

UDC 821.411.21-32.09

METAPHORICAL COMPRESSION: NARRATIVE EXPERIMENTS OF MUSTAFA SELIM

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This article explores the stylistic features of Mustafa Selim's prose, focusing on his short story collection *Secret Tunnel*. The analysis centers on the author's style, characterized by a synthesis of laconic form and deep metaphorical content. The study aims to identify and systematize the key stylistic means Selim uses to create a multi-layered narrative space within the short prose form. The paper employs a comprehensive approach, combining methods of literary, linguo-stylistic, and structural-semiotic analysis when studying Selim's metaphors, his experiments with the composition of the story, the role of intertextuality and surreal elements. Based on the juxtaposition of prose oeuvres, Selim's style is compared to that of Naguib Mahfouz, Yusuf Idris, and Ahmad al-Qarmalawi, whose works echo Mustafa Selim's prose in terms of style and genre.

The relevance of the study is determined by the need for a deeper understanding of the latest trends in contemporary Arabic literature based on an analysis of the individual style of one of its prominent representatives. The article reveals how Selim, through a unique combination of stylistic means, creates prose that is simultaneously deeply rooted in Arabic cultural tradition and open to global literary influences. The research results demonstrate that Selim's style is characterized by a masterful combination of minimalist form with rich metaphorical content, allowing the author to explore complex philosophical concepts and delve into the depths of the human psyche within a limited textual space. The analysis of Selim's stylistic techniques reveals the features of his individual author's manner, which reflects trends in the evolution of modern Arabic prose.

Keywords: intertextuality; laconism; metaphor; Mustafa Selim; narrative structure; stylistic devices; surrealism

Introduction

Modern Arabic literature is going through a period of active development and transformation, reflecting socio-cultural processes in the region. The literary landscape is characterized by a dynamic dialogue between tradition and innovation, where writers experiment with form and content, responding to global challenges and local realities [Arabic Literature... 2010]. In this context, the work of the Egyptian writer Mustafa Selim attracts special attention for its artistic originality and philosophical depth. Selim, as a representative of a new generation of Arab writers, continues the tradition of experimental prose, associated with Naguib Mahfouz, Yusuf Idris, Ahmad al-Qarmalawi and Ibrahim al-Koni. At the same time, Selim brings to the literature a fresh look at the existential problems of a modern human, using innovative narrative and stylistic techniques.

Mustafa Selim (born 1983) is an Egyptian writer and journalist, a dedicated philologist and a specialist in the field of modern literary criticism. In 2013, he won the Dubai Cultural Award for novels, and a year later – the “Book of the Day” award for a series of short stories [Selim 2024, 77]. The collection *Secret Tunnel* by M. Selim was translated into Ukrainian language in 2024 with the assistance of the Sharjah International Book

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Fair Translation Grant Fund. This vivid example of modern Arabic short prose, consisting of concise and touching texts, demonstrates the author's unique style, which combines conciseness of form with deep metaphoricity and symbolism. *Secret Tunnel* attracts with its multi-layered structure and philosophical problems, which reflect the actual issues of human existence in the modern world. Each story in the collection is like a microcosm that opens a whole universe of meanings and associations to the reader. Selim skillfully uses a minimalist form for maximum content, creating texts that require thoughtful reading and interpretation. This feature of his prose makes *Secret Tunnel* not just a collection of short stories, but a kind of literary experiment that explores the limits of the possibilities of the short prose form and presents a challenge for the translator.

The subject of this research is the stylistic features of Mustafa Selim's prose, and the object is his collection of short stories, *Secret Tunnel*. As Tresilian [Tresilian 2022] notes, the study of stylistic innovations in the work of young Arab writers is key to understanding the evolution of Arabic prose in the 21st century. Thus, the analysis of Selim's work allows to assess his personal contribution to the development of Arabic literature and to further trace the trends of the modern literary process in the Arab world. The importance of this study is also emphasized by the fact that Selim's work is part of a wider phenomenon of "new Arabic literature", which, according to Starkey, is characterized by increased attention to form, experiments with narrative techniques and deep psychologism [Starkey 2014]. In this context, the analysis of the stylistic features of Selim's prose can help to better understand the direction of development of modern Arabic literature, its interaction with global literary trends, and its unique cultural identity.

