

FAIL TO CHOOSE A WATER TAP: EXPLORING STANCE PROJECTION IN “I SHALL NOT RETURN THE BORROWED DUST...”Muazzma Batool¹, Joun Abbas², Samina Rana^{*3}**Original Article**

1. M. Phil English Researcher, Department of Linguistics & Literature, Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Dera Ismail Khan, KP, Pakistan
2. M. Phil English Researcher, Department of Linguistics & Literature, Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Dera Ismail Khan, KP, Pakistan
3. Associate Professor of English, Higher Education Department, Punjab, Pakistan
Corresponding author Email: saminarana09@gmail.com

Abstract

Literary works have become the unique mediums to express human expressions through the language which is used to construct the identities. Identity crises occupy a place of great importance as a response to their lost homes. When people find themselves dislocated from their previous past, their mental disturbance haunts them constantly, and they endeavor to re-locate themselves by recalling their nostalgic past. The aim of this study is to explore the “I shall not return the borrowed dust...” from the Formalism and Defamiliarization perspective to uncover the impact of the factors on the text helping to foreground the identity crises of the immigrants who, after got Pakistan in 1947 but fail to get identity. Using a qualitative research method, the study shows that how familiar images and symbols are becoming helpful to make the apparently familiar things strange/ defamiliar to exhibit the identity crises.

Keywords: Close reading, Defamiliarization, Formalism, Identity crises, Nostalgic, Qualitative research

Introduction

As social beings, humans have to communicate to live and to express themselves either verbally and non-verbally where the former deals with the spoken utterances while the latter includes either written language or gestures. This latter medium, Damono (2020, as cited in Purbo, Hidayat and Wahyuni, 2021) states, concerns with the literature to explore humans' emotions and feelings usually using language as its power and is conveyed in form of a story, poem etc. Similarly, Sumarni (2014) attempts to explain that talking about literary works clearly remind us that they are intended to pass on messages using language since literature is an art related to the emotional aspects of human beings. Piscayanti (2021) indicates that literature can take many forms but poetry is a detailed form of literature comprises of stanzas, lines, rhyme etc. which is also the object to be analyzed in this study.

Harris Khalique, a Pakistani born Muslim, living in Karachi, portrays the scenario after partition in “*I shall not return the borrowed dust...*” by depicting what happened when people come through the bloodshed, brutality, injustice and violence during the War of Independence (1947) and even lost their homes and near and dear ones back to India after the war ended. How the immigrants lost their identities, became diasporic and felt nostalgia after the War of Independence

(1947) when the people shifted from India to Pakistan after partition. Identity crises is a post-colonial concept propounded by Homi K. Bhabha (1994) to explicate the condition of those who lost their homes after migration for the quest of fetching their own identity but fail to do so and remain identity less due to the psychological makeup under the influence of the multiple culture printed in their minds. The deliverance of this atmosphere happens to the greatest cause why this poem has been selected to be explored.

Formalism theory, pioneered by Roman Jakobson (Bennet, 2003, as cited in Purbo, Hidayat and Wahyuni, 2021), is encouraged in this research paper as the principal tool to expose the purpose. The main focus of this theory is only on the words on page and the contents within the text such as the grammar, syntax, signs, literary tropes, etc. Formalists do not concern with the author's biographical, cultural or historical background rather their purpose is to bring attention only on the careful analysis of a literary text's craft, a careful scanning of the text and a detailed analysis for seeking to understand its patterns and structure that form the text, connect its parts to the whole and seeking for uses of language that contribute to the effect. Another formalism-based concept is used to examine the aim is defamiliarization, propounded by Victor Shklovsky (2007), which is a process to make the everyday and familiar things strange or unfamiliar in order to make the reader observe the world in a new and an unforeseen way, Seldon, Widdowson and Brooker (2005).

