A Literary Linguistic Perspective on Free Verse:
A Case Study of 'No Women in Poetry'

Sirisira Chokthawikit

Lecturer at Department of Thai and Eastern Languages, Faculty of Humanities,
Ramkhamhaeng University, Bangkok, Thailand
E-mail: extoy-muy-bien_expanyol@hotmail.com, sirisira@ru.ac.th

Abstract

This research paper aimed to examine the poeticity of the free verse entitled 'No Women in Poetry' by means of a concept of literary linguistics. Generally speaking, free verse is regarded as common, non-poetical work albeit possessing certain quality. So, I have intended to prove the status of this free verse which deviates from the Thai tradition of consideration of poetry conventionally based on the metric or the concrete pattern like formula of the work.

The results showed that, first, 'No Women in Poetry' contains several rhetoric devices as metric verse does. Surprisingly, this free verse has so many outstanding figures of speech at level of linguistic form such as anaphora and parallelism with semantic levels of irony and antithesis, to the level that it surpasses some metrical verses in this regard. The overall value of its content is impressive and convincing through a number of untraditional morale disguised in the stories of this verse. Placed on the spectrum of poeticity, 'No Women in Poetry' is at the least, yet this indicated that, although this free verse is much more liberal to the expression and presentation, it is still poetical. Second, the attitudes towards the poeticity of this free verse were various. While some scholars felt more offended with the presentation of this verse, others accepted it as a genuinely poetical oeuvre. Yet a group of people whose attitudes lied between them remained. In my view, such factors as sounds, shape, sense, and situation should be taken into account as far as poeticity is concerned.

Keywords: Figurative Language, Free verse, Literary linguistics, Metrical verse, Poeticity

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1. Introduction

The word 'Poeticity' is the quality or being of poetry, and the genre of free verse is ambiguous among Thais because we have metrical verse which is inherited from the past to the present for us. So I, as the research, desire to study the quality of Thai free verse that is 'No Women in Poetry' by Zakariya Amataya. The poetry was awarded S.E.A Write in 2010. There are three groups of acceptance, refusal and ignorance. The problem is the linguistic pattern which is contrast to the metrical verse in Thai poetic heritage. Free verse is 'a type of poetry that does not contain patterns of rhyme or meter. Free verse is considered an open form of poetry, as opposed to poetry written in structure or form, and tends to follow natural speech patterns and rhythms.' (Literary Devices, n.d.). A poetry is composed in structure and form with meter and rhyme called 'Metrical verse[1]'. Moreover, How to differentiate between metrical/rhyming verse, blank verse and free verse need the principle for evaluation. The cue is such a significant thing that is a concept of meter. 'Blank verse is written with strict poetic meter, usually in iambic pentameter, without rhyme at the end of the line. Free verse, on the other hand, contains no such adherence to a regular rhythm while also maintaining an absence of rhyme scheme.' (Literary Devices, n.d.)

(1) An example of metrical or rhyming verse: A kind of Nursery Rhymes and Nursery Song by James William Elliot

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the King's horses, And all the King's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again!

(2) An example of blank verse: Hamlet by William Shakespeare

But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must…..

(3) An example of free verse: Song of Myself by Walt Whitman

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

Above all, the issue of meter and rhyme affected the interest of Thai members such as lecturers, students, critics and gurus in the domain Thai poetry. The impact of the old definition of Thai poetry concealed the other possible meanings for defining poetry according to the context of

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[1] Tumtavitikul (2001: 29) defined the word 'metrical' based on phonetics which is about a number of syllable structure and determined rhyme called 'chanthalak-ฉันทลักษณ์' in Thai. This is conformed to 'Metre' which is the organized pattern of syllables which are stressed and unstressed are the rhythm, particularly are shown in poetry (but the pattern can occur in other text types) in form of the 'foot' or a group of rhythm of recurring sound unit in one line. (Nørgaard et al., 2010: 109)

society and development. However, Thai people has educated with the traditional poetry before receiving innovative wisdom in tertiary level. It is too late to change the belief. The proposes here are: (1) to examine the linguistic devices of the free verse titled 'No Women in Poetry', and (2) to judge the quality of the poetry in terms of poeticity.

2. Method

2.1 The Approach to analyzing I adapted a theory of Tung (1994)'s Four Spaces of Poetry. It consists of four components as follow:

1) Sound: all poetry has sounds either real sounds if we read or hear or alphabets representing sounds in written form.

