Poeticizing the Everydayness in Contemporary Algerian Poetry: From Fleeting Details to the Construction of Poetic Vision

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Abstract

This study examines the ways in which the everydayness enters contemporary Algerian poetry and the processes through which familiar, fleeting details are transformed into aesthetic and semantic components of the poetic text.

The study proceeds from the premise that the use of everydayness detail is not a simple transcription of reality or a record of ordinary life. Rather, it is subjected to a poetic process that reshapes objects, scenes, and actions and endows them with meanings that exceed their immediate referential presence.

To demonstrate this process, the study draws on selected poems by *Mohamed Qast, Ashour Fanni, Salah Badis, and Lakhdar Barka*, revealing distinct modes of poeticizing the everydayness through personification, condensation, irony, the humanization of nature, and the transformation of the urban scene into a space for the production of meaning.

Keywords: contemporary Algerian poetry, the everydayness, detail, poeticization of reality, poetic image, urban scene, objects...

1. Introduction

Contemporary Algerian poetry has undergone significant transformations in both the nature of its poetic material and its relationship to reality. Poetry is no longer confined to grand themes or inherited rhetorical images; it increasingly opens itself to the small details that make up everydayness human life: household objects, streets, means of transport, machinery, urban features, elements of nature, and transient actions that may at first seem unworthy of poetic expression.

The importance of such details, however, does not lie in their mere presence. What matters is the way the poet reshapes them within the poem. Once an everydayness element enters the poetic text, it relinquishes part of its direct practical function and acquires a new one through its relationship with language, imagery, rhythm, and the other components of the poem.

This leads to the study's central question:

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How does the everydayness move from the familiar and transient to become an aesthetic element that contributes to the construction of poetic vision in contemporary Algerian poetry?

Several related questions follow from this: What artistic devices do poets employ to transform everydayness details into poetic material? Does the presence of the everydayness bring poetry closer to reality, or does it instead reimagine reality? And how does the function of everydayness detail vary from one poet to another?

The study therefore draws on selected examples from different Algerian poetic experiences in order to trace the plurality of ways in which the everydayness is handled, rather than treating it as a phenomenon governed by a single mechanism.

2. From the Quotidian to the Poetic

The concept of "*the quotidian*," or "*everydayness*" derived from the word "*day*," has become an important category in contemporary Arabic poetry generally and Algerian poetry in particular, because it "contains within itself a vast range of ideas and intentions that remain concealed behind the diverse routines and practices of ordinary life" (Al-Turayki, 2009, p.57).

The everydayness does not enter the poem as a ready-made reality. It enters only after undergoing a process of reconstruction. The poet does not reproduce the object exactly as it exists; instead, the object is placed in a new context and given relationships that were absent from its ordinary use.

Poeticizing the everydayness is therefore an act of rediscovering the familiar. An object that people habitually see without attending to its possible meanings can become, within the poem, the center of an emotional or intellectual experience.

Two levels may be distinguished here: the everydayness element itself, and the manner in which that element is poetically reconfigured. The cigarette in Mohamed Qast is not merely a cigarette; the crane in Salah Badis is not merely a construction machine; the wind in Lakhdar Barka is not merely a natural phenomenon; and the cloud in Ashour Fanni does more than perform a descriptive function.

Poeticizing the everydayness thus becomes an act of seeing the world anew: poetry recovers its power to make familiar objects strange, arresting, and worthy of contemplation.

3. Mohamed Qast: Everydayness Detail and the Transformation of Objects into Language

Mohamed Qast offers a clear example of how small, ordinary details can be invested with meaning. In one poem, he writes:

*"**First cigarette of the night,***
lures your mouth into confession…
By morning,
***I count the corpses of your words… in the ashtray**."* (Qast, n.d.)

At first, the scene is close to ordinary experience: a cigarette, a mouth, an ashtray, and words. Yet the poet redistributes the functions of these elements. The cigarette becomes a medium that coaxes the mouth into speaking, while the ashtray becomes the place where the "*corpses of words*" accumulate.

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A semantic tension emerges between burning and speech. Just as the cigarette gradually consumes itself, words too are subjected to a kind of death in the ashtray. The everydayness object thereby becomes a correlative for an inner experience of speech, silence, and loss.

The same transformation recurs in another passage:

*"**Tin has a language…***
it moans beneath the rain; the wind tends its wounds…
***and the creak becomes music**…"* (Qast, n.d.)

Here the sheet of tin acquires a "*language*"; the rain makes it "*moan*," the wind tends to it, and the resulting creak becomes "*music*." The image moves gradually from inert matter to a being endowed with voice and affect.

This image reveals one of the central mechanisms in the poeticization of everydayness life: human qualities are redistributed across ordinary objects so that they cease to be silent or neutral and instead participate actively in the construction of emotional experience.

