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# THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF THE RHETORICAL IMAGE IN THE POETRY OF MALIK IBN AL-MURAHHAL: A CASE STUDY

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## Abstract

The present study aims to explore the psychological function of the rhetorical image in the poetry of Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal, revealing the ways the poet used simile, metaphor, and metonymy to express his various psychological states. The study also reveals the aesthetic and psychological functions of the rhetorical image in the poetry of Ibn Al-Murahhal, which express the poet's various psychological states, such as love, infatuation, happiness, and sadness. Moreover, the study reveals the impact of the poet's emotional experiences and the historical period he lived in on the development of the rhetorical image. The study also reveals the psychological function of the rhetorical image, which served the poet as a means of expressing emotions, psychological repression, and inner tension. Finally, the study reveals the role of rhetoric in the poetry of Ibn Al-Murahhal, which served the poet as a means of constructing his psychological state and expressing himself.

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**KEYWORDS:** Malik, simile, psychological, function

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## 1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Based on the long life span of the poet Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal, the turbulent period in which he lived, and the relation of the period to the poet's experiences, the present study aims to identify the psychological problems the poet faced by exploring the psychological function of the rhetorical image in the poet's work, such as simile, metaphor, metonymy, and allegory.

## 2. THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study is intended to uncover the features of rhetorical beauty and reflect the rhetorical image in the poetry of Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal Al-Andalusi (605 AH-699 AH), using a psychological approach. The researcher relied on his use of simile, metaphor, and metonymy, based on his experiences of joy, sorrow, and happiness, and on the natural beauty of Andalusia, which includes trees, flowers, rivers, and mountains.

## 3. THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. Definition of the Psychological Function
2. The rhetorical image is a reflection of psychological pleasure
3. The rhetorical image is a reflection of love and infatuation
4. The suffering of aging and separation from loved ones
5. The rhetorical image is a reflection of longing and inner burning
6. The rhetorical image in the poetry of Malik is a mirror of inner conflict
7. The rhetorical image is a reflection of emotional burning
8. The rhetorical image is a reflection of a psychological cover
9. The rhetorical image is a reflection of a psychological mechanism of concealment
10. The psychological function is related to the passage of time
11. The rhetorical image is a reflection of the function of self-admiration
12. The function of sensory pleasure.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in uncovering the sources of rhetoric and psychological effects in the poetry of Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The collection of poems of the poet Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal, Adeb Al-Adwatain, and books on rhetoric and psychology.

## 4. INTRODUCTION

This research is a study of the psychological function of rhetorical image in the poetry of Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal Al-Andalusi (605 AH-699 AH), seeking to identify the relationship between rhetorical expression and the poet's psychological state, and how rhetorical image in his poetry became an artistic tool to express deep human emotion. The research is based on a hypothesis that assumes that rhetorical images in the poetry of Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal are not limited to their aesthetic and decorative functions, but are also a psychological function that reflects the poet's inner emotions and attempts to interpret his emotional struggles and human experiences. In this research, a number of examples from the Diwan of Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal were analyzed using an analytical methodology that combines classical Arabic rhetoric and psychological concepts. It also utilized concepts of the theory of construction proposed by Abdulqahir Al-Jurjani, who claimed that the order of words corresponds to the order of meanings in the mind, indicating that poetic language is derived from the poet's conscious experience before being embodied in words. Moreover, it utilized concepts of psychological theory proposed by psychoanalysts such as Freud and Lacan to interpret the relationship between language and the unconscious.

What the study revealed is that the rhetorical image in Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal's poetry had various functions in the realm of psychology. First, there is the function of psychological pleasure and aesthetic fascination, which is revealed in the portrayal of the beloved's sensual beauty and Andalusia's landscape, wherein simile and metaphor are utilized to convey a state of awe and inner harmony. Second, there is the function of attachment and emotional infatuation, wherein the rhetorical image is utilized to convey feelings of love and attachment. In contrast, however, the study revealed that there is a presence of rhetorical images that express the psychological suffering of growing old and losing loved ones. In this regard, the poet utilized rhetorical image to compensate for his perception of lost youth or growing old. Other rhetorical images express anguish and inner turmoil, wherein the poet utilized metaphors of fire and water or presence and absence to convey feelings of emotional pain, which is a manifestation of the psychological contradiction experienced by the lover.

