

Ambiguity in Geoffrey Hill's Selected Poems

Assist Prof. Dr Qais A. Abdulla
University of Anbar
College of Education for Humanities

Dhuha A. Hamadi (M. A. Student)
University of Anbar
College of Education for Humanities

Abstract

This study is an attempt to investigate and analyze linguistically Empson's Seven Types of Ambiguity (1947) found in G. Hill's selected poems: *September Song and Ovid in the Third Reich*. Empson's Seven Types of Ambiguity shows the omnipresence and power of ambiguity in literature and involves a tension that drives creativity. This study aims at revealing those ambiguous expressions, which make an obstacle between the speaker/writer and his/her hearer/reader. These expressions which have multiple interpretations form difficulty and obscurity on the part of the receiver. Context is very important and plays a vital role in determining the meaning of words. In order to make a communication between the speaker/writer and the hearer/reader, this topic should be studied to understand Hill's poetry, which is characterized, by difficulty and obscurity.

المستخلص

تعد هذه الدراسة محاولة لاستقصاء وتحليل أنواع اللبس السبعة لأمبسون (1947) وجدت في قصائد هيل المختارة: أغنية أيلول وأوفيد في الرايخ الثالث. يظهر كتاب سبعة أنواع من اللبس لـ Empson تواجد اللبس بقوة في الأدب وينطوي على التوتر الذي يدفع إلى الإبداع. تهدف هذه الدراسة الكشف عن تلك التعبيرات الملتبسة التي تشكل عقبة بين المتحدث/الكاتب وسامعيه/قرائه. هذه التعبيرات التي لها تفسيرات متعددة تشكل صعوبة ولبس من عند المتلقي. السياق مهم جداً وله أثر حيوي في تحديد معنى الكلمات. من أجل جعل التواصل بين المتحدث/الكاتب والسامع/القارئ، ينبغي دراسة هذا الموضوع لفهم شعر هيل الذي يتسم بالصعوبة واللبس.

Introduction

Ambiguity is a complex semantic phenomenon. It can be defined as the possibility of interpreting an expression more than one way (Radford et al., 2009:5). In other words, it means uncertainty of meaning. Generally, context plays a vital role in resolving ambiguity. The same piece of information may be ambiguous in certain context and unambiguous in another. Lexical ambiguity which is a type of ambiguity contributes to the richness of poetic language. Some poets use ambiguity, specifically lexical ambiguity, to evoke many thoughts and emotions in us with just a few words. It helps to think rather than to accept what is said. Literary critics consider Hill's poetry to be difficult as they make the observation. Hill's poetry has verbal innovativeness which is linked to difficulty. Words are used to go beyond words. His poetry includes semantic uncertainty that comes from "the activation of many layers of meaning in his poetic locutions". Hill's verbal innovativeness which constitutes a vital aspect of his poetic achievement, is intimately linked to difficulty. Hill's poetry is marked by semantic uncertainty, a willed ambiguity that has the effect of deepening the perceived complexity of his compositions. The semantic uncertainty comes from "the activation of many layers of meaning in his poetic locutions" (Dissanayake, 2011:1-3). So, the problem is that his poetry has ambiguous expressions that each expression might give two interpretations; in addition, his poetry is full of semantic phenomena that make his poetry innovative. This study aims

at analyzing Hill's poetry from a semantic point of view, particularly analyzing *Seven types of Ambiguity* by W. Empson which are found in his poems. This study focuses on Hill's two selected poems: *September Song* and *Ovid in the Third Reich*.

1. Meaning and Meaning Shades

Meaning is defined as

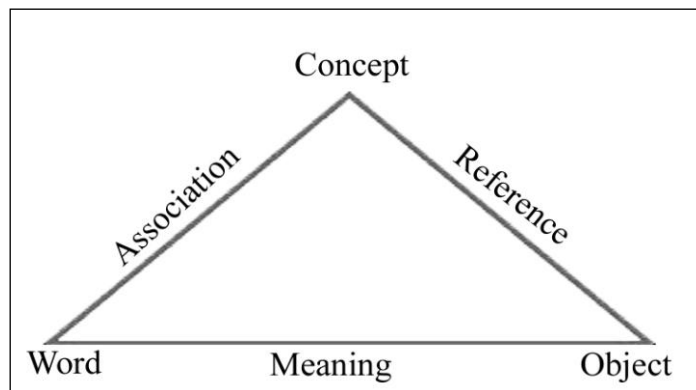
The situation in which the speaker utters it and the response which it calls forth in the hearer. There is a coordination between the speaker's situation and the hearer's response. Giving an accurate definition of meaning to every linguistic element scientifically requires accurate knowledge for referring to everything in the speaker's world.

