Employment of the Oxymoron in the Traditional Poem and the Modern Prose Poem

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Abstract

The employment of the Oxymoron, which is a modern linguistic device, is one of the significant techniques that enjoys evident presence in modern poetry and influence on the reading and interpretation processes. This study defines the technique of the Oxymoron as a poetic style, explores its first signs in the traditional Arabic poetry and determines the track of its process till its appearance in the prose-poem in the modern period.

The importance of this study is that it highlights Oxymoron as a key to analyzing poetic text and that it offers a comparative study between classic and modern poetry and highlights the difference in dealing with the Oxymoron and its development over time. In addition, this study presents a new definition of Oxymoron, new classifications based on the theoretical material around it and poetic readings.

Key terms: oxymoron, poetic ambiguity, poetic language, contradiction

Introduction

Language as a living creature that lives in the heart of society and is influenced by its changes has witnessed a prominent transformation from its state in classical Jahiliyyah poetry and its modernist contemporary poetry.

The poetic language is no longer an accurate introduction or a tight exposition of a thought or a topic, and the poetic phrase no longer follows a clear system of stable relationships between words which are close to standard declarative direct language that keeps to the accuracy of punctuation marks and grammatical rules. In fact, the classical language has turned into a language that is no more subject to the familiar commonly accepted writing patterns, but a language that neglects grammatical rules, punctuation marks, conjunctions, and traditional sentence

structure. Besides, it is characterized by being evasive, non-stereotyped, non-conjunctional, illogical, and employs contradiction, paradox and discrepancies as a fundamental connection between its phrases, which suggest chaos, disconnection, and disorder.

Perhaps the Oxymoron is one of the significant techniques that enjoys evident presence in poetry and influence on the reading and interpretation processes. This study defines the technique of the Oxymoron as a poetic style, explores its first signs in the traditional Arabic poetry and determines the track of its process till its appearance in the prose-poem in the modern period.

I. The lexicological and terminological meaning of Oxymoron

The term Oxymoron comes from the classical Greek language, which indicates a combination of two words of two separate meanings; 'oxus', which means 'sharp' or 'clever' and 'moros', which means 'foolishness' or 'stupidity.'[1] This phrase of 'clever foolishness' undoubtedly refers to the combination of antonyms in an unfamiliar way, and the paradoxical meaning of the two words is what characterizes the oxymoron in particular from other techniques. The term 'oxymoron' was translated into Arabic as 'al-Irdaph al-Khalfi' which means "joining a word to another with which there is some kind of contradiction. It was defined as "an external paradox between two phrases in order to arouse admiration[2] or irony[3] or to achieve a rhetorical impact[4].

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[1] Majdi Wahba points out that the Greek origin of the term Oxymoron means, "somethings that has no intended meaning', Wahba, 1974, p. 25.

[2] Wahba, 1974, p. 374

[3] Assi, Yaqub, 1987, v. 1, p. 122. Als: Yaqub, Barakeh, Shikhani, 1987, p. 29.

[4] Fahi, 2000, p. 22. Mohammad al-Tunji, mentions in his book al-Mu'jam al-Mufassal fi al-Adab, that the purpose of external contradiction is to reach the real deep meaning by a rhetoric effect, in: al-Tjnji,1993, vol. 1, p. 79.

II. The Structure and Types of Oxymora

The Oxymoron comes in different forms but all of them are far from the ordinary and clear employment of the language. Probably the most important classification of oxymoron forms is the one that was made by Yeshayaho Shen, who distinguished between two main kinds: *direct oxymoron* and *indirect oxymoron,*. The main difference between them is that the first consists of two antonymous consecutive lexical items that are directly contradictory. This means that the first word appears and its antonym follows e.g.: *jafaf ratb/wet dryness,* where the words *'jafaf/dryness, and wet,* are lexicological items that introduce two contradictory poles that have clear dimensions.

This type of oxymoron does not distinguish between the noun *jafaf/ dryness* and the adjective *jaf/ dry* as both of them introduce the direct opposite to the word *ratb*. Regarding the *indirect oxymoron*, the two lexical items that consist of oxymoron are not antonymous in a direct way, as the second item is an adjective that is contradictory to the first item e.g. *jafaf maa'i* / watery dryness, where 'water' is not a direct opposite of *jafaf/ dryness*, but it is one of the basic components of *wetness*, which are the opposite of *jafaf/ dryness*.

Bernard Dupriez distinguishes between other types of Oxymora at the level of the word, the level of the phrase, and the level of points of view and thoughts.[1] Dupriez defines the Phrasal Oxymora as a discourse that consists of two consecutive emphatics that contradict each other but are not discordant. Dupriez defines the Oxymoron of Points of View as a contradiction of paradoxical opinions within the same character [2]. He confirms that the paradox remains latent, implicit but is not against logic, because the meaning of the words in reality remains non-discordant with each other, and when the Oxymoron is

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[1] Dupriez, 1991, pp. 311-313.