Moreover, the study revealed that there are instances wherein rhetorical image is utilized to mirror the poet's inner turmoil. For instance, metaphors of dwelling in the heart or being bound by

chains around the neck convey the extent to which love dominates the soul. Another psychological function of rhetorical image is concealment and emotional cover-up. In this regard, it is revealed that the poet utilized symbolism or allegory in reference to the beloved to avoid gossip.

Moreover, the study reveals the poet's use of rhetorical image to deal with the issue of time and old age. In other words, allegory or metaphor is used to convey the poet's awareness of the passage of time and the decline of vitality. At the same time, other images appear that convey balanced admiration and refined aesthetic pleasure, and the poet contemplates the beauty of the beloved and nature with an artistic spirit that transcends the boundaries of emotional pain.

The study has shown that the rhetorical image used by Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal is a crucial element in the construction of the poetic experience. In other words, it is not used for the sake of rhetoric and decoration, but is used as a psychological and artistic tool for conveying inner emotions and relieving emotional tension. Moreover, these images are used for constructing the poetic experience and enhancing the emotional content of the poetic text. It is clear that the poetic experience is based on the interaction between language and emotion. In other words, the study has shown that rhetoric is used in the poetry of Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal to exceed the boundaries of its aesthetic role and become an indirect tool for psychological analysis, revealing the depth of the poet's human experience and the nature of the relationship between literary creativity and the psychological life of the poet.

## 5. THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The psychological function is seen as an essential constituent in creative writing. It is characterized by an emotional attribute that is instantiated in literature and has varied psychological features. This is naturally linked to the Theory of Construction, which was put forward by the theory's inventor, Abdulqahir Al-Jurjani, who argued that speech is subject to meaning in construction and that words are arranged in utterance because of the arrangement of their meanings in the soul (Al-Jurjani, 1992).

The words used are of ultimate precision and portray the psychological state of the speaker. They portray eloquence and depth in conveying feelings. The context of speech is not constant. There is a difference between the context of gratitude and complaint; between congratulation and condolence; between praise and censure; between enticement and intimidation; between seriousness in all of these and

jest; between initiating and responding. Each of these contexts has different requirements compared to the requirements of the other (Al-Jurjani, 1992).

The use of words is dependent on the psychological state of the speaker. First and foremost, meanings synergize and come into being before being expressed through words. This shows us the mode of expression, which is dependent on the personality and social status of the speaker as emotions are expressed through words, which is a powerful medium of expression.

This is in line with the views of Al-Sayuti who stated that the speaker must be elegant at the opening of his speech, for it is the first thing to strike the ear. If it is refined, it is accepted and assimilated by the hearer before the speech continues. Otherwise, he turns away from it. Even if it is of ultimate beauty, it should be expressed with the sweetest, most delicate, most eloquent, and smoothest wording; with the best construction and casting; with the most exact and clear meaning; and without complexity or confusing transpositions and inversions that are unsuitable.

Thus, it is clear that the degree of importance of the words pronounced by the speaker indicates their level of interest in the subject or the opening. The speaker values the initial words pronounced to stir up within their chest, as this opening is the first surge of words by the speaker (Anooz, 2022). It is evident that the speaker's emphasis on their initial words indicates their manner of thought, their manner of influencing, and their depth of meaning.

The connection between emotion and literary creativity can be derived from the artist's emotional experience. The process of artistic creation evokes emotions within the artist, which are the aesthetic form of the literary text (Faidooh, ). Emotions are of vital importance in the process of literary creativity. The emotional experiences of the artist are the foundation of their vision. Art has the capability to evoke feelings, which are the essence of beauty and touch the soul. The emotional effect of discourse transcends the boundaries of words to envelop the psychological, cultural, and social context of the recipient, where feelings and thoughts are interconnected to create a unique experience, which is the depth of human emotion (Al-Shayib, 1994). Moreover, the critic, having the advantage of psychoanalysis, can elaborate on many enigmas and clarify them (Zaki, 1997), as they highlight the explanation of deep and ambiguous psychological phenomena underlying the text.