So, names of minerals are defined in regard to chemistry and mineralogy ,for example, salt consists of sodium chloride (NaCl) (Bloomfield, 1933:139).

A list of definitions of meaning, that belongs to philosophers, psychologists, philologists, literary critics and other specialists, is given by Ogden and Richards (1989:186-188). Consider some of these definitions as stated below:

1. An Intrinsic property .
2. A unique unanalyzable relation to other things .
3. The other words annexed to a word in the Dictionary .
4. The connotation of a word .
5. An essence .
6. An activity projected into an object."

Kreidler (1998:43)elaborates that the above two linguists try to clarify meaning on the basis of "what is in people's mind" and their scheme is as follows:



Diagram(1): Meaning's Scheme

The association is the tie between word and concept on the one hand and the tie between concept and object is called reference on the other hand. Meaning is the tie between the object and word.

2. Denotative Meaning vs. Connotative Meaning

Denotation is the dictionary meaning of a word .There is a saying "words do not have meaning, people do." Furthermore, denotative meanings are jointly held by communicators. Culture can affect denotative meanings in different ways, for example, age differences seriously affect them. The word 'lame' to those who lived in the middle of the previous century denoted 'a person or animal with a bad leg'. At the current times ,it

means 'a person or thing that is stupid'. The differences of language can happen between two members of the same area and age (Rahimi,2008:18).

Denotative meaning shows the association between a linguistic meaning and the non-linguistic entities to which it refers, for example, 'dog' denotes 'the set of all dogs'. Connotation makes the word meaning broader than the denotative meaning or primary sense (Crystal,2003:129). Connotative meaning is acquired through common associations, for example, the word 'rugby' whose denotative meaning is a special type of football perhaps connotes 'large men', 'manliness', 'boorish and bawdy behavior', or 'public schools' (that is, expensive and prestigious private schools). Moreover, it may also connote our pride in our local or national team, or it may connote a present or former boyfriend(Trask, 2007:51).

Connotative meaning generally varies because it depends on peoples' experiences but some words have shared connotation (Kreidler,1998:45).

3. Ambiguity: preliminary

The term 'ambiguity' is generally used to denote 'uncertainty of meaning' or 'fogginess of expression'. Literally, it shows dual expression. Ambiguity is linguistically used in a narrow sense ,but literal studies deal with ambiguity with a broad sense. Accordingly, Su (1994:201-202) shows a distinction between ambiguity and multiple meaning. Su considers that the former is a subtype of the latter. Su gives a set of terms which are usually associated with ambiguity that include "meaning ,significance, denotative, connotative, affective meaning, reference, lexical item(or unit), lexeme, polysemy, homonymy, and others. Ambiguity is classified into: syntactic , phonological and lexical ambiguities and they are as follows:

3.1 Syntactic Ambiguity

This kind of ambiguity is widely discussed by linguists. Studying this phenomenon from a syntactic aspect shows the constructions, the grammatical relationships, and the solution (Crystal , 2003 :21).

Structural ambiguity is a very important phenomenon since one finds a difficulty to illustrate such type of ambiguity without using either labeled brackets or tree – diagram, for example, in phrase structure, a compound such as" toy car crusher" which means either 'A' or 'B' (Radford et al, 2009:149):

A- " toy car crusher" means [crusher for toys car]

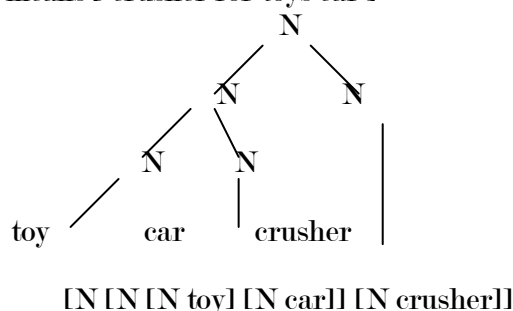


Diagram (1) The First Interpretation of " toy car crusher"