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is:

1. To explore the contribution of the poet's emotions as reflected in the apparent structure of the text (e.g. the use of small letters etc.)
2. To examine the formalist features while revealing the identity crises after War of Independence (1947)

Research Questions

This research paper will answer the following research questions:

1. How does the grief and regret-centered emotions of the poet contribute to make him identity less?
2. How effective are formalist features to reveal the implicit and latent ideas in the poem?

Literature Review

To achieve the objective of this study, the researchers use literary theory (formalism theory) as the tool to expose the strength of "*I shall not return the borrowed dust...*". Formalism emerged in Russia and flourished throughout 1920s. There are two groups in this movement: Moscow Linguistic Circle (1915) and OPOJAZ (1916). The leaders of the former group are Roman Jakobson and Petr Bogatyrev who later found the Prague Linguistic Circle (1926), while Viktor Shklovsky, Yury Tynyanov and Boris Eikhenbaum are the prominent figures in the latter group. The prominent formalist in the Russian Formalism is Linguist Roman Jakobson who takes literature as an "*organized violence committed on ordinary speech*" (Hollander, 1956, p. 148). It does not reflect the social reality, ideas etc., but a particular organization of language. Peter Steiner, Medvedev, Vladimir Propp and Boris Tomashevski also contributed in formalism approach.

In 1925, it was the dominant method. It is the reaction against imagism and symbolism which believe that writers create images to convey thoughts. The formalists concern with the

arrangement of images and explain that poets rearrange the images which are already there. They focus on how aesthetic effects are created by literary devices such as: metonymy, metaphor, simile, synecdoche etc. Their aim is to explore what is specifically literary in texts. They are interested only in close reading of individual texts and talk about what literary texts have in common. They give primary importance to what language itself is and to what it communicates has secondary importance. For them, literature concerns with “*the writer’s technical prowess and craft skills*” (Seldon, Widdowson and Brooker, 2005, p. 30).

Several studies have been conducted on formalism many times. Using formalism approach as a tool for the analysis, Azarias and Francisco (2019) are of the view that Ilokano literature still exposes universal truth particularly on universality of human characters and their culture by highlighting eight literary devices in the selected Ilokano poems. Working on the same theoretical framework, Ivaki, Rasoulnia and Hasanpoor (2018) analyzed one of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab’s poems and concluded (by highlighting nostalgic emotions, dialogues, soliloquies, imagery, affections, atmosphere etc.) that, under the oppression and tyranny done to the nation, it suffered a lot of difficulties and moved away from Iraq. Zolfaghari, Mousavi and Khosravi (2018) explained with the help of form and structure of the text that since the poet is imprisoned and has no freedom, therefore, the grief, sadness and regret are dominating the “*Arghavan*”.

Employing formalist criticism, Faniranand Adetuyi (2017) examined Wole Soyinka’s poem and foregrounded with the help of devices such as: imagery, influence of indigenous culture, sad tone, effective language use and rhetorical questions that he was an insightful human poet. Mahmood, Hussain and Ahmad (2016) comparatively examined Shelley’s “*Ozymandias*” using Formalism and Reader Response Theory and concluded that there is a deep relationship among the text, reader and language since every reader is free to interpret the text using language without keeping into account the social, cultural and historical context behind every happening in the text. Amini (2012) examined collection of nuanced linguistic changes of poetry comprises of a wide scope of components i.e. syllables, repetition, circumlocution etc. that how they either consciously or unconsciously reside in poet’s mind to create excellencies in speech and it has equally been shown that through proper understanding of the idea, a new reading can be attained.

Ayanita (2021) explored that Agha Shahid Ali is attempting to highlight, in his poetry, his own cultural trauma that how he lost his identity due to the migration from India to USA and how he feels exile and nostalgia. Deshmukh (2021) attempted to trace the difficulties of hybridity and identity crisis as conflict with conflicting religious, historical and socio-cultural backdrop in which diasporic society is located in. Javidshad and Nemati (2020), applying postcolonial aspects given by Homi K. Bhabha on an Australian aboriginal poet’s (Oodgeroo Noonuccal) selected poems, tried to indicate that he portrayed the whole scenario from the colonial period till their cultural amalgamation and from thence pointed to the end of otherness. Sajeesh (2019) comparatively analyzed the selected poems of Allen Curnow and Fleur Adcock and highlighted dislocation and exile.