## 6. DEFINITIONS

Sigmund Freud explains that the psychological

function includes everything within the sphere of consciousness, thought, and volition. It is impossible to overlook the necessity of emphasizing the presence of unconscious thought and unconscious volition (Freud, 1995). Freud adds that there are thoughts and feelings of which we are conscious; but there are also unconscious thoughts and feelings which help shape our thinking and behavior. This is an example of how the human psyche is an integrated whole.

The topic of this issue is also discussed by Jacques Lacan, who states that the ambiguity of natural language, and words as nodal points... literature alone was capable of providing the completeness and value necessary for this discussion. The word is not a sign, but a signifying knot (Lacan, 1999). According to this French psychologist, natural language is a complex tool consisting of unconscious human ideas, full of ambiguity. Literature can help to reveal this complexity, focusing on metaphors, similes, and metonyms. At this point, the role of the psychological function is reflected in the rhetorical image, having an effect on the creative arts. It is necessary to note that, having briefly discussed the role of the psychological function of rhetorical image and its effect on the creative arts, Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal did not forget these beautiful oases, embodying them in his poetry, thus proving the fact that the psychological function of rhetorical image in his poetry is based on the representation of emotional effect and embodiment of sentimental turmoil experienced by the poet in his relationship with the beloved.

The image transforms from being a tool of description to being a tool of psychological projection, revealing states of attachment, infatuation, fear, jealousy, betrayal, and contentment, which can be divided into the following categories:

First: Rhetorical Image and the Embodiment of Psychological Pleasure and **Aesthetic Infatuation**

The psychological dimension emerges in the depiction of sensory beauty as a source of joy and spiritual tranquility, as seen in the following verses (Ibn Al-Murahhal,):

The perfection of joy lies in the seas of palaces,  
Amidst a garden of light where the gazelle grows tender.

With wondrous beauty and a supple body,  
Mimicked by the swaying branch when it bends.

These verses highlight a psychological state dominated by fascination and pleasure. The poet employs metaphor and simile to depict the body as a supple branch, a precise sensory comparison that reveals a psychological inclination toward aesthetic contemplation. Here, the image does not merely describe beauty; it expresses an internal harmony felt

by the poet in the presence of the beloved. This imagery performs a function of psychological gratification, where the yearning soul reaches a state of completion rather than tension. Hazm Al-Qartajani posits that imagery combining light and gardens induces a pleasure of stillness rather than a pleasure of agitation within the soul (Al-Qartajani, 1981).

The psychological function is further manifested by linking beauty to life itself, as in Malik's words (Al-Murahhal,):

The life of souls is found in the sweetness of sitting  
Near a bride who shines like the mid-morning sun.

The poet renders proximity to the beloved as a psychological equivalent to life, likening the beloved to the sun, a grand cosmic image signifying light, warmth, and continuity. This reveals a deep psychological need for such proximity as a prerequisite for existence and tranquility. The image serves the function of emotional revival; the beloved is not a catalyst for painful longing, but a source of psychological life. Abdulqahir Al-Jurjani argues that when a metaphor shifts meaning from the abstract to the vital, it breathes into it a second soul (for it is the poet's skill to instill the meaning into the listener's soul so effectively that it precludes any initial misunderstanding of the intent).

Second: Rhetorical Image as an Expression of Attachment and Infatuation

Psychological attachment to the beloved is manifested through delicate kinetic image, as in the following (Al-Murahhal,):

Devoted to a slender youth, like a supple branch,  
Toward whom my heart departs and returns,  
evening and morn.

Here, the image transcends the limits of description to become a psychological projection. It is the heart that departs and returns, not the body, signaling the beloved's dominance over the center of consciousness. Likening the beloved to a supple branch performs a clear psychological function, illustrating the refinement and fluidity of emotions and the total lack of internal resistance to this love.

Third: Rhetorical Image as a Revelation of the Suffering of Loss and Aging

One of the deepest manifestations of the psychological function in Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal's poetry is his depiction of aging and the intensification of gray hair, as recorded by his student Al-Numayri (Al-Murahhal,):

The detractors said, as grayness appeared at my parting:

Signs of old age have emerged to prove your years.  
I replied: Youthful passion for a man is like light;  
It is at its sweetest just before the dawn.