The essence of Selim's style lies in the masterful combination of conciseness of form with deep metaphoricality and symbolism, which creates a multi-layered narrative space [Selim 2020]. This allows the author to reveal convoluted philosophical concepts and explore the depths of the human psyche in a limited textual volume. Selim uses a wide range of stylistic techniques – from sophisticated metaphors to surreal imagery – to create texts that resonate on an emotional and intellectual level. His prose is characterized by a dense network of intertextual links that connect it to the rich tradition of Arabic literature, while at the same time opening new horizons of artistic expression. Mustafa Selim applies in his prose the dedication of a researcher and a philologist, deliberately utilizing the aesthetic tools and rhetoric means to strengthen his oeuvres and integrate them into a broader cultural context, rethinking the heritage and cooperating with other writers. The doctoral research of M. Selim is devoted to the specifics of narrative formation in the prose of famous Libyan author Ibrahim al-Koni, and this project has turned into fruitful cooperation and communication between both writers [Al-Gül 2018]. Several articles in Arabic media explore the literary style of Mustafa Selim by taking the *Secret Tunnel* collection as an example for their case study which focuses attention on various aspects of this short prose masterpiece: the composition and narrative, images and the use of stylistic means ["Muṣṭafā Salīm yadhulu..." 2019], psychologism and the representation of traumas [Samīr 2020; Muṣṭafā 2020]. After the publication of the Ukrainian translation of *Secret Tunnel*, some literary critics, among them K. Rodyk, found allusions to the heritage of Franz Kafka and Latin American magic realism in the stories of the *Secret Tunnel* collection, commendably evaluating the artistic world elaborated by Mustafa Selim [Rodyk 2024]. This article seeks to explore how, through a unique combination of stylistic devices, Selim creates prose that is both deeply rooted in the Arabic cultural tradition and open to global literary influences.

Laconism as the Style's Dominant

Laconism in Mustafa Selim's work is the fundamental basis of his artistic method. Although brevity of form is common to some Arabic writers [El-Enany 2020], Selim takes it to a new level, which becomes evident when comparing his work to established

Egyptian masters of contemporary Arabic prose such as Naguib Mahfouz, Yusuf Idris and Ahmad al-Qarmalawi.

Secret Tunnel impresses with its structural economy. Most of the short stories do not exceed 1–2 pages, which is in stark contrast to the longer short stories of Mahfouz and Idris. The typical structure of Selim’s stories includes a sharp, often non-linear beginning, which immediately plunges the reader into the epicenter of events:

Hīnahā tadhab ilā sarīr ba‘da yawm šāqq, fa-tajidu nafsaka ta‘īšu fī ‘ālam muwāzin, taḥyā fī-hi ḥayāt^{an} kāmilat^{an} min al-aḥdāt, taltaqī ašhās^{an}; minhum man raḥal, wa-minhum man ‘alā qayd al-ḥayāt; baynahum man ta‘rifu-hu, wa-kaṭīr lā tus‘ifu-ka al-dākira fī tajsīd malāmiḥi-him ‘alā naḥw wādiḥ, li-taḥyā baynahum ḥayāt al-zilāl, hunā ta‘akkad annaka ta‘īšu akṭar min ḥayāt, wa-tatakarraru ziyārātu-ka li-l-jaḥīm yaqzat^{an} wa-manām^{an}. “Then you go to bed after a hard day, and find yourself living in a parallel world, living a full life of events, meeting people, some of whom have passed away, and some of whom are still alive, some of whom you know, and many whose features your memory does not help you to clearly embody, so you live among them a life of shadows. Here you are sure that you are living more than one life, and your visits to hell are repeated, awake and asleep” [Selim 2020, 11].

