

Investigating and analyzing conflicts and binary oppositions in poems by Nima Yushij

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ABSTRACT

The present study has been carried out to elaborate on the structures and applications of conflicts and binary oppositions in poems by Nima Yushij and comparison of his poetical style with traditional poetry. In order to achieve this goal, the structures of the binary oppositions and conflicts in Nima's poems are seminally investigated and his poems' binary oppositions will be secondarily compared with those in traditional poetry in terms of form and content. The present study's findings indicated that Nima Yushij has made conscious and frequent use of the binary oppositions and conflicts in his poems and that his poetry is a conflict with the traditional poetry not only in terms of form and format but also in terms of the fresh perspective and enjoyment of new ideologies. The most important result of the present study is the maximal recognition of Nima's poetry and personality in the area of binary oppositions.

Keywords: conflict, opposition, Nima Yushij, blank verse, traditional poetry

Introduction

Conflict and opposition are well-known but unrecognized words with which we are faced every day and Nima Yushij, father of blank verse, is a poet withheld from a proper position fitting his poetical title.

Several articles have been so far published regarding conflict and binary opposition but they have been devoted to the other poets and no independent research has been so far conducted about Nima Yushij; thus, there is felt a necessity for dealing with the binary oppositions and conflicts in Nima's poems.

Nima's personality is in such a way that many individuals have defended and opposed him; his poetry, as well, has a lot of

opponents and proponents. It is here that the question is raised as to what are the personality characteristics and attributes in Nima that instigate a lot of interests and hatred.

The severity of Nima's interest in binary oppositions caused this figure of speech to be frequently used in his poetry and account for a high frequency. How does Nima construct binary oppositions and conflicts? How does he use them? And, how is his poetry in contrast with traditional poetry? Finding answers to these key questions is the goal the present study is chasing.

The present research is composed of two parts. In the first part, the conflicting words and their binary oppositions are presented and the second part deals with the contrast between Nima's poetry and traditional poetry.

Opposition and Contrast:

Conflict means contention, enmity, inconsistency, oppositeness, struggle, duality, disagreement, tension, contrast and so forth and it has been used in various books. "In semantics, the term 'contrast' is intentionally used as a substitute for conflict because conflict is also a sort of contrast".^[1]

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In logics, as well, conflict is considered as part of contrast and the discussions on contrast speak of a sort of the “conflict between two opposites”. Binary oppositions include “two existential issues imposed on a single subject one after the other but they cannot simultaneously coexist therein; however, it is impossible to imagine one of them without the other”^[2].

Binary conflicts and oppositions are topics currently pertinent to the “structuralism” field of science. “In a binary opposition, not only the two poles are in conflict with one another but they are also exclusive opposites of one another”^[3]. In binary oppositions like good/bad, light/dark, psyche/physique, heaven/hell and so forth, there is always a pillar in a superior position and another in an inferior position. Of course, this hierarchy was later on criticized by the post-structuralists and Jacques Derrida suggests their inversion^[4].

Various Kinds of Binary Oppositions and Conflicts in Poems by Nima Yushij:

1) Paradoxical Oppositions:

These oppositions include the negation of one of which results in the justification of the other. Moreover, they are words deployed against one another via the use of negating morphemes. These oppositions account for a vast volume of Nima’s poems but mentioning of all of the examples is beyond the present article’s scope:

“O’ death, would you come finally, what a life is this?!”^[4]

2) Proportional Oppositions:

The words that are not inherently in opposition to one another but they are used in speaking and writing in such a way that they become opposites. In these oppositions, the presence of one of them does not bar the other’s presence and there might be even words concomitantly collocating in one phenomenon:

“He was the key to the lock of every closed thing”^[4]

3) Symbolic Oppositions:

The application of the symbolic words in the form of oppositions in Nima’s poetry is limited to a few words most of which have been inspired by nature:

Night is the symbol of a ruling despotism, suffocation, ignorance and distressed status of the society in opposite to morning (occasionally day) as a symbol of victory, hope, freedom, justice, and improvement of the society’s status:

“Hey! Morning came with a smile on lips/let the contention of the night go with the wind”^[4]

4) Ironical Oppositions:

