




## Why Narrative Poetry Still Matters in Stylistics

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### Abstract

In Morocco, debates over English language instruction have marginalized poetry as a distinct literary genre. The shortage of poetry events arguably makes poetry teaching both daunting and intimidating. Besides fostering trust, memorization, and empathy, helping students develop a penchant for English language, as well as humanity, poetry, and narrative poetry, in particular, proffers teachers ample opportunities to fully engage students in the learning process. Not only does it awaken their senses and make them establish connections but leads them to think in a critical way about the world around them. In this paper, the teaching of narrative poetry through the cooperative approach is negotiated along with its value and pertinence for the stylistics course.

**Keywords:** *stylistics, narrative poetry, Moroccan higher education, cooperative learning, discourse analysis, responses.*

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### Introduction

It is widely assumed that poetry teaching in Moroccan higher education is becoming a nightmare for some students. Teachers often complain that poetry is “difficult,” “hard to teach,” or “not cool” (Drifte & Jubb, 2002); it is sometimes “tedious or boring” (McIlroy, 2019), “difficult to assess” (Allott, 2019), and not worthwhile teaching because of its falsification of reality and excessive use of imagination. If Moroccan teachers teach poetry, it is only because they must or they have to; hence, Moroccan students’ love of and interest in poetry wane and the poetry experience becomes frustrating. In so far as Booth and Moore (2003) are concerned, students privilege watching movies, listening to songs, admiring paintings and prints, yet they remain wary of poetry. Working hard to overcome potential fears about poetry should then be the prime concern of Moroccan teachers and students because poetry consists of the art of interpretation, beauty, and the appreciation of the metaphorical meanings.

The advantages of teaching poetry in English language classes in Moroccan higher education classes are immense. Teaching poetry leads to an all-around development of the whole personality of students—particularly the emotional, imaginative, intellectual, aesthetic, and intuitive aspects (Ediger et al, 2003).

According to Stanley (2004), poetry promotes language development and enhances natural language acquisition. It is, to borrow Allington and Cunningham's (2002) terminology, a "thoughtful literacy" so long as it involves students in thinking, sharing, discussing, explaining, creating, reflecting, and revising their common ground knowledge. Plato, the Athenian philosopher, explained the benefits of poetry (mimesis) as a morally instructive endeavor to imitate the harmony of nature. Further, he believed that poetry pointed to nature and the purpose of life (Smiley, 2009).

In this paper, I highlight the importance of narrative poetry in the stylistics classroom using the cooperative approach. In the first place, I investigate the current position of poetry in Moroccan higher education. Next, I report on students' readings of—and their groups' critical responses to—"Abou Ben Adhem," a narrative poem written by the British poet and essayist Leigh Hunt (1784–1859) about the early Sufi mystic, Abou Ben Adhem. Eventually, I propose some helpful strategies for reading and analyzing poetry cooperatively. The following questions are fully considered:

1. What is the status of poetry in Moroccan higher education?
2. Can cooperative learning, as an academic and social learning experience, enhance Moroccan students' involvement with respect to narrative poetry in the stylistics course?
3. Which procedures should be followed in the reading and analysis of poetry?

Before answering these questions, it seems fundamentally important to pinpoint the status of poetry in Moroccan higher education.

## Literature Review

### The Status of Poetry in Moroccan Higher Education

Poetry opens pathways into intercultural dialogue and textual awareness, paving the ground for appreciation and enjoyment and allowing for the exploration of the multiple workings and functions of language—its rhetorical dimension and perlocutionary effects. Since poetry borrows insight from the human experience, it tends to hone students' analytical and critical thinking skills and makes them more keenly aware of life by training their imagination and crystallizing treasures in their memories. However, any poem is difficult to read, talk about, or even teach if one does not know how the poetry system functions. In the words of Burt (2010, p. 20), "[A]ll poetry is difficult if you do not have a way in, a sense of what is represented;" it is more difficult because "we have lost the art of reading any poetry that will not read itself to us" (Aguilar, 2001, p. 18).