[2] Dupriez, 1991, p. 312.

accompanied by contradiction in the meaning of the context or connection it means that there is integration between the contradictory thoughts. [1]

The Oxymoron is not limited to these types, as we find more varieties and other classifications. However, after I became aware of all the kinds of Oxymoron, and after reading most of what has been written about this lexical feature, in addition to going over the classical an modernist collections of poetry and the Oxymora that are mentioned in them, I found it appropriate to define other types of Oxymoron, which might be close to Shen's classification of direct and indirect oxymoron, as Oxymora that are not interested not only in whether the oxymoron is direct or indirect, but interested also in the rhetorical figures of speech or poetic techniques that accompany the contradiction, and constitute a significant part of the Arabic poetry in its different stages. Consequently, this study defines the types of oxymoron and treats them as two main types, but the second type is divided into four sub-types, as follows:

1. **Antithetical Oxymoron**, which was traditionally called the *Direct Oxymoron*. This study deals with it with specific reference to the figure of speech of antithesis (Tibaq) in its two types: Tibaq Salb and Tibaq Ijab / Negative Tibaq and Positive Tibaq [2], such as: *kathratu qilla/ abundance of littleness ; quwati dha'f/ my power is weakness; ghuyyab hudhar/ absent present ones; al-qarib al-na'i/ the close remote* and other oxymora that consist of two paradoxical words. We notice in the predominantly employed

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[1] Dupriez, 1991, p. 313.

[2] Tibaq al-Ijab or antithesis is the combination between "something and its opposite", Matlub, 1996, p. 522. It has two opposites. Asi, Yaqub, 1987, vol. 2, p. 787. Tibaq al-Salb occurs when" the speaker says two sentences or two words, one of which is positive and the other is negative, or the two are negative". Ibn Abi al-Isba', 1963, p. 114.

type is Tibaq al-Ijab, though we might find also employments of Tibaq al-Salb (antithesis) such as *hadher ghayr hadher / present not present*, where the opposite of the word "*present"* is its negative form by the use of "*ghayr"* (*not/ non*).

2. **The Integrative Oxymoron**, which is quite close to the Indirect Oxymoron. This study calls it "Integrative" because it is basically established on integration between two artistic techniques; the first is the oxymoron, while the second is a comparison or a metaphor, the style of integration of senses or coincidental synchronous senses, or the style of symbolism. In view of this, we can define four types of the *Integrative Oxymora*, which are:

   a. **Comparative Oxymoron**, which combines between the oxymoron on the one side and the comparison on the other, such as: *al-samt oghniya, silence is a song;* or *al-samt qasida / silence is a poem*, where the speaker compares 'silence' to its opposite. The song sends out sounds, and the poem is also based on words rather than silence.

   b. **Metaphorical Oxymoron**, which is an oxymoron whose two words or the rest of the phrase are connected by a metaphorical relationship, e.g. *al-hawa' al-mayyet/ the dead air; al-dhayf al-hajari/ the stone guest*, where 'death' is attributed to 'life', which is the source of life, and the quality of petrification and fixation is borrowed for the welcome guest, which makes the contradiction, whether direct or indirect, dominate the phrases between the borrowed one, the borrowed from , or the borrowed for.

   c. **Oxymoron of Synchronous Senses**. The technique of synchronous senses is "an expression that indicates the perception or describes a specific perception with a specific sense through the language of another sense such as: perception of one's voice or describing it as 'velvet' or

'warm' or 'heavy' or 'sweet' [1] . In this type of oxymoron, there is a mixture of between the senses, through keeping contradiction between the two sides of the oxymoron as in: *al-'Itr al-Mu'tem/ the dark perfume*, which combines between the two senses of 'sight' and 'smell'. Perfume, which symbolizes refreshment and any beautiful thing, is given the trait of *'mu'tem/dark*,' which indicates darkening, ambiguity, enclosure. Paradox between the two fields is clear.

d. **Symbolical Oxymoron**, which consists of two words, whose symbolism is contradictory, or the symbolism of one word is contradictory with the symbolism of the second one. For example, the phrase *bahr fi jidar/ a sea in a wall* is a symbolical oxymoron as the sea is a symbol of expansion and openness, softness, motion, and life, the wall is a symbol of stability, fixation, and narrowness.

III. The Oxymoron from the Classical Arabic Poetry till the Modern Prose-poem

a. Classical Arabic Poetry

The Oxymoron is a classical-modern Arab-Western poetic technique, and though it is a modern poetic term in the field of the Arabic literary criticism, it is linguistic phenomenon that had some signs in the traditional Arabic poetry.

However, the study confirms that this technique used to be considered a 'shortcoming' or 'a flaw' in the classical poetry and the poet would be blamed for it and therefore, it is better for him to avoid it. Its employment in classical poetry was not to lend ambiguity to the line of poetry or the poem as a whole,

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[1]. al-Muhandes, Wahba, 1984, p. 138; Fathi, 2000, p. 69-70; al-Tunji, 1993, vol. 1, p. 363.

to make the text evasive, or to activate the reader to decode the ambiguity; it focused on more ornamentation and artificial beauty.

