

Suggestive role of phonemes and structures in the process of production of the meaning Case study: Ahmad Shamloo

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Abstract

Ahmad Shamloo, one of the Iranian contemporary poets, has a very short poem with remarkable hidden potentials. At first glance, the brevity and the simplicity of this poem may lead readers to underestimate its true value and the critics to ignore the impact of its analysis. But this article is determined to reveal how this brilliant poet has succeeded to create within few words, a newfound image for a worn and deadened notion which is the fatigue and disappointment.

To prove this claim, first we studied the suggestive role of phonemes, armed by the theories of French linguist and phonetician: Maurice Grammont. And then, by dint of a structural analysis, based on the theories of Roman Jakobson, the famous Russian linguist, we found out that the parallelism is the key factor of this poem which creates its poles and so the possibility of a circular movement. This movement leads to the idea of an independent whole, which is the ultimate purpose of all artistic and literal productions. The guarantor of this unity is the body of the enunciator. A semiotic analysis helped at last to see how this body provides, with his sensations, the rhythm and the direction of the meaning. Due to its evocable phonemes and its parallel structure, this poem awakens sensations of the enunciator's body and leads him toward the production of a peerless meaning.

Keywords: linguistic analysis, semiotic analysis, evocable phonemes, parallel structure, Ahmad Shamloo

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1. Introduction

Ahmad Shamlou, one of the Iranian contemporary poets, has a very short poem with remarkable hidden potentials. At first glance, the brevity and the simplicity of this poem may lead readers to underestimate its true value and the critics to ignore the impact of its analysis. But this article is determined to reveal how this brilliant poet, without prolonging, has succeeded to create within few words, a newfound image for a worn and deadened notion which is the fatigue and disappointment.

2. Methodology

The present paper consists of three parts. In the first part, we will examine the suggestive role of phonemes and sounds based on the theories of Maurice Grammon. The second part will be devoted to the analysis of poetic structure based on Roman Jakobsen's theories. And in the last part, there will be a semiotic analysis based on theoretical framework of Paris schools of semiotics, focusing on the subject of body and senses. Each of these three sections, separately and finally together, examines and highlights the process of the meaning production in the selected poem.

3. Results

Due to its evocable phonemes and its parallel structure, this poem awakens sensations of the reader's body and leads him forward to reach a peerless meaning. To prove this claim, we did a linguistic-structural analysis of this poem in the first section of the present paper. In this part, we are armed by the theories of the French linguist and phonetician: Maurice Grammont, who has spent several years of his scientific life to study the suggestive role of phonemes and to approve his theories he studied the phonemes of so many languages. He categorizes the phonemes in to different sensational groups and explains the characteristics of each category and evaluates at last how they contribute to the production of the enunciator's desirable meaning. Examining the suggestive role of repeated sounds (vowels and consonants) of this poem

and their combinations, we can see how the poet tries to suggest the feeling of an ecstatic calm, caused by a coldness that has taken over his existence, paralyzed him and stopped him from moving. Choosing words with appropriate phonetic echoes and their effective repetition may be the first trick of any poet to create a lasting work, but more important is the creative arrangement and composition of these words in the body of the poem. As we have learned lots of things from the combination of phonemes and sounds in the heart of a word, a phrase, or a verse, examining other overt and covert relationships between the elements of a structure can also be a great help in better understanding of the meaning and mysteries of this very short poem of Shamloo.

So in the second part of this paper, we based our analysis on the theories of Roman Jakobson, the famous Russian linguist and the pioneer of structural analysis, in order to verify how much the structure of this poem can influence or fortifies its meaning. According to Jakobson, parallelism is the most important feature of a poetic structure. It is true that the repetition and return of similar phonetic, lexical, and grammatical elements are the first manifestations of a parallel structure, but the parallelism is not limited to repetition and there must be, in any parallel pattern, a coefficient of similarity as well as a coefficient of contrast. Although the parallelism of Shamloo's poem owes much to repetition, it does not rely solely on repetition. Therefore, after analyzing the effect of structural repetitions, we examined the similar and contrasting relationships that play a role especially in the lexical body of the poem, words that seem to be chained together and follow each other. This study permitted us to see that the parallelism in this poem is not only due to the repetition of sounds and words, but also stems more from a kind of similarity and semantic contrast between each of its constituent elements. The notion of the parallelism is the key factor of this poem which creates its poles and so the possibility of a circular movement within the words, phrases and parts of the poem. This movement leads with no doubt to the idea of an independent whole, which is the ultimate purpose of all artistic and literal

productions. And the guarantor of this fullness and this unity is with no doubt, the body of the enunciator. This body provides, with his sensations, the rhythm and the direction of the meaning. In fact, the study of the sounds and the structure of the poem made it possible to go beyond and study the role of the senses and emotions in the process of producing the meaning. By examining the sensory-perceptual process of this poem, we found out how the poet's body becomes a place of emotional pressures and a scene of fight against the outside world. This emotional excitement eventually leads to isolation, disconnection and lac of interaction with the world, and so to the inactivity and stillness. Such a state evokes undoubtedly the meaning of nothingness and death. Therefore no matter from which angle we look at this short poem, it is always the repetition of the same bitter message, the same hidden resonance of surrender and death of the poet's soul.

4. Conclusion

All the constituent elements of this poem, from its phonemes to its parallel structure and finally the position of the sensory-emotional body of its narrator, each serves in a way to produce and reinforce the same meaning and to explain the poet's relationship with the phenomenological scene he describes. Considering the linguistic study of phonemes and structures, along with the semiotic analysis of the senses, this article has shown that this is actually the opposition between the inside and outside worlds, between *I* and the *other* that leads to isolation and inactivity and produces the expression of a semiotic experience of despair, hopelessness and death.