Gold (2012) has reflected on the place of poetry in social work education and considered the unique role of poetry in social work training. By using personal narratives, short stories, and poetry as texts for learning, he found that poetry managed to create a reflective "space" that encourages dialogue and practice. In his own words, poetry "has proven an effective way to expose students to rich descriptions of practice—from both client and practitioner perspectives" (Gold, 2012, p. 758). Likewise, Sigvardsson (2020) has investigated Swedish teachers' perceptions of poetry teaching and proposed some strategies to engage pupils with poetic texts: drawing on personal engagement, discussing pupils' conceptions from the outset, creating a safe classroom atmosphere, and scaffolding pupil's interpretations.

In turn, Kubiak (2020) has studied poetry teaching to adults with intellectual disabilities at the university. He has shown that writing poetry can become a powerful tool to explore the self and social identity, as well as a means to question and challenge the ideational world that these individuals are situated in; the exposure to poetry enables students and teachers to analyze social worlds (Richardson, 2000). Following the same line of thought, Eva-Wood (2008) has underscored the challenges of poetic instruction and the dilemma encountered in terms of students' reading and interpretation of poetry. She argued that any confusion can be

more than a resource for meaning making. When students voiced their impressions and emotions in their response to poetry reading, they demonstrated a high level of engagement and commitment to poetry.

In Moroccan university institutions, poetry is experiencing an unprecedented decline. Few English departments are affording the teaching of poetry at the undergraduate level. Most of the courses focus on language, media studies, translation, cultural studies, applied linguistics, or literature in general, particularly drama and novels. Also, students rarely choose to work on poetry in their end-of-term projects. The arguments questioning the utility of poetry's pedagogical significance are not nascent. In 1934, Edmund Wilson published the first version of his controversial "Is Verse a Dying Technique?" essay. Treading on his footsteps is Joseph Epstein, who asked, "Who Killed Poetry?" The answer to these thought-provoking questions demands surveying the Moroccan educational scene and laying bare the whys and wherefores in subordinating poetry.

Universities like Ibn Zohr (Agadir), Hassan II (Casablanca), and Abdelmalek Essaadi (Tetouan) include respective modules of poetry. The modules in question introduce students to the complexity and pleasure of poetry genres in different historical periods, ranging from sonnets to haikus, Shakespeare to Eliot, and the Renaissance to the present. The aim is to enable students to grasp the mechanisms that make up the core of poetry and push them to think in a critical and responsive way. In other Moroccan English departments, the partial inclusion of poetry could be spotted in courses such as drama and poetry (Oujda) or in courses like stylistics and literary criticism (Rabat).

The demise of poetry can be attributed to its complexity—the attitudes teachers and students hold, vis-à-vis its language and style. The focus on technicalities rather than metaphors and imagery, word choice, or the theme itself, sometimes results in student passivity and indifference to poetry. What is more, the poems chosen almost neither cater to the expectations of students nor fall within their areas of interest. Traditionally, students are given a poem to read, and it is always the teacher who provides the stylistic analysis. This occurs mainly because the teacher dwells on lecturing and hardly invests in group work to stimulate students to collaborate and produce the eventual reflective analysis. It is believed that collaboration is the best remedy to passivity, as it increases motivation and productivity (Gardner, 2016). To prompt collaboration, students are entailed to work in groups with the objective of creating an ambiance in which fun and hard work merge together.

### **Collaboration and Group Work**

Research has revealed that, in classroom settings, active collaboration not only optimizes learning outcomes but also consolidates students' emotional, social, and psychological well-being (Gaudet et al., 2010). Collaborative learning thus makes students depend on themselves in their pursuit of knowledge, and it paves the ground for a meaningful learning process to become fully-fledged; Namaziandost et al. (2020) have studied the impacts of incorporating cooperative learning strategies on the promotion of the EFL learner's speaking fluency. They have demonstrated that there is a high correlation between the cooperative learning strategies and speaking fluency of language learners. The latter become highly motivated when they discuss and reflect as a homogeneous group rather than individually, and they usually find the learning experience enjoyable, unlike the traditional way that presumably limits their thinking abilities and worldviews; however, such a modality of learning can impede students' academic development if there is no monitoring by the teacher. Le et al. (2018) identified four common obstacles to collaboration: students' lack of collaborative skills, free riding, competence status, and friendship. This is why students ought to regularly swap their roles and move to different groups. As Shea (2018) declares:

One of the biggest problems is that most of my students actively dislike the difficulties created by having to work in groups, and if given a chance, would rather do additional work themselves than having to put up with some of the less-endearing qualities of their peers. For example, whenever I give

my students the choice of working in teams of two or three or working by themselves, about 90 percent choose to work alone even though they had to do more work themselves (p. 307).