This technique creates an instant feeling of tension and intrigue, forcing the reader to actively engage in the understanding of the text from the first sentence. Unlike Yusuf Idris, who devotes considerable attention to revealing context and background, Selim confines himself to the bare minimum. Information about the characters and the situation is revealed gradually, through actions and dialogues, which creates the effect of progressive immersion into the story. This requires the reader to pay more attention and actively participate in the process of interpreting the text.

Selim uses a dynamic, almost cinematic narrative style, in contrast to Mahfouz’s leisurely, detailed plot development. Events follow each other with kaleidoscopic speed, often with unexpected turns. This creates a sense of unpredictability, keeping the reader in constant emotional tension. If Idris often ends his stories with a clear moral lesson or resolution, Selim leaves the ending open to interpretation, prompting the reader to think and rethink what they read. In achieving brevity, Selim skillfully uses a variety of language devices. He often resorts to elliptical constructions, omitting certain elements of the sentence and leaving only the most necessary for understanding the meaning:

Kāna qānūn ahl hādā al-zamān anā wa-min ba‘dī al-tūfān, tawaḥḥaṣat amwāj al-tūfān fa-btala‘at-hum. Ġariqa al-baṣar; wa-zalla al-tūfān. “The law of the people of that time was ‘I, and after me the Flood’. The waves of the Flood became wild and swallowed them up. People drowned, but the Flood remained” [Selim 2020, 33].

This contrasts with Mahfouz’s more traditional, grammatically complete constructions and Idris’s complex, extended periods. Selim uses short, often monosyllabic sentences connected without conjunctions: *Ašfaqa man yaṣṭaḥibu-hu ‘alayhi, ša‘ara annahu yuḥaddiṭu-hu ‘an hiḍlān istabadda bihi, fa-naṭaqa bi-mā naṭaq, qāṭa‘a-hu ...* “The one who accompanied him felt sorry, he perceived that one was telling him about the betrayal that had befallen, so he said what he said, interrupting his speech...” [Selim 2020, 49]. He also frequently employs nominative clauses to create atmosphere, something rarely found in the more traditional prose of Mahfouz and Idris. Selim’s lexical minimalism is manifested in the avoidance of lengthy descriptions and excessive epithets common for Mahfouz’s prose. Instead, he uses precise, comprehensive imagery. Compared to Idris’s dialectic-rich language, Selim more often refers to the general Arabic vocabulary, but at the same time skillfully uses culturally specific terms to create a deeper subtext:

Sa‘ala al-murīd al-šayḥ: hal ra‘ayta al-ašbāḥ yawm^{an}? Al-šayḥ: na‘am. Al-murīd: wa-māḍā ‘anhum? Al-šayḥ: hum mālikū al-awḥām allatī tu‘mī al-baṣar ‘an al-ḥaqīqa, wa-ta-

suddu āfāq al-baṣīra ‘an ru’yat al-ḥaqq. Al-murīd: wa-kayfa umayyizu hādā al-dalāl yā ṣayhī? Al-ṣayh: kun ḥālim^{an} laysa illā. “The disciple asked the Sheikh: ‘Have you ever seen ghosts?’ Sheikh: ‘Yes’. Disciple: ‘What about them?’ Sheikh: ‘They are the ones who have delusions that blind the sight to the truth and block the horizons of insight from seeing the Truth’. Disciple: ‘How do I distinguish this delusion, my Sheikh?’ Sheikh: ‘Just be a Dreamer’” [Selim 2020, 43].