2) Shape: all poetry has varieties of shapes that means the arrangement of alphabet, syllable, word, clause and symbol or special mark in any characteristics of visual forms.

3) Sense: all poetry has senses in its form. The sense is a sematic feature or any of meanings construing stories.

4) Situation: all poetry has its situation based on the presentations of happening events by users such as the protesters' leader read a poem in the sake of convincing the mass to support him.

The theory brought to study the Thai free verse in all four dimensions will be produced the results. Any of dimensions can be focused on by the poet and the reader may touch one of them or entire components.

2.2 The comprehension of form and meaning with regard to any contexts led into the cognitive process analyzed the content of the poetry in ways of figurative language concept. Especially, the rhetoric proved must be pertinent to the language which can be claimed one of the literary linguistic characteristics.

2.3 Description used in the style of presentation of the results is necessary for critics to clarify. Conclusion and further practice are demonstrated, lastly.

3. Results

3.1 Anaphora is the repetitive word at the front of each line of a poem. The redundant unit – most of them is a level of word help the readers pay attention to the text and have the first question that why the recursive word plays reoccurring role on their cognition which embodied though schema or thought outline.

(4) The example of a poem 'ความรู้-Knowledge'

หนังสือหนึ่งเล่ม
ต้องใช้อักษรกี่ล้านตัว
ต้องใช้ความรู้สึกกี่แสนความรู้สึก
ต้องใช้เหตุผลกี่หมื่นเหตุผล
ต้องค้นคว้ากี่พันชั่วโมง
ต้องกลั่นกรองกี่ร้อยรอบ

ต้องขบคิดกี่ค่ำคืน
ต้องใช้กระดาษกี่พันหน้า
ต้องตัดต้นไม้กี่ร้อยต้น
ต้องเสียหยาดเหงื่อกี่หยด
เพื่อบรรจุความว่างเปล่าของเรา

There is a book
How many letters written must be
How many emotions expressed must be
How many reasons given must be
How many hours spent must be
How many times scrutinized must be
How many nights thought must be
How many pages used must be
How many trees cut must be
How many drops of sweat broken out must be
For keeping our emptiness

This poem has relations between sound and shape in lines two to ten by means of anaphora 'ต้อง' equivalent to 'must' and the technique of repetition 'กี่' that is 'how many'. Especially in Thai, there are sets of word class of classifier namely in lines seven and ten, and measure word added to classifier in lines tree, four, five, six, eight and nine for specifying the characteristic or state of things. The measure words create the power of quantitative force in manners of hyperbole in contrast to the real things but it can be true.

The modal verb 'ต้อง' is obligatory to force the main verb be true. The readers realize the roles that were presented in the text. The form of interrogative clause is the technique of rhetoric question without readers' answers. And the answer is the last line 'เพื่อบรรจุความว่างเปล่าของเรา' (For keeping our emptiness). No matter what human beings do activities bothering or affecting the environmental entities is an emptiness implying the life is of mortality.

3.2 Parallelism is the structural unit, especially the clause or the whole stanza which is the prototype of other clauses or stanzas. It can draw the readers' attention to the text, and let them to consider the stereotype of the theme of events. The structure may be the springboard to reach the thought cultural way in general in in purpose of being open minded before judging the social effect from the text. It is important to hold the text together or make it coherent. (Jakobson, 1960; Levis-Strauss cited in Montgomery et al, 2007: 227; Montgomery et al, 2007: 227-228)

The linguistic form in the example (5) contains the agent who is the speaker 'I' is the central to all events. The locations as destinations must be seen in the first line. Next, the goals of action were told completely. The beneficiary or receiver the result is the pronoun 'you' with the social deixis of endearment 'My love'. (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014: 23-26)

(5) The example of a poem 'ที่รัก-My love'

ฉันไปตลาดมืดค้าอาวุธ
เพื่อซื้อนิวเคลียร์
มาฝากเธอ
ที่รัก

~

ฉันไปตลาดค้าไม้
เพื่อซื้อโลงศพ
มาฝากเธอ
ที่รัก

~

ฉันไปตลาดขายดอกไม้
เพื่อซื้อดอกไม้
มาฝากเธอ
ที่รัก

~

ฉันไปตลาดค้าอิสรภาพ
เพื่อซื้อสันติภาพ
มาฝากเธอ
ที่รัก

~

แต่มันไม่เคยมีขาย!