Two givens in collaborative learning are positive interdependence and individual accountability (Millis, 2010). There cannot be any collaboration if there is no exchange of information between students, if they do not have the same vision, or if they do not work toward one common goal. The ethos of collaborative learning is that students complement one another and combine their strengths by fulfilling their roles and sharing their responsibilities (Hudson, 2013). Hence, when joint intellectual efforts are brought together, good outcomes occur and students take pride in their overall performance. They cannot only build social connections, but they can also bypass disagreement and disruptive behavior in order to maximize their chances of success.

Collaboration and group work turn mandatory if students want to access the intended meaning as imposed or proposed by the poet. Meaning itself, in so far as Hirsh (2012) is concerned, is “pragmatic” and challenging. This level of analysis is more ambiguous, for it deals with the intentions of the text/speaker and the receiver’s reaction to it (Picot et al., 2008). Briefly stated, both collaboration and group work are efficient as they allow students to show perseverance and self-efficacy, so they will never give up when analyzing narrative poetry.

## Methodology

Drawing on the qualitative research method, action research, and a curiosity about the world of love as viewed by poets, the present article endeavors to study the different readings and critical responses students give to Leigh Hunt’s poem “Abou Ben Adhem.” The field of qualitative research is quite diverse. The methodologies included in this approach are discourse analysis and observation. By discourse analysis, I mean the study of language beyond the sentence boundaries (Yule, 2020) and the pragmatic meanings that flow in narrative poetry. Students can, for example, focus on the moral of the poem, the values embedded in it, and then link them to the wider social context. For Sibul et al. (2020), the object of discourse analysis is discourse itself, the written text, or any kind of communicative activity.

As a qualitative research method, discourse analysis revolves around the examination and interpretation of texts in order to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of a particular phenomenon (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003); it is more suitable, especially in the reading and analysis of short texts like poems. When students collaborate to interpret the poem, they engage in discourse analysis, for each one of them provides a reading according to their own backgrounds and worldviews. Concerning observation, it helps the teacher pin down student (dis)engagement in group work, as well as check whether or not they respect the responsibilities assigned to them. My basic assumption is that the production of the stylistic analysis and the ability to share it publicly in class mean that students have worked collaboratively. With discourse analysis and observation in mind, I intend to study group receptions of the poem, their choice of words, values, and themes accentuated by them, their usage of deixis, style, interpretation of typography, as well as other supra-sentential elements like speaker and addressee.

## Data

The study highlights student responses to Leigh Hunt’s poem “Abou Ben Adhem” using the cooperative approach. Group responses are accorded considerable attention because they reflect not only student understanding of the poem but also their critical thinking skills and attitudes about its theme. The cooperative approach was initiated into the stylistics class with the view to motivate students so as to critically analyze texts and develop a penchant for the course. Conventionally, the stylistics course is teacher-centered because teachers hardly push the students into the basin of collaboration and group work, since they believe that students are less disposed to engage in them. This has been confirmed by Burke (2011, p. 87), who holds that “many students cringe and groan when told that they will need to work in a group.” Their reluctance is due

mainly to the preconceptions they have constituted about university life where the teacher is located at the center because they do everything.

At the very core lies the problem of meaning, which seems to be negotiated between the poet and their readers, namely the students and their groups. Meaning is viewed as “a two-way process that resides in the transaction that occurs between the reader and the text” (Neuman & Dickinson, 2002, p. 349), where students reconstruct and reshuffle “reality” according to their schemata and prior knowledge. Before group responses had been clustered and shared verbatim in class, students were allocated 10 minutes to interpret the poem. Each group had to nominate one spokesperson to report the findings of their team on the stage. The spokesperson was required to speak on their behalf and to transfer the analysis from the written to the oral mode in a 1-minute talk. Once the class was over, group representatives submitted the readings and critical responses to the teacher for correction.