By ironical oppositions, those binary oppositions are intended that are perceived from the concept of combination or phrase. This concept might be in conflictive or proportional opposition to its opposite concept:

The opposition between winter and spring: “take off your overcoat and put on your cassock”^[4]

5) Innovative Oppositions:

Nima Yushij is the poet who has innovations in all poetical grounds from form and format to content and theme; lexical oppositions are also no exception to this rule. Nima has deployed words against one another that have not been used by many poets for indicating opposition:

Gem/Plant: “plants and gems are similar unless a man has sight”^[4]

6) Contradictory Oppositions:

In contradiction, a part of an expression is in contradiction to another part in semantic terms in such a way that two of them cannot be summed up in a single instant of time.

Nima Yushij uses these contradictory oppositions sometimes in the form of two opposite words at the side of one another and sometimes in the form of a contradictory combination and occasionally in the form of a poetical sentence or image infeasible in the real world:

“He was a walking dead live”^[4]

7) Intellectual Oppositions:

The contention of Nima Yushij’s thoughts in confrontation with the society’s streams and personalities and his reactions in the community shape oppositions enabling one to figure out Nima’s real personality. Based on what has been stated in Nima’s poems, these oppositions can be summarized in several subjects:

7.1) Conflict between Nima’s thoughts and bullying despots and rulers’ thoughts

7.2) Conflict in Nima’s thoughts regarding injustice and poverty

7.3) Conflict in Nima’s thoughts regarding the profit-seeking religious men and clergymen

7.4) Conflict in Nima’s thoughts regarding school and knowledge

7.5) Conflict in Nima’s thoughts regarding the city and city dwellers

7.6) Conflict in Nima’s thoughts regarding the proponents and claimants of poetry

7.7) Conflict in Nima’s thoughts regarding the society and people

The Contrast between Nima Yushij’s Poetry and Traditional Poetry:

General public may think that Nima Yushij has been an enemy of traditional poetry and that he has been promoting blank verse in contention and opposition to the ancient poetry while Nima, even if having had hatred in the beginning for the old literature and sought a novel form and theme, is “one of the great fans of old Persian literature”^[5] and his criticisms of the classic poetry does not mean the continuation of his hatred thereof because many of his poems have been recited based on the antecedents’ methods and with a little change within the format of couplet, stanzaic, eclectic, quatrain poems and so forth.

Nima was looking for a new road in the period that the Persian literature had reached a dead end. He says: “We have exactly reached the time in which poetry is dead; the short field of view

and narrow path on which the antecedents had stepped has now come to an end”^[5].

The poems by Nima are divided by some experts into three sets: traditional, semi-traditional and free^[6,7]. This classification does not mean that Nima had been precisely observing it because he is sometimes found positing a fresh view in his traditional poems.

The current research paper tries looking at the binary oppositions in Nima Yushij's poems and comparing his poetical style with the traditional way of reciting poetry from various angles.

Nima's Contention with Traditional Melody of Poetry:

Nima realizes traditional poetry as being artificial and dependent on the melody and knows his poetry as being free of such a dependency and order because his poems have their natural state hence closer to prose.

Nima does not oppose music rather he is at odds with the traditional melody of poetry and believes that our traditional music does not provoke feelings and, contrarily, describes his poetry as being in a higher stage of prosodic melody.

Nima's Contention with Traditional Metre and Prosody:

Nima disagrees with traditional metre and prosody and realizes the old metres as being fossilized. His enmity and disagreement with the traditional prosody is to the extent that he writes the following words in one of his letters: “one of the two things in which I have never believed and to which I have never sold my independence is prosody and the other is this very logic”^[8]. Of course, such oppositeness has not caused Nima to change the prosodic metre rather he has just disordered the equality of the pillars and broken the metre.

Nima's Contention with the Traditional Format and Rhyme in Poetry:

In the minds of nearly all of the people, the revolution Nima created in poetry is in the area of format and rhyme but this does not mean that he has been in opposition and disagreement to the poetical form. To Nima, rhyme is of great importance. He has repeatedly written that “poetry lacking rhyme is like a human being lacking bones”^[5]. He moves on in giving importance to rhyme to the extent that he finds the traditional poetry as lacking rhyme in contrast to his poetry and recounts the rhyme-processing by the antecedents as having been simple and childish: “rhyme is what I give to my poems and they seem to have no rhyme, not the rhymes made by the antecedents in their poems. The antecedents' works are childish” (Ibid).