Nazir and Sher (n.d.) examined the three selected poems by Sujata Bhatt applying Clifford’s Diasporic Consciousness as a theoretical framework and concluded the painful experiences of an Indian layman during and after the War of Independence (1947). In the backdrop of postcolonial theory, Sarma (2018) attempted to explain that Ezekiel explored the relation between home and identity and how home contributes in shaping one’s identity through his poetic corpus. Azam (2016) explored the ambivalence, hybridity, identity crises and duality in Walcott’s poetry using comparative study as a method for analysis. Meshram (n.d.) explored in a

study that Agha Shahid Ali being a diasporic triple exiled himself from Kashmir to India and then to USA throughout his life exposing himself to multiculturalism and multilingualism which shaped his life and instilled in him national consciousness, feelings of the memory of home, loss and the pain of being isolated to a new land and culture are also expressed in his poetry.

A number of studies have been done employing formalism as an approach to study and also a lot of work has been specified to explore the postcolonial aspects in poetry but none has explored the Harris Khalique's poem "*I shall not return the borrowed dust...*" from any perspective. This research paper is significant in a way to unfold the hidden meaning of the poem applying formalist approach and also to highlight identity crises and nostalgic feelings of the diasporas. This study will significantly contribute to the existing body of knowledge as it explores an unexplored text which will help other researchers in understanding the meanings of the poem.

Research Methodology

The methodology selected for this study is qualitative design, particularly employing close reading method to expose the elements and further investigate them which is a reading technique that utilizes personal engagement towards critical thinking and the text as its requisite (Valentine, 2016). Duarte et al. (2019), similarly, highlight that in close reading analysis the patterns and the structures existed within a text are focused. Therefore, this method is employed as a tool to investigate the purpose of the research paper.

Theoretical Framework

Cain (1999) explicates that formalism deals with the fact that the text is an autonomous entity without considering the biography of the author who created it. Formalism is the application of linguistics to the study of literature while the content is only "*motivation*" which is beyond a literary work. Formalists use the devices such as narrative techniques, syntax, imagery, rhythm, sound, meter, rhyme etc. in a defamiliar way. Some devices such as symbolism and metaphors are used in non-poetic language as well but not in the same intensity. Jakobson and Yuri Tynyanov (1928, as cited in Seldon, Widdowson and Brooker, 2005) call literature as a systematic science. Tynyanov (ibid) gives the concept of "*Literariness*" which is special use of language i.e. devices.

Shklovsky is a materialist and puts the definition of literature as "*the sum total of all stylistic devices employed in it*" (Seldon, Widdowson and Brooker, 2005, p. 31). He gives the concept of "*defamiliarization*" in his essay "*Art as Technique*" and proclaims that literature "*deformed*" our "*automatized*" perceptions by means of literary devices and differentiation and makes them strange because under the pressure of literary devices our ordinary language is twisted, turned on its head and intensified. The essence of literature is to make things strange because it is a sort of "*self-referential*" language i.e. a language which talks about itself. From Shklovsky, poetic language is different from practical language by means of the perception of its structure. Formalists' focus is how certain devices, which are used in a text, function within a text. He exclaimed that "*the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known*", Shklovsky (2007, p. 2).

The following are defamiliarization and formalism terms used as the tool to examine Harris Khalique's poem "*I shall not return the borrowed dust...*".