B- "toy car crusher " means [car crusher which is a toy]

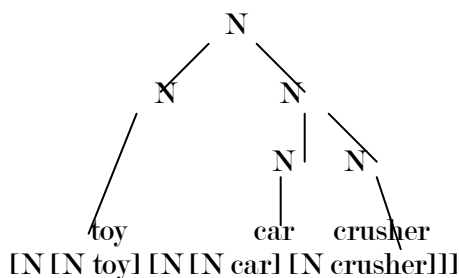


Diagram (2) The Second Interpretation of " toy car crusher"

Ambiguity can appear in the surface structure as well as in the deep structure. The former means words are put together to create different possible constructions whereas the latter denotes a group of words probably having more than one different interpretation. An example of surface structure:

(1) John and Mary or Pat will go. [[John] and [Mary or Pat]], [[John and Mary] or [Pat]]

An example of deep structure is as follows:

(2) Overtaking cars on the main roads can be dangerous.

(2.a) overtaking cars is dangerous.

(2.b) cars overtaking are dangerous.

(Kreidler, 1998:170)

3.2 Phonological Ambiguity

Ambiguity is clarified by Ullmann (1962:156) that sometimes appears in spoken language in terms of the phonetic structure of the sentence. He adds that:

since the acoustic unit of connected speech is the breath-group, not the individual word, it may happen that two breath-groups made up of different words become homonymous and thus potentially ambiguous.

This can be explained in the following example, traditionally, the English word 'near' as a noun, which means 'kidney', gradually disuses as there is a confusion between 'a near' and 'an ear'.

3.3 Lexical Ambiguity

Lexical ambiguity is one of semantic properties of words. This type of ambiguity is adopted to analyze the data, on the basis of Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1947).

This type of ambiguity as the same word having more than one sense. It perhaps takes two different forms: polysemy and homonymy. The former means the same word having more than one different meanings as in 'board', as a noun, may mean 'a thin plank, table, a tablet, food served at the table, and so on. The latter means two or different words being similar in sound as in 'mean' = 'middle' and 'mean' = 'inferior' (Ullmann, 1962:158-159). In other words, lexical ambiguity is the simplest type that is caused by providing two various meanings for a lexical word, for example,

(3) The sailors enjoyed the port.

The word 'port' may refer to 'fortified wine' or 'town by the sea'. Yet, both interpretations can exactly be used in the same structure or context. Intentionally, ambiguity often has humors, ironic or subversive effects. It may have complex cases when it contains the lexical and structural ambiguity. As a result, it frequently gives different readings (Trask, 2007: 14).

4. William Empson's Model(1947)

Empson (1906-1984) is a British critic, poet and former professor of literature at Sheffield University. He is famous for literary criticism. He wrote his book, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, while he was a student in 1930. In this work, he focuses on the analysis of texts of poetry. Hence, his name is combined with the school of New Criticism. Empson states that "Seven Types of Ambiguity analyzes meaning, rather than determining value-although ambiguity itself emerges as a kind of value in Empson's rendering of it" (Malpas & Wake, 2006:181).

Seven Types of Ambiguity shows "the defining characteristic of poetic language, its virtuoso feats of close, creative 'practical criticism' in action, and its apparent tendency to detach literary texts from their contexts in the process of 'reading' their ambiguities was particularly influential on New Criticism" (Selden et al., 2005:18).

Ambiguity is defined by Empson (1947:19) as

Something very pronounced, and as a rule witty or deceitful. I propose to use the word in an extended sense, and shall think relevant to my subject any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language.

Ambiguity, as mentioned above, is used in critical evaluation which has some weight and importance. Empson's theory briefly views that sometimes things do not mean what they seem and that words connote at least as much as they denote. These types of ambiguity are as follows (Empson, 1947:19-231):

1. The first type of ambiguity is when a detail is effective in several ways simultaneously. This type is created by a comparison, which is related to likeness, antitheses combining with differences as in *Peacock's War Song*:

The eagles and the ravens
We gluttoned with our foemen;
The heroes and the cravens,
The spearmen and the bowmen.

These lines show finality which is expressed by the use of differences between 'heroes' and 'cravens', both have equal deaths, and in relation between 'heroes' and 'eagles' and between 'ravens' and 'cravens'.