Besides, a number of expressions of oxymoron in classical and neo-classical poetry became commonly known and did not cause awe to the reader such as: combining of closeness and remoteness, presence and absence, in the same described object. Here are some examples from a poem by Abu Tamman, in which he praises Abu Duluf al-Qasem Ibn Isa al-'Ijli:

فأنت لديه حاضرٌ غير حاضر   جميعًا وعنه غائب غير غائب

For him, you are present and not present

And absent from him, and not absent [1]

Abu Tammam makes the praised person 'present' and 'not present' at the same time, and 'absent' and 'not absent', too, but does not connect the two contradictory words by any connecting word, such as the negative conjunction 'la = not' for example, or any other article that might direct the reader and reveal the ambiguity, but he gives the person two contradictory traits that are connected by a relationship of Tibaq Salb (antithesis), where the second contradicts the first by negating them with the word "ghayr" (not).

By doing so, the expression comes closer to the antithetical oxymoron (Tibaqi), and the reader who comes across it finds himself confused and cannot comprehend how the same person can be 'present' and 'not present' at the same time. It suggests two different directions, where the person can be "present at" and "not present" from the other, such as 'the heart and the eye.' The praised can be present in the heart and mind though he is not present physically in front of the eyes. This meaning is repeated in another line of poetry, in which he says:

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[1] . Abu Tammam, 1964, vol. 1, p. 213.

طُلِبتَ فلم تبعُد وأنتَ بَعيدُ   فلا تبعُدَن مِنّي قريبًا فطالما

Don't be away from me, you have been asked repeatedly to be close,

and you did not go away, even when you were away[1]

The poet addresses this line of poetry to Ibn Abi Dawoud, who wanted to hear his poem, but when he was delayed, he asked him not to be away from him, as he considers Ibn Abi Dawoud close to him in soul, and he does not go away even if he is far away in body. Abu Tammam's words "You were not far even when you were far," come close to the form of the *antithetical oxymoron,* which is based on two antonyms that are connected by the relationship of *negative antithesis* e.g. *lam tab'ud and ba'id/ you were not go away when you were.* In one of his poems, Abu Tammam defines himself as "*the close-remote*" but this combination is not clear till the reader rereads the line several times and connects it with the lines that precede and follow it. Thus, he becomes aware that the poet is elegizing, and considers himself after his death *'the close-remote'* one. In other words, the elegized person is remote from the poet visually, but is close to him spiritually. Thus, the poet is in a state of spiritual closeness and physical remoteness.

فأنا اليومَ في القريبِ البعيدِ   ونأى الهجرِ بالذي لا أسمّي

Separation went away with the on that I do not name,

And today, I am in the remote close one[2]

This combination between *the close* and *the remote* is an antithetical oxymoron, as the two words contradict in a direct way, and the relationship of *positive antithesis* connects them. We can refer to another line of poetry that integrates these two antonyms in a poem in which Abu Tammam addresses his beloved lady, saying:

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[1]. Ibid., p. 400.

[2] . Abu Tammam, 1965, vol. 4, p. 190

قَرَّبَتها المُنى وباعدها النَّأُ   يُ فأَضحَتْ مِنّي بعيدًا قريبًا

Wishes brought her closer, but remoteness kept her away

She became remote close to me[1]

In the first hemistich of this line, Abu Tammam explains what makes his beloved *close* to him, and what makes her *remote*. In the second hemistich, he describes his beloved as close-remote, and the remoteness between them is, as he has said in previous lines, is physical, but her closeness is spiritual, which is represented in his longing to see her and meet a real meeting.

In one of the lines that al-Mutanabi said in his youth praising Mohammad bin Abdullah al-'Ulwai al-Mushattab, he says:

ليس يحيك الملام في هِمَم   أقربها منك عنك أبعدها

Blame does not affect bravery, whose closest part to you

Is the remotest part from you[2]

He makes bravery, which is closest to the addressee, the remotest from him. The intended meaning behind this antonym is that bravery is in one's thought, but far in reality.

b. The Neoclassical Poetry

It seems that the neoclassical poetry, whose landmarks were crystallized at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, inherited from classical poetry the components of the employment of oxymoron and its roles, which is an extremely natural matter because the neoclassical poetry is a poetic aesthetic extension to classical poetry. Some examples of Oxymoron in neoclassical poetry is the following line that Ahmad Shawqi said in elegizing Qassem Bek Amin:

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[1] . Ibid., p. 161.

[2] . al-Mutanabbi, vol. 1, p. 331.

<div dir="rtl">

أبكيكم من غُيَّب حضَّارِ　　　　يا غائبين وفي الجوانح طيفُهم

</div>

O absent ones, but your vision is between the wings,

I cry for of you - the absent and the present[1]

Shawqi means by that that the dead person is absent physically, but present spiritually. The Oxymoron "absent-present" in this case does not lend the line a semantic ambiguity, but emphasizes the meaning of the first hemistich and repeats it. The two components of this phrase, which goes under the antithetical oxymoron category, are defined and therefore, it is understood and accepted by the reader. Giving the two adjectives of *guyyab wa huddar/absent and present* to the same persons makes the image more structural and more complicated. However, the previous explanation to it and the declaration that the poet is speaking about body-absence and spiritual-presence removes any obscurity or ambiguity.