The simile here performs a compensatory psychological function. The poet resists the sense of loss and the passage of time through the image of light at dawn, a transitional moment between darkness and radiance. Psychologically, it symbolizes an attachment to the remnants of youth and an attempt to cling to aesthetic pleasure before it fades.

Fourth: Rhetorical Image and the Embodiment of Anguish and Internal Combustion

This sentiment is reinforced in his erotic verse (Al-Murahhal, ):

My eye weeps blood while they dwell within its pupil,

And my heart laments the distance while they abide between my ribs.

This appears to be one of the most poignant psychological images, combining contradiction and irony. The beloved is physically present (within the eye and chest) yet psychologically absent, doubling the pain. This imagery performs a profound revelatory function regarding the state of internal fragmentation and emotional deprivation.

Fifth: Rhetorical Image and the Embodiment of Erotic Rapture and Psychological Imbalance

His student Abu Bakr Al-Qallusi recorded his words (Al-Murahhal, ):

Be gentle, O camel-driver, with lovers

Intoxicated, having passed around the cup of longings.

This image embodies a specific psychological state: the ecstasy of love that causes the lover to lose emotional equilibrium. The poet employs the vocabulary of intoxication and the cup to express emotional fullness, rendering longings as a drink and lovers as intoxicated. This is a declarative metaphor that transfers emotion from the abstract realm to the tangible, sensory realm. The image relies on this metaphor, where longings are likened to wine and lovers to the inebriated, to provide a psychological portrait of the loss of emotional control, where love becomes an overwhelming force that strips the lover of consciousness.

Sixth: The Image as a Mirror of Inner Conflict and Entrenched Attachment

The poem in which Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal laments the beloved's infidelity is considered one of his deepest texts in revealing the lover's psychological structure. In it, rhetorical imagery intensifies to embody the internal habitation of love. He says:

Within his ribs, a beloved resides,

Settling in their place, while love speaks aloud (Ibn Al-Murahhal, ).

The image here appears to be a metonymic

metaphor where love is depicted as a living being dwelling between the ribs, even speaking. This is a profoundly psychological image because it expresses the dominance of emotion over the center of feeling (the heart), to the point where the poet no longer possesses the means to break free. This psychological function also manifests in the denial of consolation:

How can there be solace from the one I love,

While around my neck are love's covenants and bonds? (Ibn Al-Murahhal, n.d.-b)

Here, passion is depicted as a debt or a covenant around the neck. This is a metonymy for forced commitment, revealing an internal sense of emotional enslavement rather than free choice.

Seventh: Image and the Embodiment of Spiritual Burning and the Paradox of Pleasure and Pain

Ibn Al-Murahhal reaches the peak of psychological expression in this poem, where imagery multiplies to depict passion as a state of permanent internal combustion:

)Ibn Al-Murahhal, (:

In my soul, the embers of grief are ablaze,

While in his mouth, the water of life runs pure.

This image relies on metaphorical contrast between fire and water within and outside the lover's soul. The beloved is the source of life and hydration, while the lover burns with thirst. This paradox reveals the cruelty of the psychological experience lived by the poet.

The psychological function is also evident in the comparison of the beloved to nature through beautiful metaphors:

It grew long and its darkness increased, so I thought it

The night of desertion, yet I remained attached.

Beauty has a water that flows in his cheeks;

How many pupils of the eye has it drowned?

He transcends with his presence the moon of the heavens,

And with the suppleness of his stature, the willow branch.

And when he speaks or his lips smile,

He leaves no comforted soul but that it falls in love (Ibn Al-Murahhal, ).

He employed metaphors, the branch for suppleness, the moon for transcendence, night for desertion, and water for life. These images reveal an aesthetic sanctification of the beloved, contrasted by an internal feeling of insignificance and weakness, as seen in:

I wish to swim through tears toward you,

But I fear, from the weakness of passion, that I shall drown (Ibn Al-Murahhal, ).

The imagery here is psychological par excellence;

he renders tears as a sea and passion as the ability to swim. These metaphors reflect the poet's fear of losing even his capacity for suffering, let alone his capacity for survival.