### The Population of the Study

The target population of the study was students of Semester 6 who had to undertake the course of stylistics in the linguistics stream at Ibn Zohr University. The time frame allotted to the course is 2 hours per week, and it involves both theory and practice. Several texts are chosen to help students explore the creative side of language and the distinctive style of each genre, respectively. Blurbs, headlines, news stories, and poems are all included in the course design to enable students to develop an interest in language and appreciate its esthetical dimension and cadence. In so far as the practical side of the course is concerned, students are always arranged in groups of six individuals, who customarily choose one color (i.e., green, black, white, blue, yellow, orange, etc.), and then assume a certain responsibility, such as leading, managing time, monitoring participation, controlling the use of language, checking volume, and reporting on stage. To this end, 65 students were invited to read, interpret, and—at a later stage—analyze the stylistic features of the poem following Verdonk’s (2002) analytical model. Eleven groups were built to strike a balance and maintain consistency and homogeneity in terms of work and response. Regarding the sampling frame, the respondents—all of whom represented specific groups—were chosen following the non-probability sampling method, as a few members from the groups were reluctant to present the analysis. Their reluctance can be attributed to their shyness or weakness when speaking. However, all the respondents share a wide range of traits, such as academic level, city, affiliation, religion, and nationality. Consider Table 1 that presents the characteristics of the population of the study.

**Table 1.** *Characteristics of the Population of the Study*

Population of the Study	65 students
Respondents	11 Spokespersons
Age	More than 20 years
Gender	Males & Females
Academic Level	Semester 6
City	Agadir
Affiliation	Ibn Zohr University
Cultural Background	Arab, Amazigh, and Sahrawi
Religion	Islam
Nationality	Moroccan

## Methods

This paper capitalizes on action research to help Semester 6 students in the English department improve their performance while reading and responding to narrative poetry in the stylistics course. The aim is to study their overall reactions to narrative poetry dealing with the theme of love. According to Sagor (2000, p. 3), “[A]ction research helps educators be more effective at what they care most about—their teaching and the development of their students.” It enhances a sense of responsibility and conduces positive social change. Inductive reasoning is accommodated, for it propels researchers—as well as teachers—to observe a specific event or situation and draw inferences (Sesay, 2011). As Sloman and Lagnado (2005, p. 96) assert, inductive reasoning is “an activity of the mind that takes us from the observed to the unobserved.” By walking around the desks and monitoring student debates over the poem and their critiques of it, I verified whether cooperative learning was a good procedure for reading and analyzing narrative poetry. Sometimes, I asked whether every individual is taking part in the discussion and whether language monitors are doing their jobs effectively. At other times, I remind the time and volume managers to do their work. The pragmatic analysis of the poem is written by the spokesperson on a sheet of paper and shared openly before the entire class. The choice of “Abou Ben Adhem” is not arbitrary because it presents one formula of what can be termed “the pedagogy of love.” According to Loreman (2011, p. 1):

Love as pedagogy has been more frequently preserved in informal contexts, such as father teaching his daughter how to fly a kite, or a family friend teaching a child how to float on his back during a day at the beach. In these sorts of situations, the interactions are intimate, safe, caring, and warm. The comfort level both parties feel enhances and enriches the learning experiences, making them memorable and effective.

In this study, I focus on the student readings and critical responses, which necessitate an investment on context (*circumstantia Scripturae*)—what the speaker means and what the reader understands. The emphasis laid on meaning is credited to the heterogeneous interpretations that students generate when approaching the poem in a cooperative way. Cooperative learning is now an accepted and often the most preferred instructional procedure at all levels of education. It is presently adopted in schools and universities in every part of the world, in every subject area, and with every age student (Gillies et al., 2007). As a teacher, I always invest in the strengths of the cooperative approach to build a culture of dialogue inside the class by involving all of the students and motivating the low achievers to catch up with their peers. Cooperative learning is common in Moroccan high schools, yet it is still a new practice in the university context.

## Analysis and Interpretation

The readings and critical responses, which students and their groups gave to “Abou Ben Adhem,” oscillated between description, interpretation, and even appreciation. Most students gave succinct attention to describing general features of poetic language and its style. A few embarked on interpreting the poem from a critical perspective by questioning form, hidden meanings, implicatures, and the overall impressions it triggered in them as readers. The theme of the poem was not overlooked by them, for it is integral to the analysis, yet their reactions were heavily concentrated upon the unequivocal denotations of the poem. Let us consider the following readings and critical responses:

**Group Critical Response 1:** This poem is written in the form of a narrative. There are two main characters. The first one is Ben Adhem. It’s clear from his name that he is a Muslim, and from the 1st and 2nd lines we can guess that he is valued in society and he loves peace. The second character is the angel that comes to write names of those who love God. At first, Ben Adhem’s name was not included but when he begs the angel, the

result was that he was one of those whom love of God blessed. This poem inspired one not to give up when not achieving something, just give a try and who knows, you may reach it as Ben Adhem did.