In his poem, which he wrote in honor to Shawqi at the festival that was held in 1927 at the Royal House Opera, Khalil Mutran says:

<div dir="rtl">

من ذلك الرجل **القريب النائي**　　　　لا شيءَ أروغُ، إذ تكون جليسه،

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There is nothing more wonderful than to be a companion

to that close and remote man [2]

As we see, he also employs the phrase *the close-remote* combining 'closeness, and 'remoteness', which are antonyms, and makes them double synchronous adjectives as one adjective. He considers Shawqi remote and close at the same time. He speaks about two different directions of 'closeness' and 'remoteness'. In other words, Shawqi is close to everyone in his beautiful poetry and in his defense of his people, but he is remote in his body because he had a new position as a Member in the Senate representing Sinai region.

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[1] . Shawqi, 1965, vol. 3, p. 212

[2] . Mutran, 1967, vol. 3, p. 234

As we see, both classical and neoclassical poetry include oxymora, but they are limited in number. Besides, they are built according to one clear and definite form, and definite understandable meanings that are confirmed in the first or second hemistich, or in a preceding or following line to the oxymoron. We should point out that the type of oxymoron that was most common and popular in this period is the antithetical type. Probably, that is attributed to the fact that this type of oxymoron is easier to explain as its analysis and understanding its meaning depends on the interpretation of the two words that form it and the determination of the features of contradiction between them.

c. Modern Arabic Poetry: Foot Poetry and Prose-Poem

In modern poetry, mainly in the *foot poetry* and the *prose-poem*, the Oxymoron has become a fundamental feature of ambiguity that calls the reader to share in the writing and acquire the different skills in order to be able to decode the text and reach its different indications, knowing that every new reading of the text carries a new indication.

Besides, the oxymoron phrases started assuming a more structural and sophisticated character that expresses antithetical duality between two sides or more about the dialectic of life and death, death and resurrection, and mythical meanings in which the dialectic of the personal and the total, and the real time and the legendary lie together. It also expresses the dialectic of reality and dream, good and evil, and other human literary and artistic life themes.

Regarding the oxymoron that is most common in this stage, we can say that it is the **Integrative type**, despite the existence of phrases of antithetical oxymora, too. The following section introduces illustrations to each type. I chose here the method of qualitative exposition rather than the historical one to point out the extent of the domination of oxymoron on the text of modern poetry in its different

types, unlike the classical poetry, which mainly included the antithetical oxymoron, a less complicated type:

1. **Antithetical Oxymoron**: This type spread in traditional poetry, but it has presence also in foot-poetry (Shi'r al-Taf'ilah). Here are some examples from al-Bayati's poem **al-'Anqa'/ The Phoenix**:

I love her a young lady,	أحبّها صبيّة
Dead and alive,	**ميّتة وحيّة**
A poem on a grave,	قصيدة على ضريح
An orphan rhyme,	قافية يتيمة
A willow without leaves,	صفصافة عارية الأوراق
Crying for Euphrates[1]	تبكي على الفرات

Though he separates between the two antonyms by the conjunction "wa/ and," this separation does not clarify the meaning or simplify the operation of interpretation for the reader. The antonyms do not appear as two different states. On the contrary, the poet makes them one state for the young lady, or two similar states, or two identical ones. He loved her alive and dead. What simplifies the reader's understanding of this antonym is the title of the poem – **al-Anqa'/ Phoenix**. She is that large bird, the legend that symbolizes resurrection and rebirth after death through its burning in fire and birth of another phoenix from its ashes to repeat the cycle of life [2]. Here, it becomes clear that the idea in *dead and alive* refers to the idea of resurrection and rebirth after death. The young lady in the first line can be the same legendary phoenix that has had prominent presence in most of al-Bayati's poetry.

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[1] . al-Bayati, p. 83.

[2] . For more information about the myth of death and resurrection, see Awadh, 1974; al-Azmeh, 1996.

In the poem **Ughniyat min Zaman al-Sanabil al-Muhtariqa/ Songs from the Time of the Burnt Wheat-Spikes**, Mohammad Afifi Mattar says:

> وليلة المخاض لا تجيء.. غيرَ أنني أحسُّها تدور
> مسرجةً مطفأةً في العين

The night of labor does not come… but I feel it revolves

Lighted-extinguished in the eyes [1].

The paradox appears clearly between the two words *lighted* and *extinguished*, which are antonyms. Through this phrase, Mattar expresses a pessoptimistic look. He imagines the *night of labor* that he waits for, the night of the birth of his son, Mansour, to be the night of the end of pain and suffering. It is lighted and he feels its approach, but it does not keep this hope of salvation for him, as it dims and is extinguished again, and he no more sees it. He realizes that it is extremely far away from him. In its circulation and revolution, its alternation between *lighting* and *extinguishing* arouses hope in him once and despair once, without letting him settle down on any state.