2. The second type of ambiguity is as follows: when two or more alternative meanings are resolved into one. It is related to double meanings in word or syntax, for example, T. S. Eliot's poem

Webster was much possessed by death
And saw the skull beneath the skin;
And breastless creatures underground
Leaned backward with a lipless grin.

The word 'Leaned' syntactically has two functions. The first one may be used as a verb to explain that 'Webster saw the skull under the skin and the skeletons under the ground which were leaning backwards'. The second one is perhaps used as an adjective to mean that, according to the semi-colon, 'Webster saw the skull under the skin ,independently of him, whether seen or no, the creatures underground leaned backward'. Both emphasize having their laugh out and looking upward at the object of their laughter(Empson, 1947,102).

3. Empson's third type of ambiguity(1947:127) is when two apparently unconnected meanings are given simultaneously. This is expressed by puns: allegory, mutual comparison, and pastoral. The two meanings of pun are used to produce an additional effect. This type refers to several different topics, several universes of discourse, several modes of judgment or feeling. This type can be explained in the following example

The watchful guests still hint the last offence,
The daughter's petulance , the son's expense;
Improve his heady rage with treacherous skill,
And mould his passions till they make his will.
(Johnson, The Vanity of Human Wishes.)

A conscious pun in this example is represented by 'heady' which has a multiple meaning. Both meanings are intended and they mean that ' he was head of the family and that his passions soon came to a head '.

4. Empson explains the fourth type as follows: when several meanings, which do not agree among themselves, combine to make clear a complicated state of mind in the author, for example , Hopkin's poem

Though world of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you will weep and know why.
Now no matter ,child, the name .
Sorrow's springs are the same .

I. A. Richards (1929), as cited in Empson (1947:177), explains in these lines that 'will weep' has various interpretations: 'insist upon weeping, now or later', or 'shall weep in the future '. 'know' perhaps follow 'will'. In this case, it probably means either ' you insist upon knowing' or ' you already know why you weep, why you shall weep, or why you insist upon weeping'. It may be 'listen and I shall tell you why you weep, or shall weep, or shall insist upon weeping, or insist upon weeping already'.

5. The fifth type of ambiguity is a kind of confusion when a writer discovers his idea while he was writing. In other words, he/she has not apparently preconceived the idea but come upon it during the act of creation, for example, Shakespeare's following lines

our Natures do pursue
Like Rats that ravyn downe their proper Bane
A thirsty evil, and when we drink we die
(Measure for Measure, I. ii.)

Here, the first idea was the poison. Accordingly, 'proper' means 'suitable for rats', but it also gives an irrelevant suggestion about 'right and natural'. The poet urges to use poison (nowadays phosphorus) to prevent rats from dying in the wainscot by giving a clear image; Therefore, 'proper bane' is ambiguous since it now refers to water and poison (Empson, 1947:184).

6. The sixth type of ambiguity is when something appears to contain a contradiction, tautology, or irrelevancy and the reader has to find interpretations, for example, the following lines

Take, oh take thy lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworne,
And those eyes : the break of day
Lights that doe Mismatch the Morne;

'the break of day' is a contradiction. This means either that at dawn she can again see his beauty; in the morning he leaves her harshly and forgets his vows. Or 'like the break of day' which means either he must take his eyes away though they give her world all the light it can now hope for; and because they are like the sun of a day, one must expect that they would soon be taken (Empson, 1947:212-213).

7. According to Empson (1947:225), the seventh type is a complete contradiction which shows that the author is as unclear as to what way he/she says it. Empson considers this type of ambiguity as the most ambiguous of all the categories. It also involves the anthropological ideas of opposites and the psychological idea of context. For example, the following lines are taken from Macbeth when he is drowned for a moment in the fearful anticipation of crime.

Come what come may,
Time, and the Houre, runs through the roughest Day.

Both 'time' and 'the Hour' have singular form which reveals opposites. The 'hour' is the hour of action and 'time' is the rest of time (ibid, 235).

