



Original Research Paper

The Aesthetics of Living Nature Diagnosis in the Poetry of Fazel Al-Azzawi

Agsan Sattar Mahmoud¹, Prof. Dr. Likaa Nazaht Suleiman²

^{1,2} Department of Arabic Language, College of Education for Girls, Tikrit University, Iraq

¹ Astar334@st.tu.edu.iq, ² dl.alsham@tu.edu.iq

Abstract:

This research aims to examine the aesthetics of personifying the living natural world in the poetry of the Iraqi poet Fadhil Al-Azzawi. It highlights this striking stylistic feature in his work, exploring its impact on the text's aesthetic quality and creative depth, as well as its role in shaping the poem's dramatic structure. The technique of personification possesses the capacity to transform familiar elements into active agents within the poetic framework; consequently, the poetic realm becomes a world pulsating with movement—a space where objects, human beings, and abstract concepts intertwine, forging new relationships characterized by aesthetic,

semantic, and dramatic dimensions

This is evident in the poetry of Fadhil Al-Azzawi—a distinctive poetic experience within modern Iraqi and Arab poetry—characterized by an openness to experimentation, a departure from traditional modes of expression, and an extensive use of imagination and poetic imagery, alongside an ability to reconstruct reality through unconventional linguistic relationships

Keywords: Aesthetics, Living, Nature, Diagnosis, Poetry

Preliminaries

In the field of modern critical studies, personification is defined as a rhetorical device through which the writer attributes “human qualities or forms to animals, inanimate objects, and abstract entities” (1), by conferring human characteristics upon abstract ideas or things that are not endowed with life (2), and presenting them, through imagination, as speaking entities characterized by human feeling and movement. Thus, “the inanimate or lifeless appears, within the image, as an entity distinguished by feeling, movement, and life” (3). Accordingly, nature and inanimate objects are addressed as though they were living beings capable of hearing, seeing, and responding to the poet; he portrays and embodies

(4) them directly in poems and myths

Personification is one of the important foundations of modern Arabic criticism and one of the most significant characteristics of the formation of the artistic image in poetry, because of its ability to convey the ideas and meanings that the poet seeks to express through a sensory image that can

be perceived and received through the senses. This occurs by breathing life into that which has no life or attributing rationality to that which has no reason. Although the term has become widespread in modern literary studies, it was also used in ancient literary studies. Al-Jahiz (d. 255 AH), for example, provides a clear indication of personification in his discussion of the signifying function of words: “the state that speaks without utterance and points without the hand; this is evident in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in everything silent and speaking, fixed and growing, staying and departing, increasing and decreasing. The signification found in lifeless inanimate things is like that found in the speaking animal; silence speaks through signification, and the mute expresses itself through proof” (5). Al-Jahiz thus identifies one of the dimensions of personification: inanimate objects may become speaking figures endowed with an emotional

nature

For the poet of the 1960s, “the technique of personification did not come merely to stimulate description and deepen narration; rather, it came as an aesthetic catalyst for creating formal stimulation

*Corresponding Author:

Received: 19th July, 2026; Revised: 27th July, 2026; Accepted: 24th August, 2026; Available Online: 29th August, 2026
(DOI): 10.70102/AEJ.2026.18.4s.94

within drama. This demonstrates the richness and fertility of the moving image in condensing new meanings and connotations. In addition, personification gives the poetic text a mythical atmosphere that distances it from direct statement, because it fuses the self with the object, the particular with the general, and the present with the past, making the poetic work accessible at all times (6).

Living nature refers to the entities of nature characterized by movement, such as domestic and wild animals, birds, and insects, which the poet Fadhil Al-Azzawi has drawn upon in his poetry. He interacts with them and works to humanize or personify them by attributing human qualities to them, thereby creating worlds and artistic tableaux through which his personality and natural impulses are reflected. Living or moving nature received considerable attention from the poet because he found in it artistic symbols and objective correlatives for his experience of life. His poetry collections abound in the use of this dramatic technique, in a striking manner that constitutes a distinctive phenomenon in his poetry. This section