4. Ashour Fanni: Condensation and the Transformation of the Ordinary Scene into Poetic Image

Semantic condensation is a salient feature of modern Arabic poetry, and of Algerian poetry in particular. It is generated by the poet's linguistic and cognitive competence and by the ability to work inventively with words, producing layered meanings through aesthetic displacement and compression (Al-Talib, n.d., p.4). Condensation therefore becomes an aesthetic strategy that unsettles the reader and invites an active search for the deeper implications encoded in the poem.

As the poet's linguistic and cultural field expands, the possibilities of meaning likewise deepen: intelligent condensation enables meaning to "*take on broader dimensions through fragmentation*" (Al-Bustani, n.d., p.59). Such compression leaves meaningful gaps that the reader is invited to fill through imagination.

The poetic scene has likewise become a major feature of contemporary poetry. It can be understood in several related ways. Qasim al-Miqdad describes it as the space in which dialogue between characters takes place, or the space in which those characters articulate their ideas to one another (Mounsi, 2000, p.110).

Mounsi defines scenic writing as writing in which images unfold successively, "*as though a moving film were being shown, rich in backgrounds through which symbols move*" (Mounsi, 2003, p.9). Ben Malik's semiotic glossary, meanwhile, relates the scene to dramatic content, significant events, and moments accompanied by textual expansion (Ben Malik, 2000, p.158).

The scene is realized through poetic writing itself—more precisely, through language, which conveys the scene in its temporal and spatial circumstances (Al-Makri, 1991, p.190). Such language is characterized by movement and transformation, becoming an "ever-open form" (Al-Shaykh, n.d.).

Ashour Fanni's handling of the everydayness differs in that it relies on extreme condensation, reducing the scene to a small number of elements. In the poem "Writing," he says:

*"**The cloud passes high above,***
its shadow walks slowly

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***across the white page**."* (Fanni, n.d.)

The scene appears simple: a cloud crosses the sky and its shadow moves over a sheet of paper. Yet the arrangement of these elements causes the natural scene to merge with the act of writing.

The white page, belonging to the domain of writing, becomes an extension of the sky, while the cloud's shadow becomes an imagined trace of inscription. The poet therefore does not simply describe a cloud; he makes it participate in the production of writing itself.

The same mechanism appears in the poem "Mallow Flower":

*"**Alone,***
startled by spring's whisper,
***it released its colors upon everyone**."* (Fanni, n.d.)

The flower becomes a being endowed with affect: it is "*alone*," spring approaches it as a "*whisper*," and it responds by releasing its colors. Natural detail thus moves beyond description to embody a transition from isolation to openness, and from stillness to life.

Fanni's poetic condensation turns a modest scene into an expansive field of meaning. Instead of building a long image, he rearranges a few familiar elements in an unfamiliar way, allowing the ordinary to generate a broader poetic resonance.

5. Salah Badis: The Urban Everydayness and the Construction of Irony

Irony is one of the prominent devices of contemporary Arabic poetry. It works through tension between apparently incompatible meanings and often disrupts the reader's horizon of expectation.

Although classical Arabic poetry knew forms of imagistic contradiction and contrast, traditional Arabic criticism did not isolate irony as a distinct artistic technique in the modern sense (Zayed, 2002, p.130). Its aesthetic force lies in the fact that it leaves the reader room to search for the meaning withheld beneath the surface of the expression (Abdel Fattah, 2007, p.386).

In Salah Badis's poetry, everydayness detail takes on a distinctly urban character. The city, its machines, and its visual forms become central components of the poetic experience. In "*The Highest Man in the City*," he writes:

*"**But I know***
that the highest man in the city today
***is the crane operator building this minaret**..."* (Badis, 2016, p.4)

The poem begins with an ordinary urban image: a crane building a minaret and a worker operating the machine. Yet the phrase "*the highest man in the city*" is reconfigured through an irony that plays on two senses of height—the metaphorical idea of elevated rank and the literal height produced by the crane.

The machine is therefore more than a technical instrument. It becomes a device through which the poem rearranges the social scene, bringing everydayness labor, the city, and machinery into the heart of poetic reflection.

The irony is intensified in another passage:

*"**The beautiful yellow cranes***
we once imagined
lifting the disk of the sun from the water

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at every sunrise
have begun to break down—
yet they still try to lift people's spirits.” (Badis, 2016, p.4)

The poem moves from a childlike or lyrical imagining of cranes to a different condition: the machines can no longer fully perform their practical function, yet they “try to lift people's spirits.” The literal action of lifting is converted into an emotional one. Badis thus uses the everydayness city not merely to record urban reality, but to reflect on the human being, labor, the city, and the social condition.