Eighth: Image as a Psychological Veil and Oblique Disclosure

Ibn Rashid Al-Sabti, a student of Ibn Al-Murahhal, noted his teacher's psychological state: Our teacher, the man of letters Abu Al-Hakam Ibn Al-Murahhal, used the beloved's name with varying movements in a riddle of his, relying on the letter Kāf (Al-Sabti, ). He said:

O seeker of the name of the one who possessed

My heart, and the love I reveal to you,

My beloved's name is plain, its reverse

In his smile; so behold it when he laughs (Ibn Al-Murahhal, ).

The image serves a precise psychological function: the poet resorts to symbolic concealment rather than direct declaration. By reversing the beloved's name (making it visible in the smile/teeth, he creates an image that balances the desire for disclosure with the fear of exposure. This tension reflects a common psychological state in lovers, where the symbol becomes a means of psychological safety against detractors while providing the pleasure of suggestion.

Ninth: Image and Concealment as a Psychological Mechanism

Malik's psychological imagery is also prominent in his use of allusive metonymy for his beloved:

I use a kunya for him, fearing that a slanderer

Might gossip, and I be shamed in love, or he be shamed.

So I say at night, O moon of the darkness,

And I say at dawn, O sun of the forenoon (Ibn Al-Murahhal, ).

The image performs a dual psychological function: it is a metonymy for the desired beloved, as Ibn Ashur () noted: A metonymy for the desired beloved because he wishes for their realization and occurrence in reality. On the other hand, it is a tool for concealment and outmaneuvering the observer, revealing the internal tension between the urge to confess and the fear of scandal.

Tenth: The Psychological Function in Confronting Time

Malik described his state when writing to Judge Abu Al-Hajjaj Al-Tarshuni, embodying the psychological function of imagery, specifically metonymy, regarding the number of years he lived:

O my master, your grateful Malik,

The 'M' of his name has been turned into an 'H,'

And he who lives for ninety-five years

Has reached the utter end of life (Ibn Al-Murahhal, ).

He psychologically employed the phrase the M of his name into an H (turning Mālik [Owner/King] into Hālik [Perishing]). The number mentioned seems to be a metonymy for longevity rather than a mere arithmetic calculation. Eloquence lies not in the figure, but in the psychological significance of the heavy consciousness of time. The poet does not boast of age; he mentions it as a heavy existential burden. Al-Qazwini () noted that metonymy is more eloquent in places of reflection because it does not shock the soul with directness. The image serves the feeling of receding vitality, the poet's sense of his self thinning and dissolving over time. Nasif (1981) pointed out that such imagery reflects a precise psychological awareness of the disintegration of internal energy.

Eleventh: The Function of Non-Pathological Admiration and Infatuation

Malik said:

A slender waist and a graceful stature,

And an elegant beauty that surpasses all mankind (Ibn Al-Murahhal, ).

The metonymy for total beauty in slender waist and the preference surpasses all mankind does not reach the point of hyperbole or loss of self. The psychological function here is balanced admiration. The poet is an admirer, not an obsessive. Abbas () argues that the use of metonymic psychological functions in love poetry often indicates a social consciousness regulating emotion, stating: He transferred the meaning of mimesis in the creative process to its effect on the soul; thus, there is no longer a difference between subjective poetry based on mimesis, as both seek stimulation through psychological emotion.

Twelfth: The Function of Refined Sensual Pleasure

Malik has a verse embodying the psychological function as an extrapolated simile:

With the symmetry of stature and the flushing of a cheek,

Like the redness of a rose covered in dew (Ibn Al-Murahhal, ).

An extrapolated simile that combines color, scent, and dew. The image is composite moving beyond mere visual sensation. The psychological function here is refined psychological pleasure, a pleasure that does not lead to anxiety but to calm aesthetic appreciation. Nasif (1981) emphasizes that in composite images, Arabic criticism did not traditionally celebrate the psychological forces significant in producing poetry, while Anna () defines poetry by its tendency toward the effects of imagination, such as appropriate similes.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The current research has shown that the role of rhetorical imagery in the poetry of Malik Ibn Al-Murahhal is significant from the psychological point

of view. It expressed the poet's emotions, his inner contradictions, and helped him overcome his psychological tension. In other words, the image was not just used for decorative purposes, but was also used for deeper and more expressive functions.

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