

## Features of Deviation in Literary Discourse Between Rhetoric and Modern Stylistics

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### Abstract:

The importance of this intervention, entitled "Deviation in Literary Discourse Between Rhetoric and Modern Stylistics," lies in a comparative descriptive analysis of the expressive dimensions encompassed by the concept of deviation at the level of the literary text. Deviation refers to a departure from the conventional standard; a good style is one that diverges from the original language and its customary manner, constituting a violation of the ideal level of literary discourse. Today, this concept has garnered significant attention in linguistic, rhetorical, critical, and Arabic linguistic studies, reflecting both acceptance and appreciation for its descriptive capabilities and its relevance to Arab culture, both in heritage and modernity. This study also considers the speaker's ability to convey intended meanings to the recipient. My intervention compares the issue of deviation between rhetorical studies and modern stylistic studies, with rhetoric here referring to the classical artistic standards that provided a foundation for describing texts, critiquing them, and evaluating their aesthetics based on various verbal and semantic considerations.

**Keywords:** Deviation, Rhetoric, Text.

الانزياح في الخطاب الأدبي بين البلاغة والأسلوبية الحديثة

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ملخص:

تأتي أهمية هذه المداخلة الموسومة بـ : (الانزياح في الخطاب الأدبي بين البلاغة والأسلوبية الحديثة) من خلال عملية وصفية مقارنة لما ينضوي عليه مفهوم الانزياح من فضاءات تعبيرية على مستوى النص الأدبي، والانزياح هو عدول عن المعيار المتعارف عليه، فالأسلوب الجيد هو الذي ينحرف عن اللغة الأصلية وطريقتها الاعتيادية، وهو انتهاك للمستوى المثالي للغة الخطاب الأدبي على نطاق واسع، وقد حظي اليوم باهتمام واسع في الدراسات اللغوية والبلاغية والنقدية واللسانية العربية، مما يعكس قبولا ورضا بما يؤديه من قدرة على الوصف من جهة وما يمثله من مناسبة للثقافة العربية تراثا وحادثة،

ومن خلال معرفة قدرة المتكلم على توصيل المعاني المقصودة للمتلقى، وجعلت لمداخلتي هاته مقارنة لقضية الانزياح بين الدرس البلاغي والدرس الأسلوبي الحديث، وأقصد بالبلاغة هنا تلك المعايير الفنية القديمة التي كانت تمدنا بأساس لوصف النصوص ونقدها وتقييم جمالياتها لاعتبارات عديدة لفظية ومعنوية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الانزياح - البلاغة - النص.

## 1. Deviation:

The concept of deviation serves as a fundamental theoretical framework for understanding structuralist poetics' perceptions of rhetorical figures. This concept appears explicitly and centrally in modern poetics (Jean Cohen) or implicitly through parallel concepts such as the "poetic function" (Jakobson) and "transparency" (Todorov). The motivation behind studying deviation was the search for "distinctive features" of literary language, which significantly influenced modern rhetorical research. This research nearly shifted entirely towards a rhetoric specific to poetry or literary texts rather than classical rhetoric. However, the concept of deviation faced theoretical and practical challenges, such as difficulties in establishing a standard, reducing and interpreting deviation, and reconciling its function with communicative function. Consequently, we sought to exclude it—after critique—because it does not align with our strategy in constructing a rhetorical model based on an integrative interactive concept combining linguistic, cognitive, and rhetorical components, namely, the concept of "titling."<sup>1</sup>

Jean Cohen's works (1966, 1970, and 1979) best represent the concept of deviation within the structuralist poetic school. This study will focus on presenting his theoretical propositions before concluding with a critique highlighting the concept's theoretical and procedural shortcomings.<sup>2</sup>

The term deviation is widely used today in stylistic, rhetorical, critical, and Arabic linguistic studies, reflecting its acceptance as both a descriptive tool and a concept relevant to Arab culture, both in heritage and modernity. Efforts to establish its theoretical foundations stem from this perceived relevance.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the debates surrounding the concept and the various directions it has generated in Western studies, Arab scholars have largely overlooked these discussions, missing an opportunity to expand the term into a full-fledged theory for defining the essence of style.<sup>4</sup>

This study attempts to address this gap and may be followed by further research shedding light on Arab scholarship's attempts to invest in the concept of deviation to

establish a stylistic theory and reinterpret Arab literary and critical heritage through its lens.<sup>5</sup>

Even though deviation has been extensively analyzed, it continues to appear in linguistic and critical dictionaries alongside the issues it raises. In linguistic dictionaries, deviation is defined as follows:<sup>6</sup>

1. When comparing two language states, if one features an element in a position occupied by a different element with an equivalent meaning in the other, a deviation is identified between these two states. For instance, a deviation exists between Old French "rei" (le roi) pronounced [rei] and Modern French "roi" pronounced [rwa]. This deviation has allowed for the formation of systematically diverse linguistic variations, including geographical and social deviations.
2. When defining a standard—meaning a general usage of language shared by all speakers—any utterance that violates one of its rules is considered a deviation. Such deviation results from a deliberate decision with aesthetic value. In certain stylistic approaches, deviation is analyzed as a stylistic act.<sup>7</sup>