5. The Status of Geoffrey Hill in Modern Poetry

Among critics, Geoffrey Hill's rank is seen as the one of the main British poets of the last half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century. Beside the contemporary poets such as Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes and Philip Larkin, Hill's name is mentioned. Although these three poets have come true success in their poetry, Hill's poetry is less known because of the difficulty or inaccessibility which characterizes his poetry in comparison to theirs. For this, Hill steadfastly highlights that "difficult poetry is the most democratic and least condescending to the intelligence of the ordinary people." Hill believes that his poetry improves the deep memory as "civic duty, in order to fight the debased and evasive language of so much of public life, which he calls an "oligarchy of fraud". Critics also observe that Hill's poetry has a kind of priestly quality because of his interest in the metaphysical poetry and the defending of a Catholic tradition in English poetry running through Donne, Dryden, Hopkins, and Robert Southwell (Persoon & Watson, 2009:224-25).

Davie, cited in Kendall (2007:584), accuses Hill's poetry of having an equation in which one side eliminates the other that leaves us with an ironic zero. As a matter of fact, Hill's poetry shows that the antithesis of an ironic zero is regarded as an ironic plenitude. In *September Song*, Hill uses the plain style which contains a knotted and knotty message. It is simultaneously that a sharp silence is as a sharp confessional, it is enigmatic in its locked-in emotion.

Hill's poetry eternally deals with the motivation of violence of the past and the poet's relationship to describe such violence. Generally speaking, Hill has written his poetry with eternal themes which are wars, death and human suffering. This research focuses on the analysis of Hill's *September Song* and *Ovid in the Third Reich*. The former memorializes a child who was born in 1932, as Hill, and killed in 1942 by the Nazis, (i.e.), in the holocaust. It reminds people of the dreadful consequences of war and of racism. It also memorializes the horrors and the injustices of the holocaust. This poem imagines the

scene and how the Nazis use "Zyklon B" in their gas chambers (Persoon & Watson, 2009:225).

Ovid in the Third Reich puts Ovid in the inappropriate position of writing love poems and in the presentation of horror and violence. The poem consists of broken lines to give linguistic possibilities of interpretation. If the poem is read with the broken lines, it shows that "a poet needs to be less concerned with the lofty spiritual and transcendental – not looking down upon those less favored" (ibid, 225). The theme of this short poem is that the poet speaks in the persona of the Roman Empire under the Emperor of Augustus. According to the title, the speaker places in the Third Reich of Adolf Hitler's Germany. Hill wants to draw a parallel between these two periods. This is used instead of the Roman Empire under the Emperor Augustus. Augustus banished Ovid to Tomis on the Black Sea for unclear reasons. Hill uses ludicrous shifts in perspective. He places a historically real poet in a historical setting to which Ovid does not belong, (i.e), a pagan poet occurs in the Christian world of Nazi Germany and Hill makes Ovid literarily take distance in the last line (Knottenbelt, 1990:105).

6. Empson's Types of Ambiguity in Hill's Poetry

1. September Song

(The title of the poem)

"September" in this phrase is metaphor. Hill makes a comparison between 'the winter month' in England and 'death'. Or, he compares this month with the death of the child who was born few days before his birth. "September song" recalls the reader of the genocide during the World War II. "Song" is a semantically ambiguous word which is metaphorical used. Hill compares between a short musical composition that is intended by sung, ballad with the mourning child. Hill may compare this short poem setting to music with the victims' cries on the holocaust ("September Song: Geoffrey Hill - Summary and Critical Analysis," n.d). These represent the first type of ambiguity in that comparisons provide various interpretations at once.

2. born 19.6.32 – deported 24.9.42

(Dedicatory epigraph)

The word "deported" is semantically an ambiguous word in that it has two meanings, as far as this context is concerned: either originally to force somebody to leave a country either because the Jews have broken the law of the country or because they do not have the right to be there or to return a person who has illegally tried to enter another country. As a matter of fact, it is a pun, used instead of 'departed' or 'killed', (i.e.), to kill the Jews on the Nazi's Holocaust (Kendall, 2007:584). So, the third type of ambiguity displays two unconnected meanings that are given simultaneously.

3. Undesirable you may have been, untouchable

you were not.

(September Song, Stanza 1, L.1-2)

Semantically, the word "undesirable" is ambiguous. It means that "undesirable" becomes 'desirable'. The Nazis' opinion is that the Jews are desirable to be like fodder for the death machine, (i.e.), the holocaust. Or, ironically, the Nazi desires to do nothing with the Jews, but they do not let them live in peace. The word "Untouchable" is an ambiguous word because it is used to be an apposition to "undesirable" if the reader firstly reads the broken line. So he/she understands that it is a restatement of the disgust of Nazi ideology for Jewishness. Reading this broken line with the next one, that is to say, "untouchable/you were not.", grammatically means that the Jews are touchable (Persoon &

Watson, 2009:225). So the intended meaning of the poet is reversed by the influence of negation that the Jews were "reached " and "touched" in the most violent way. The use of these two words 'undesirable' and 'untouchable' represents the seventh type of ambiguity whose negation makes a division in the author's thought process .