The Contrast between Nima Yushij's Poetry and Traditional Poetry in Lingual, Literary and Technical Terms:

In Nima's poetry, there are words and combinations to which Nima has endowed a novel shape by making his occupations. These occupations and changes have some been created due to the poetical necessity and some others based on the antecedents'

methods and they might have even brought about due to Nima's shortage of knowledge about the Persian Language. Such changes and occupations include silencing of a voiced letter and vice versa, addition of Hamza to the beginning of some of the words, mentioning of an additional “b”, use of the prefix “No” instead of “n” and using the negative-makers within a distance from the verb and so forth^[9-11].

The contrast in Nima Yushij's Novel Perspective with Traditional Poetry's Viewpoints:

Nima disagreed with the repetition of the old themes and believed that the poets who repeat the old themes “are porters of the dead's words”^[5]. In his idea, today's poet should use the old words as masonry for constructing novel combinations. In Nima's opinion, the poetical meters cannot be applied as a criterion for recognizing the traditional from the blank verses rather the thing that can be employed as a scale for separating the traditional poetry from blank verses is the possession of a novel perspective. Nima writes in a letter that “I am interested in all sorts of antiques except the old styles and old mindsets”^[8].

Objectivism and Reductionist Approaches in Nima's Poetry in Contrast to Subjectivism and Holistic Approaches in Traditional Poetry:

The thing repeatedly pointed out by Nima Yushij in his writings is that “our old poetry is subjective”^[5]. By this word, Nima means that the traditional poetry is more subjective and a person having no shared memory with it cannot communicate with it; therefore, in Nima's idea, the traditional poetry and music cannot incite sadness or happiness in most of the people. On the other hand, he believes that the blank verse is objective and features an objective state. It is this objectivity that can reside in anything in nature and creation.

The past poets' spiritual movement on the path of the poetry's evolution was in the form that they seminally portrayed an image in their minds and used this mentality to approach objectivity; then, they returned from objectivity to the mind; but, “Nima reversed this route. His spiritual wayfaring in the course of the poetry's evolution was the journey from objectivity to subjectivity and from mentality to objectivity”^[6].

Nima Yushij's Enjoyment of the Novel Ideology of Literary Schools in His Poems in Contrast to the Old Philosophy of the Traditional Poetry:

When looking at Nima Yushij's poetry from the perspective of literary schools, we are faced with a poet who has utilized the modern literary styles in his poetry in its real sense. These are styles each contradicting the other and have emerged in European literature in certain periods.

It can be stated in a general classification that Nima “in the first step, recited traditional and old poems and became a romanticist in a second step and became inclined towards social symbolism

in a third step"^[12]. But, this is not the whole story; Nima showed inclinations towards other literary schools, as well; many signs of such schools as realism, naturalism, surrealism, and others can be found in Nima's poems.

In addition to the above cases and from another perspective, the presence of dramatic elements in Nima's poetry is another case of his poem's contrast with traditional poetry. Nima has recited some of his poems within the format of the story and drama. Although Nima does not exactly observe theme, character, time and place in their modern forms, he deserves appreciation as a poet who has produced poems like "Afsaneh", "Aqa Tuka", "Servivili House" and "Amen Bird" at the beginning of the dramatic literature's path in Iran. In these poems, Nima makes use of conversation instead of description. In these conversations, several sounds can be heard; it is the thing that not so many examples of it can be seen in the poems by the traditional poets.

Conclusion:

In this study, it can be concluded following finding out that the binary oppositions are components of contrasts that Nima has used all the structural methods in the area of binary oppositions' structures for constructing conflict and opposition and he uses them for various functions. In such a shaping of the binary oppositions, we become familiar with a sort of latticed contradiction in a poem the example of which can be less frequently seen in the poetry by the other poets.

In the section on the various kinds of binary oppositions, we figured out Nima's personality and mindset in the community according to the contrasts and conflicts in his mind.

It is finally concluded that Nima's novel perspective and modern ideology, as compared to the traditional poetry and mindset of

the antecedent poets, cause his poetry to be closer to the universal standards more than any other poet.

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