4. THE LINK BETWEEN EMOTIVE EXPRESSIONS, PHATIC COMMUNION AND LITERARY DEVICES

> "There is no need here to examine how ... early impulses are diverted and disguised by social pressures... The primitive new-born animal may be gradually transformed into a bishop."
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> I.A.Richards[1]

Only a small proportion of the utternces we use in everyday life can be described as purely informative. This is explained by the fact that long before we developed language as we know it, we probably made all sorts of cries expressive of such internal conditions as hunger, fear, loneliness, sexual desire and triumph. When grunts and jibberings became language, it was possible to exchange accurate reports, but we almost universally tend to begin a report with an expression of our internal condition. (*Ow!* Expression. *My tooth hurts.* Report). "Many utterances are, as we have seen with regard to "snarl-words" and "purr-words," vocal equivalents of expressive gestures, such as crying in pain, baring the teeth in anger, nuzzling to express friendliness, dancing with delight, and so on. When words are used as vocal equivalents of expressive gestures, we shall say that language is being used in presymbolic ways. These *presymbolic* uses of language coexist with our symbolic systems, and *the talking we do in everyday life is a thorough blending of symbolic and presymbolic*."[2]

In expressions of strong feelings of any kind, presymbolic features creep into the language and take on a discernible form. Other expressions indulged in for presymbolic reasons are simply talking for the sake of hearing ourselves talk, which can give us a pleasant sense of being alive. We hear children prattling, adults singing in the bathtub, large groups making noises together, as when they sing, recite or chant in a group. In activities such as these, the significance of the words used is almost completely irrelevant. Social conversation is another example of using language in a largely presymbolic character. Remarks made at cocktail parties or gatherings of every kind are

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[1] I.A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, 1925, p. 45-46.

[2] Hiyakawa 1978, p. 78. Italics added to the last sentence. The relevance of this information to the study is that the text I study directly depicts social situations, interaction and dialogue, in a "I said – he said – she said format", which can probably safely be assumed to be based on true-to-life accounts of how people communicated with each other. Of course, here one needs to give consideration to the fact that literature, when highly stylized, can be far removed from realities of daily living. In the type of belles-lettres which Arabs, and Abu̱ 'l-Faraj al-Is̱faha̱ni̱ in particular, generated in those times, the narrative component is based on transmission rather than fantasy, and the anthology is presented as factual, not as a collection of myths or fables. The author quite distinctly aims at the highest degree of adherence to 'pure transmission' and shuns 'fiction', which is not his aim. Admittedly, there is an emphasis on the anecdotal nature of the related on-goings, which could leave us with the impression that life was merrier and jollier than it was in real life. This bias in the 'factual transmission' comes from the notion that literature, however serious, should be entertaining. More about the character of Arabic belles-lettres will be said in the section entitled *An Overview of Relevant Research*.

rarely worth making for their informative value. But it is regarded as rude to remain silent, and indeed, as a social error not to exchange set pleasantries, even if we do not mean them.[3] "From these social practices it is possible to state, as a general principle, that the prevention of silence is itself an important function of speech, and it is completely impossible for us in society to talk only when we "have something to say." "[4]

"We talk together about nothing at all and thereby establish friendships. The purpose of the talk is not the communication of information, as the symbols used would seem to imply ... but the establishment of communion. Human beings have many ways of establishing communion among themselves ... But talking together is the most easily arranged of all ... forms of collective activity. The *togetherness* of the talking, then, is the most important element in social conversation; the subject matter is only secondary. There is a principle at work, therefore, in the selection of subject matter. Since the purpose of this kind of talk is the establishment of communion, *we are careful to select subjects about which agreement is immediately possible*."[5] This is important, because the need for togetherness is not fulfilled merely by talking, but by expressing opinions on which the conversants agree, and with each new agreement, no matter how commonplace or obvious, friendship is established more firmly.[6] In this type of communication, where phatic communion is sought, unoriginal remarks are immensely valuable. They are reassuring, indicate integratedness and cement social ties. A variant of this form of communication is, engaging in 'kidding around' instead of stereotyped phrases and predictable answers, and being able to respond to it in the same manner, or even more wittily, can act as an initiation rite or prerequisite for further interaction.[7]

Another aspect of presymbolic language is engagement in rituals. "Sermons, political caucuses, conventions, pep rallies, and other ceremonial gatherings illustrate the fact that all groups – religious, political, patriotic, scientific, and occupational – like to gather at intervals for the purpose of sharing certain accustomed activities .... Among these ritual activities is always included a number of speeches, either traditionally worded or specially composed for the occasion, whose principal function is *not* to give the audience information it did not have before, not to create new ways of feeling, but something else altogether."[8]