will therefore shed light on this phenomenon

The employment of animals and birds constitutes a symbolic mode with aesthetic suggestiveness within the poetic text. Their presence has played a notable role in the thematic construction of the Arabic poem throughout its various historical periods. They often appear in symbolic form to achieve an artistic purpose far removed from directness and explicit statement (7). They constitute an objective correlative and an active element in the aesthetic formation of the text, becoming a mask behind which the poet conceals himself, thereby achieving a different semantic consciousness from what is customary (8). In this way, they provide a profound artistic mode for expressing the poet's human experience and a device that enables him to avoid direct declaration and evade censorship when expressing the hidden connotations of his text, whether emotional, philosophical, or political. Animals and birds have acquired different meanings and connotations in world thought; some of these meanings are associated with myth and imagination, while others are connected with thought and philosophy. Some are also used to signify optimism or pessimism (9). The contemporary poet has employed animal and bird symbols, drawing upon their meanings and

symbolism from the ancient poetic heritage, yet introducing a form of deviation into their use within the text. They have become symbols upon which he projects his experience at times and his culture at others, thereby reinforcing his poetic style and demonstrating his poetic competence and broad cultural awareness (10).

The poet Fadhil Al-Azzawi employed animal and bird symbols in his poetry through the use of personification. This became a recognizable phenomenon in his work, indicating the poet's artistic need for this form of symbolic and metaphorical employment, as it provides a range of expressive, artistic, semantic, and aesthetic functions. This can be observed in readings of his poetic texts that rely on personification. One example is the poem "The Painter and the Bird" (11), whose events revolve around two characters: the painter, as the maker of the event within the text, and the bird, as a participating creature in furnishing the poetic scene. The poet makes the bird an objective correlative of his experience, as follows:

The painter sat for a long time in his room, "painting a blue bird. The painter was suffering from loneliness and fever, while the bird sat alone within the painting

After months, the bird grew tired of the painting
and slipped into the valley
where the shepherd played his flute
and the forest laughed in the sunlight
There it kept singing until night caught up with it
then it returned
and landed on the open window

The painter, angry with his bird, said
Come back. How easy it is for me to erase —
!your colors

The bird sobbed

What can a solitary bird like me do in a —
?painting

,The painter filled the painting with trees
,and countless birds from every continent
.suns, moons, and shepherds in the valleys
.You will not escape me this time —

:The bird laughed and said
Who would sit in a prison when the world is —
”?full of joy

The poet deliberately personifies the bird and makes it share his experience of boredom and loneliness. It is alone in the painting, just as he is alone in exile. The poet presents it in blue, a color that suggests its mood and the state of sadness and depression that overwhelms it. Blue is often a color reflecting atmospheres associated with fantasy and magical or mythical worlds, in addition to its connotations of freedom and the desire for it (12). The personification of the bird contributes to deepening the psychological and intellectual significance of the text. In the expression “the bird sat alone within the painting,” the bird becomes an entity that experiences loneliness and suffocation, as though the painting were a real prison. Here, the painter’s psychological state is transferred to the bird, which becomes a symbolic image of human
.loneliness

The bird grew tired of the painting.” Here, the “act of becoming bored is attributed to the bird, although it is a human emotion, in order to express rejection of restrictions and the desire for freedom and movement. “The bird’s boredom and its escape from the painting toward the valley marked a turning point in the course of the poem, as it shifted from a narrative structure to a dramatic structure embodied in the appearance of direct external dialogue between the painter and the bird” (13). The personifying metaphors become more intense in the expression “the forest laughed in the sunlight,” which gives nature a living spirit full of joy and delight and contributes to creating an atmosphere of harmony and life beyond the boundaries of the painting. The density of

personification is further intensified in “it kept singing until night caught up with it,” where night is transformed into an entity pursuing and overtaking the bird. This is a personifying image suggesting the movement of time and its dominance. The poet then constructs a dialogic scene between the painter and the bird, characterized by a heightened vocal tone on both sides. This is evident in the painter’s anger: “Come back. How easy it is for me to erase your colors!” and “You will not escape me this time,” as well as in the bird’s sobbing and its use of a question accompanied by intense crying: “What can a solitary bird like me do in a painting?” The bird is thus endowed with the ability to weep and sob, revealing the intensity of its pain from living under
.constraint and isolation