I went to war arms black market
For buying nuclear
Bringing to you
My love

~

I went to wood market
For buying coffin
Bringing to you
My love

~

I went to flower market
For buying flowers
Bringing to you
My love

~

I went to freedom market
For buying peace
Bringing to you
My love

~

But there is no peace to sell!

This poem aims to present the principle of contrast which construes all goods are sold except that the peace does not happen because no peace is in markets. The contrastive meaning in the last stanza is a climax and a conclusion of the poem. Everything is traded in markets but if you require any peace, you cannot buy it. It, thus, makes humans being be aware of the peace happened by humans' hands instead of monetary exchange in our world. The shape of the poem is unique by arrangement. Each line has its own meaning considered as each clause. The linguistic structures are easy to get it. We, as leaders, can include each of four lines as a unit of one thought or one event. Linguistically speaking, each one event is equivalent to one sentence. The repetitive sounds in parallelism give the concentration on the same action that is 'I went to any kind of markets to buy something for someone', however, the differences between the state of having or not having something to buy are contrastively distinguish and scrutinizing. In addition, the situation of using this poem is to demand for liberty and peace in politics and human rights. The address term 'ที่รัก - my love' is not definite to special persons but it is used in general, which reminds all men of souls as liberalism more than trading as materialism.

3.3 A combination of anaphor and parallelism is a linguistic tactic in order to support the emotion disguised in the content. Not only do the readers review the repetitive structure, but they are also aware of the form used for the meaning. The technique is the style of antithesis which

is linguistic form as a sentence with contrastive meaning. Almost of first fragments as preposition phrase of each line is luxury and powerful but the meaning in second fragments in each same line negated the absolute feature as prototype of each entity with regard to the ideology is appraised by majority.

(6) The example of a poem 'ผู้ถูกหลงลืม-Forgotten person'

ท่ามกลางอัญมณี ฉันคือก้อนหิน
ท่ามกลางเม็ดทราย ฉันคือฝุ่นดิน
ท่ามกลางบุตรธิดา ฉันคือผู้ที่ตายตั้งแต่ยังเด็ก
ท่ามกลางนักรบ ฉันคือผู้ขลาดหนีสงคราม

ท่ามกลางคำตอบ ฉันคือคำถาม
ท่ามกลางคู่รัก ฉันคือเพลิงริษยา
ท่ามกลางนักปราชญ์ ฉันคือคนโง่
ท่ามกลางกวี ฉันคือคนใบ้

ท่ามกลางพฤกษชาติ ฉันคือวัชพืช
ท่ามกลางบุปผชาติ ฉันคือดอกหญ้า
ท่ามกลางดวงดาว ฉันคือดาวตก
ท่ามกลางทรราช ฉันคือขบถ

ท่ามกลางชายฝั่ง ฉันคือหินโสโครก
ท่ามกลางมหาสมุทร ฉันคืออ่างน้ำตื้น
ท่ามกลางความงาม ฉันคือความอัปลักษณ์
ท่ามกลางนักบุญ ฉันคือคนบาป

ท่ามกลางบทเพลง ฉันคือบทสวดศพ
ท่ามกลางสัจธรรม ฉันคือความโกหกมดเท็จ
ท่ามกลางเสียงอึกทึก ฉันคือความเงียบ
ท่ามกลางวันวาร ฉันคือวันที่ยังมาไม่ถึง

ท่ามกลางศิลปะ ฉันคือกองขยะ

ท่ามกลางความศิวิไลซ์ ฉันคืออนารยธรรม

ท่ามกลางการสรรเสริญ ฉันคือการดูแคลน

ท่ามกลางประวัติศาสตร์ ฉันคือผู้ถูกหลงลืม

Among gems I am a rock
Among sand I am soil dust
Among children I am the one who died from childhood
Among warriors I am a coward escaping from war

Among answers I am questions
Among lovers I am a fire of jealousy
Among the wise people I am a fool
Among poets I am dumb

Among greenery of plants I am weed
Among the blossoms I am a grass flower
Among the stars I am a meteor
Among tyranny I am a revolt

Among the coast I am a reef
Among the ocean I am a shallow pool
Among beauty I am an ugliness
Among saints I am a sinner

Among all songs I am a funeral psalm.
Among the truth I am a lie
Among the clamor I am quiet
Among days I am a day not coming yet

Among the arts I am a garbage
Among civilization I am uncivilized
Among praise I am scorn
Among history I am forgotten

