



Extended Abstract

Vol 17, Issue 2, Summer 2025, Ser 64

A Semiotic Reading of Manouchehr Atashi's Poem "City of Image" Based on Riffaterre's Model

Mohammadjavad Mansouri Hasanabadi 
Masoud Algooneh Juneghani* 

Introduction

Michael Riffaterre (1924-2006), a French structuralist researcher, has conducted fundamental and significant research in the field of semiotics of poetry. His approach, while maintaining the importance of structure, leans towards hermeneutics. Riffaterre's semiotic reading is based on mimetic and retrospective levels, offering features such as hypogram, model, accumulation, descriptive constellation, and matrix for poetry reading. These elements play a determining role for the reader and elucidate important points regarding the creation of poetry by the poet and its reinterpretation by the reader. Riffaterre divides readers into two groups: ordinary readers and super-readers. Only the super-reader can go beyond the mimetic level, grasp the virtual relationships of the poem's elements, and reach the matrix. Therefore, in this study, Manouchehr Atashi's poem "City of Image" will be examined based on Riffaterre's semiotic model. Considering the often-neglected historical-social considerations in Riffaterre's model, this study will interpret the poem based on its structure, emphasizing the significant influence of these aspects in shaping literary works. It appears that this poem results from the expansion of a single matrix, where the poem's signification depends on it, and the scattered signs in the poem derive their meaning from this matrix.

Purpose, Methodology and Review of Literature

The structuralist approach used in this study aims to employ Riffaterre's method and apply it to provide a structural poetics. Various studies have analyzed and examined works of poetry based on Riffaterre's approach. For instance, Nabilou (2011) has analyzed Nima's poem "Phoenix" using this approach, identifying ungrammatical elements, accumulations, descriptive constellations, and the structural network of the poem as a series of lexical and conceptual associations expanding a single element. In another study, Nabilou (2013) has examined two poems, "Winter" by Akhavan and "A Message on the Way" by Sohrab Sepehri, using Riffaterre's approach, discovering a unified message spreading throughout the poems. Algooneh Juneghani (2016) reinterpreted Ahmad Shamlou's poem "On the Threshold" based on Riffaterre's model, exploring matrix, model, and textual space, and distinguishing between the creation and the re-creation models in Riffaterre's approach.

This study aims to employ Riffaterre's semiotic reading model in the analysis of Manouchehr Atashi's poem, "City of Image." The goal is to elucidate Riffaterre's semiotic reading framework and explain its principles and elements as tools for analyzing the poem's signification.

* Associate Prof in Persian Language and Literature, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.
algooneh@yahoo.com

DOI: 10.22099/JBA.2025.50258.4528



COPYRIGHTS ©2021 The author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, as long as the original authors and source are cited. No permission is required from the authors or the publisher.

Discussion

Manouchehr Atashi (1931-2005) is considered an independent and stylistic poet of contemporary Persian literature. Despite following Nima and aligning with the Pure Poetry movement, Atashi took a different path, characterized by a notable and novel structure. His acquaintance with English literature and mastery of poetry and language enabled him to create a structure in his poetry that was cohesive and impactful. Among his contemporaries in the 1960s, Atashi is regarded as a follower of Nima, yet his poetry possesses unique features not seen in his peers, stemming from his intuitive and inherent understanding of structure. This structure can be examined using Riffaterre's model, revealing its structural poetics.

Conclusion

Using Riffaterre's hermeneutic structuralism, this study will conduct a hermeneutic structural reading of Atashi's "City of Image," examining elements such as matrix, hypogram, model, accumulation, and descriptive constellation. The main question is whether Atashi's poetry has a solid structure and whether Riffaterre's model can provide the reader with the means to read and reinterpret the poem. The study also seeks to uncover whether Atashi's poem, written during the socio-political transformations of the 1960s and 1970s, reflects the historical and social conditions of its time.

The findings reveal a philosophical disillusionment and passive spirit, influenced by the poet's environment, that is manifested in the poem's meaning. Therefore, the research begins with structural analysis and concludes with interpretation, aiming to highlight the socio-historical context as an integral part of understanding the poem's significance.

Keywords: Manouchehr Atashi, Michael Riffaterre, semiotics

References:

- Abrams, M. H. (1953). *The mirror and the lamp: Romantic theory and the critical tradition*. London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Algooneh Jouneghani, M. (2018). *Semiotics and poetry (Collection of articles)* (2nd ed.). Tehran: Neviseh Parseh. [in Persian]
- Algooneh Jouneghani, M., & Farajzadeh, Z. (2022). Structural configuration analysis of Manouchehr Atashi's poem "Waswasah". *Contemporary Persian Literature*, 12(1), 29–53. [in Persian]
- Atashi, M. (2001). *Another song* (2nd ed.). Tehran: Negaah. [in Persian]
- Babachahi, A. (1998). *Individual propositions* (Vol. 1, 1st ed.). Tehran: Naranj. [in Persian]
- Barkat, B., & Eftekhari, T. (2010). Semiotics of poetry: Application of Michael Riffaterre's theory on Forough Farrokhzad's poem "Ey Marz-e Par-gohar". *Comparative Language and Literature Research Quarterly*, 1(4), 109–130. [in Persian]
- Culler, J. (2001). *The pursuit of signs: Semiotics, literature* (1st ed.). London: Routledge.
- Culler, J. (2008). *Structuralist poetics* (K. Safavi, Trans.; 1st ed.). Tehran: Minuye Kherad. [in Persian]
- Goldmann, L. (1990). *Genetic criticism* (M. T. Ghiyasi, Trans.; 1st ed.). Tehran: Bozorgmehr. [in Persian]
- Makaryk, I. R. (2006). *Encyclopedia of contemporary literary theories* (M. Mohajer & M. Nabavi, Trans.; 2nd ed.). Tehran: Agah. [in Persian]
- Namvar Motlagh, B. (2015). *An introduction to intertextuality: Theories and applications* (2nd ed.). Tehran: Sokhan. [in Persian]
- Nabilou, A. (2012). Application of Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory in the analysis of Nima's poem "Phoenix". *Journal of Linguistic Studies in Foreign Languages*, 1(2), 81–94. [in Persian]
- Nabilou, A. (2013). A semiotic reading of Akhavan's "Winter" and Sepehri's "A Message on the Way". *Contemporary Persian Literature*, 3(4), 11–136. [in Persian]
- Nabilou, A. (2019). A semiotic reading of Akhavan's poem "The Inscription". *Journal of Contemporary World Literature*, 24(1), 283–305. [in Persian]
- Nooriala, E. (1969). *Forms and reasons in modern Iranian poetry* (1st ed.). Tehran: Bamdad. [in Persian]
- Payandeh, H. (2018). *Theory and literary criticism: An interdisciplinary textbook* (Vol. 2). Tehran: Samt. [in Persian]
- Riffaterre, M. (1978). *Semiotics of poetry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Selden, R. (1993). *A guide to contemporary literary theory* (A. Mokhber, Trans.; 1st ed.). Tehran: Tarh-e Now. [in Persian]
- Shafi'i Kadkani, M. R. (2016). *The history of Persian poetry* (9th ed.). Tehran: Sokhan. [in Persian]

- Sharifi, F. (2021). *The poetry of our time (Manouchehr Atashi)* (5th ed.). Tehran: Negaah. [in Persian]
- Shamisa, S. (2015). *Literary criticism* (3rd ed.). Tehran: Mitra. [in Persian]
- Todorov, T. (2022). *Structural poetics* (M. Nabavi, Trans.; 8th ed.). Tehran: Agah. [in Persian]