

# Aesthetic Function in the Poem

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## Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji karya sastra melalui analisis stilistika yang didasarkan pada ilmu bahasa sistemik fungsional. Metode penelitian menggunakan studi pustaka dan pendekatan intrinsik objektif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa analisis semantik menghasilkan makna bahasa latar belakang (the automatized linguistic meanings) dan makna bahasa latar depan (the foregrounded linguistic meanings). Makna pertama menghasilkan masalah utama (subject matter), sedangkan makna kedua menghasilkan makna sastra (literary meaning). Selanjutnya, makna sastra menghasilkan tema. Akhirnya dipahami bahwa masalah utama berkisah tentang pemimpin yang bijak, jujur, tegas, terhormat, sedangkan makna sastra tentang ancaman keruntuhan Inggris tahun 1806, serta tema tentang komentar sosial politik terhadap Inggris.*

**Kata kunci:** makna bahasa latar belakang, makna bahasa latar depan, masalah utama, makna sastra, tema.

## 1. Introduction

Generally there are several stylistic theories namely Formalist, Functionalist, Feminist, Pragmatic, Affective, Cognitive, Pedagogical and Critical (Weber 1996). Particularly the Functionalist covers some theories such as Functionalism, Systemic Functionalist, Tagmemics, Prague School Functionalist and West Coast Functionalist (Matthiessen 1995). Based on the systemic functional study, language can be diversified into hierarchically realizational stages: 1) language in context of culture 2) registers (text types) in context of situation types 3) texts (a register or a text type) in context of situations (a situation type) and 4) a text in context of a situation (Halliday and Matthiessen 1999).

In fact a text is a semantic unit and a clause is a grammatical unit. Then semantics is an interface between context of situation and lexicogrammar. In this sense the semantic systems relate upward to contextual systems and relate downward to lexicogrammatical systems; moreover these semantic systems are internally related to cohesive systems (Halliday and Hasan 1985, Martin 1992, Eggins 1994 and Mathiessen 1995).

Really the semiotic system of verbal art is concerned with language (expression), symbolic articulation (content 2) and theme (content 1); the language is also a semiotic system concerning with phonology: signifier, lexicogrammar: signified 2 and semantics: signified 1 (Hasan 1985, 1996). At the stratum of symbolic articulation the first order meanings are constituted by the distinctive objectives and properties. In regard to practical language, the distinctive objectives are revealed through the process of *foregrounding* (Hasan 1985) and of *logogenesis* (Halliday and Mathiessen 1999). In reference to poetic language the distinctive properties are achieved by the descriptions of *semantic indirection* (Riffaterre 1978). Then the first order meanings (the objectives and properties) function as symbols of the second order meanings or the literary meanings. Mukarovsky (1977) argues, "poetic language is permanently characterized only by its function, however function is not a property but a mode of utilizing the properties of a given phenomenon". In turn the literary meanings convey themes of the poem. The themes cover universal humanism and literary intertextuality in conjunction with the intrinsic objective approach as well as biographical relevance and

reader's socio cultural context in accordance with the extrinsic subjective approach. The interconnectedness of the semiotic systems of language and verbal art is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Two Semiotic Systems in the Poem

Language	Symbolic Articulation	Theme
Lexicogrammar: wordings	Consistent foregrounding	Universal humanism
Semantics: meanings	Logogenetic process	Literary intertextuality
Discourse: lexical cohesion	Semantic indirection	Biographical relevance
Context: subject matter	Literary meaning	Socio-cultural context

This writing is concerned with an analysis on a poem written by William Wordsworth shown as follows.

November 1806

Another year! – another deadly blow!  
 Another mighty Empire overthrown!  
 And We are left, or shall be left, alone;  
 The last that dare to struggle with the Foe.  
 'T is well! from this day forward we shall know  
 That in ourselves our safety must be sought;  
 That by our own right hands it must be wrought;  
 That we must stand unpropped, or be laid low.  
 O dastard whom such foretaste doth not cheer!  
 We shall exult, if they who rule the land  
 Be men who hold its many blessings dear,  
 Wise, upright, valiant; not a servile band,  
 Who are to judge of danger which they fear,  
 And honour which they do not understand.