In the Encyclopedia of Linguistic Sciences, the concept is linked to the definition of rhetorical figures and is thus followed by objections to the rule/deviation perspective. The encyclopedia states: "Style is sometimes considered a deviation from a standard, but one cannot claim that Victor Hugo's style deviated from a standard of his time, first because defining such a standard is problematic, and second because what characterizes Hugo's style is not necessarily what distinguishes it from common usage."<sup>8</sup>

These examples illustrate the difficulty in determining the precise meaning of deviation and its scope, whether in linguistic or literary description. This necessitates tracing its rhetorical origins and stylistic extensions.<sup>9</sup>

## **2. In Classical Rhetoric:**

In Western studies, deviation is closely tied to rhetorical research. Although classical rhetoric was reduced to elocution, French scholars expanded its scope under the influence of philosophy and grammar.<sup>10</sup>

Du Marsais and Fontanier were among the earliest rhetoricians to revive rhetorical studies by analyzing metaphors and rhetorical figures in relation to linguistic levels. While Du Marsais focused on polysemy and synonymy, Fontanier examined meaning in relation to truth. He defined literal meaning as "a word's meaning when it is not—specifically—denoted by any other word that could replace it in all instances, and its

meaning is inherently primary, habitual, and ordinary to the extent that it cannot be considered circumstantial or acquired but is instead somewhat obligatory and necessary."<sup>11</sup>

Literal meaning stems from conventional, necessary, and obligatory words, whereas figurative meaning is realized through images that "deviate from the simple, ordinary, and common way of speaking in a direction that allows them to be replaced by something more ordinary and common."<sup>12</sup>

Thus, literal and figurative meanings contrast, reflecting a distinction between simple speech and language that continuously deviates from it. This defines rhetorical study as focusing on language that diverges from common speech, though this definition is based on an unspecified criterion.<sup>13</sup>

To clarify this ambiguity, rhetoricians proposed various standards to differentiate between simple, natural speech and figurative speech, primarily focusing on words. Todorov summarized these standards into four oppositional pairs:<sup>14</sup>

1. **Logical/Illogical:** Natural speech is logical, whereas figurative speech involves deviation towards illogicality. Based on this, requesting something already possessed is considered a rhetorical figure, as is describing something with excessive detail and subsidiary ideas derived from a single source. This corresponds to "amplification" in Arabic rhetoric, which is contrasted with "brevity," another rhetorical figure. However, while Western rhetoricians contrasted amplification with logic, Arabic rhetoricians juxtaposed both amplification and brevity with "equality" or "matching."<sup>15</sup>

### **3. In Modern Studies:**

Discussions on formalism, stylistics, and New Criticism as approaches to literary language should acknowledge that these movements operated within inherited models, with classical rhetoric being one of the most influential.<sup>16</sup>

Rhetoric was originally the science of oral discourse due to the social function of orators in Greek democracy. Over time, it became a discipline of linguistic embellishment, shifting from text analysis to word analysis. While later scholars reduced it to a mere list of decorative devices, rhetoric nonetheless provided the foundation distinguishing literary from ordinary language through imagery. Furthermore, before its decline, rhetoric—when considered as discourse analysis—offered crucial insights into the speaker's culture and the audience's reception, aligning with contemporary studies like pragmatics and reaffirming rhetoric's relevance today.<sup>17</sup>

Classical rhetoric's classificatory efforts provide tools for analyzing different levels of literary language and offer perspectives on defining and understanding literariness. The revival of rhetoric in modern studies, particularly through deviation, reconnects classical rhetoric with contemporary literary theories, contributing to the emergence of new rhetoric and text linguistics.<sup>18</sup>

## **New Rhetorical Trends:**

### **A- The Linguistic-Rhetorical Approach:**

This approach distinguishes between poetic language and everyday language (Langage Courant / Langage Poétique), based on the evolutionary premise that poetry "arises from the application of rhythm to speech." This implies that poetry does not blend with or coexist with ordinary speech; rather, it is speech augmented by an additional element that is not necessarily linguistic. Poetry is not merely a structure but the outcome of structuring.<sup>19</sup>

This distinction is also based on symbolism, where various images drive linguistic deviation to its peak, forming a parallel world distinct from reality. This world emerges through a secondary language that doubles ordinary speech. Beyond metrical and rhythmic constraints, poetic language differs from everyday language mainly in its lexicon and partially in its structures and syntax.<sup>20</sup>

From this distinction arises a specific view of style as a result of conscious selection and exclusions among various possible stylistic choices. This deliberate choice of words is a hallmark that sets poetry apart from other forms of expression. The approach maintains a hierarchy of styles, akin to classical rhetoric, positioning poets as a distinct category with their own language, reflecting the notion of multiple linguistic registers within a single nation.<sup>21</sup>

Regarding linguistic deviation ("déviation"), the definition originates from classical rhetoric, where deviation is measured against both simplicity and a neutral standard of expression. From a rhetorical perspective, deviation is anchored to a fixed norm, whereas from a formative perspective, it represents a rupture from temporal conventions, resulting in novelty and innovation. Deviation manifests in:<sup>22</sup>

- **Static deviation:** Distancing from common expression.
- **Dynamic deviation:** A leap towards unexpectedness.
- **Contextual deviation:** Semantic anomaly.