He prefers verb forms for narrative dynamism, while Mahfouz and Idris more often resort to detailed descriptions: *Alqā al-kalimāt al-muḥīfa ‘alā masāmi‘i-hi wa-raḥal... Nahada al-ḥafīd yabḥaṭu ‘an al-jadd fī al-ḡurfa, fa-lam ya’tur ‘alayhi, fa-tatabba‘a atara-hu bi-da‘awāt al-raḥma...* “He said the scary words to him and left... The grandson got up to look for his grandfather in the room, but he did not find him, so he followed his trace with prayers for mercy...” [Selim 2020, 35].

Laconism in Selim’s prose performs important functions in creating an artistic effect. Compared to the more traditional narrative, where the reader can allow oneself to “relax” and meditatively observe the flow of details, Selim’s prose requires constant concentration. Each word acquires special weight, forcing the reader to carefully analyze the text. While Mahfouz and Idris often provide the audience with explanations and characterizations, Selim leaves many “blank spots” for the reader to fill in with their own imagination, turning the text interpretation process into an active co-creation. The concentration of content in a small amount of text creates the effect of an emotional impact, which is often stronger than in the more extensive stories. The minimum of specific details allows the reader to more easily project the described situations onto their own experience, which makes Selim’s prose more universal compared to the often locally and historically specific works of other authors. Thus, laconism in Selim’s works is not a mere stylistic technique, but a holistic aesthetic concept that allows the author to create multi-layered, philosophically rich texts within the framework of a small prose form.

Metaphorism and Symbolism in Secret Tunnel

Metaphors and symbols are key elements of Mustafa Selim’s artistic world, which, combined with laconicism, contribute to the author’s style. In general, modern Arabic prose tends to metaphorism as a means of encoding complex social and philosophical ideas in the face of political censorship and cultural restrictions. In the case of Selim, these artistic means acquire special importance, forming the multi-layered narrative space of his works.

The central metaphor of the collection is its very name – *Secret Tunnel*. This image sets the tone for the entire book, symbolizing transition, transformation, as well as the unknown and danger. The “mystery” of this tunnel emphasizes the individuality and uniqueness of each person’s life path. This metaphor resonates with Roger Allen’s idea of the “journey into the unknown” as a key motif in contemporary Arabic literature [Allen 2021].

Along with the central metaphor of the tunnel, Selim skillfully uses a whole system of metaphors that permeate the entire collection. A dream in his works often acts as a metaphor for an alternative reality or the subconscious. For example, in the story “Mirage”, dreams become a space where the hero faces his hidden fears and desires [Selim 2024, 15]. Memory appears as an unreliable archive of human experience, which is vividly illustrated in the story “Leaky Memory”, where the author uses the image of “leaky” memory as a metaphor for the fragmentation of human identity [Selim 2024, 21]. The life path is often presented as a labyrinth or a tangled road, which acquires a particularly poignant sound in the story “Forced Path”, reflecting the existential hopelessness of the hero [Selim 2024, 50].

Symbolic images in Selim’s prose also play an important role, often having a multi-layered meaning. The desert is a symbol of spiritual testing and loneliness, which is

clearly visible in the story “Mountain Embraces” [Selim 2024, 59]. The sea symbolizes life’s challenges and the unknown, as shown in “The Sea of Life” [Selim 2024, 63]. The clock and time become symbols of the inexorability of fate and the transience of life, which is especially noticeable in the story “Starting Shot” [Selim 2024, 64].

Metaphors and symbols in Selim’s prose are key means of revealing deep philosophical issues. Through the metaphors of the “secret tunnel” and the “sea of life”, the author explores the theme of existential loneliness and isolation of an individual in the world. The symbolism of the mirror and the metaphor of “leaky memory” reflect the process of self-discovery and personality formation. The metaphor of the life path as a labyrinth emphasizes the importance and complexity of personal choice, touching on the themes of freedom and responsibility. Through the metaphors of dreams and delusions, Selim blurs the boundaries between reality and imagination, questioning the nature of human perception. The symbolism of the clock and the metaphor of the “starting shot” emphasize the volatility of life and the inevitability of death.