## 2. Language

This section discusses semantics (logical, experiential, interpersonal and textual), cohesion (lexical cohesion) and context of situation (subject matter: paraphrase). However the grammatical analysis is not inserted because of the limited space. The ideational metafunction (logical and experiential) produces automatized linguistic meanings and the main lexical chains of participant, process and circumstance also produce automatized linguistic meanings. In turn the main lexical chains produce subject matter that is also called as *the second order field* (Halliday and Mathiessen 1999). Thus subject matter is the meaning of automatized linguistic meanings. Then subject matter can be paraphrased into heuristically interpreted clauses because paraphrase is similar to *heuristic reading* (Rifaterre 1978).

### 2.1 Logical Semantics (Logical Meaning or Logical Metafunction)

Logical semantics deals with a clause type. The poem is realized by 1 clause simplex and 3 clause complexes consisting of 3 initiating and 16 extending clauses. Out of 16 clauses there are 3 clauses of paratactic extension, 4 clauses of hypotactic projection, 1 clause of hypotactic enhancement and 8 clauses of paratactic elaboration. Thus elaboration is the automatized pattern or the background of the poem. In other words elaboration produces linguistically automatized meanings. Moreover the poem has 5 clauses of future tense and 15

clauses of present tense. Thus present tense is the background of the poem and it produces automatized linguistic meanings.

## **2.2 Experiential Semantics (Experiential Meaning or Experiential Metafunction)**

Experiential semantics discusses a process type. The poem is made up by 9 clauses of mental process, 6 clauses of material process, 4 clauses of relational process and 1 clause of verbal process. Thus mental process is the automatized pattern or the background of the poem. It means that mental process produces automatized linguistic meanings.

## **2.3 Lexical Cohesion**

Lexical chains realize the poem and each chain has a member of lexical items or lexical factors (Riffatere: 1978). There are 8 lexical chains namely 1) subject: we, we, we, we, we, we, we, we, they, men, men, men, they, men and they; 2) sensing: dare to struggle, know, feel safe, feel safe, cheer, judge, fear, judge and understand; 3) doing: overthrown, felt, felt, stand, laid and rule; 4) being: will be, shall be, is and are; 5) characteristics: deadly, mighty, right, low, unpropped, dear, wise, upright, valiant and not servile; 6) synonym: year = day, Empire = the land, Foe = dastard, blow = danger and blessings = honour; 7) action: process relation: fear and danger and 8) antonym: safety and danger.

In conclusion the main lexical chains of subject (chain 1), sensing (chain 2) and characteristics (chain 5) are the automatized patterns or the background of the poem. It means the three main lexical chains produce automatized linguistic meanings.

## **2.4 Subject Matter**

The three main lexical chains produce subject matter so that the subject matter is that we shall feel safe if the leaders (men) are graceful, wise, honest, brave and honourable. Then subject matter can be paraphrased into heuristically interpreted clauses: 1) Another year! another deadly blow! Another mighty Empire [will be] overthrown; 2) and we are left; 3) or we shall be left alone; 4) and [we shall be] the last; 5) who dare to struggle with the Foe; 6) T is well; 7) from this day forward we shall know; 8) that in ourselves we must feel safe; 9) that by our own night hands we must feel safe; 10) that we must stand unpropped; 11) or [that we must] be laid low; 12) we shall exalt O dastard; 13) whom such foretaste doth not cheer; 14) if they be man; 15) who rule the land; 16) who are graceful, wise, upright, valiant and not servile; 17) who are to judge of danger; 18) which they fear; 19) and [who are to judge of] honour; 20) which they do not understand.

