



Visual and Auditory Images in Selected poems by Thomas Hardy and Wilfred Owen

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Abstract

This research paper deals with an important issue in literature, that is, the use of visual and auditory images in poetry. The poet is a skillful craftsman, he uses language as his raw material to manifest his immortal pieces of art.

This research covers the use of certain devices in poetry to show the visual and auditory images. It is divided into two sections with an introduction and a conclusion.

Section one deals with the auditory images in Wilfred Owen's poem 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' and auditory images in Thomas Hardy's poem 'The Voice' and the literary devices used, such as alliteration, assonance, tripling, etc..

Section two unfolds the function of the visual and auditory images conducive to certain perception. The two poems reflect a series of visual and auditory images related to man's life and experience. The conclusion sums up the findings of this study.

Key Words: Visual, Auditory, assonance, figures of speech.

المستخلص

يهدف هذا البحث الى تغطية احد المواضيع المهمة في الادب بصورة عامة والشعر على وجه الخصوص. حيث يتحور البحث حول استخدام الشعراء للصور السمعية والمرئية في شعرهم فغالباً ما يستخدم الشعراء اللغة كمادة اولية لاصالهم. فيصوغ الشعراء شعرهم بمهارة الحرفي للوصول الى المعنى المطلوب.

يقسم البحث الى محورين اساسيين مع مقدمة وخاتمة. يدرس البحث الوسائل الشعرية المستخدمة من قبل الشاعر للحصول على الصور السمعية والمرئية ومن هذه الوسائل التكرار للاحرف الصحيحة واستخدام السجع وغيرها من الانوات الشعرية المعروفة والتي لها علاقة بالموضوع.

اما المحور الاول فيتناول قصيدة الشاعر ولفرد اون وهو شاعر انكليزي يبين في قصيدته الموسومة (انشودة الشباب الهالك) النتائج المروعة للحرب من خلال مزج الصور السمعية والمرئية.

يناقش المحور الثاني للبحث قصيدة الكاتب توماس هاردي (الصوت) والتي يشدو فيها الشاعر بالحنين الى زوجته الراحلة من خلال استخدام مجموعة من الصور السمعية والمرئية. تلخص الخاتمة ماتم مناقشته في البحث.

Introduction

Literature, like any other art, is considered as an imitation of nature or reality. This idea is traced back to the 1st century B.C when Aristotle and Horace wrote about the relation between the two. Aristotle, for example wrote the following representations in this respect, comparing a poem to a painting. "As with pictures, some poems the closer you stand Are more pleasing, but some more remote should be scanned, Once appears best in shadows, and one in clear light Unafraid of a critic's discerning insight; And some please us once, some, an indefinite time." (Aristotle, cited in Con Davies & Finke 1989: 100 ,361-365)

Didoc Llorens described the relationship between language and imagery in these brief lines:

In Literature images are triggered off by language and through them, A poet recalls or evokes instances of physical, sensual perception. Language could therefore be considered a bridge linking the external World and the human mind.
(Llorens, p.2)

The use of imagery enables the writer to deliver his ideas with deeper insight and extensive understanding. This is done through the use of images that trigger the senses through the use of descriptive language and figures of speech. It is the eye of the mind that perceives different kinds of images. In his poems "Mowing" and "The scythe whispering to the ground" Robert Frost uses auditory images. Thus, figures of speech can aid the poet to present his desired image. In spite of the word 'imagery' being always used with reference to the sense of sight, it is also used with other human senses like: smell, hearing, and touch.

There are various kinds of images such as visual concerned with the sense of sight, auditory images which appeal to the sense of hearing, olfactory images appeal to the sense of smell, Gustatory images that appeal to the sense of taste, Tactile images appeal to the sense of touch. There are also kinesthetic imagery related to movement and organic related with sensations like fear or hunger and so on.

The most popular and regular images used are visual and auditory ones. Robert Frost's poem ' After Apple Picking' employs both visual and auditory images. Longstone Hughes presents the African American struggle for social equality and justice in a poem called " Or does it Explode?" Keats' "Ode on the Eve of St. Agnes" is a good example of the use of images such as " lancet

syrup" flavored with Sinnamon. Keats makes the reader smell the material the narrator gives to the heroine.