As Sabri Hafez points out, the use of metaphors and symbols in contemporary Arabic literature often serves as a means of overcoming language and cultural barriers, allowing authors to address universal themes in a local context [Hafez 2010]. In the case of Selim, this allows for the creation of prose that, while deeply rooted in Arab culture, at the same time addresses universal philosophical questions. Thus, metaphoricity and symbolism in the prose of Mustafa Selim are not just stylistic techniques, but fundamental means of constructing the artistic world and expressing complex philosophical ideas. Combined with laconicism, these elements create a literary style that allows the author to reveal deep existential themes within a frame of small textual spaces.

Elements of Surrealism in Selim’s Stories

Surrealistic elements in Mustafa Selim’s prose play a key role in creating the unique artistic world of his stories. In contrast to the realistic tradition represented by Naguib Mahfouz and Yusuf Idris, Selim actively experiments with surrealist techniques, which allows him to expand the boundaries of traditional narrative and penetrate deeper into the subconscious of his characters, which is a feature seen in modern Egyptian prose, for example, in *Summer Rains* of Ahmad al-Qarmalawi [Al-Qarmalawi 2023].

One of the key aspects of surrealism in Selim’s work is the blurring of the line between reality and dreams. In many of the stories in the *Secret Tunnel* collection, dream and reality are intertwined so closely that it becomes difficult for the reader to distinguish where one ends and the other begins. For example, in the story “Mirage”, the main character experiences a series of visions that seem more real than reality itself [Selim 2024, 15]. Selim masterfully uses this technique to explore the deep fears and desires of his characters, which in real life often remain hidden.

The illogic and paradoxical nature of situations is another characteristic feature of surrealism in Selim’s prose. The author often puts his characters in absurd, at first glance, circumstances, which, however, have a deep symbolic meaning. In the story “The Guest Who Stayed”, the hero ends up on Earth after falling from another planet, which creates a surreal situation to explore the theme of alienation and rejection [Selim 2024, 61]. Such paradoxical plot twists contrast sharply with the logical sequence of events in Idris’s works, allowing Selim to go beyond the traditional cause-and-effect narrative.

The functions of surrealist techniques in the context of the *Secret Tunnel* collection are diverse and multifaceted. First, they serve to reveal subconscious processes and hidden aspects of the human psyche. Selim uses surrealism as a tool to explore those aspects of human experience that are difficult to express through realistic prose. In addition, surrealist elements help the author create a special atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety, which reflects the complexity and unpredictability of the modern world.

Unlike some European surrealism oeuvres, which aimed to shock the audience, Selim's surrealism has a more subtle, intellectual character. It does not so much seek to impress the reader's imagination with unusual images, as it encourages deep thinking about the nature of reality and human perception. In this aspect, Selim is closer to the magical realism of Latin American authors, but with a distinct Arabic flavor. Surrealistic elements also serve as a means for Selim to overcome the limitations imposed by realistic prose. They allow the author to touch on topics that are difficult to discuss directly, including politics, religion, and social criticism. In this context, surrealism becomes a kind of "Aesopian language", which allows the author to express bold ideas in a veiled form.

Thus, elements of surrealism in Mustafa Selim's stories are an integral part of his unique artistic method. They allow the author to expand the boundaries of the traditional narrative and penetrate deeper into the subconscious of the characters. Combined with laconicism and deep metaphoricality, surrealist techniques make Selim's prose a bright and innovative phenomenon in modern Arabic literature.

Experiments with Narrative Structure

Experiments with narrative structure are one of the key aspects of Mustafa Selim's creative method, which distinguishes him from contemporary Arab writers. In comparison to the more linear narrative seen in Naguib Mahfouz's works, Selim actively experiments with temporal plans, narrative fragmentation, and polyphony of voices. An analysis of the timelines in Selim's stories reveals his mastery in manipulating the chronology of events. The author often deviates from the traditional linear sequence, creating a complex temporal structure where the past, present and future intertwine and interact. For example, in the story "Leaky Memory", time plans are constantly shifting, reflecting the fragmented nature of the main character's memories [Selim 2024, 21]. Selim uses sudden transitions between time layers, which creates an effect of disorientation similar to that experienced by the character himself.