4. Not forgotten

or passed over at the proper time.

(September Song, Stanza 1, L1-2)

In this context, Empson's third type is represented by the term "passed over", that is to say, a pun. It stands for "Passover" of the Jews . Regarding the Jewish customs and beliefs, the reader knows that "Passover", as a noun, is a key festival in the Jewish calendar. Its story is that the Angel of death saved the children whose parents had marked their doors, because of the plague, but did not spare the Egyptians. However, the poet intends the reversal meaning that ungodly force ensures the Jewish people , who are chosen by God, are marked to be killed. Or the term "passed over" may mean that the Nazis do not ignore the Jews to banish them. The phrase "the proper time" is a pun, too. It refers to the Jews' observation of the Sabbath which is regarded as a day of rest for the Jewish people. It is a religion and observance among them and some Christian sects . It begins at the sunrise on Friday to the sunset of the next day. The meaning is that either the Jews now do not forget or ignore this crime by making it a religious time for worship and observation. Or it is the proper time for the Nazis to kill them and they do not forget or ignore the exact time to punish them(Dudley, 2012 Aug. 7). This ambiguity also belongs to the third type since separate ideas can be expressed simultaneously in a word.

5. As estimated ,you died. Things marched, sufficient , to that end.

(September Song, Stanza 2, L1-2)

Actually , the reader notionally knows that all human beings and things will die and this is emphasized in this line .So, they are not immortal .But the poet intends something else .When one arrives the camp ,he/she will find the Jews' death that is inevitable in such way by the Nazis or the holocaust which is the final solution to the Jews as Hitler said. This line is contrasted with the previous one:" Not forgotten /or passed over at the proper time" in that the first line of the second stanza reflects the cold efficiency of the Nazis forces (Kendall,2007:584). All Jews ,whether man, woman or child, should have the same destiny. Such interpretations depict the sixth type of ambiguity in that invented interpretations are made in the mind of the reader.

6. Just so much Zyklon and leather, patented terror , so many routine cries.

(September Song, Stanza 2, L 3-4)

From a semantic viewpoint, the word "patented" is an ambiguous word because it has a double meaning. As an adjective, it always refers to obvious evident or innovative. As a verb, it means receiving a patent or exclusive rights to an invention. Conversely, The poet aims to describe this type of torture or terror used by the Nazis as patent that is used for the first time by them, not to be useful to people, but to kill people as on the Holocaust. Or someone gives them a reward as a patent to get ride of those who are undesirable to live. This is similar to the second type of ambiguity. Another lexical ambiguity in this line is the phrase "patented terror" which includes a multiple interpretation: it may refer to "Zyklon and leather" used for killing the Jews or this expression may refer to "many routine cries" which is a proof of that terror. This explanation belongs to the fourth type of ambiguity. Finally, "routine" is a semantically ambiguous word. Hill compares one's usual or habitual activity with the routine cries of the victims for help to save them from destiny or he compares one's usual or habitual activity with the routine cries of the

victims because of the high temperature on the holocaust. So the word "routine" that is used metaphorically presents the first type of ambiguity as "routine" gives various comparisons at the same time .

7.(I have made an elegy for myself it is true)
(September Song , L7)

Semantically speaking, the pronoun "it" refers to either the event itself or the poet's elegy. Besides, the word "true" is lexically an ambiguous word. It has two meanings: making an attempt to authenticate the poet's poem that is a true elegy; creating an admission that he has made it for himself (Kendall,2007:584). According to Empson's types, all are the second type of ambiguity when two or more alternative interpretations are used as one.

