Stylistic Analysis of a Poetic Text: A Case from Persian

Ali Rabi Tafreshi
Assistant professor ELT Department
Islamic Azad University Faculty of Teacher Training, South Tehran Branch
alirabi20@yahoo.co.in

ABSTRACT

Poetic analysis involves the explication of a poem by focusing on the process of semiosis in it. Through semiosis linguistic meaning is transformed into stylistic meaning. An examination of semiosis brings us to look at the hypersemantized poetic structures which are none other than the style features of a poem. Since style functions in a literary text by conveying meanings other than literal ones, any poetic analysis necessarily centers on the examination and function of the style features. The poetic analysis in this paper involves the study of the style features along with their functions at the levels of the 'sentence symbol', 'symbols in art', and 'art/aesthetic symbol' Gargesh (1990). While the study at the first two levels implies a textual analysis, the study at the level of the aesthetic symbol involves viewing the aesthetic concretions in the mind of the readers.

Key words: Stylistics, Semiosis, Poetic analysis, Persian rhythm.

1. Introduction

At the core of the present study lies the fact that the semiolinguistic approach to the study of language and literature accepts verbal communication as a social contract of the order ‘I-You’ rather than ‘I-It’ in its orientation. Included in this approach are the three dimensions of communication, namely linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic. Further it accepts man as a sign-creating animal and emphasizes the fact that language serves as a primary modeling system for all kinds of cognition and communication.

Following Gargesh (1990), the writer of the present article believes in the possibility of merging the lingua-aesthetic approach for the study of literary works into the semiotic perspective so as to give a more functional account of a semiolinguistic framework for the analysis of literary styles. As a scientific discipline for such an analysis, which arises from viewing a literary artifact a composite-whole, the three-tiered study of a poetic work- the level of the Sentence Symbol (L1), the level of the Symbols in Art (L2) and the level of the Art Symbol (L3), suggests the possibility of reconciling a long-lasting clash between linguistic description and the literary interpretation of a literary work. The stylistic analysis envisaged here only takes into account the linguistic-based analysis showing how one level of
The view that language is the primary modeling system for the structure of all science. Therefore, it is semiology that is part of linguistics. The French structuralists did view language, like Saussure, in terms of the process of signification. Theoretically, they viewed the linguistic sign as a system of the signifier (form) and the signified (content). This two-sided genius like entity underlines signification in actual communication. It is the context of communication that provides additional or new significances to a linguistic sign. This kind of process is referred to as 'communitability' of the sign by C. S. Peirce (1931:121). Scholars like Derrida (1976: 83) perceive of this process as 'deferral'. Peirce, of course, unlike Saussure, views the linguistic sign in terms of a 'triadic' model.

Linguistic theory also exploits the sign function of language. A literary text is a context for itself and, as a play, a novel, etc, contexts of situation are not historically real. The contexts created are analogous to life. Since literary language is mediated by an aesthetic sensibility, scholars like Mukařovsky (1970) and Jakobson (1960) talk about aesthetic function of language. According to Roman Jakobson there are six factors in human language—adresser, addressee, context, contact, code and message, and corresponding by, there are six functions-expression, evaluation, reference, phatic, metalinguistic and poetic functions. According to Jakobson these functions are not exclusive, but can be found together, though one of the functions may predominate. The dominant function is determined by the 'einstellung' that is ‘the set towards’. Thus, depending upon the focus on any function will let that particular function dominate. If the focus is on the message, no matter what the language, then the function is poetic or aesthetic. According to Jakobson: "the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (1960: 68).

This implies that equivalences are established at the level of linguistic form. This further means that equivalences are established at the phonological, lexical, syntactic and pragmatic dimensions. These equivalences we know (Culler 1971; Rifatittere 1974, Werth 1976) became meaningful only when mediated by an active reader. In order to study a literary text, Gargesh 1990, Sharma 1987 and Srivastava 1981 have developed a three tiered model for poetic analysis. They view a literary text in terms of three different but inter-related levels: the levels of the sentence symbol, symbols in art and the art symbol.