The fragmentary narrative technique is another important aspect of Selim's narrative experiments. Instead of a coherent cohesive narrative, the author often offers the reader a series of separate episodes or scenes that do not always have an obvious connection between them. This is especially noticeable in the story "The Web", where the narrative is fragmented and the reader must connect it into a single whole [Selim 2024, 39]. Such a technique requires the active participation of the reader in the process of interpreting the text, which differs sharply from the more traditional approach of Mahfouz, where the author usually provides the reader with all the necessary information to understand the plot.

The polyphony of voices and points of view is another important aspect of Selim's narrative experiments: Selim often uses multiple perspectives, allowing different characters to express their often conflicting positions. This is evident in the story "Incompleteness", where the story unfolds through the prism of the perception of two different characters, providing a multifaceted picture of reality [Selim 2024, 40]. This technique allows Selim to research the subjectivity of human experience and the relativity of truth – a key philosophical concept of his work. The fragmented nature of the narrative often reflects that of human consciousness and memory, and the polyphony of voices enables the author to explore the complexity of interpersonal relationships and conflicts. In addition, such narrative techniques let him create a text that can be interpreted on different levels.

Selim's experiments with narrative structure are also closely related to his desire for laconicism. The fragmentary nature of the story and the multiplicity of perspectives allow the author to concentrate the content as much as possible, conveying intricate ideas and emotions through the minimum number of words. This creates a special tension in the text, where each word acquires weight and meaning. It is worth noting that Selim's

narrative experiments reflect trends in modern world literature, particularly the influence of postmodernism. The author adapts these techniques to the context of Arabic culture and literary tradition, creating a synthesis of modern narrative strategies and traditional Arabic narrative forms.

Intertextuality of Selim's Short Prose

Allusions to philosophical and literary texts in Selim's prose play an important role in shaping the intellectual background of his works. Comparing to Naguib Mahfouz, who often explicitly referred to classical Arabic heritage, Selim prefers more subtle, hidden allusions that require the reader to have a deep knowledge of world culture. For example, in the story "The Dreamer", one can find an echo of Jean-Paul Sartre's ideas about freedom of choice and responsibility, although the name of the philosopher is not directly mentioned [Selim 2024, 30]. In another story, "The Well", allusions to Dante's "Divine Comedy" are found, giving an additional layer of meaning in understanding the metaphor of the fall and spiritual purification [Selim 2024, 49].

The dialogue with Arabic literary tradition in Selim's work acquires special importance. The author relies on the rich heritage of Arabic literature, actively rethinks it, linking the past and the present. For example, in the story "Murid" Selim turns to the Sufi tradition but interprets it in the context of modern existential searches [Selim 2024, 51]. This way of engagement with the literary tradition resembles the approach of Ahmad Qarmalawi in his novel *Summer Rains* [Al-Qarmalawi 2023] but contrasts with the style of Yusuf Idris, who often used folkloric motifs in a more straightforward, illustrative manner.

The role of intertextuality in the formation of the multi-layered semantics of Selim's texts is difficult to overestimate. Each allusion, each hidden reference creates an additional dimension, allowing the reader to interpret the text on different meaning levels. Such a technique allows Selim to create texts within the framework of a short story, which in terms of their richness are not inferior to lengthy novels.