1. Section One: Auditory images

1.1 Section One: Auditory images in Owen's Poem: Images in general refer to the use of descriptive language that employs the senses of man. The poem 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' by Wilfred Owen is a clear example of the exploitation of the senses to reveal his personal experience. In this poem he manifests his horror and disgust of battlefield. Owen wrote in a very skillful way that he created both visual and sound effects of the battle field. To achieve this, he employed certain techniques, he is the master of imagery. Owen has created an immortal and vivid picture of the war of the trenches. This is only possible through the use of certain poetic devices. Owen in this poem used the sonnet form to show his aim and theme. The main reason behind writing such a poem is to reveal the futility of war and to stand against the mediated concept of scarifying one's self for the country. (Thorn, 2009.p,256)

Owen uses juxtaposition in the title of the poem. It is an anthem (a song of glory), but for the slaughter of young soldiers. The poem is a manifestation for the loss of young lives. The sonnet is a mixture between the Italian and the Shakespearean ingredient. The Shakespearean rhyme scheme (ababedcd effegg) is mixed with the octave and sestet of the Italian form. Owen addresses two different scenes that is of the front and home life. **What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?**

**Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries for them from prayers or bells,
Voice of mourning save the choirs,
The Shrill demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.**

(Owen,1965. p.44)

In the Octave Owen immediately draws the attention of the reader with use of the interrogative. The answer to the first question is included in the rest of the octave. Owen posed his question with clear anger; the poet believes that the tribute for the sacrifice being made is insufficient. While in the sestet the question is posed to emphasize the idea that humans cannot perceive the reason behind the sacrifice of young lives.

The octave represents the battlefield it is harsh, loud, and violent. the diction and sound qualities of the octave imitates the chaos and noise of the front. The octave supports a vivid auditory

image of what the soldiers in the battlefield feel and hear. Owen masters the image through multiple means. They are as follows:

1. The use of diction, the language that Owen uses is powerful. He employs lexis such as "*die, guns, rifles, and shells*". The diction prepares the mind for the gloomy and dangerous surroundings of the battle. The use of adjectives in the octave supports Owen's theme, for they reflect the noise and shrill of war. Modifiers such as "*monstrous, stuttering, shrill, demented, and wailing*" are employed. The atmosphere is that of an image inside hell. Owen believes that religion has no role to reduce or sooth the painful effects of war, for the "prayers, bells, choirs, and orisons" can support spiritual relief. The only orisons and prayers that deliver dead soldiers are the monstrous sound of the guns and rifles. Religious words should offer hope in times of despair. This is not the case to Owen. The mood of anger is prevailing throughout the poem.
2. The use of figures of speech is to manifest the auditory images in the poem. Owen brought the weapons of mass destruction to life through the use of personification. The guns are associated with anger. Stuttering and patter modifies the rifles. The shells are wailing and choirs. While the weapons are given life, the soldiers are deprived of their humanity by reducing them to cattle through the inevitability of their slaughter. This contrast emphasizes the poets theme of the futility of wars, for there is no satisfactory tribute is paid in return for the loss of lives.
The use of alliteration, (the repetition of the same sound in the initial position of a sequence of words). In the poem "Anthem for Doomed Youth" the sequence rifles rapid rattle. This harsh and loud alliteration mimic the sounds of the weapons in battlefield. The use of assonance, (a repetition of the same or similar vowel sounds, usually close together), reinforces the mood of pity over the loss of life. The use of sonorous sounds, (loud sounds impressive in effect), such as *Nor ... mourning*.
3. The use of juxtaposition, Owen uses this device to transcend his actual experience in war to the public. Dead soldiers receive no prayers or passing bells or orisons, the only sounds one can hear in the battlefield is the sound of guns, and shells. These weapons provide a kind of prayers or orisons they are wailing for the waste of young lives. Another use of juxtaposition lies in the title of the poem. the poem is an *anthem*, a song of glory for none but the slaughtered young soldiers who are destined to be killed brutally in wars.