Probably the following passage, which is the sixth in Adonis' poem **Simia'** / **Semiotics**, is the one that most employs antithetical oxymora. It says:

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[1] . Mattar, 1978, p. 65.

Out of desire and intention,

I rode my entity,

Independent with an assistant,

Complete and insufficient,

Rising with a sunset, organized

But completely scattered

Accepted and refused,

Close but there is no sign of me,

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Out of desire and intention,

I rode my entity,

Part of me is my wholeness,

My darkness is my light,

Deserted but do not feel lonely

Connected but do not feel amicable

Safe but have no peace of mind. [1]

من الرغبة والقصد

ركبت ماهيتي

مستقلاً ولي مُعين

تامًا وبي نقص

طالعًا وبي غروب

منظومًا وكلّي انتثار

مقبولاً وما من أحد إلا ويرفضني

قريبًا ولا علامة لي

من الرغبة والقصد

ركبت ماهيتي

بعضي كلّي

ظلامي نوري

مهجورًا لا أستوحش

موصولاً لا أستأنس

آمنًا ولا طمأنينة لي

2. **Integrative Oxymoron**. This type is more present in poetry and can be divided into two sub-types:

   a. **Comparative Integrative Oxymoron**. Here is an illustration from Mattar's poem **Ughniyat al-Mughanni al-Akhras/ the Songs of the Dumb Singer.** The title itself is an oxymoron. The poem says:

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[1]. Adonis, 1988, p. 226.

الصمت في حنجرتي قصيدةٌ دامية عميقة

وآهة رقيقة

الصمت في غاشية الأحلام

أغنية تهرب في الظلام

Silence in my throat is a deep bleeding poem

And a soft sigh,

Silence in the swoon of dreams

Is a song that escapes during the night.[1]

The poet describes the singer who sends out his voice to sing as '*dumb* and cannot speak. This is a comparative oxymoron in which the trait of *speaking* is negated and the singer is given the trait of being *dumb*, as if the phrase should be *the singer as a dumb person*. This singer is the speaker in the passage, and he considers *silence* to be a *poem*, a *sigh* and a *song* considering *silence* to be the best way that expresses serious issues and personal emotions. The two phrases *silence is a poem* and *silence is a song* go under the category of Comparative Oxymoron. *Silence* is compared to a *poem* in all its linguistic, formal, and content characteristics. It is also compared to a *song*, as if the speaker wanted to emphasize that *silence* is deeper than *speech* , more expressive and more suggestive. It is also the best means that describes sadness, pains, and sighs, and the best singer and pacifier to human beings.

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[1]Mattar, 1978, p. 72.

b. Metaphorical Integrative Oxymoron

This type of oxymoron is the most common one in poetry. The following are samples from al-Bayati's poem **Sura li al-Sahrawardi fi Shababiheh/ A Picture of al-Sahrawadi in his Youth.**

> أعرفها تلك **الصحراء المائية** ذات الأثداء
> وهي تعري سرتها للشمس الحمراء

I know that breasted watery desert

As she denudes her navel to the red sun[1]

Al-Bayati combines between the desert and water. The desert is smooth with no trees and mountains. It is like the bare back of the animal, with no plant or life [2] but here it is given liveliness and life through describing it as *watery*. Thus, the wild desert is compared to the sea, and acquires the quality of fertility and freshness. It has breasts, wears jewels, and possesses an eye of pottery. Probably, it symbolizes daily life that surrounds people and is full of temptations that the poet considers imaginary and false.

The metaphorical Oxymoron is clear in Mohammad Afifi Mattar's poetry. He employs it in a single poem in a conspicuous meaningful way, which is connected to the general meaning. Here is an interesting example:

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[1] . al-Bayati, 1966, p. 232

[2] . Ibn Manzour, 1988, vol. 7, p. 289

أمي ولدتني فوق سرير الجوع

فشربت الصدأ السائل من مسمار العالم

ورقصتُ على إيقاع الموت

وأكلتُ الأرغفة الحجرية

فاخترقتْ صدري الحربة في أعراس الصمت

My mother gave birth to me on the bed of hunger

I drank the flowing rust from the nail of the world

And danced at the rhythm of death

And ate the stony loaves

A spear penetrated my chest at the weddings of silence[1]

Here, *death* has a *rhythm, silence* has a *wedding* and he describes the *loaf of bread*, can be eaten, as *stony*. All this confirms the poet's reliance on oxymoron as a linguistic poetic technique, and he employs it in an intensive way in the poem, and even in the same passage/stanza. *Death* is the absolute silence, stagnation and eternal sleep, where there is no beating of hearts, no life and no rhythm, but Mohammad Afifi Mattar makes it lively with a rhythm, and not just any rhythm – it is a rhythm that people can dance according to. In other words, it is a singer who calls to integration and dancing. In addition to that, silence turns into a wedding. It no more means silence and muteness, but expresses an atmosphere of joy, singing, dancing and other activities that create an atmosphere of wedding.

