

Psychoanalytical Foreshadowing: The Application of a Literary Device in Quranic Narratology

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Abstract : Literary approaches towards the text of the Quran predate the modern period. Suyuti (d.1505)'s encyclopedia of Quranic sciences, Al-Itqan, provides a notable example. In the modern era, the study of the Quranic rhetorics received particular attention in the second half of the twentieth century by Egyptian scholars. Amin Al-Khouli (d. 1966), who might be considered the first to argue for the necessity of applying a literary-rhetorical lens toward the tafseer, Islamic exegesis, and his students championed the literary analysis as the most effective approach to the comprehension of the holy text. Western scholars continued the literary criticism of the Islamic scripture by applying to the Quran similar methodologies used in biblical studies. In the history of the literary examination of the Quran, the scope of the critical methods applied to the Quranic text has been limited. For, the rhetorical approaches to the Quran, in the premodern as well as the modern period, concerned almost exclusively with the lexical layer of the text, leaving the narratological dimensions insufficiently examined. Recent contributions, by Leyla Ozgur Alhassen, for instance, attempt to fill this lacunae. This paper aims at advancing the studies of the Quranic narratives by investigating the application of a literary device whose role in the Quranic stories remains unstudied, that is, "foreshadowing." This paper shall focus on Chapter 12, "Surah al-Yusuf," as its case study. Chapter 12, the single chapter that includes the story of Joseph in one piece, contains several instances in which the events of the story are foreshadowed. As shall be discussed, foreshadowing occurs either through a monolog or dialogue whereby one or more of the characters allude to the future happenings or through the manner in which the setting is described. Through a close reading of the text, it will be demonstrated that the usage of the rhetorical tool of foreshadowing meets a dual purpose: on the one hand, foreshadowing prepares the reader/audience for the upcoming events in the plot, and on the other hand, it highlights the psychological dimensions of the characters, their thoughts, intentions, and disposition. In analyzing the story, this study shall draw on psychoanalytical criticism to explore the layers of meanings embedded in the Quranic narrative that are unfolded through foreshadowing.

Keywords : foreshadowing, quranic narrative, literary criticism, surah yusuf

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