The following examples of the language of ritual speeches may be enlightening: "Let us look at what happens at a pep rally such as precedes college football games. The members of "our team" are "introduced" to a crowd that already knows them. Called upon to make speeches, the players mutter a few incoherent and often ungrammatical remarks, which are received with wild applause. The leaders of the rally make fantastic promises abour the mayhem to be performed on the opposing team next day. The crowd utters "cheers," which normally consist of animalistic noises arranged in extremely

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[3] Hayakawa 1978, p. 78-79.
[4] Hayakawa 1978, p. 79-80.
[5] Hayakawa 1978, p. 80.
[6] Hayakawa 1978, p. 80-81.
[7] Hayakawa 1978, p. 79 (footnote).
[8] Hayakawa 1978, p. 83-84.

primitive rhythms. *No one comes out any wiser or better informed than he was before he went in*." Analogously, "To some extent religious ceremonies are equally puzzling at first glance. The priest or clergyman in charge utters set speeches, *often in a language incomprehensible to the congregation* (Hebrew in orthodox Jewish synagogues, Coptic in Egyptian Christian churches, Sanskrit in Chinese and Japanese temples) with the result that, as often as not, no information whatsoever is communicated to those present."[9]

Hayakawa's remarks on this phenomenon of human behaviour and the use of language are as follows: "If we approach these linguistic events from a detached point of view, and if we also examine our own reactions when we enter into the spirit of such occasions, we cannot help observing that, whatever the words used in ritual utterance may signify, we often do not think very much about their signification during the course of the ritual ... Only the superficial, however, will dismiss these facts [that people, e.g., chant things they do not understand] as "simply showing what fools human beings are." We cannot regard such utterances as "meaningless," because they have a genuine effect upon us. We may come out of church, for example, with no clear memory of what the sermon was about, but with a sense nevertheless that the service has somehow "done us good." What is the "good", that is done us in ritual utterances? *It is the reaffirmation of social cohesion*."[10]

In his concluding statement, Hayakawa underlines that ritualistic utterances, which are accustomed sets of noises which convey no information, have to do with feelings, which are often group feelings, and they rarely make sense to someone who is not a member of that group, for their effect is to a considerable extent independent of whatever signification the words once possessed.[11]

This introduction, I felt, was necessary, as a gateway for interpreting the material I have collected. Arabs have reaped quite a reputation in the field of 'rhetorics' and are viewed as being 'highly rhetorical' and indulging in their 'rhetorical style' almost to the exclusion of anything that is not oratory. It is an undeniable fact, that this is so. It is the 'why this is so' that, I believe, has gone, not only unanswered, but unasked. The link between 'emotive content' and 'rhetorical speech', I hope, has been established, in that both are expressions of the presymbolic function of language, or for expressing the need to create and maintain social bonds.

To be able to attempt finding some answers to the questions posed at the end of the previous secion, a related feature of communication needs to be examined as well. Namely, 'directive language' (the language of social control).

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[9] Hayakawa 1978, p. 84

[10] Hayakawa 1978, p. 84

[11] Hayakawa 1978, p. 84. On p. 85-86: Hayakawa states in a section entitled *Advice to the Literal-Minded*: "Ignorance of the existence of these presymbolic uses of language is not so common among uneducated people (who often perceive such things intuitively) as it is among the educated. " He says that the gloomy conclusions about the stupidity or hypocricy of people who exchange trivialties are the result of "applying the standards of symbolic language to linguistic events that are either partly or wholly presymbolic in character." His rather firm statment: "The intellectually persnickety often tell us that we should always say what we mean and mean what we say, and talk only when we have something to talk about. These are, of course, impossible prescriptions." is thought-provoking.

“What we call “commands,” “pleas,”, “requests,” and “orders” are the simplest way we have of making things happen by means of words ... With words, ... we influence and to an enormous extent *control future events*. It is for this reason that writers write; preachers preach; employers, parents, and teachers scold; propagandists send out news releases; statesmen give speeches. All of them, for various reasons, are trying to influence our conduct – sometimes for our good, sometimes for their own. These attempts to control, direct, or influence the future actions of fellow human beings with words may be termed *directive uses of language*.”