6. Lakhdar Barka: Nature as a Speaking Being

Lakhdar Barka offers a different model of poeticizing the world, one in which nature itself enters into a direct relationship with human experience. In his poem “The Wind,” he writes:

“There is no one
who sees the wind in cages,
or anyone who calms it with pills.
The wind blows so the trees may speak.
The wind does not jostle in a café.” (Barka, 2016, pp.6-7)

The image is built on an unfamiliar relationship among wind, cages, pills, cafés, and trees. The wind ceases to be merely a natural phenomenon and becomes a being that can be imagined as confined or sedated; more importantly, it becomes the force that enables the trees to “*speak*.”

This personification is not merely decorative. It makes nature an active participant in the production of meaning: trees are no longer background elements but become capable of speech through the wind.

The presence of the café also draws the natural scene toward human everydayness life, creating an overlap between natural and urban spaces. Barka does not isolate nature from daily reality; he recomposes the two fields within a single poetic image.

7. Divergent Mechanisms of Poeticizing the Everydayness

The preceding examples show that “*the everydayness*” does not generate a single meaning. Differences in the poets' treatment of everydayness material produce different poetic functions.

Poet	Everydayness element	Artistic mechanism	Poetic function
Mohamed Qast	cigarette, ashtray, sheet metal	personification and metaphor	expressing confession, silence, and loss
Ashour Fanni	cloud, page, flower	condensation and scene construction	transforming the natural scene into emotional experience
Salah Badis	crane, city, minaret	irony	constructing a vision of the city, labor, and the human condition
Lakhdar Barka	wind, trees, cages	personification	turning nature into an

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			active producer of meaning

This comparison shows that poeticizing the everydayness is not achieved simply by inserting familiar objects into a poem. It depends on reorganizing the relationship between those objects, the speaking self, and the world.

When an object changes position within the text, its meaning changes as well. Small details can therefore carry questions and implications that far exceed their material scale.

8. The Everydayness and the Rediscovery of the Familiar

One of the most important functions of the everydayness in contemporary poetry lies in its capacity to make us look again at things whose presence has become habitual. The poem enables the reader to see the cigarette as an opening onto confession, sheet metal as a being that suffers and makes music, the crane as an element in the social construction of the city, and the wind as a force that grants speech to trees.

Poeticity thus becomes a mode of rediscovering the world. Reality does not necessarily change; rather, the way it is seen changes. From this perspective, the everydayness represents an attempt to move beyond ready-made themes and to restore significance to the small objects and gestures that constitute human experience in its most ordinary details.

9. The Everydayness between Realism and Poetic Imagination

The presence of everydayness material does not mean that the poem becomes realistic in a straightforward documentary sense. Poetry does not reproduce reality exactly as it is; it reimagines it.

The crane exists in the real city, but Badis makes it the center of an ironic poetic construction. Sheet metal belongs to ordinary life, but Qast gives it language and voice. Clouds and flowers are natural objects, yet Fanni places them within a poetic structure that connects nature to writing and emotion. In Barka, the wind becomes a being capable of making trees speak.

The poeticization of the everydayness therefore emerges through the interaction between a real-world referent and poetic imagination. In literary experience, the poetic work leaves an effect on the reader that can shape response and behavior (Al-Ruba, 1989, p.113). The everydayness object retains a trace of its real-world existence, but within the poem it acquires an additional layer of meaning.

10. Position of the Study in Relation to Previous Research

Previous studies have examined aspects of detail and marginality in contemporary Algerian poetry, including work devoted to the "poetics of detail and the marginal," while other studies have analyzed individual poetic experiences from various aesthetic and semantic perspectives.

The present approach differs in that it moves from treating detail as an isolated phenomenon to examining the mechanism of its poeticization—that is, the process through which ordinary details are transformed into poetic signs.

The study also does not confine itself to a single poet. By comparing several examples, it reveals different artistic strategies: personification in Mohamed Qast, condensation in Ashour Fanni, urban irony in Salah Badis, and the personification of nature in Lakhdar Barka. The central

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issue, therefore, is not simply whether the everydayness is present in the poem, but how it is transformed into poetry and meaning.

11. Conclusion

The examples examined here show that the "*everydayness*" has become an important component of contemporary Algerian poetic experience. Its presence, however, cannot be reduced to recording the surfaces of daily life.

Each poet reshapes detail and assigns it a new function within the poem. Mohamed Qast turns the cigarette, ashtray, and sheet metal into elements associated with confession, silence, and loss. Ashour Fanni transforms the cloud, flower, and page into condensed scenes that exceed direct description. Salah Badis brings the crane and the city into an ironic structure concerned with labor and urban life, while Lakhdar Barka makes the wind and trees active participants in the production of meaning.

Poeticizing the "*everydayness"* is therefore, at its core, a reconstruction of the relationship between the human being and the world. Poetry grants ordinary things the ability to generate questions and meanings that extend beyond their material presence.

The value of the everydayness in contemporary poetry lies not simply in its "*everydayness*," but in poetic language's capacity to transform the fleeting into the significant, the familiar into an object of contemplation, and the smallest detail into part of a broader poetic vision.

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