Thus, we can argue that these two phrases of *rhythm of death* and *weddings of silence*, in which Mattar integrates life and death, silence and motion, sadness and joy and other contradictions are two metaphorical oxymora as he compares *death* to a *song* or a rhythmic tone. Besides, he compares

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[1]. Mattar, 1978, p. 1

silence to a *celebration* at a certain wedding, or it is the wedding itself with the rites that it includes. In addition to that, Mattar employs a third oxymoron, which is the *stony loaves*, where the *stone* is a symbol of *stagnation*, solidity and death, while the *loaf* is a symbol of *living* and it is not made of stone or rigid things, but from plants in order to give its eater health and life. There is no doubt that since Mattar introduces these expressions in a consecutive way, he is aware of this type of integration of contradictions, and he aims at targets beyond mere innovation in the linguistic poetic coinages. Rhythm of Death and Stony Loaves and Weddings of Silence participate to introduce the dialectic of life and death, and to express those circumstances in which the first person speaker (I) is born in the poem. The general atmosphere in that place in which the first person (I) is born is summarized in hunger, death and silence. However, the poet reduces the effect of the pressure of this description, and turns death into a song with a rhythm, and silence into a wedding. Besides, he does not ignore the existence of the basic needs of life and growth, i.e. bread. He mentions it but he makes it stony. Thus, he lends some special beauty, surprises the reader and dazzles him by his extraordinary structures.

In the third passage (stanza) of the poem, he says:

The unknown dead person in the evening streets Comes every day from my village He leaves his stretched skin on the asphalt And his vest on the stripes of the guards[1].	الميّت المجهول في شـوارع المسـاء من قريتي يجيء كل يوم يترك جلدَه الممتدَّ في الإسـفلت، والصدارَ في أشـرطة الحراس

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[1] . Mattar, 1978, p. 8

The poet returns to integration between life and death, as he makes the dead man able to come from the village . This is a metaphorical oxymoron also, in which he compares the dead person to a human being who can go and come and make visit too. Here, he seems to come to the village to give her something of himself, his skin and his vest and then to leave. The relationship between him and this city seems to be unbreakable even after death.

In his poem, **Ahzan al-Shabah al-Awwal/ Sorrows of the First Ghost,** Mattar says:

لو أن **الشمس القاسية السوداء**

قلعَتْكم من غيطان طفولتكم ورمتكم

في عرباتِ الغربةِ والصحراء

فخلعتم ثوب الدفء الأول

ولبستم رُقع الألوان الثلجية والديجور

لعرفتم كيف أموت

If the cruel black sun uprooted you

From the fields of your childhood and threw you

Into the carriages of exile and the desert,

And took off the garment of first warmth

And dressed the parchments of snowy colors and darkness,

You would know how I am dying[1]

Describing the sun as *black* makes the phrase go under the category of metaphorical oxymoron due to the clear contradiction in comparing the *sun* to a deeply *black* or dark night. Through this expression, the poet hints at the disadvantages of life, to the transformation of conditions from comfort, childhood and innocence into troubles, distress, and running after one's

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[1] . Ibid., p. 91

bread that can lead to death. The addressee in the poem did not live such life. The cruel *black sun* did not move them from childhood into exile and desert, and they did not taste the bitterness of hardships and darkness. Therefore, they do not realize what the speaker's suffering and the hardships he has undergone is like. Besides, they do not realize the closeness of death to him, and his feeling that it accompanies him.

c. Symbolical Integrative Oxymoron

We find some examples that illustrate this type of oxymoron in al-Bayati's poem **Ughniyat al-Mahkoom bi al-Hub/ Song of the Doomed to Love.** He says:

A bird of fire	عصفور من نار
Woke me up	أيقظني
Flew	طار
Through the walls[1]	عبر الأسوار

Here, al-Bayati combines between life, freedom and movement that is represented in the bird on the one hand, and death, ruin and termination that the fire represents on the other. He makes the bird a creature that is made of fire. It flies, wakes up the poet and passes. Here, the reader finds himself confused, unable to imagine the scene of this firebird, neither can he reach the meaning that lies behind this expression. No doubt, the reader has to read this stanza several times, besides reading other texts by al-Bayati in order to realize that the dialectic of life and death is present in a prominent way in most of his themes, especially the theme of love which is considered to be death and life, weakness and power, and other contrasts that never pass

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[1] . al-Bayati, 1996, p. 75

away. Death, for al-Bayati, does not indicate the *end* but *burning in fire*, which indicates *rebirth from ashes*, and the firebird, even if it is about *death in fire* is consequently about *rebirth*.

In the poem **al-Mattar/ Rain**, the speaker/poet says:

In the **stony fields**	في الحقول الحجرية
The night planted gypsy roots	غرسَ الليل جذورًا غجرية
And legends of Bedouin songs	وأساطير غناء بدويّة

The expression *stony fields* goes under the category of Symbolical Oxymoron, as the fields symbolize life, blossoming and giving, while the stones symbolize solidity, hardness, rigidity, death and non-giving. By qualifying the fields as *stony*, Mattar cancels the trait of blossoming, giving and life, and makes them a place where the cities of silence and fires were planted.