Hayakawa states that directive language cannot be dull or uninteresting, if it is to produce the wanted effect, which is why it *must* make use of every affective element in language, from dramatic variations in tone, rhyme, rhythm, endless repetition, to rebuke, endearment or praise. Whatever moves the audience best, is utilized for the end of the speaker or writer, be this the making of meaningless noises, the declaration of noble ideals, scaring the listener or reader stiff, or the provision of facts, when that is deemed to be the most potent means of influencing the minds of others. Deciding whether a text is using directive language entails discovering the aims behind it. Naturally, this is not easy to do. But it must be kept in mind, that there is an aim behind every utterance. Using gentle language may be motivated by the aim to direct people to be more kindly towards each other, producing intelligent arguments may be motivated by the aim of influencing people who are not likely to be moved by subrational appeals. “If we are trying to direct people to lead better lives, we use affective appeals that arouse their finest feelings. Included among directive utterances, therefore, are many of the greatest and most treasured works of literature; the Christian and Buddhist scriptures, and most writings of Confucius, Milton’s *Areopagitica*, and Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.”[12]

One feature that such appeals have in common, is that they usually *make promises*. They promise gratification or an improvement in the quality of life, in one form or another.[13] Directive language, which is by definition affective in nature, because its *aim* is to *move*, is natural and legitimate. It is nothing to frown upon. In fact, it is the very foundation upon which society and civilization rest; making citizens conform to social and civic customs is what makes judges just, priests pious, teachers interested in the welfare of students, soldiers courageous ... it is the very fabric of which fidelity, in the widest sense of the word, is woven. The important question for the target of a directive utterance – which is the civilized (i.e. verbal) form of physical coercion – is to ask oneself whether the promises inherent in the message that is being delivered are likely to come true or not.[14] From the point of view of literary criticism, being able to ask such a question, is an almost certain indication that the text one is faced with is fraught with ‘emotional appeal’. Another criterion which helps in detecting such appeal, is trying to figure out the aim behind a text.

[12] Hayakawa 1978, p. 92.
[13] See Hayakawa 1978, p. 93.
[14] See Hayakawa 1978, p. 93-96.

It is not for the critic to pass value judgments – not even of value judgments – but to aim at the highest degree of neutral observation possible and to look for clues which facilitate the most wide-based interpretation possible. Realizing that the term 'affective', as has been expounded above, is a very broad concept, which covers behaviour ranging from pounding one's fist on the table in anger, to delivering a factual account in speech or writing, may complicate charting this territory, but the picture conveyed in the end, can turn out to be a bit more comprehensive than it would, if terms were not used in their broadest sense.[15]

In this context, it is necessary to highlight one more important aspect of the affective use of language, which is the verbal hypnotism achieved by the use of complex literary devices, which have a phonetic basis. Such devices are employed regularly in speeches and oratory, but especially in writing. The simplest way of hypnotizing an audience or readership can be by the use of impressive, bombastic words, which are long, hard to pronounce and hard to fathom. This is, of course, more 'affected' than 'affective'. The truly skilful writer uses rhyme, alliteration, assonance, crossed alliteration and all the subtleties of the rhythm that can be achieved by language to reinforce other affective devices. The attraction of such literary devices is that they charm the reader like the snake charmer's flute (or thumping) charms a snake.[16]

Metaphors and similes are rather nonsensical if interpreted literally. They are not used for their appropriateness or informative connotations, which are relatively irrelevant, compared to the feeling or desire they are intended to arouse. Again, this does not mean that they are of no value:[17] "During the long time in which *metaphor* and *simile* were regarded as "ornaments" of speech – that is, as if they were like embroidery, which improves the appearance of our linen but adds nothing to its utility – the psychology of such communicative devices was neglected."[18] The basic process by which we arrive at metaphor is that we tend to assume that things which create the same responses in us are identical with each other. (A heavy rock is hard to move and so is an obstinate mule. Therefore, a person who will not budge in his positions may be called a rock or a mule,

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[15] In spite of this, I find the narrowing down of a concept sometimes, not only justified, but necessary: Another 'affective use of language' is the collection of collective sanctions called 'laws'. The constitutions of nations and organizations are simply 'directives', which have been accumulated, codified and systematized. They are among the most interesting linguistic events, which are not merely accompanied by ritual, but are the central purpose of ritual. Ritual, in the final analysis, aims at imposing patterns of behaviour upon the individual, bestowing predictability, which is the way to look out for the interests of the whole group. In this study, the concept of 'affective language' is narrowed down to exclude laws, legislation and jurisprudence, although Hiyakawa argues interestingly in favour of the inclusion of 'laws' under 'affective content' in ibid., p. 96-101.

[16] Hayakawa 1978, p. 106-107. (p. 106: "Often when we are hearing or reading impressively worded sermons, speeches, political addresses, essays, or "fine writing", we stop being critical altogether, and simply allow ourselves to feel as excited, sad, joyous, or angry as the author wishes us to feel. Like snakes under the influence of a snake charmer's flute, we are swayed by the musical phrases of the verbal hypnotist. If the author is a man to be trusted, there is no reason why we should not enjoy ourselves in this way now and then. But to listen or read like this all the time is a debilitating habit.")