**Group Critical Response 2:** This poem carries many implicit values that the reader needs to recognize while reading. The poet considers Ben Adhem as a good man who imparts a good feeling to his fellow men. This is what we should all seek. When the angel comes and informs him, he will write a list of those who love the Lord, Ben Adhem asked him only to write his name as one that loves his fellows. Thus, we can predict that the person who loves other humans is regarded as the best since he is included in the list as their leader.

**Group Critical Response 3:** This poem shows the great position that Ben Adhem fills in the spiritual world. The evidence of this is the presence of angels around him, which also implies the big reward such people may receive from God. This is a reminder for other people to make Ben Adhem a model to follow if they ever wanted to be blessed by God's love. The poet asserts this implicature in the two last lines of the second stanza, in which he stated that Ben Adhem is at the top of the list of those God has blessed.

**Group Critical Response 4:** From our deep reading of the text at hand, we mention that it is a kind of conversation between Ben Adhem and an angel. This gives us the idea that this man is a noble one because not anyone can get a conversation with an angel and see it in his dreams. The angel writes the name of those who will meet the Lord. Abou asks him to write also his name. The angel accepts his demand; so we can say that this man is among those who will go to paradise.

**Group Critical Response 5:** The speaker is trying to involve the readers in a story of ancient times. The two main characters in the poem are the angel and Ben Adhem, who is a respectful and peaceful man based on the expression "may his tribe increase," and the fact that he did not fear the presence of the angel. The speaker here is trying to be objective by using neutral terms like God, which is common to all religions and also by describing the angel using "it" instead of "she/he." At the end of the poem, we are informed that if a person is good in her/his behaviour, they will be automatically rewarded by the Heavens.

**Group Critical Response 6:** The poet perhaps tries to give a hint that Ben Adhem is belonging to a certain tribe. When Abou knew that the angel is writing the names of the ones who love the Lord, he begged him to write his name too with a low and humble tone, which means that Abou is a religious and faithful man. Then, the angel came again and this time the name of Abou was the first in the list. The poet maybe is sending a message to humanity that faithful and good men will succeed in their life and will get the support from the Lord.

**Group Critical Response 7:** The poet shows the way to God's love—one must have peace in heart and love for all mankind. One must spread love and not hatred in the world. The highest level a person can reach is to be loved by God, and the way to it is quite simple and straightforward: Love one another.

**Group Critical Response 8:** The poem is a narrative piece, which tells the story of two characters: Abou and the angel. The use of the phrase (may his tribe increase!) and other positive themes like "good," "blest," "love," "heaven," and "light" point to the good and peaceful nature of Abou's personality traits. Moreover, the angel's feedback as in "with a look made sweet accord" demonstrates the positive attitude of the angel toward Abou.

**Group Critical Response 9:** The poet tries to convey that Abou is one of the lovers of God. The poet represents him as a clean person who desires God's love, and he wants to be mentioned by the angel in the book of gold. The poet used the expression (may his tribe increase!), which is a very significant clue, indicating Abou's value in society.

**Group Critical Response 10:** From the expression between brackets in the first line, we can evaluate Abou's importance and value. The poet seems to have a positive attitude when talking about angels, peace, love, and so on. This poem begins in delight and ends with wisdom.

**Group Critical Response 11:** Apparently, the poet looks influenced by Abou, and this is obvious from the way he represented him as a pure man, who was committed to become one of those who love the Lord. To interpret this poem, we can say that the angel might refer to life and its difficulties and Abou refers to a role model who cannot stop doing his best to reach his aim.