The analysis of a text begins by studying it in terms of the sentence symbol. At the level of the sentence symbol, we study the linguistic / stylistic configurations and such a study involves a grammatical / linguistic competence, and the optimal unit of analysis is sentence. At this level, significant linguistic equivalences are identified. Next the text is viewed in terms of symbols in art, and this level requires a communicative function, and the units of analysis are the configured equivalences and even the poetic figures and images. While the first level had involved the discursive function of language, this second level involves the connotative function. At the third level of analysis, i.e., at the level of the art symbol, the whole text is studied from a qualitatively different angle. The equivalences and significances arrived at are seen in terms of an integrated network. The whole text is the unit of analysis, and the study involves an artistic competence and the function of language is also artistic. The text can also be studied as an aesthetic symbol, which is a counterpart of the art symbol. The unit of analysis is the full text and the competence involved is aesthetic. And the function of study is 'sentence'.

In the light of the above-given discussion, the present paper attempts to study stylistically the Persian poem /vaheyyi darlah/e (an oasis in a moment) by Sohrab Sepehri (1978). It may be mentioned that like other literatures, Persian poetry too foregrounds in poems the literary language in contrast to the ordinary language.

Sohrab Sepehri, a distinguished Iranian poet and painter is among the most enlightened figures of the Iranian contemporary art. He stepped to the world of fame as a modernist painter in 1351/ 1972. His paintings are inspired by nature, but not in the sense of picturing a real natural scene with all its details. Rather he preferred to create a scene of his own interest. This appraisal of nature by Sohrab is seemingly that of the Western Romanticism (i.e. from Rousseau to Andre zid), but it is, in fact, rooted in some deeper soils, i.e., the Eastern mysticism. This would therefore be safe to claim that his mystical interest is more inclined towards the Far East mystic views than any other prevailing discipline. Here is the poem and its word-for-word translation that follows. This text-based translation is meant to preserve the peculiarity of the elegant collocations used, which further signifies the individual feature of Sepehri's noble language.

1. /be sarae: man agar miya:y yi:d/ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v
2. /pošte hi: estan:nam/ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v
3. /pošte hi: estan:n ja:y yi:st/ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v
4. /ke xabar mi:ya:rand'az gole va: ši:deye du:tar i:n bu:teye xa:k/ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v
5. /ru:ye šenha: ham, naqsha:ye some 'asba:ne savar:na ne zari: fi:st ke sobh/ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v
6. /pošte hi: estan:n ra:ga ye hava: pore qsa:seda:ha yi:st/ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v
7. /esta:n ra:st/ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v
8. /esta:n jah/ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v
10. /be sare tappeye me:re: ja:ša: qeq ra:la:hd/ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v
11. /pošte hi: estan:n cēne xa: he: ba:x ast/ v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v v
15. /rangi ba:ran be seda: mi:ya:yad/  
18. /be sora:qe man agar mi:ya:yi:d/  
20. /maba:da: ke tarak barda:rad/  
21. /ei niye na:zoke tanha:yi ye man/  
22. /ei niye na:zoke tanha:yi ye man/  

2.1. Analysis at the level of the sentence symbol  

2.1.1. The phonological level  

2.1.2. The lexical level  

The concrete nouns can also be subdivided further into [+Nature] and [-Nature] nouns. The [+Nature] category comprises the words of nature, namely /qa:sed/, /gol/, /bute/, /xa:k/, /i:ni:/, /som/, /sab/, /tappe/, /šaqa:yeq/, /barg/, /ba:ra:n/ and /na:rvan/. The word /qa:sed/ is the abbreviated form of /qa:sedak/ used basically for retaining the unity of the rhythm. The [-Nature] category comprises the remaining concrete nouns like /rag/, /saxv/, /šaqa:yeq/, /barg/, /ba:ra:n/ and /čini/. In addition to the above, the following, only one word, /hi:česta:n/ is repeated in the entire poem. Although there are four lines containing this word, it can be said to be present in the entire poem for it stands as the topic of the poem toward which all other nouns and compounds are directed.