In the poem of **A State of Siege**, Onsi al-Haj describes the scene of a butterfly flying around a pig, saying:

> رأيت مخرزًا يحفر بطن حامل وخنْزيرًا تراوده
> فراشة. بصوت مرتفع ذهبت في الطريق. نُكحت من
> بؤبؤي وعلى الورقة كتبت بياضًا

I saw a **an awl that digs the abdomen of a pregnant woman**,

And a pig that was tempted by a butterfly,

I went on my way with a loud voice.

I was taken from the pupil of my eyes,

And on the piece of paper, I **wrote a white**[1].

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[1] . al-Haj, 1994, p. 43.

Usually, a pig and a butterfly do not meet in one scene. What attracts a butterfly is beauty and blossoming flowers rather than ugly wild animals that send fear and shuddering. This expression of *a pig that is tempted by a butterfly* is a symbolical oxymoron that carries contrast between the *pig*, brutality, wildness, and dirtiness that it symbolizes on the one hand, and calmness, peacefulness, beauty and purity that the butterfly symbolizes on the other. We can argue also that the phrase *I saw an awl that digs the abdomen of a pregnant woman* is a symbolical oxymoron that sends an oxymoronic image in the reader's soul. The *awl* and *the pregnant woman's abdomen* do not go together in the same scene in one's intellect, as *murder* that is symbolized by the *awl* contradicts the idea of *birth* that pregnant woman's abdomen symbolizes. We can add to these two oxymora the last phrase *I wrote a white*, which contradicts the act of writing and the symbolism of the *white* of the sheet of paper that is void of any writing or drawing or any sign by a pen or pencil. It seems as if the speaking "I" here considered *whiteness* a kind of language and *speech* that means a lot, and probably more than what written words can mean. Thus, he considers non-writing and leaving the page *blank* a kind of writing and a text that says a lot.

d. **Oxymoron of Synchronous Senses**

This type of oxymoron of synchronous senses is the least common one. Here is an illustrative sample from Mattar's poem **Mamlakat al-Ya's/ Kindgom of Despair**.

> في أرض القلب المرتعش العُريان
> أمشي مرتعدًا عبر حقول الدم
> فيحطُّ عليّ ويخنقني العطر المعتم

In the land of the bare shivering heart

I walk trembling through the fields of blood

The **dim perfume** descends, and suffocates me.[1]

The phrase *dim perfume* illustrates the type of Oxymoron of Synchronous Senses. *Perfume* is a superordinate for all types of scents.[2] It symbolizes intoxication, openness, and can be conceived of by the smell sense. The trait that is given to it *dim* implies *darkness*, ambiguity, and opaqueness, which are conceived of by the senses of *sight* . As we see, the paradox is clear between the two sides of the oxymoron.

The employment of this type of oxymoron is repeated in other poems by Mattar. Here is one of them in the second stanza of his poem **Washm 'ala Khara'it al-Jasad. Al-Wash al-Thalith/ Tatoo on the Maps of the Body- The Third Tatoo.**

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[1] . Mattar, 1978, p. 53.

[2] . Ibn Manzour, 1988, vol. 9, p. 266

هذي جيوشُ السلاطين هامدةٌ في السكون الملون

(لا تعبري النهر يا طفلتي يا **غزالة رعبي**

وحلمي المكثّف..

يأتي زمانك.. يأتي زماني.. فنعبر في

جسد الرقص، نخترق **الصرخة الحجرية**.)

Here are the armies of the sultans, lying motionless in the colored silence

(Don't cross the river, my child, the doe of my fear

And my intensified dream,

Your time will come… my time will come, and we will go through

The body of dance, and penetrate the **stony cry**). [1]

Here, the *stony cry* represents an obstacle that the speaker tries to cross and overcome.

In another poem, Mattar uses a more unusual phrase:

ليس منتظمًا فوق طبل البراح المشاع سوى

خطوةِ الدّركي وصوت الحذاء الثقيل على **حجر السمع**

There is nothing organized over the drum of the public stretched land

Except the steps of the Daraki, and the sound of the heavy shoe upon

the **stone of hearing.** [2]

This integration between the two words *stone* and *hearing* has clear contradiction. The *stone* does not hear, and it is not influenced by any voice, while the sense of *sight* catches voices and is affected by them. Here, it is possible to consider this addition an **oxymoron of synchronous senses** ,

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[1]. Mattar, 1994, p. 75

[2] . Ibid., p. 134

where the *stone* is a visible and a tactile object, while *hearing* is a different sense. This phrase depicts the degree of heaviness of the sound of the steps of the Turkish gendarme (*Daraki*), and the people's hatred to him, and if the sense of *hearing* is inactive, if it is a stone, it will feel the heaviness of this sound and be drawn to it. This phrase is repeated in the poem, as the speaker says at the end of the poem:

> (خطوةٌ.. خطوتان..
> ومن بين وجهيهما شعلةٌ ودخانُ
> السجائر كالفرشـة المستضاءة،
> عاد إلى مستراح الحذاء الثقيل على **حجر السمع**.)

