writer himself, who is a Palestinian Christian. This makes the study more national and keeps it safe from any accusations regarding anti-semitism and extremism.
- The time of publishing: This Book of Poems was published in 2013 and after 20 years of signing Oslo Peace Agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis. This peace which has not prevailed yet and Jerusalem is still aching under the Israeli occupation. The poet Jamal Salsa'a included several poems about Jerusalem in the aforementioned book of poems:
  - Al-Quds Poem -1- p. 226
  - Al-Quds Poem -2- p. 292
  - Al-Quds and Wadi Al-Nar - p. 295

2/ The textual analyses

The poem "The Mirrors, Jerusalem and Negotiations" diagnoses a poetic and psychological state in an attempt to redeem the city of Jerusalem – the icon of peace- from its occupation through the activation of self-feedback and questioning to uncover the secrets of the hidden, the falsified and the deceived inside the self in its attitude towards what is existent (The present consciousness) and the supposed to be (The possible consciousness). This entails a number of potential changes, which the individual aims to achieve to overturn the actual state. Culturally, this means, as stated by Lucien Goldman, that "The individual creates an imagined universe to express the vision of a certain social class, which possesses certain consciousness to be formulated about the aspired future state".<sup>2</sup>

This poem addresses the issue of Jerusalem poetically in terms of the denotative shift, the linguistic paradox and the interpretation. That is, the words will digress away from its silent and actual dictionary use and slide away looking for a new denotative horizon that would break the freeze and stalemate of reception or as stated by Bart, "Digression is the system of the text enjoyment".<sup>3</sup>

The context itself, whose structure overlaps with the threads of time and the entity of the place, constitutes a central image of Jerusalem. This kind of penetrating language really reassesses the processes of bringing down and rebuilding to formulate them in accordance with the culture and the identity, 4 which are compatible with the representations of the intellectual, political, religious and social status quo in a way that enables the receiver to decode this semiotic employment and determine

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the features of Jerusalem, which permeate into the two ends of the mirrors and the negotiations.

This study will certainly look for those semiotic signs to diagnose and illustrate them. Accordingly, the tools of illustration will definitely focus on the prominent linguistic and aesthetic structures of both the title and the poetic content of the linguistic and denotative structure of the image of Jerusalem in this poem through the following axes:

2. Lucien Goldman, *The Human Sciences and Philosophy*, trans. Yusuf Al-Antaki, ed. Mohammad Barada, the Supreme Council of Culture (Cairo, 1996), 116.

3. Roland Barthe, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Munther, Ayshi, 2nd ed., The Cultural Development Center (Aleppo, 2002), 33.

4. *Ibid.*, 28-29.

3/ The threshold dimension (Trilogy: The mirrors/ Jerusalem /The negotiations)

The title is regarded the most important lingua-visual message to be received since this message constitutes one of the reading thresholds; "it is the product of the semiotic interaction between the sender and the work, while the receiver gets involved in the work through the gate of the title and tries, using his/her cognitive background, to explain and investigate the title, which is short of number, grammar, structure and context"<sup>5</sup>. Since the title often summarizes the message of the text in a figurative and linguistic construction, which stores and intensifies the poetic meaning, Jamal Salsa'a intentionally used the tools of the artistic imagery in his poem's title "The mirrors, Jerusalem, The Negotiations" to let the receiver face three poetic utterances, whose threads unfold within the context of the poem.

The title of "The mirrors, Jerusalem, The negotiations" obtains its expressive powers from the denotative momentum, which the title absorbs from the major title of the book of poems "We are still being washed by the departure", in addition to what it stores from tacit meaning hidden within the linguistic texture of the poetic context. As for the nature of the relationship between the title of "The mirrors, Jerusalem, The Negotiations" and "We are still being washed by the departure", it is inclusive as the title plays the role of the stimulator to investigate the message of the main topic of the book of poems, which is the departure - the return to the usurped homeland. Therefore, the Arabic imperfect past tense "Still" implies that the book of poems is based on chronology and history and that any distortion of this imperfect past tense entails the distortion of history and reveals the nature of the everlasting Palestinian- Israel conflict about the land and the occupied Jerusalem; the linguistic construction "Being washed" is a perfect and vivid construction with denotations of life after death,

5. Mohammad F. Al-Jazzar, *The title and the semiotics of Literary communication*, General Egyptian Book Organization (Egypt, 1998), 19. similar to T.S Eliot approach.