2.1.3. The syntactic level

The analysis of the poem at the level of syntax reveals some significant features too. In the whole poem, except the last line, each line stands for a sentence. Thus the poem consists of 15 sentences. Meanwhile, some of the sentences are well combined to form either compound or complex sentences. The former includes lines 1 and 2, 9 and 10, 11 and 12, 13 and 14, while the latter contains lines 4 and 5, and 6 and 7. The significant style features are the forms of the main verbs, the violation of selectional restrictions profuse in Ezafe constructions and misplacement of some verb phrases. The overt repetition of the compound /pošt-e hi:česta:n/ occurs three times in three different lines signifies the centrality of this imaginary place, as it remains an implied point of reference in the other lines throughout the poem; it is ‘topicalized’. Fourthly, the [+ Real Abstract] and [+ Nature Concrete] expressions. Fourthly, the [+ v v -] foot. Secondly, the internal sound patterns in the form of alliteration: assonance and rhyme, as what only exists in lines 3 and 4, gives the poem a sense of prosaicism. Such a sense is further strengthened by the speech-like rhythm of the poem through the lines of majorly two to four feet. It can thus be said that the poem's rhythmic structure creates a peculiar sense of speech music with quick tempo.

The analysis at the level of lexicon also reveals some significant facts. Firstly, the use of the present tense used in almost all the sentences conveys the impression of certainty added to the sense of directionality which the whole lines imply. Secondly, the violation of selectional restrictions in lines 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 16 function to foreground the deviated expressions in the poem. The foregrounding effect is of course well achieved not only through the peculiar collocative structures, even in case of non-deviating compounds, but also through the manipulation of the sentences' grammatical structures. Thirdly, the overt repetition of the compound /pošt-e hi:česta:n/ three times in three different lines signifies the centrality of this imaginary place, as it remains an implied point of reference in the other lines throughout the poem; it is ‘topicalized’. Fourthly, the two adverbs in the poem, namely /narm/ (gently) and /česte/ (slowly) in line 15 function to pinpoint the delicacy of the poet's lonely place. Fifthly, the conditional clause /be sora:qe man agar mi:yayi:d/ in lines 1 and 13 functions to show the possibility of having such an unwordly experience in life time, since this clause is, in fact, an indirect invitation to the place where the poet is. The only past tense verb of the poem, /raftand/, emphasizes the time-bound feel of departure from the man-made world is extremely highlighted by preventing even a single member of this world to enter /hi:česta:n/. The nominalized form /hi:česta:n/ is ‘concretized’. Thirdly, the use of imperative nouns /jara:/, /ʃaqa:yeq/, /barg/, /ba:ra:n/, /čez/, /čini:/ and /šaqa:yeq/ conveys a sense of simple-heartedness and enhances the simplicity of expressions. Fourthly, the [+ Real Abstract] and [+ Nature Concrete] words form the largest classes of the nouns which build up an atmosphere of consolidating a real picture of the place being described, a sense of watching a piece of painting on canvas.

The analysis of the whole poem is also of some significant observations as follows: Firstly, the present tense used in almost all the sentences conveys the impression of certainty added to the sense of directionality which the whole lines imply. Secondly, the violation of selectional restrictions in lines 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 16 function to foreground the deviated expressions in the poem. The foregrounding effect is of course well achieved not only through the peculiar collocative structures, even in case of non-deviating compounds, but also through the manipulation of the sentences' grammatical structures. Thirdly, the overt repetition of the compound /pošt-e hi:česta:n/ three times in three different lines signifies the centrality of this imaginary place, as it remains an implied point of reference in the other lines throughout the poem; it is ‘topicalized’. Fourthly, the two adverbs in the poem, namely /narm/ (gently) and /česte/ (slowly) in line 15 function to pinpoint the delicacy of the poet's lonely place. Fifthly, the conditional clause /be sora:qe man agar mi:yayi:d/ in lines 1 and 13 functions to show the possibility of having such an unwordly experience in life time, since this clause is, in fact, an indirect invitation to the place where the poet is. The only past tense verb of the poem, /raftand/, emphasizes the time-bound feel of departure from the man-made world is extremely highlighted by preventing even a single member of this world to enter /hi:česta:n/. The nominalized form /hi:česta:n/ is ‘concretized’. Thirdly, the use of imperative nouns /jara:/, /ʃaqa:yeq/, /barg/, /ba:ra:n/, /čez/, /čini:/ and /šaqa:yeq/ conveys a sense of simple-heartedness and enhances the simplicity of expressions.
poem, in addition to conveying a declarative voice to it, gives a sense of introduction of somewhere which is totally unknown to people whose minds are captured by materialistic aspects of life. Secondly, the personification of inanimate objects like /āsqa:yeq/, /āq:edāk/, etc. functions to call the civilized man's attention to the true source of revelation. The ironic use of /hi:čestān/ along with all the symbolic entities engineered in the poem's structure are directed towards realization of the 'Afterworld'.