1. Title
2. Setting
3. Point of View
4. Language structures (which include: Stanza Division, Rhyme, Rhythm)
5. Figurative language which includes: Imagery and Symbolism)

6. Specific literary devices (which includes: Analogy, Simile, Metonymy and Synecdoche)

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This study conforms to Khaliq's desire to pass on to the readers the disastrous effects of partition 1947 on the immigrants who left their homes in India and migrated to Pakistan for getting their own homeland and pure identity but failed to do so and remained identityless like their ancestors till the end due to the effect of the hybrid culture e.g. the amalgamation of the Hindu, Punjabi, Bengali, Muslim, Sindhi and Mohajir cultures living together in subcontinent before partition 1947.

Title

No capitalization and three dots at the end of the title "*I shall not return the borrowed dust...*" indicate the identity crises of the immigrants who after the partition are running with the identity crises as they were before the partition. They are unable to be free from the grip of multiple identities and there is no limit that how long they will have to live with identity crises.

Setting

The whole scenario has been created at Lahore after the partition by flashing back to the horrors, brutality and bloodshed during the War of Independence (1947) and also by comparing the position of the immigrants with their forefathers in a sad tone to highlight the identity crises.

Point of View

First person point of view is selected to depict the whole picture of identity less immigrants.

Language Structures

There is no specific stanza division in the poem. There are either too long stanzas containing upto eight lines, or too short comprises of a single line. The whole poem is written in free verse as there is no particular rhyme scheme followed by the poet to give the readers rhythm. The poet deliberately does so in order to highlight both the violence and horror during the War of Independence (1947) and the identity crises of those who have apparently have their own home but still are identity less under the influence of the multiple cultures.

Figurative Language

Imagery

The poet intentionally uses the visual imagery in the poem such as: "*Tadpoles*", "*chairs*". "*pedestal fans*", "*cables*", "*dish antennae*", "*train stations*", "*sky*", "*stars*", "*seas*" and "*graves*" in order to show the horrible condition of Pakistan after the War of Independence (1947). It has been described that how everything was destructed with the gunpowder both in India and Pakistan. Also the condition of Pakistan is fore grounded when there was no sign of human beings rather the objects are there at a courtyard which is explicated in terms of the images like tadpoles, chairs, pedestal fans, train stations etc. representing the lack of humanity, the terror of the war, the fear of losing their near and dear ones, and the panic of losing their precious belongings behind.

Symbolism

The tangible symbols are employed here to portray the actual scenario after partition (1947) where: "*tears*" represent the culture; "*water tap*" refers to the identity; "*Hindu pani*" is for Hindu identity; "*Muslim pani*" is for Muslim identity; "*gunpowder*" symbolizes bloodshed and horror during the War of Independence (1947); "*monsoon evening*" represents the revival or rebirth or freedom or getting a separate homeland; "*darkness*" is the symbol of the loss of losing their near and dear

ones behind whereas “*light*” is used for the freedom; “*dead*” portrays the borrowed culture; “*valley of Sindh*” is the representation of a particular identity for the Muslims; “*Hindu tears*” are used for the Hindu culture, “*Muslim tears*” for the Muslim culture, “*Punjabi tears*” for the Punjabi culture, “*Bengali tears*” for the Bengali culture, “*Mohajir tears*” for the Mohajir culture and “*Sindhi tears*” symbolizes the Sindhi culture while the “*thirst*” is the symbol of fetching or longing for identity.

In the light of the above mentioned analysis, in terms of the symbolism used by Harris Khalique, it can be said that apparently the Muslims are free from the clutches of Hindu raj after the partition (1947) and they have their own homeland (Pakistan) where they can freely live with their own particular Pakistani identity but in actual this is not the case. Although they are free by separating themselves physically but still spiritually and psychologically they are not free. They are identity less still because of the amalgamation of multiple cultures (like Muslim, Hindu, Punjabi, Mohajir, Bengali and Sindhi cultures) which are imprinted in their minds and have become the part of their life.