The use of the present tense in "Being washed" goes deep into the future, which signifies the collective cause; the word "The departure" extends through two ages - the past and the present. It is used with the definite article "The" to show the magnitude of pain, sorrow and the lasting distress when the scene of the departure is called back. "Departure" is the English synonym of the Arabic word "Raheel", which starts with the Arabic voiced alveolar trill /r/ connected with the burning sound of the Arabic voiceless pharyngeal fricative /ħ/ and ends with the Arabic voiced alveolar lateral /l/, which swings to the bottom to symbolize the bumps of the departure and the depth of the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts.

The title also points out to the self-motivating power of the Palestinian memory, which is fueled by the words of the renewable steadfastness. Consequently, the departure will not be linked with the aimlessness or absence, but with steadfastness, return, land recovery, turning the chapter of the inner divisions and history, and then the title "The mirrors, Jerusalem, The negotiations" will definitely be an intellectual journey and a symbolic message, which constitutes one feature of the features of the search for the truth amidst the debris of fantasy and falsehood, and so Jerusalem will always be the center, to which the internal and external conflicts are directed. With reference to the structure, the title of the poem is an incomplete nominal sentence. This, in turn, allows the receiver to bridge the textual gaps. It is worth mentioning that the meaning of the threshold, here, is focalized since it is free from the time denotation, which reveals the state of stalemate, which affects each element in the title.

This is reflected in the prelude of the poem:

I am the bet frost..... Shall I depart? (Salsa'a: We are being washed by the departure: 54).

The poem is opened with an overview of the Palestinians' perception that they live in the idea frost atmosphere and struggling with the accumulation of the signs of semiotics; the white pause (...) <sup>6</sup> suggests the painful silence and the inability to express on one hand and the voice of the repeated Hamazah-the Arabic glottal stop [ʔ]- stands as a barrier to the revelation in the verb (Amadi)-Are you departing? on the other hand. "It is known that when uttering the sound of Hamzah, the opening between the two vocal cords closes completely, resulting in the blockage of air."<sup>7</sup> It is the glottal plosive that blocks the breath when it is uttered, as is the case in this title, which conceals a number of different voices behind the mirrors and the negotiations that revolve around Jerusalem between the views, hope and falsehood.

It is clear that each of the elements of the title is surrounded by a halo of vagueness, as is evident from the size of the questions and confusion that the poem raises along the lines of poetry - questions behind the mirrors ranging from the national memory mirrors that deepen the image of the ancient history of Jerusalem, and the self-mirrors in a way that distorts the internal self-image in its misleading mirrors and questions about what splits are hidden behind the negotiations and what Jerusalem gives in return for all this steadfastness to overcome any Arab or local containment as mentioned in the following lines: ( Salsa'a: 60)

The truth remains  
Cuts in the soul the morning sun into two halves  
One half gives and looks for the morning tears  
The other half walks around and refuses these wounds  
How can I live with a divided soul??

Then, the tone of puzzlement rises line after another until it reaches the textual conclusion as represented by the last stanza; (Salsa'a : 61)

6. Jan Kohen, *The Structure of the poetic Language*, trans. Mohammad Al-Wali, Mohammad Al-Omary, 1st ed, Tupqal Bookshop (Morocco, 1986), 55.

7. Mohammad J. Noury, *Chapters in Phonetics*, 1st ed, I-Nasser Press (Nablus, 1991), 231.

How can I leave this negotiation between the mirrors?  
Could an explosion be born inside us and take away the mirrors?

Could we have a choice that carries our sins?

The interrogative structure has exceeded fifteen expressive structures distributed between the meanings of self-criticism and optimism. However, these questions lead to other question in a spiral movement until the spark of salvation is spotted; it is only the fire, as a poetic and legendary symbol, that represents "that lunar enriched power ..... we know that from the legends of the nations, which talk about the first torch and how it was brought to the earth by being stolen from the moon by a woman."8 it is the fire that will bring life and save Jerusalem from the jaws of the immovable mirrors.

4/ The artistic dimension in the textual context:

Jerusalem constitutes the central poetic focus employed in the Palestinian contemporary poetry for its denotative effectiveness, which is linked with the historical context, and its elasticity for the artistic imagination, which changes into an artistic image, "where the picture moves smoothly in its general concept as a mental structure that intrinsically belongs to the world of thought, imagery and imagination rather than the real world. Thus, it does not appear to represent the real intended place, but the psychological one because it, as a mental and emotional structure, expresses a certain experience in a formative way. Consequently, the image is regarded as the focus, from which the threads of poetic composition emerge."9. Undoubtedly, Jerusalem is the theme of poetry discourse through different imagery patterns, which were presented in the form of two semantic dualities as seen below:

8. Feras Al- Sawwah, *The Mystery of Ishtar*, 8th ed, Al-Eddin Bookshop ( Damascus, 2002),12.

9. Salman A. Abbadi, *The Artistic Composition in the New Poem*, The Modern Bookshop (Jordan,2011),73.

4/1- Jerusalem is the cycle of life and resurrection:

A set of temporal clues maintain its superiority in the poem. These clues form a denotative and semantic field, which implies rejuvenation that moves from the immaterial death to the state of the recurrent psychological rejuvenation, such as the denotations of (The sun, the morning, the seasons' climate and orbits, tears, explosion, candles, wash me, wakes me up, we returned, the tears of time).