2.3. Analysis at the level of art symbol (L 3)

At this level the individual symbols begin to fall into a pattern. They no longer remain isolated symbols but form part of the whole text. The text is now transformed into an art symbol which is autonomous in form and expressive in function. The art symbol as a semiotic entity reveals a single pattern of significance.

The significant phonological patterns are the 'rising rhythm' of /v v - -/, namely /fara:la:ton/ and the lack of rhyme scheme. The rising rhythm is depicted as to enliven the true sense of enjoying the truth, the appraisal of the scenes being visited. The lack of rhyme turns the minds from the form to the theme.

Therefore, this generally unrhymed poem calls for an in-depth understanding of the message being conveyed. The tone created in the entire rhythmic structure are directed towards realization of the 'metaphysical' worlds. Whatever feature in the various levels, is not something extraneous to the art object but is constitutive of the art object. It is a creatively employed verbal device for artistic purposes. It has been considered autonomous because all the contexts for its interpretation are built within the text itself and call attention only to themselves. This organic constitute is self-sufficient for it is not a constituent of any higher level of organization. Here both the structure and the texture of the poem co-exist in mutual harmony.

References


Ali Rabi Tafreshi, completed his B.A studies in English Language and Literature at Islamic Azad University (Karaj) and further pursued his postgraduate studies through the successive academic degrees of M.A, M.phil and PhD in Linguistics at the Linguistics Department of Delhi University, India.

His major lines of interest and specialization are phonetics / phonology as stylistics in theoretical discipline of the linguistic studies. He has also devoted quite some time to Teaching English Language and Translating to and from English, which build up a backbone for his experiences in applied linguistics.

He has a number of articles presented at the national and international conferences, some of which are also published at both domestic and international journals.

**Parody: Another Revision**

ABSTRACT

The vast diversity of the proposed definitions of parody, both before and after the twentieth century, can be an emblem of the lack of a thorough agreement amongst the literary critics about the definition of this literary technique (genre?!). While there is not a comprehensive all-accepted definition of parody, modern and postmodern literatures both exhibit a wide application of it. After looking at the definition of parody under Bakhtin's dialogic concepts, Genette's structuralist viewpoints, and Barthes's poststructuralist notions this study endeavours to put forward a more comprehensive and more applicable definition of parody mainly based on Bakhtin's dialogic criticism. Parody then can be defined as a deliberate imitation or transformation of a socio-cultural product (including literary and non-literary texts, and utterance in its very broad Bakhtinian understanding of it) that recreates its original subject having at least a playful stance towards it.

Key Words: Parody, Dialogic Criticism, Bakhtin, Playfulness, Deliberation

Mohammad Reza Sadrian
Assistant professor, Islamshahr Azad University, Islamshahr Branch Tehran IRAN
mrsadrian@iiau.ac.ir

One of the major concerns of poststructuralist theories in general and postmodern literary practices in particular is the call for plurality and thereupon criticism. In line with these concerns, parody as a literary device is a significant method in demonstrating and responding to this notion. Imitating a subject, parody enables the writers to depict at least two voices simultaneously. One is the writer's own voice and the other is the voice of the original subject that is parodied. Also, since parody takes a kind of attitude which is most of the time both evaluative and playful towards its subject of imitation, it criticizes that very subject in order to reconstruct a whole new subject.

Parody has been used from the time of the antique Greek plays to the present time. The application of parody is detectable in the ancient time from the works of Hegemon the Thasian, who lived in the fifth century BC and in his *Poetics* Aristotle refers to the parodic nature of his plays, and from the earliest extant example of parody, *Batrachomyomachia*, to Euripides’ *Cyclops*, which "provides a structural parody of the Cyclops episode in the *Odyssey*" (Dentith, 2000, p. 42), and most of the plays of Aristophanes (448-388 BC), which are "full of parodic allusions, most notably to the plays..."