(One step or two

And from between their faces, a flame and smoke,

And the cigarettes smoke, like an illuminated mattress,

Returned to the resting place of the heavy shoe

On the **stone of hearing**)[1] .

Thus, he makes the sound of the shoe steps a *weight* that cannot be ignored, to which he returns at any time, and even the cigarette smoke returns to its resting place.

In a stanza from the poem **Dam al-Sha'ir/ The Poet's Blood**, al-Bayati resorts to the employment of *colors* as a side of the oxymoron, as he gives things colors that do not belong to them:

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[1] . Mattar, 1994, p. 135

صوت الشاعر فوق نحيب الكورس يعلو، منفردًا، منحازًا
ضد الموت وضد تعاسات البشر الفانين، **بنار سعادته**
السوداء يجوب العالم، منفيًا يتطهر، **لا اسم له،**
وله كل الأسماء، بقانون أزلي يتحول، يقتل هذي الوحشة، يقضي
بالشعر عليها، كم هو شرير أن يسكنك الشعر

The poet's voice rises the lamentation of the chorus, alone, and biased

Against death and against the miseries of mortal people, with the fire of his **black happiness**, roaming the world, purifying himself in exile, **with no name**,

And **he has all names**, by an everlasting law, killing this wilderness, exterminating it by poetry; how evil it is that poetry occupies you! [1]

The speaker describes the fire of happiness or happiness itself as *black*, combining between the feeling of happiness, which is an internal feeling, with the *black color*, which is a feeling that is perceived by *sight,* which incorporates this phrase under the category of **oxymoron of synchronous senses**. We can consider it, too, as a metaphorical oxymoron, because *happiness* is compared to *burning fires* that can be seen by the naked eye, and these fires are *black* because of the ashes that result from intensity of their inflammation. The poet raises his solo and sided voice, crying for the miseries of mortal humans. He roams the world, adapts himself to its changes, and tries to overcome loneliness by his poetry, as he is occupied by poetry, without having a name, though he has all names. This poet

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[1] . al-Bayati, 1996, p. 225-226.

transcends different times and places by his poetry. He does not belong to any of them, but rises above them in order to become suitable to any time and any place.

IV. Summary and Conclusions

To sum up, we suggest that the Oxymoron is an artistic technique that is based on external paradox that stems from real life and a foggy grey existence. It can be repelling on the surface, but deeply expresses the human self and human society, its reality and the whole world.

This style has become one of the fundamental techniques on which different arts are based. In modern poetry, it represents the poets' desire to be emancipated from glorification and over-hallowing of the traditional poem, and liberation from sanctification of the rigid self-closed poetic language.

The employment of the oxymoron was considered a flaw in traditional poetry and it is better for the poet to avoid it. However, in modern poetry, we find that awareness of the technique of paradox and combination of contrasts has become more prominent and more popular. Paradox is the basis of the structural method and it is also prominent in modern literary terminology as external paradox, and irony. In addition to that, paradox has become more common in modernist Arabic poetry, and clear through several poetic technique including oxymoron, which poets started employing in a deliberate way, and out of full awareness of its role in its semantic direction.

The oxymoron phrase in traditional poetry was not connected to the poem's indication as a whole, but a technique which is like other techniques and types of rhetoric and figures of speech, whose interpretation requires definition of the two sides of the paradox and continuity of reading the following line of poetry or rereading the preceding line in order to find out the meaning. Many times the

reader finds the interpretation of the oxymoron in the line in which the oxymoron appears, without having to make any extra effort.

Interestingly, in the popular folk poetry known as "hida'a" (cameleer's singing), the oxymoron has turned in many poems into a motif, and the analysis of the whole poems stems from its analysis. Treatment of the oxymoron requires a special state of awareness, persistence and working of the intellect. The ordinary unpracticed reader cannot deal with oxymoronic phrases and deduct their indications. Besides, the reader of traditional poetry, whose role was exclusive to listening or reading and clarifying difficult expressions, is no longer apt for the modernist method in writing, which requires a reader-writer, a reader-poet, and a reader-critic   who is familiar with the poetic styles in their classical and modern forms, and a well-educated reader who has a store of an abundant legendary heritage and cultural legacy.

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توظيف الأكسيمورون (الإرداف الخُلفي) في القصيدة التقليدية وقصيدة النثر الحديث

تكمن أهمّيّة البحث في كونه يسلّط الضّوء على الأوكسيمورون كمفتاح لتحليل النصّ الشعريّ، وفي أنّه يقدّم دراسة مقارنة بين الشعر القديم والحديث ويبرز الفرق في التعامل مع الأوكسيمورون ما بين القديم والحديث وكيفيّة تطوّر المصلح. وإلى جانب هذا يقدّم البحث تعريفًا جديدًا للأوكسيمورون، وتصنيفات جديدة يعتمد على المادة النظريّة حوله والقراءات الشعرية