## **3. Symbolic Articulation**

This section deals with consistent foregrounding, logogenetic process, semantic indirection and literary meaning. Firstly literariness is achieved through the opposition of foreground and background (Jefferson 1995). On one hand foreground(ing) has some terms like deautomatization, defamiliarization and the dominant, prominent, highlighted, foregrounded, deautomatized or defamiliarizing pattern; on the other hand background is also called as automatization, familiarization, and the normal, canonical, habitual, common, automatized or familiarizing pattern (Mukarovsky 1977). According to Butt (1996), the opposition of foreground and background in verbal art is analogous to the reversal of figure and ground in Gestalt Psychology. It means foreground is analogous to figure (chalice: gelas

anggur) and background to ground ( two faces: dua wajah). The reversal taken from Gregory (1984) is shown in figure 2. In verbal art the semantic background produces subject matter and the semantic foreground produces literary meaning. Thus the opposition of subject matter and literary meaning in verbal art is analogous to the reversal of two faces and chalice in Gestalt's Psychology.

Fig. 2 The Reversal of Figure and Ground



Then logogenesis, ontogenesis and phylogenesis constitute semogenesis. Whereas logogenetic process is a process of the creation of meaning in the unfolding text in which a changing system is used not only by writer/ speaker as a resource to create a text but also by reader / listener as a resource to interpret the text; the changing system reveals coincidence between shifts in grammatical pattern and shifts in textual episode (Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999). Moreover semantic indirection is concerned with “embellishment, self reference, representation and manner” (Robey, 1995). At last consistent foregrounding, logogenetic process and semantic indirection are all the first order meanings to function as symbols of the second order meanings. Thus literary meaning is the meaning of foregrounded linguistic meanings.

### 3.1 Consistent Foregrounding

Section 2.1 shows that elaboration is the automatized pattern so that the first clause complex is foregrounded by virtue of combining extension and elaboration. Thus foregrounding of logical relations occurs at clauses **1, 2, 3, 4** and **5**. Again section 2.1 indicates that present tense is the automatized pattern so that future tense is foregrounded. Really foregrounding of tense takes place in clauses **1, 3, 4, 7** and **13**. Then section 2.2 declares that mental process is the automatized pattern so that other processes are foregrounded. In fact foregrounding of process covers clauses **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 14** and **15**.

In conclusion patterning of all foregrounded patterns reveals that consistency of foregrounding converges toward clauses **1, 2, 3, 4** and **5**. It means that consistency of foregrounded linguistic meanings or *semantic drift* (Butt: 1996) is that Another day! another deadly blow! another mighty Empire will be overthrown and we are left or we shall be left alone and we shall be the last that dare to struggle with the Foe.

### 3.2 Logogenetic Process

The changing system of process reveals coincidence between the shifts of grammatical pattern or *latent patterning* (Butt: 1996) and the shifts of textual episode or *variant* (Riffaterre: 1978). The shifts are described as follow. 1) shift from *mental process* (clause 5) into *relational process* (clause 6) coincides with shift from *the threat of Empire's down fall*

into *consequence*; 2) shift from *relational process* (clause 6) into *mental process* (clause 7) coincides with shift from *consequence* into *the importance of safety*; 3) shift from *material process* (clause 11) into *verbal process* (clause 12) coincides with shift from *the importance of safety* into *the requirements of needed statement*. This poem is created by the changing system of process but different poems have different kinds of changing system. Logogenetic process is presented in table 2.

Table 2. Logogenetic Process

Clause Number	Grammatical Pattern Cf. latent patterning	Textual Episode Cf. variant
1	material process	The threat of
5	mental process	Empire's downfall
6	relational process	Consequence
7	mental process	The importance of
11	material process	safety
12	verbal process	The requirements of
20	mental process	needed statement

### 3.3 Semantic Indirection

Semantic indirection is concerned with embellishment, self-reference, representation and manner. Firstly the embellishment or *displacing meaning* deals with diction, image, figurative language and rhetorical device. In this poem kinetic imagery is found in line 1 *blow*, line 2 *overthrown*, line 4 *struggle* and line 8 *stand unpropped*. Then rhetorical device of enumeration exists in line 1 *another, another* and line 2 *another*. Again enumeration takes place in line 3 *we are left or shall be left*.

Secondly the self-reference or *distorting meaning* (Riffaterre: 1978) discusses irony, ambiguity, contradiction and nonsense. In this poem there is a contradiction in line 8 *we must stand unpropped or be laid low* and between line 6 *safety* and line 13 *danger*.