1.2 Auditory images in Thomas Hardy's poem 'The Voice'

The poem is an account of a personal agony and nostalgia of the poet after the death of his wife. The poet poses a question and is looking for a real or an imaginary answer. The poem is a ballade composed of four quarters each rhyming (abab). The internal rhythm, a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed ones, is song-like to give hope to the poet that his wife is there waiting for him.

While the last stanza is harsh it draws the poet back to reality that his wife is dead and the sounds he hears is only the wind.

The poem seems to give the impression of a cycle of repeated events, this is done through the use of similar sounds and words in the final syllables. The first stanza ends in *call to me* and *all to me*; the second stanza ends in *then; listlessness* and *wistlessness*.

Hardy's use of assonance in the poem in words such as (*view* and *you*), (*knew* and *you*), (*oozing* and *through*), (*thorn* and *norword*) presents the speakers struggle to distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary. Other sound qualities in the poem is the use of sibilance (the recurrence of sounds such as /s/ and /sh/ which produce a hissing sound) this is made clear in the words (*listlessness* and *wistlessness*). While alliteration is used in the last stanza with words like (*faltering forward*) and (*thin, through, and thorn*) the repetition of the -f and th stimulates the sound of the wind and breeze in autumn. The surroundings prevent the poet from distinguishing between what is real and what is not.

2. Visual Images :

2.1 Visual images in Owen's "Anthem for Doomed youth":

Owen's insight of war has become vivid because of his ability to present real images visual and auditory. The Octave ends with the sound of the bugles calling from back home. The reader immediately shifts to a different atmosphere that of homes of dead soldiers. It is distinguished by its silence and despair, where visual images come to use. Owen describes the rituals back home. The tone is sad and melancholic. Families are suffering from pain and horror for losing their beloveds. The scene of mourning shows that families are speechless. Owen believes that the acts of the rituals back home, like the flowers and candles, are not as important as the real acts of sadness. They are shown in the faces of girls being so pale after losing their loved ones or even in the eyes of boys losing their brothers. Their minds are silent with grief and horror. The visual image of funerals with devastated families is the only tribute the soldiers receive for sacrificing their lives for the country.

2.2 Visual images in Hardy's 'The Voice':

Hardy created a visual image that lies between illusion and reality. He describes his beloved wife with her " *air-blue*" dress instead of "sky-blue" to remind us of the imaginary nature of his experience. The poem is built on the use of senses. The reader sees the woman through the visual image Hardy draws, the auditory image is there when the woman calls for the poet, and the breeze is felt through tactile images. The visual and auditory images in Hardy's poem are both mystical and ethereal at the final stanza. All the poet can hear is the wind and breeze of autumn. They bring him back to reality and to his sadness when he remembers that his wife is dead and what he is experiencing is only imaginary. Time has stopped for the poet when he imagined his wife hope

crept into his soul, but time moved again when he came back to his senses and everything disappeared.

Conclusion

Imagery is a useful device in literature, for it transcends an idea vividly and clearly. Images work on the mind by imitating the senses. They give the literary piece its beauty and value. We cannot imagine literature, in all its genres, without the use of images. Without them literature would be dull and boring.

Images could be of various kinds but the most common ones are those that appeal to the five senses. So, images enrich our understanding of certain beliefs or ideas and create a world of its own in the eye of the mind.

Owen's belief in the futility of war was only made clear when he used auditory images from the battlefield. The loud and shrill of the weapons receiving the dead souls instead of prayers or bells as it is usual for dead people being part of their right. The other image is a visual one we see the sadness on the faces of the families at home practicing their burial rituals.

The second example is different because of the uncertainty of the experience. More than one image is used, the poet built up his poem depending on the senses. We share the poet's imagination by seeing the woman with her air- blue dress, we hear her calling the poet and we tend to feel the wind and breeze blowing. Whether the experience is real or not we saw it, we heard it, and we felt it.

To conclude imagery is a very wide and complicated topic. It is indispensable and integral to all kinds of literature. It could be used in our daily language to enrich it with extra meanings and beauty.

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