## Results

A quick glance at the group critical responses showcases that students and their groups resolved to paraphrase the poem in their own style—by simplifying its message and clarifying complex dictions and structures. While some groups used certain lines as clues to better fathom the enigma of the poem, as is the case with Group Critical Response 1, Group Critical Response 3, and Group Critical Response 5, all groups, in fact, unpacked the moral of this narrative poem by tapping on its pragmatic and second meaning. Strikingly enough, one can note that the students in Group Critical Response 2 were somehow both emotionally and psychologically involved owing to their usage of the person deictic “we” several times. This is crystal clear in the expression: “This is what we should all seek.” Such awareness of the humanistic and altruistic value system embedded in the poem could be located in another statement: “This is a reminder for other people to make Ben Adhem a model to follow if they ever wanted to be blessed by God’s love.” The same idea is reiterated in Group Critical Response 11 as students claimed that Abou is indicative of a role model—the epitome of persistence and perseverance.

In Group Critical Response 6 and 7, I can claim that the students are thinking about well-being in a global way (see Table 2). What I mean by this is that the students are alert to the human tragedies infecting the world and are well-determined to provide a recipe for what it means to be a human being. This is tacit in their interpretative statement: “The poet here is sending a message to humanity that faithful and good men will succeed in their life and will get the support from the Lord.” In what concerns Group Critical Responses 8, 9, and 10, the students were attracted to typography because it betrays another meaning. This is applicable even to Group Critical Response 5. Indeed, the parentheses enclosed incidental information and incited the above groups to constitute a comprehensive picture about Abou and his outstanding personality, albeit students in Group Critical Response 10 were somewhat creative in the use of style and their articulation of ideas when they noted that the poem starts in delight and ends in wisdom. Group Critical Response 11 is also worthwhile because it associates the poem with the hardships people encounter in life and the amount of perseverance required to achieve one’s potential. Group critical responses are summarized in Table 2 along with the pragmatic meanings of the poem:

**Table 2.** *Group Critical Responses and Pragmatic Meanings*

Group Critical Responses	Pragmatic Meanings
GCR1	Love; Peace; Muslim
GCR2	Good Man; Good Feeling; Fellowship; Leadership
GCR3	Models; God; Love
GCR4	God; Rewards; Noble People
GCR5	Respect; Peace; Rewards
GCR6	Goodness; Faith; Success



GCR7	Love; Peace; Mankind
GCR8	Good Personality Traits
GCR9	Cleanliness; The Lovers of God; Abou's Value
GCR10	Positive Attitudes; Delight; Wisdom
GCR11	Purity; Life; Hardships; Perseverance; Goals; Role Model

Tapping on this second—or metaphorical—meaning of the text is one of the objectives of the stylistics course. As can be seen, the student readings and group critical responses have a few nuances and subtleties due to their miscellaneous attitudes and cultural backgrounds; however, there seems to be a large consensus on their side that the narrative poem has a moralistic and didactic tone. By giving oral readings and written critical responses, students had the chance to learn how to be contributing agents in the construction of meaning in texts. The term text here designates a readable passage of any length, which can be discerned as a unified whole (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). They are likely to develop more sophisticated abilities in terms of reception and even production whenever they approach narrative poetry. Such experimentation of the world of narrative poetry and familiarity with its nuts and bolts (besides equipping students with the necessary instruments to exercise intellectual and mental skills) directs them to relate what they read to their own experiences. Although this module is perceived as being thorny on account of its emphasis on application, analysis, and synthesis (Ouakrim, 1986), there is no doubt that poetry helps them, along with other forms of literature, in the process of enlightenment, promoting their intellect and broadening the scope of their thinking in addition to facilitating their interaction with other cultures (Ennaji, 2005).

## Discussion

The present study has yielded numerous results. First, it has revealed that the students overcome passivity when they work cooperatively; they regained self-confidence and self-efficacy when there is an anxiety-free atmosphere and a room for togetherness and a spirit of teamwork. Second, the ability to assume responsibility in the group helps students develop self-autonomy and optimize their own learning. Besides enabling them to observe self-esteem and belonging, the cooperative approach endowed them with a chance to establish a good rapport with each other and scaffold their presentational and speaking skills before a public. Third, the spokespersons were competitive, as each one of them wants to outshine their counterparts on the stage. They were all struggling hard to lead a good show and be successful in order not to disappoint their groups. Admittedly, they hankered after constructive feedbacks and extrinsic rewards, such as praise and ovation, since the performance, per se, was about positive face and self-image. Fourth, students were capable of touching on several aspects of meaning and making associations between the world of the poem and their own world.