Apparently they are free to live their lives by their own but in fact the horrors and fears of losing their precious belongings and their near and dear ones behind in India overcome their freedom. They are unable to forget and throw away the identities mingled with their own identity and they are failed to choose a particular identity (“*water tap*”). The separation of the identity in terms of the “*Hindu pani*” and the “*Muslim pani*” does not bring into light the fruit of their freedom. They are living in the “*valley of Sindh*” as their own homeland but still they have to adopt the multiple cultures in terms of “*Hindu tears*”, “*Muslim tears*”, “*Punjabi tears*”, “*Bengali tears*”, “*Mohajir tears*” and “*Sindhi tears*” to live a life and to quench their thirst.

Literary Devices

Metonymy

Two metonymic expressions are used in the poem such as: “*lexicon*” and “*taste buds*” which are the part of a culture to explicate that these two parts of the culture are not free from the clutches of those which were mingled once due to the togetherness in the Subcontinent. Although they are living in Pakistan separately but still they are not psychologically free as the culture of Avadh is present in lexicon and the taste buds feel the Kashmiri culture.

Synecdoche

The whole scenario of failing to “*choose a water tap*” is created to expose only the *identity* of the immigrants shifted from India to Pakistan after partition (1947). The depiction of bloodshed, violence, destruction during the War of Independence (1947) and becoming diasporic and feeling nostalgia after the partition indicate the identity crises only.

Simile

Simile is used in “*We are/Like our forebears were obsessed/ with Avadh and Kashmir.*” to explore the failure of the forefathers of the immigrants living in Pakistan after partition to choose a particular culture or identity for themselves as they were obsessed with the glorious nights of Avadh and Kashmir and were unable to forget this all.

Analogy

The extended comparison is being depicted by the writer to show how the people are failed to live their own lives without being amalgamated with others. Both the condition of the immigrants and their forefathers who used to live there at the Subcontinent is same since both are unable to choose a particular identity. The former, who are given even the chance to be away from clutches of multiple identities still remain identity less after getting their separate homeland (Pakistan)

whereas the latter submitted their identities to those who were in power as they were unable to prefer one thing over the other i.e. to get freedom.

Conclusion

The main aim of this research paper is to find out how “*I shall not return the borrowed dust...*” is created from a defamiliarization and formalism point of view. Thus, recounting the elements that are brought into being after the analysis process, formalism theory is encouraged as an analysis tool that examines the intrinsic elements of a text. With the help of the components using in both formalism and defamiliarization such as: title, point of view, tone, setting, language structures (stanza division, rhyme scheme and rhythm), figurative language (imagery and symbolism) and literary devices (metonymy, synecdoche, simile and analogy), it has been concluded that like their ancestors (who were under the influence of multiple cultures due to their togetherness while living in Subcontinent) who were identity less these immigrants (after getting independence from those cultures and having their own homeland) too are suffering from the same illness i.e. identity crises. Physically they are free but unfortunately, all the cultures have been imprinted in their minds, they are psychologically and spiritually under their influence and are unable to free themselves from these clutches and also fail to choose a water tap i.e. particular identity for them.

The researchers have delimited this study exploring the poem employing only Formalism as a research method to highlight the identity crises of the poet. This poem can also be examined foregrounding the cultural hybridity, diaspora and nostalgia of the poet. Also, the other research methodologies such as: deconstruction, modernism, post-modernism and post-colonialism can be applied to this poem.

References

- Amini, M. R. (2012). A Single-verse Analysis of Sa'di and Hafez for a Better Understanding of the Basic Concept of Formalist Approach. *Sher Pazhoi (Journal of BoostanAdab of Shiraz University)*, 4(1(11)), 21-40.
- Ayanita, B. (2021). Re-Mapping Culture and Identity: Diasporic Theorisation and Dislocation Strain in the Selected Poems of Agha Shahid Ali. *International Journal of English Learning & Teaching Skills*, 3(2), 2022-2032.
- Azam, A. S. M. I. (2016). Ambivalence in Derek Walcott's Poetry: A Comparative Study. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, 4(5), 341-351.
- Azarias, R. A., & Francisco, A. S. (2019). Formalist Criticism: Critique on Reynaldo A. Duque's Selected Ilokano Poems. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 2(6), 393-446.
- Bhabha, H.K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Cain, M. A. (1999). Problematizing Formalism: A Double-cross of Genre Boundaries. *College composition and communication*, 51(1), 89-95.
- Deshmukh, A. S. (2021). Fractured Identities: A Study of Diasporic Reality & Identity Crisis in Agha Shahid Ali's Poetry. *Smart Moves Journal IJELLH*, 9(7), 104-118.
- Duarte, A. M., Martins, C. B., Marques, M. C., & Mesquita, F. C. (2019). Deepening the analysis of literary texts among university students using close reading and writing: A pilot study. *Anglo Saxonica*, 17(1), 1-13.