Selim's intertextuality is not a manifestation of literary snobbery. Instead, it organically weaves into the fabric of the story, enriching it, but not overloading it. Intertextuality in Selim's prose is also closely related to his experiments with narrative structure. Allusions and references often become points of connection between different temporal and narrative planes, helping to create a complex, multidimensional narrative structure. This is particularly noticeable in the story "Fragments of Life", where literary and philosophical allusions become a kind of bridge between different episodes of the main character's life [Selim 2024, 14]. Selim's intertextuality serves as a means of dialogue that exceeds the limits of literary tradition, appealing to the modern context as well. The author includes references to social and cultural problems, using intertextuality as a kind of "Aesopian language" to discuss sensitive topics.

Stylistic Techniques in Creating an Emotional Atmosphere

Selim often builds his stories on unexpected collisions of opposites. For example, in the story "Angel", the author creates a striking contrast between the mundaneness of the street scene and the sudden appearance of an "angel" in the form of a girl who saves the life of an elderly man [Selim 2024, 42]. This contrast heightens the emotional impact of the scene and prompts the reader to think about the nature of goodness and randomness in life.

Selim's paradox often takes the form of an unexpected combination of opposite emotions or states. In the story "Cynic", the author masterfully interweaves irony and deep sadness, creating an emotional palette that reflects the inner world of the main character [Selim 2024, 55]. This approach allows Selim to avoid ambiguity in the depiction of

emotions, polishing a more realistic and nuanced picture of human experiences. The author uses precise, comprehensive details to create vivid images that instantly evoke an emotional response from the reader. Avoiding wordy descriptions, Selim chooses individual, unexpected details that become the key to understanding the whole scene or the personality of a character. For example, in the story “Photocard”, the author focuses on the details of the broken glass of a wedding portrait, which becomes a powerful symbol of broken relationships and lost hopes [Selim 2024, 57].

Selim often appeals to various senses, creating synesthetic images that deeply affect the reader’s emotional perception. In the story “The Violin” [Selim 2024, 44], sound and visual images intertwine, resulting in an almost physical feeling of music and love. The rhythmic organization of prose is another important aspect of Selim’s stylistic mastery. The author pays great attention to the rhythm of the story, using it as a tool to establish an emotional atmosphere and convey the inner state of the characters.

Selim’s use of the “rhythmic crescendo” technique is particularly interesting. In stories that describe moments of emotional tension or crisis, the author gradually accelerates the pace of the story, using short, choppy sentences that retrieve a sense of growing anxiety or excitement. This can be observed in the story “Sudden Fall”, where the rhythm of the prose mimics the accelerated heartbeat of the main character:

Irtafa‘at daqqāt qalbi-hi, fa-ša‘ara bi-dīq nafsi-hi wa-ḥtināq, aḡmaḍa ‘aynay-hi, ḥāwala istinšāq mā yastaḥī‘u min al-hawā’ li-yasta‘īda ra’su-hu al-tawāzun alladī faqada-hu, lam yastaḥī‘. Intafaḍat al-awṣāl, wa-rta‘aṣat al-a‘ṣāb dāḥil al-mafāṣil, lam taqwa al-qadamān ‘alā ḥaml al-jasad, fa-saqata arḍ^{an}. “His heartbeat increased, and he felt short of breath and suffocation. He closed his eyes and tried to inhale as much air as he could to restore the balance his head had lost. He couldn’t. His limbs trembled, and the nerves trembled inside his joints. His feet couldn’t carry his body, so he fell to the ground” [Selim 2020, 31].

At the same time, Selim skillfully uses rhythmic pauses to create moments of emotional climax: *Yazīdu sur‘at al-laḥn, tartafī‘u watīrat al-tawattur, fa-yutarjimu nazrat^{an} min abⁱⁿ li-ṭiffⁱⁿ tūḥī bi-l-‘ajz ‘abra jumlatⁱⁿ mūsīqīya ṭawīla* “The melody speeds up, the tension rises, and a helpless look from a father to his child is translated into a long musical phrase” [Selim 2020, 29]. Sudden changes in rhythm and the inclusion of short, almost aphoristic phrases in the middle of a longer narrative result in the effect of an emotional shock, forcing the reader to stop and think about what she or he has read. It is worth noting that the rhythmic organization of Selim’s prose is closely related to the musicality of the Arabic language. The author uses the phonetic features of Arabic to create an additional emotional effect, playing with alliteration and assonance. This gives his prose a special melodiousness that enhances the emotional impact of the text.