The text presents the relationship between the painter and the bird as a relationship between two human beings: dialogue, anger, and rebellion. This strengthens the symbolic dimension of the text and transforms abstract ideas such as freedom and loneliness into vivid and affecting images. It also gives movement and life to elements of nature and the painting and reveals the conflict between constraint and freedom through profound symbolism. The painting represents prison, while the outside world represents life and freedom. Thus, the text successfully constructs a dense personifying image in which the bird becomes a mirror of the human being who rejects isolation and
.searches for a space of freedom and beauty

The poet also gives the dialogue a theatrical structure by describing the painter and the bird as they engage in conversation, as in “the painter, angry with his bird,” “the bird sobbed,” and “the bird laughed.” In this way, the poet enables the reader to visualize the image and hear the voice of each of the two characters, as though watching a theatrical performance. Furthermore, the presence of punctuation marks after the end of speech contributes to televisualizing the scenic shot and enables the reader to determine the tone of voice and its degree of harmony with the expression. The intonation produced by the contrast between the language of the interlocutors, reflected in the rising and falling of sentences, performs semantic and structural functions because it “actually tells us about the mentality of the speaker” (14), thereby giving the text different implications and connotations that have a major effect on

crystallizing the meaning the poet wishes to convey
 .(15) to the reader

One of the poetic models based on the humanization and symbolism of animals is the poem "A Donkey in the Mill," in which the animal
 :(16) speaks and engages in dialogue

My feet led me to a grain mill"
 ,in a low-lying part of the town
 ,and I saw a donkey panting, exhausted in the heat
 .while a miller was beating it with a whip
 :The miller said to me, rebuking me
 I grind the grain of the poor, so what do you —
 ?grind
 .I said: I have come to console the millers

:He looked at me in amazement
 Well done. A human being is lonely in the —
 ,mill
 .so come and take your turn
 The miller loosened his donkey's bridle
 .and led it to the pasture
 ,I began to go around
 .with the miller's whip upon my back

:But his donkey brayed from afar
 ".Thank you, Abdullah

The text is characterized by a high density of personification, which constitutes one of the most prominent artistic techniques employed in constructing its human and symbolic meaning. It reveals the suffering of the oppressed human being by projecting human qualities onto animals and

objects, while also transforming certain characters
 .into social and political symbols

One of the most prominent manifestations of personification in the text is the image of the donkey. It is not presented as an ordinary animal, but as a conscious entity capable of feeling exhaustion and injustice. This appears in the statement "I saw a donkey panting, exhausted in the heat," where the donkey is endowed with a human condition of fatigue and suffering, making it a symbolic objective correlative of the ordinary person exhausted by work and oppression. Personification becomes deeper and more intense at the end when the poet says: "But his donkey brayed from afar: Thank you, Abdullah." Here, the donkey is given the ability to express gratitude, a distinctly human quality. This personifying image carries a satirical and painful significance at once, because the animal appears more aware of the injustice of reality than human beings themselves. The phrase "Thank you, Abdullah" makes the donkey a participant in the event rather than merely a tool of
 .labor

The mill also contains a symbolic personifying dimension. It is not merely a physical place but a space of human suffering and isolation. This becomes clear in the miller's statement: "A human being is lonely in the mill." The mill is thus transformed into a symbol of a harsh life that revolves endlessly, as though it were an entity that swallows and exhausts the human being. As for the image of the whip in "with the miller's whip upon my back," it carries a symbolic and personifying significance, as the whip becomes representative of social oppression and exploitation rather than
 .merely an instrument of beating

The poet reverses roles within the text in a symbolic manner. When the narrator takes the donkey's place in turning the mill, the human being is transformed into a creature subjected to labor like an animal. This exposes a critical vision of a reality in which human beings lose their humanity under the pressure of labor and exploitation. It highlights the suffering of the poor and oppressed and creates a satirical contrast between human and animal by transforming the donkey into a human symbol carrying awareness and pain. This deepens the symbolic and social dimension of the text. Thus, personifying imagery in the poem is not merely a

rhetorical ornament, but an artistic instrument for exposing human alienation and class oppression, whereby human and animal become partners in the
 .daily mill of suffering