The most resonant finding of the study related to respondent thoughts and analytical readings of the poem, all of which emphasized universal values like peace, fellowship, love, commitment to humanity, and the like. Both group work and the 1-minute talk spokespersons gave at the end led to the reduction of the teacher talking time; it revealed that students are more interactive when given “colors” and assigned specific roles in their groups. They feel neither stressed nor anxious but rather more relaxed and enthusiastic to work on the poem and produce the stylistic analysis. Having observed group discussions of the poem, member conformity with rules, and the performance of their representatives on the stage, I can declare that cooperative learning, as an academic and social learning experience, enhances Moroccan student involvement in narrative poetry. The eagerness to share group responses to the poem proves that cooperative learning is an effective method of instruction in higher education. This confirms the aforementioned belief that the cooperative approach,

accompanied by discourse analysis, is more likely to hone student critical thinking skills, raise their awareness about the text, and incentivize them to embrace dialogue and unity in the classroom.

No doubt, the narrative poem and the cooperative procedure adopted in its analysis made learning quite meaningful, since students expressed an admiration for Abou and his worldview. This goes in utter congruency with Gaudet et al. (2010), who reported that active collaboration is amenable to student emotional, social, and psychological well-being. When the poem relates to student cultural backgrounds, it becomes more significant and worth studying. The study disconfirmed the Mcilroy (2019) premise that the teaching of poetry is tedious and boring. In fact, the experimentation of poetry in the stylistics course can provide students with an opportunity to taste the beauty of rhythmical language and metaphorical expressions. As Moore and Wright (2009) argue, “[T]eaching poetry is an enjoyable activity” that permits people to negotiate meaning and develop a good grasp of the culture they are living in, its norms and values.

The findings of the study also confirmed the findings of Sigvardsson (2020), who held that the creation of a safe classroom climate leads students to explore their personal experiences and reactions to poetry. By fusing critical response theory and cooperative learning, this paper showed that students had an affinity for narrative poetry and group work; it thus proposed what Eva-Wood had called a “think and feel aloud” method for poetry instruction to get students to read, analyze, and (why not!) appreciate poetic texts. The study also goes in tandem with Burke (2011), who noted that group work can be especially beneficial for large classes; it helped students feel that their class was smaller and encouraged them to attend them regularly. They felt deeply invested in the course, as well as in the class material, which enhanced active learning and amity between them. As an academic and social learning experience, cooperative learning enhanced Moroccan students’ involvement with respect to narrative poetry in the stylistics course. It lent shape and meaning to the learning experiences of students and contributed to their personal development and well-being in the classroom. There is no denying that the most effective way of engaging student–teachers with poetry rests not only upon reading and exploring together (Simecek & Rumbold, 2016) but upon colors and group work, as well.

### **The Cooperative Approach**

One of the most salutary advantages of the cooperative approach I brought to the stylistics classroom is that it makes students feel pretty comfortable with learning; they take part in the creation of an environment in which they learn best. In this way, students have a greater sense of belonging to a small community—a sense of membership to fit in a group—which in turn creates a sense of self-confidence and esteem and provides emotional security and trust for them. In such a group, there can be, according to Dyke (2004, p. 73), “a meeting of minds about a particular topic and this can help students learn from other students.” This modality of learning, while increasing the self-esteem of group members, helps the students ameliorate their communication and high-order thinking skills, such as presenting an argument in public, listening to others, and responding to them appropriately. Hence, cooperative learning is conceived of as something a learner does, not something that is done to a learner (Ferguson, 1995). The question that many might ask now: How can students read and analyze poetry in a cooperative way?

### **How to Read and Analyze Poetry Cooperatively**

Trying to grasp the meaning as well as the texture of a poem is no easy job. The most convenient way for students to analyze and read poetry in a responsive way is to take the challenge to read it and not be intimidated by it. They should come to it, at least, the way they might listen to a song on the radio or watch a movie on TV. They probably listen to a song several times before they hear it all, before they have a sense of how it works, where it is going, and how it gets there. They should give themselves a chance to read and therefore respond to poetry. The hardest task has already been done by the poet, so all they need to do, at the start, is to listen for the pleasure produced by the poet’s arrangement of words (Meyer, 1996). In the first place, they ought to

concentrate on the title of the poem because it is almost always very telling and revealing. Second, they have also to identify the voice speaking throughout the poem, which can be a first, second, or third speaker. Paraphrasing is also commonly believed to be the key to understanding the meaning of a poem and a useful exercise from the language point of view. Indeed, paraphrasing brings forth good results as the student is encouraged to observe the nuances in meaning between two different ways of expressing the same thing, although this might equally and, perhaps, more successfully be done with prose (Di Martino & Di Sabato, 2014).