8. September fattens on vines. Roses
flake from the wall.

(September Song, Stanza 3, L1-2)

In these two lines ,there is a metaphor which embodies the first type of ambiguity. First of all , the poet compares "vines" which creep or climb as they quickly grow in this month with the number of the Jews when they were leading towards the Nazi's camp. Or he may compares "vines" fattening or growing in this month with the number of Jews who died in September. Furthermore, this interpretation suggests another semantic ambiguity which is a contradiction between life and death as stated in Empson's seventh type. Secondly, he compares the expression "roses flaking from the wall" with either the flaking of Jewish skin by the Nazis during the holocaust because of the high temperature resulted from Zyklon B or the peeling of the paint of walls during the holocaust("September Song: Geoffrey Hill - Summary and Critical Analysis,"n.d)..

9. the smoke of harmless fires drifts to my eyes.

(September Song, Stanza 3, L2-3)

The word "smoke" is semantically ambiguous since it is metaphorically used .It creates a tremendously delicate association between the smoke of autumn's garden bonfire and the smoke coming from the ovens of Auschwitz or Treblinka by the influence of Zyklon B gas used in Nazi gas chambers during the Holocaust. Hill may compare the smoke of autumn's garden bonfire in winter with the smoke of fires drifting to Hill's eyes and coming from the past to recall the Nazis' crime against the Jews (ibid, n.d.). Empson regards these comparisons as part of the first type which shows two comparisons simultaneously.

10. This is plenty. This is more than enough .

(September Song, Stanza 3, L4)

The word "plenty" is a semantic ambiguity which has two meanings: it may refer to "the smoke of harmless fires" or it may refer to the use of 'Zyklon B' leading to create "many routine cries" in the second stanza(ibid, n.d). Such interpretations are illustrated in Empson's fourth type since two disconnected ideas are combined into a single conceit.

11.Ovid in the Third Reich

(the title of the poem)

This phrase is used metaphorically in this context. Hill either compares between the two periods that were represented by two strong leaders, (i.e.), the Empror Augustus and Adlof Hitler. Or, Hill compares Augustus's victim, Ovid, to Hitler's victims in that the victims were punished for unclear reasons((King,2010,August 04:2). This ambiguity shows Empson's first type that a metaphor is interpreted in several ways at once.

12. I love my work and my children. God
Is distant, difficult. Things happen.
Too near the ancient troughs of blood
Innocence is no earthly weapon.

(Ovid in the Third Reich, Stanza 1, L.1-4)

Analysis of Ambiguity

From a semantic point of view, "Things happen" is ambiguous. It may refer to "I love my work and my children. God is distant, difficult", that is to say, comparing the persona's relationship with God to his relationship to his work and children which is stronger than the former. Or it may refer to "the ancient troughs of blood innocence". In these explanations, Empson embodies the fourth type of ambiguity: combining two disconnected ideas into a single conceit. The word "troughs" is a lexically ambiguous word, too. It has two meanings: Firstly, in ancient times, they were used for holding food and water for animals. Secondly, this is used for the innocent victims' blood that is provided to be drunk (Renner, 2005, Jan., 2). This shows the second type of ambiguity in that a single word sometimes has two different meanings used simultaneously in the context.

13. I have learned one thing: not to look down
so much upon the damned.

(Ovid in the Third Reich, Stanza 2, 1-2)

The term "look down" is a lexical ambiguity having two meanings: it refers to either the speaker as a camp-guard looks down from a sentry tower or the speaker as an eye-witness who cannot register the magnitude of the evil being perpetrated. In addition, the phrase "the damned" also has a multiple meaning: either the Jews who are tortured or to the Nazis who tortured them (King, 2010, August 04). The expressions "look down" and "the damned" belong to the second type.

14. They, in their sphere,
Harmonize strangely with the divine Love.

(Ovid in the Third Reich, Stanza 2, 2-4)

The word "sphere" is a lexical ambiguity. It is metaphorically used for the universe, recalling ancient Pythagorean, in which the contraries of the world are met in the music of the spheres and all seeming disharmony, is reconciled in accordance with the laws of nature. In other words, Hill may either compare the damned Nazis' sphere with the universe sphere or the Jews' sphere with the universe one. Accordingly, this makes the ambiguity of the first type. Furthermore, the damned's sphere is contrasted with the divine one in this context, (i.e.), evil and good. This strange harmony with divine love suggests that we must forgive. So the poet concludes "I, in mine, celebrate the love-choir" (Renner, 2005, Jan., 2). This type of ambiguity is the seventh one as it reflects a contrast by context.