In the poem “The Dragon’s Past,” the poet employs the figure of the dragon, one of the mythical creatures associated with the stories of world mythology and regarded as a symbol of evil and destruction. This creature has been known for its ferocity and immense strength; therefore, some civilizations adopted it as a symbol of power, representing fundamental forces in the universe, religion, and nature, as well as wisdom and longevity (17). Through personification, the poet transforms the dragon into a living being possessing human, psychological, and emotional qualities. It no longer remains merely a mythical creature but becomes a living symbol carrying human and existential dimensions. The manifestations of personification are distributed throughout most of the text, giving the poem a dense dramatic and symbolic character, as can be

:(18) observed in the following lines

The dragon was sleeping on its rock “
 .It was dreaming of its children —
 Its teeth were dripping with blood
 .It was from the hunter’s wound —
 Its eyes looked out upon the night
 .It was stealing the light of the star —
Its howling was heard across generations
 .It was death, its terrified victims —
 The
 dragon
” .was dying

The poet begins his text in a narrative manner based on a dramatic premise in which conflict appears in its various forms, both external and internal. The poem notably relies on dramatic narration, introducing a narrative mode with dramatic dimensions rich in conflict through narration interwoven with description and a scenic image full of movement, sound, and color: “sleeping on its rock, dreaming of its children, its teeth dripping with blood, the hunter’s wound, its eyes looking upon the night, stealing the light of the star, its howling being heard, its terrified victims,

the dragon dying.” The rapid transition between the images enhances the dramatic quality of the text and infuses it with movement and suggestion. Personifying imagery is established from the opening: “The dragon was sleeping on its rock.” The mythical dragon is presented as a creature capable of sleeping, dreaming, looking, suffering, and dying. These actions give the image a dynamic dimension: the dragon is no longer a static picture but becomes a dramatic character developing
 .before the reader

The aesthetic quality of personification becomes clearer in “It was dreaming of its children,” where the act of dreaming, associated with human consciousness and emotion, is attributed to the dragon. The dragon therefore moves from being a frightening creature to becoming a being that possesses feelings, dreams, and emotional continuity. The beauty of the image arises from the contrast between the dragon’s monstrous nature and the quality of dreaming; the creature expected to embody violence suddenly
 .appears in an emotional state

The image then takes a more violent direction in “Its teeth were dripping with blood.” Blood here is not merely a visual detail but a formative element that transforms the dragon into a dramatic body speaking through violence. Yet the poet follows this with “It was from the hunter’s wound,” producing a dramatic paradox: the dragon, which appears to be the source of danger, becomes itself wounded. This paradox breaks the traditional image of the dragon as an absolute force and makes it a participant in a conflict whose full dimensions
 .remain undisclosed

In “Its eyes looked out upon the night,” night becomes a theatrical space in which the character moves. The eyes do not merely look; they “look out,” as though the dragon were standing behind a window observing a mysterious world. The image becomes even more striking in “It was stealing the light of the star,” where the dragon is endowed with the human act of stealing, while light is treated as though it were a material object that could be possessed and taken away. Here, personifying imagery intersects with surreal imagery, creating a paradox between the dragon’s darkness and the
 .star’s light

In "Its howling was heard across generations," the poet gives the dragon's voice an enormous temporal extension. Its howl is not heard by a single generation but by generations, as though the fear represented by the dragon had become a collectively inherited memory. This image is dramatic because it expands the event from an individual moment into a long history of terror. The poet continues constructing the dramatic image until the personifying image reaches its climax in "It was death, its terrified victims." The dragon is no longer merely a creature that causes death; it becomes an embodiment of death itself. Its significance therefore expands from that of a mythical character into a symbol of a destructive force that imposes fear upon others. Yet the poet reverses this equation at the end: "The dragon was dying." This image constitutes the aesthetic and dramatic climax of the text. The dragon, which has been personified as death, becomes itself subject to death. The gradual visual arrangement of the word "dragon" and then "dying" intensifies the sensation of collapse and downfall, as the typographical form appears to imitate the character's movement as it