- Faniran, A. O. and Adetuyi, C. A. (2017). The Textual Analysis of Wole Soyinka's Poem: A Formalist Approach. *Journal of Communication and Culture*, 8(1), 1-7.
- Hollander, John. "Organized Violence." *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1956, pp. 145–50. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4333646>. Accessed 25 Jun. 2022.
- Ivaki, A. N., Rasoulnia, A. & Hasanpoor, M. (2018). Formalist Criticism of "The Rain Song" (Enshoudah al-Mattar) by Badr Shakir al- Sayyab. *Journal of Arabic Language & Literature*, 11(2), 12-15.
- Javidshad, M. and Nemati, A. (2020). Hybridity in Australia: A Postcolonial Reading of Oodgeroo Noonuccal's Selected Poems. *Critical Literary Studies*, 11(1), 39-56.
- Khalique, H. (n.d.). I shall not return the borrowed dust.... Retrieved from <https://www.lyrikline.org/es/poemas/i-shall-not-return-borrowed-dust-2945>
- Mahmood, R., Hussain, Z., & Ahmad, Z. (2016). STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF PB SHELLY'S POEM OZYMANDIAS: FORMALISM VS READER RESPONSE THEORY. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(2), 83-92.
- Meshram, V. (n.d.). The Theme of Nostalgia and a Quest for Identity in the poems of Agha Shahid Ali. *Knowledge Resonance*, 365-367.
- Nazir, S. & Sher, M. (n.d.). Diasporic Consciousness: Family, History, Identity, and Language in Selected Poems by Sujata Bhatt. *City University Research Journal of Literature and Linguistics*, 3(1), 1-13.
- Piscayanti, K. S. (2021). Cultivating Mindful Learning in EFL Poetry Class: a Way to Make Creative and Productive Writers. *International Journal of Research in Education*, 1(1), 60–74.
- Purbo, Z., Hidayat, N. & Wahyuni, S. (2021). Defamiliarization: A Formalism Study on How Words Can Create Compelling Narrative in Edgar Allan Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart. *International Journal of Research in Education*, 2 (1), 1-8.
- Sajeesh, K. (2019). The Sense of Dislocation and Exile in the Selected Poems of Allen Curnow and Fleur Adcock. *Literary Herald*, 5(1), 189-196.
- Sarma, B. (2018). HOME AS 'IDENTITY': A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF NISSIM EZEKIEL'S POETRY. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, 6(1), 435-440.
- Seldon, R., Widdowson, P. & Brooker, P. (2005). *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. London: Longman.
- Shklovsky, V. (2007). Art as technique [1917]. *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, New York, 3, 774-784.
- Sumarni (2014). THE POWER OF LOVE ANALYSIS IN RACHEL WARD'S NOVEL "NUMBERS". *Implementation Science*, 39(1), 1–15.
- Valentine, C. J. (2016, June). *The Effect of Implementing Close Reading in A Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grade Public School Setting To Improve Student Achievement*. (Doctoral Dissertation, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, 2016). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/1314/>
- Zolfaghari, M., Mousavi, S. Z., & Khosravi, A. (2018). Formalistic analysis of the three domains of language, music and aesthetics in " Arghavan" a poem by Hushang Ebtehaj. *Literary Arts*, 3(24), 7-28.