Conclusion

Mustafa Selim’s work, presented in the collection *Secret Tunnel*, demonstrates a synthesis of techniques that form an innovative approach to Arabic short prose. Selim skillfully combines traditional elements of Arabic literature with modern literary devices, creating prose that is both deeply rooted in cultural context and innovative in nature. His experiments with narrative structure, use of surreal elements and intertextuality open new horizons for the studies of Arabic literature.

Selim’s innovation is particularly noticeable in his approach to brevity, where each word acquires weight and meaning. Selim’s compactness of form is not a limitation, but a powerful tool for building a multidimensional artistic world. This ability to concentrate challenging philosophical ideas and emotional states within a minimalist form is a significant contribution to the development of modern Egyptian prose. Selim’s skill in creating an emotional atmosphere through precisely selected details, contrasts and rhythmic

organization of prose deserves special attention. This technique allows the author to achieve a deep emotional resonance with the reader, which is crucial in the context of short prose.

Evaluating Selim's literary innovations, it is worth noting his contribution to expanding the horizons of the short story genre. Selim rethinks traditional narrative structures, elaborating a new type of prose that responds to the complexity of the modern world. His experiments with form and content open new avenues for the development of Arabic literature and its studies. In particular, the interaction between different stylistic techniques in his works and the influence of his innovations on other modern writers deserve a more detailed study. Another important aspect for future research is a study of the reception of Selim's work in different cultural contexts, which can shed light on the universality of his artistic techniques and their ability to overcome cultural barriers.

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C. B. Рибалкін

Метафорична компресія: наративні експерименти Мустафи Селіма

Стаття досліджує стилістичні особливості прози Мустафи Селіма на матеріалі збірки оповідань "Таємний тунель" (2020) та її перекладу українською мовою, виданого 2024 р. Проаналізовано авторський стиль, що характеризується синтезом лаконічності форми та глибокої метафоричності. Мета дослідження полягає у виявленні та систематизації ключових стилістичних прийомів, які Селім використовує для створення багатозорового нарративного простору в межах короткої прозової форми. У роботі застосовано комплексний підхід, що поєднує методи літературознавчого, лінгвостилістичного та структурно-семіотичного аналізу. Досліджується метафорика Селіма, авторські експерименти з композицією оповіді, роль інтертекстуальності та сюрреалістичних елементів. На основі зіставлення прозового доробку, стиль Селіма порівнюється зі стилем Нагіба Махфуза, Юсуфа Ідріса та

Ахмада аль-Кармалаві, чия творчість стилістично й жанрово перегукується з прозою Мустафи Селіма.

Актуальність дослідження зумовлена необхідністю глибшого розуміння новітніх тенденцій у сучасній арабській літературі на основі аналізу індивідуального стилю одного з її яскравих представників. Стаття розкриває, як через унікальну комбінацію стилістичних засобів Селім створює прозу, котра є одночасно глибоко закоріненою в арабській культурній традиції та відкритою до глобальних літературних впливів. Результати дослідження демонструють: стиль Селіма характеризується майстерним поєднанням мінімалістичної форми з багатим метафоричним змістом, що дозволяє автору на обмеженому текстовому просторі розкривати складні філософські концепції та досліджувати глибини людської психіки. Аналіз стилістичних прийомів Селіма виявляє риси його індивідуального авторського почерку, котрий відображає тенденції в еволюції сучасної арабської прози.

Ключові слова: інтертекстуальність; лаконізм; метафора; Мустафа Селім; наративна структура; стилістичні прийоми; сюрреалізм

Стаття надійшла до редакції 9.11.2024