.loses its power and approaches its end

The strength of the personifying image in the text lies in the fact that it does not perform a merely decorative function; rather, it produces the poetic event itself. The successive actions—(sleeps → dreams → blood drips from its teeth → its eyes look out → steals → its howl is heard → dies)—create a sequence of dramatic movements that transforms the dragon into a character with a beginning, a state, a conflict, and an ending. We may therefore say that the poet employs dynamic rather than static personification by giving the mythical character a succession of human actions and then allowing these actions gradually to reveal its vulnerability. The beauty of the image thus arises from the paradox between strength and weakness, terror and injury, life and death. Personification contributes to all of these dimensions within the text by embodying the dragon as a human-like character with dreams, wounds, and fears and moving it through a series of actions toward its end. Through this movement, the dragon changes from a symbol of power and death into a creature confronting its inevitable fate. The conclusion, "The dragon was dying," therefore becomes a dramatic reversal that invites all the preceding images to be reread in the

.light of the ending

The poet also enhances the artistic quality of the text by employing this mythical creature and personifying it symbolically in order to foreground his poetic treatment of events and dynamically moving scenes. In this way, he articulates a position opposed to all forms of oppression existing in reality, represented by a symbol deeply rooted in the civilizations of the world. He makes the dragon an objective correlative for all forms of evil, crime, and aggression, while symbolizing the hunter as the savior or redeemer of this evil. The hunter thus becomes the existential counterpart of goodness and peace. In this way, the text is distanced from the crudeness of direct expression and elevated toward the objectivity inherent in drama, which increases its poetic quality and affective power. Personification in the poem is therefore the fundamental device that makes the dragon a living symbol pulsating with meaning rather than merely

.a fantastic image

Footnotes:

- 1- *Aesthetics of Style and Reception: An Applied Study*, Mousa Rababa'ah, new and expanded edition. Amman: Dar Jarir for Publishing and Distribution, 2008 (1429 AH): 90.
- 2- *Dictionary of Arabic Terms in Language and Literature*, Magdi Wahba and Kamel Al-Muhandis, p. 154. Librairie du Liban, 2nd ed., 1984: entry (Shakhs/Character).
- 3- *The Literary Dictionary*, Jabbour Abdel Nour. Dar Al-Ilm Lil-Malayeen, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1979: entry (Shakhs/Character).
- 4- See: *Dictionary of Arabic Terms in Language and Literature*, entry (Shakhs/Character).
- 5- *Al-Bayan wa-al-Tabyin* (Eloquence and Exposition), Abu Uthman 'Amr ibn Bahr (known as Al-Jahiz); introduction, commentary, and organization by Ali Abu Melhem. Dar Maktabat Al-Hilal, Beirut, Vol. 1: 1/81.
- 6- *Personification and Its Role in Dramatic Structure: The Poets of the Sixties as a Case Study*, Layla Talal Ahmed: 33–34.
- 7- See: "Animal Symbolism in the Poetry of Mohammed Hussein Haitham," *Journal of Educational Sciences and Humanities Studies*, Issue 25, September 2022: 285.
- 8- See: "The Bird as a Symbol: A Study of Examples from Iraqi Poetry," Prof. Dr. Samir Kadhim & Yasser Ammar, *Diyala Journal*, 2017, Issue 73: 336.

- 9- See: *Symbolism in Arabic Literature*, Darwish Al-Jundi, Nahdet Misr Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, 1st ed., n.d.: 399.
- 10- See: *The Bird and Its Significance in the Artistic and Thematic Structure of Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry*, Kamil Abd Rabbo, Dar Al-Yanabi' Publications, 2010: 11.
- 11- Collected Poems*, Fadhil Al-Azzawi, Vol. 1, * Al-Kamel Publications (Cologne, Germany / .Baghdad, 2007), Vol. 1: 316
- 12- See: *The Significance of Color in the Poetry of Nizar Qabbani*, Ahmed Abdullah Muhammad Hamdan, Master's Thesis, An-Najah University, .Palestine, 2008: 130
- 13- Personification and Its Role in Dramatic Structure: Poets of the Sixties as a Case Study, Laila Talal Ahmed, Doctoral Dissertation, Tikrit University – College of Education for Women, .2002: 75
- 14- The Stylistics of Linguistic Expression in the Poetry of Samih al-Qasim*, Salim Muhammad, Kasdi Merbah University – Ouargla, Algeria, 2015: .59
- 15- See: *Ibid.*: 59
- 16- Collected Poems*, Vol. 1: 274
- 17- See: The Free Encyclopedia (Wikipedia), <https://ar.m.wikipedia.org>
- 18- *Collected Poems*, Vol. 1: 310.