These clues are repeated as ones which imply the cycle of life, which is summarized by the legends of resurrection and life, such as the legends of Ishtar, July and Griffin.

These clues, especially in the contemporary poetry, embody the inevitability of life after silence, immobility and temporary death, which are similar to the status quo of Jerusalem, which is fluctuating between the disappointments, victories, reality and falsehood.

It is Jerusalem, with its mosques, churches and gates, the honest witness for the steadfastness and the rejuvenation of its people against the tyrant, who violates the sanctity of Jerusalem and history.

In his presentation of the poetic imagery to portray Jerusalem, the poet, Salsa'a, followed the strategy of the semantic and denotative interrelatedness that is entangled with the elements of time, which exceeded the limits of the past, present and future to achieve the poetic feature of the time embodied though the symbolism of some words that are full of the transcendent temporal horizon to maintain the psychological time. The poem, with the power of symbol and

comprehensiveness of the vision, slips away from the temporal and spatial restrictions."10 (Salsa'a:56)

10. Ali J. Al-Allaq, *Poetry and Reception*, 8th ed, Al- Shorouq Press for Publishing and distribution (Amman, Jordan, 1997),151.

Every day, the fragrance of the earth brings my soul together  
Wakes me up .....

Shouts inside me....Challenge the invaders lying!

And my sun is wounds

And my Jerusalem comes back

With the morning bloods in its eyeballs

When time is humanized with semiotic signs ( My sun wounds/ morning tears ) and changes into a time beyond the traditional history, the immovable morning in its silent cycle will be a motive for renovation through the renovating denotations of the tears, which are regarded , in the contemporary poetry, as the objective correlative for the idea of the cultural rejuvenation as per the legendary reference of Ishtar legend, which revives the earth through its tears, and so spring prevails since the stumbling time has been overcome and using the legendary time brings about a new life cycle for Jerusalem in isolation from the frost of the negotiations and self-questioning.

4/2 - Jerusalem between self-questioning and the spirit of salvation

The poem "The mirrors, Jerusalem, the negotiations" brings a number of questions to the degree that it looked like a monologue, in which the poet interrogates the sounds of wind and clouds as two psychological symbols amidst the regression of the present situation and uncertainty of the ideas.

(Salsa'a:56)

He says the clouds come back on the platform of wounds

She says the winds come back on the spear's lie

And the willow of my soul is still standing

How can he leave my soul as a hostage for every possibility

In view of the this existential concern, the denotation of (Soul) repeatedly comes to the surfaces as a semiotic sign (The willow of my soul, my soul is a hostage, Divides my soul, The halves of my soul, The mirror of my soul) to point out to that distress and pain, which keeps shaking every Palestinian when he/she perceives the bitterness of the Palestinian- Palestinian split and the everyday suffering of Jerusalem/ Palestine.

As a matter fact, this multifaceted - Palestinian soul is the soul of rejuvenation when sadness lights its torch; it is the soul of hope and sacrifice. It is also the soul, which is given away for the sake of return to snatch Jerusalem from the platform of waiting: (Salsa'a: 57)

It's Jerusalem that stays before the platform

And in the frost

Waving its handkerchief

She does not say goodbye to the impossible

The Palestinian /Jerusalem soul will be the savior as in the Christianity ,which regards the soul as the hidden enlightening power ,which starts the spark of life and relieves from the feeling of being sinful for not protecting Jerusalem.(Sals'a : 61)

I still feel sinful

With my sin, I left the tears of Jerusalem

Calling.....

The open-ended closing of this stanza opens vast horizons, which need to be filled. It is Jerusalem calling. What is she saying?!! What does she want?!! And if we consider the absence of the self and its melting within the poem to become one self, then the questions, which come from the holy place, will be the same as those of the self, which transcends in the hearts of the Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims and the world freedom fighters.

## **CONCLUSION**

Jerusalem has constituted the focus of the poetic composition, whose imagery threads slipped through the trilogy "Trilogy, Jerusalem, The negotiations" and relied in its poetic composition on the rules of the poetic discourse. Therefore, it is seen as the compass for the receiver to navigate into the world of imagination in a poetic and psychological journey through the employment of the semiotic signs, which are surrounded by a halo of consecration to counter fight the bitter status quo.

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