In their choice of narrative poems, teachers should avoid constant “sweetness themes” because students may already have the perception that poetry deals only with the topics of nature and romance. Teachers do not need to be overtly worried if the vocabulary presented in the poem is somewhat challenging, complex, or inscrutable, as this can be used to heighten student awareness of the language of the past (Glasgow & Farrel, 2007). Poems then should not only fit in with schemes of work, but they should also contain within themselves what Heaney (1989) calls a “glimpsed alternative.” Thus, the poems should not merely fulfill the needs of a topic but should be “a source of truth” and a “vehicle of harmony.” In this respect, Zapruder (2010, p. 279) astutely observes that:

Poems do not have to be about the revelation, the learning at the end. They are not necessarily goal-oriented. If anything, they are more like a conversation with a friend. You start talking, you learn something, you double back, you get confused, you misunderstand, you laugh, you have some different feelings, you drift off, you come back, you know you have learned some things (though maybe you can't even say that) but most of all you know you know this person better. What is the goal? To be alive, and to experience. Which is more than enough, and a great pleasure.

Based on inductive reasoning, I can confirm that cooperative learning remains a good procedure for the reading and analysis of narrative poetry in the stylistics course. Reading the poem several times was beneficial for the students, yet their interpretations of the title, examination of speaker/addressee, their focus on the themes and values of the poem, implicit meanings, and its moral and typography were more helpful for their groups. O'Flinn (2001) proposes a method for reading and analyzing poetry cooperatively. This method, however, can be sophisticated a bit by adding extra a concept here or a fresh guideline there: Students ought to pick a color and abide by their roles. The following four steps are therefore suggested to guarantee a good reading, analysis, and interpretation of poetry:

1. Read the poem through slowly at least twice and look for the main idea or feeling that the poet is trying to get across to you.
2. Read the poem again and see how the main idea or feeling is given precise shape by the choices and combinations of words that express it.
3. Focus closely on the two or three lines that were conclusive in fixing your sense of the poem's main idea or feeling.
4. Sum up your impressions of the poem as a whole.

Among the virtues of narrative poetry is that it nourishes the students' emotional lives. “Abou Ben Adhem,” as a case in point, speaks directly to the readers to engage the feeling of love in their interactions with other species. Besides appealing to emotions, such poetry enlarges people's perspectives of the world. In this way, it introduces them to people different from themselves, places remote from their neighborhoods, and times other than their own. Those who read narrative poetry, in other terms, experience more life and have a keener sense of a common human identity than those who do not (Meyer, 1996). The problem with students is that their reading of poetry, in general, is lucrative and pragmatic in a sense because they want to pass an examination or fulfill a school requirement instead of making of it a worthwhile experience. This holds true for some Moroccan students who constantly and incessantly enthuse over the stylistic analysis of poetry when grades are added to their academic endeavors.

## Conclusion

Narrative poetry facilitated by the cooperative approach is so advantageous for Moroccan students in higher education. It enhances their positive relationships and connections with one another; likewise, it makes them explore the universal experiences of other people like or unlike themselves. For example, poetry depicts what it means to be a human being; what it means to be a global citizen of the world; and perhaps most significantly, what it means to be in love with humanity. Hence, the topics left backgrounded by other school textbooks are virtually foregrounded in narrative poetry. These are non-trivial themes because they are more likely to fully grab student attention and increase their motivation for learning. In this way, narrative poetry prompts students to imagine a world different from their own and get them to respond critically to it. The German poet Goethe (1749–1832) has distinguished three kinds of responses: one which enjoys without judgment, a third that judges without enjoyment, and the one in the middle which judges as they enjoy and enjoy as they judge (Kronegger, 2012). It is in this second space where some readings and critical responses have directly or obliquely reproduced Leigh Hunt's "Abou Ben Adhem" and regenerated him anew.

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