Conclusion

The previous analysis has concluded that some word meanings are considered as a main source of many linguistic problems. By adopting Empson's types of ambiguity (1947), the analysis shows that the whole types of ambiguity are used in these poems. Several of them are frequently used in Hill's poems, (i.e.), the first and second types whereas others are less used as in the fifth and sixth types. This view does not decrease their importance as types of ambiguity. The analysis of ambiguity shows that the two poems score totally 25

examples out of total selected poems. The first poem scores the highest percentage at 18 occurrences (i.e., 72%) out of 25 examples. Next, the second poem comes in the second position at 7 occurrences (i.e., 28%). No examples of the fifth type has been recorded in these selected poems.(see table 1)

Table (1) : The Distribution of Empson's Types of Ambiguity in the Two Poems with the Results and Percentages Obtained from the Analysis.

Types of Ambiguity	September Song		Ovid in The Third Reich		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
The First Type	6	33.33	2	28.57	8	32
The Second Type	3	16.67	3	42.85	6	24
The Third Type	3	16.67	0	0	3	12
The Fourth Type	2	11.11	1	14.29	3	12
The Fifth Type	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Sixth Type	1	5.55	0	0	1	4
The Seventh Type	3	16.67	1	14.29	4	16
Total	18	100	7	100	25	100

Besides, Empson gives two types of ambiguity which are parts of figurative language leading to create ambiguity, specifically metaphor and simile. Hill uses ambiguous expressions in order to make his readers/ listeners think deeply to determine and decipher his intended meanings since he thinks that they are intelligence to understand his poetry. In short, Empson's types of ambiguity is applicable to Hill's poetic ambiguity.

References:

- Bloomfield, L.(1933). Language. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Crystal, D.(2003). A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. 5th Edition. Oxford: Blackwell publishers.
- Dissanayake, W. (2001, Aug. 9). Geoffrey Hill and the Art of Poetry. Sunday Observer. (Part 2, pp.1-7). Retrieved Sep. 5, 2011, from <http://www.Sundayobserver.lk/2001/pix/Print Page.asp?REF>.
- Dudley , A. Poetry analysis : September Song (2010,Aug. 7). Retrieved Sep. 5, 2013 from [http:// www.helium.com](http://www.helium.com) ›
- Empson, W.(1947). Seven Types of Ambiguity. England: Penguin.
- Kendall, T.(Edit.)(2007). The Oxford Handbook of British & Irish War Poetry. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

KING, R. August 04, 2010 12:00AM. Great poetry is no scandal. The Australian. Retrieved Sep. 5, 2013 from [http:// www.theaustralian.com.au/.../story-e6frgcjx-122590077](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/.../story-e6frgcjx-122590077).....

Knottenbelt, E. M.(1990). Passionate Intelligence: The Poetry of Geoffrey Hill. Amsterdam: Rodop.

Kreidler, Charles. W.(1998). Introducing English Semantics. Routledge: Routledge.

Malpas, Simon and Paul Wake(Edit.)(2006). The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory. London: Routledge.

Ogden, C. K. and I. A. Richards(1989). The Meaning of Meaning. Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Persoon, J. and Robert R. Watson(2009). The Facts on File Companion to British Poetry 1900 to the Present. New York : Facts on File.

Radford, A, M. Atkinson, D. Britain ,H. Clahsen and A. Spencer(2009). Linguistics: An Introduction. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rahimi, A.(2008). Roadmap to Meaning: Fine-tune Your Translation Skills. Tehran: Jungle.

Renner, C. (2005, Jan.). In Praise of Geoffrey Hill: Ovid in the Third Reick. In Dissent. Retrieved Sep.,5, 2013 from <http://www.webdelsol.com/LITARTS/In.../cooper17.htm>

Selden, R., Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker(2005). A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory. 5th edition. London: Longman.

September Song : Geoffrey Hill - Summary and Critical Analysis (n.d.). Retrieved Sep.5, 2013 from <http://www.bachelorandmaster.com/.../september-song.html>.

Su, S. Peng(Dec.1994, March). Lexical Ambiguity in Poetry. Linguistic Society of America,73, (1), pp. 201-202. I.V.S.L. Retrieved Mar.24,2013, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/416627>

Trask, R. L.(2007). Language and Linguistics: The Key Concepts. 2nd Edition. Edited by P. Stockwell. London: Routledge.

Ullmann, S.(1962). Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning. U. S. A.:Harper and Row.