Thirdly the representation or *creating meaning* (Riffaterre: 1978) declares symmetry, sound pattern, embejement and homologous. In terms of sound pattern, the sound [ou] exists in *blow*, *Foe*, *know* and *low*. The sound [n] occurs in *overthrown* and *alone*. The sound [t] is found in *sought* and *wrought*. The sound [r] is described in *cheer*, *clear* and *fear*. The sound [d] is in *land*, *band* and *understand*.

Finally the manner is that *an author's work maybe distinguished by typical pattern of language use* (Robey: 1995). In this poem Wordsworth tells us about Newtonian pattern of grand universe in which God (the ultimate ground of being) ensure a harmony (Durrant: 1970). Then the harmony is achieved through 3 typical patterns: pattern of outscape relation (Durrant: 1970), pattern of prehensive unity (Whitehead: 1925) and pattern of unity in diversity (Byatt: 1970). In term of prehensive unity the harmony is achieved by an antithesis of mental and material words: human thought *we know* and natural object *the land*.

### 3.4 Literary Meaning (The 2<sup>nd</sup> Order Meaning or the Poem's Meaning)

In section 3.1 consistent foregrounding occurs in lines 1, 2, 3 and 4 (the first clause complex). In section 3.2 logogenetic process in the first clause complex discusses the threat of Empire's downfall. In section 3.3 semantic indirection in the first clause complex declares

imagery and enumeration. Then consistent foregrounding, logogenetic process and semantic indirection are all the first order meanings to function as symbols of the second order meanings. However a poem is poly interpretable because of *ontogenesis and polygenesis* (Halliday and Matthiesen: 1999) and of *erwartungs and leerstelle* (Pradopo: 1996). In short one of literary meanings is about the threat of downfall on Great Britain in 1806.

#### 4. Theme (The Meaning of Literary Meaning)

The literary meaning (the threat of downfall on England) enunciates theme. Dealing with universal humanism, the theme is about the poet's political and sound comment on the condition of England. Concerning with literary intertextuality, the poem of *November 1806* is similar to the poem of *London 1802*. In fact the word of *Empire* in the former poem refers to England in the latter poem. Thus the latter poem is the *hypo gram* of the former poem. Referring to biographical reliance, the poet was scared that England like France would experience Revolution. Pertaining to the socio-cultural context, I personally think that the poet was influenced by French Revolution that he himself witnessed its impacts.

#### 5. Conclusion

Really the distinctive objectives (consistent foregrounding and logogenetic process) and the distinctive properties (semantic indirection) are all the first order meanings to function as symbols or signs of the second order meanings, literary meanings or the poem's meanings. Thus the first order meanings are per se not literary meanings but they have an *aesthetic function* in construing the poem's meanings (Mukarovsky 1977). In other words embellishment, self reference, representation and manner are NOT inherently poetic meanings but they are inherently poetic properties that have a *defamiliarizing capacity* in conveying the poem's meanings (Jefferson 1995). Especially the poetic objects (fields, sky, sun, valley, rock, hill and river) are only *prosaic and mundane items* that play an important part in constructing the poem's meanings (Jefferson 1995).

Generally three strata of the semiotic system of the poem are related to one another. At the stratum of language, ideational semantics produces lexical cohesion; in turn lexical cohesion produces subject matter. In fact both ideational semantics and lexical cohesion reveal automatized linguistic meanings. Thus subject matter is the meaning of automatized linguistic meanings. At the stratum of symbolic articulation (Hasan 1985) or "symbolic extrapolation" (Preminger 1974), consistent foregrounding, logogenetic process and semantic indirection are all the first order meanings to function as artistic metaphors, symbols or signs of the second order meanings (literary meanings). In other words literary meaning is the meaning of foregrounded linguistic meanings. In fact the opposition of subject matter and literary meaning in verbal art is analogous to the reversal of faces and chalice in Gestalt's Psychology. Then the literary meanings convey themes of the poem. In short theme is the meaning of the poem's meaning (literary meaning). Actually theme describes universal humanism, literary intertextuality, biographical relevance and reader's socio cultural context. Finally themes should be construed by both the intrinsic objective approach and extrinsic subjective approach because a poem is a literary text about *reality* written in *language* sent by the *author* to the *reader*.

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