[17] Flemming Olsen, *Elements of Textual Analysis*, Everyman editions, 1986, is a helpful reference book for textual analysis. For denotations vs. connotations see p. 17-18. For literal versus figurative expression, p. 83-84.

[18] Hayakawa 1978, p. 109.

and so forth.) In a metaphor, we transfer the agreeable or disagreeable sensation produced by one situation to the one that reminds us of it. "Metaphors are not "onaments of discourse"; they are direct expressions of evaluations and are bound to occur whenever we have strong feelings to express. They are to be found in special abundance, therefore, in all primitive speech, in folk speech, in the speech of the unlearned, in the speech of children, and in the professional argot of theater people, of gangsters, and of those in other lively occupations."[19]

Personification is the kind of metaphor that does not distinguish between animate and inanimate objects, because the underlying *feeling* (of fear, delight, suspense, etc.) is the *same*, whether it is caused by an animate or inanimate object.[20] While simile (used a lot in slang and works on exactly the same principles), which can be considered an 'upgraded metaphor' (a smile is not 'the sun' anymore, but becomes 'like the sun') is a product of the imaginative process by which poets arrive at poetry. "In poetry, there is the same love of seeing things in scientifically outrageous but emotionally expressive language."[21] Such linguistic devices help us get along without inventing new words for new things or feeling. "Metaphor, simile and personification are among the most useful communicative devices we have, because of their quick affective power ... [as long as they] represent useful similarities."[22]

Other potent affective elements called literary devices and frequently employed in speech and literature are: the repetition of sounds (alliteration and assonance; especially in creating 'catchy titles' or slogans), repetition of grammatical structures (as in: Government of the people, by the people, for the people)[23] and the use of allusion, irony, pathos and humour. Allusion is evoking in the mind of the listener or reader feelings already expressed by someone else, or in previous circumstances, by mentioning a well-known book, poem, phrase, saying, quoting someone or making any reference to anything that is in some way connected to the present or to any idea we wish to express. In this manner, we can borrow and transfer affective connotations. (For example by saying: they are acting like 'Qais and Laila', the English equivalent of which would be 'they are acting like Romeo and Juliet'.) "But allusions work as an affective device only when the hearer is familiar with the history, literature, people, or events alluded to ... whenever a group of people – the members of a single family or the members of a whole civilization – have memories and traditions in common, extremely subtle and efficient affective communications become possible through the use of allusion."[24]

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[19] Hayakawa 1978, p.109.

[20] Hayakawa 1978, p. 109.: "Therefore, in the expression of our feelings, a car may "lie down and die,", the wind "kisses" our cheeks, the waves are "angry" and "roar" against the cliffs, the roads are icy and "treacherous," the mountains "look down" on the sea, machine guns "spit," revolvers "bark," volcanoes "vomit" fire, and the engine "gobbles" coal."

[21] Hayakawa 1978, p. 110. (One of the examples given is: The hunched camels of the night / Trouble the bright / And silver waters of the moon. Francis Thompson.)

[22]Hayakawa 1978, p. 111-112. (Note: Arabic is 'infamous' for the use of metaphors and similes, but the list the author provides of how commonly they are employed in every department of the English language makes one wonder whether English gets the upper hand. sic!)

[23] Hayakawa 1978, p. 107.

[24] Hayakawa 1978, p. 112.

Irony, pathos or humour, can, in principle, be achieved by unlikely comparisons, such as quoting a poem which arouses feelings of beauty and majesty while looking at something ugly and distasteful. The conflict resulting from the juxtaposition of these two opposed 'sights' results in a third feeling, which is neither awe nor shock (sic!) but the desire to laugh or weep, depending on the situation.

The above methods are all clearly affective. But 'sticking to the facts' by no means guarantees the absence of affective elements. In fact, it is hard to find a text which is not calculated to arouse some kind of feeling in the reader. It is the 'affectiveness of facts' which is relied upon to influence people's judgements and thinking. The skilful writer provides facts and descriptions which allow the reader to draw his own conclusions (which the writer implicitly suggests by the choice of his or her topic and way of presentation) while the writer who does not trust his audience to figure out the conclusions they can reach at on the basis of the text for themselves, fills his lines with explicit judgments, which may appeal to someone who does not object to 'ready-made' answers, and which the more analytical reader is likely to find an insult to his intelligence.[25]

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[25] Based on Hayakawa, p. 114-117.