The rhetorical impact of this approach is evident through four transformation operations: addition, deletion, reordering, and alteration (addition + deletion). The

first three align with compositional processes at the syntactic level, reinforcing the idea that rhetoric serves as a "natural laboratory" aiding linguistic analysis due to its close ties with linguistic structures and operations.<sup>23</sup>

From the deviation perspective, different structures emerge:<sup>24</sup>

- **Rhetorical deviation:**
  - Ellipsis (omission of elements)
  - Zeugma (omission of repeated words)
  - Asyndeton (omission of conjunctions)
- **Poetic deviation:**
  - Insertion (embedding elements)
  - Effacement (erasure of elements)
  - Permutation (rearranging elements)
- **Stylistic deviation:**
  - Speech forms: descriptive (Assertion) or expressive (Interrogation, Command, etc.)
  - Speech acts: requests, complaints, regret (Demander, Se Plaindre)
- **Lexical deviation:**
  - Metaphor and metonymy (Synecdoque et métonymie)
  - Pure metaphor (métaphore)
  - Simile-metaphor (Métaphore-Comparaison)
  - Image-based metaphor (Métaphore-Image)

Deviation undergoes two phases to achieve full liberation: first, a release from linguistic constraints, and second, a disruption of meaning. When poets break imposed linguistic rules, they do so consciously, not arbitrarily. They reconstruct language, redefining its norms, as deviations, once institutionalized, become new conventions.<sup>25</sup>

## **B- The Rhetorical Poetics Approach:**

According to Cohen, everyday speech is prose, while poetry is a departure from it. However, this contrast does not define poetry but rather delineates what it is not. To establish this distinction, Cohen analyzes poetry on two levels:

- **Phonetic level:** Poetry possesses distinct, encoded features (versification).
- **Semantic level:** Rhetorical devices contribute to encoding, but while phonetic elements are obligatory, rhetorical devices are optional.<sup>26</sup>

Cohen does not seek rhetorical figures in poetry but rather the underlying structure common to various poetic forms that defines its departure from ordinary language.

He terms this structural principle "deviation." He argues that meter itself is a regulated form of deviation, a codified divergence from a phonetic norm of standard speech. Likewise, at the semantic level, there exists a similar law of deviation, albeit different in nature.<sup>27</sup>

By using prose as a benchmark, Cohen does not claim that prose lacks deviation; rather, he considers the distinction relative. He uses scientific prose as the reference point since it minimizes aesthetic considerations, making its deviation nearly negligible (tending towards zero).

Cohen further differentiates between poetry and mere verse. Adding versification to prose results in metrical speech but not necessarily poetry. He asserts that verse in poetry is inherently tied to meaning, unlike music, which, when added to prose, does not alter its structure. For example, rhyme is not merely a phonetic resemblance but is intrinsically connected to meaning. Thus, versification is not an external addition to poetry but an integral part of its semantic structure.<sup>28</sup>

One of Cohen's key arguments concerns translation. He highlights that while prose can be translated while preserving both meaning and style, poetry resists translation because it involves a unique formal structure that cannot be replicated without loss.

### **Poetic Structure Analysis:**

Cohen examines poetic deviation across two dimensions:

#### **1. Phonetic Level:**

- **Meter and Rhythm:** Poetry uses meter and rhythm to enhance similarities between units, contrasting with prose, which emphasizes differentiation.
- **Rhyme and Alliteration:** These create phonetic parallelism, reinforcing poetic deviation.
- **Wordplay (Puns, Assonance, and Consonance):** These blur clarity, creating ambiguity, which is a core feature of poetry.

#### **2. Semantic Level:**

- **Attribution (Syntactic Structure):** Deviation occurs when subjects and predicates form unexpected pairings. In poetry, these unexpected pairings create novel meanings.
- **Determination (Use of Modifiers):** Poetry subverts conventional use of adjectives, demonstratives, and temporal-spatial markers, rendering them ambiguous.

- **Connection (Linking Phrases and Sentences):** Poetry disrupts syntactic cohesion by combining unrelated ideas, enhancing ambiguity.<sup>29</sup>

## Conclusion:

Cohen's analysis ultimately seeks to demonstrate that poetic deviation is systematic and methodical, making it the defining characteristic of poetry. He argues that poetry is not merely a deviation from prose but its antithesis. While prose relies on clarity and differentiation, poetry thrives on ambiguity and resemblance, balancing structure and disruption to create a unique mode of expression.

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