This poem has great parallelism in all lines in consistency starting at the preposition 'ท่ามกลาง - among' plus something in the first phrase; the second structure is a clause with the first singular person 'ฉัน-I' as a person deixis, which we know who the agent is; and the stative verb coming after the subject is one of the Thai 'verbs to be' that is 'คือ- be (is, am used with 'I', are, was, were)'. Interestingly, something were said in the first phrases are most of good things or generic term but the second phrases as clauses have most of worsen or invaluable meaning in the subset of the words in the first phrases, in other words, the objects in the second phrases are similar or related negative manners to the ones in the first phrases. The senses of the poem are several meaning but the anti-thesis of the contents makes separate extremes but it keeps still

harmonizing the proper co-occurrence of sematic communication. No matter what happens in the first phrase, the representatives of the objects in the second phrases are properly contrastive.

3.4 Rhetoric Question is the form of interrogative which is the way to inviting the readers' minds interpreting the text in contrast to the question. The character or the poet has kept the answer already. Also, the readers are still keeping the same answer.

(7) The example of a poem 'กุหลาบควรจะอยู่ ณ ที่ใด-Where roses should be'

ช่อดอกไม้ที่ยังไม่ได้จัดแต่ง
แจกันใบโตบนโต๊ะไม้ยาวตัวเขื่อง
ดอกไม้หลากสีสันกำจายกลิ่น
ฟุ้งอบอวลในมวลอากาศธาตุ
ผึ้งและผีเสื้อหลายตัวบินโฉบเฉี่ยว
แต่ฉันคิดไม่ออกว่า
กุหลาบควรจะอยู่ ณ ที่ใด
คิดจะจัดดอกไม้แบบเซน
ฉันโง่ ฉันทึ่มและฉันไม่เข้าใจ
ครั้นจะจัดแบบตะวันตกคลาสสิค
บาโรก เรอเนสซ็องส์ เขาไปกันใหญ่
กุหลาบควรจะอยู่ ณ ที่ใดหรือ
ฉันทุบแจกัน

Bouquet not yet arranged
Large vases on a long wooden table
Colorful flowers smell
Influx in the elemental air
Many bees and butterflies fly gracefully
But I cannot think of that
Where should the roses be?
Be thinking of Zen styled flower arrangement
I am silly, I am gaga and I do not understand
Where the classic Western style will be
(Or) Baroque, Renaissance, how stupid these
Where should the roses be?
I smash the vase

This poem is powerful and charming. The concept of the flower arrangement affected is not suitable for some thinkers. They believe 'nature is nature by nature' the plants deserve to grow along with the nature of origins such as on earth, in forests etc. but not being in any vases. A character in the poem decided to break down a vase. The phenomena is symbol for letting it go naturally. The morality is 'all men do not violate nature' which is leading into the acceptance of the truth and life's circle. Ironically speaking, three same questions 'Where should the roses be?' including the title of this poem are bringing a way to finding out an exit of this query, and the last line as a linguistic structure in a sentence is the answer for the place of roses. The strategy of rhetoric question in lines seven and twelve encourages readers give their answers in the minds but the poet answered as well. The answers of all men are the same but another question is so reasonably happening that we must be aware of taking actions than just knowing or getting it. The exit of real world is 'I smash the vase'.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The poetry in form of free verse entitled 'No Women in Poetry' is rich of tropes. The first figurative device found the most is 'anaphora' in concordance with the other one which is similar in level of clause is the technique parallelism. They are the linguistic forms which Jakobson (1960) claimed the foregrounding or making a pattern salient, weird and untraditional. The language play in meaning presented in the first row is 'contrast/antithesis'. It is usually occurred with the figure of rhetoric question.

It is obviously splendid that the poetry has more capable of demonstrating and maintaining the profoundness of contents reflecting philosophy in life. Although the free verse 'No Women in Poetry' does not follow the traditional steps for writing in form of exactly salient metrical pattern, it is embedded rhythmically by any of language arts such as rhythm in clauses, anaphora, repetition, metaphor, contrast, etc. I, as a reader, who have my soul to touch it with devices in literary linguistics can judge by myself the free verse in confusion by many groups of critics as one of poetry in accordance with the principle of poeticity.

I am so appreciate to express my academic here that you may receive some knowledge from my work. If we have more perspective with regard to any theories, we can demonstrate new results. However, the analysis is managed creatively to produce the integrated work among Thai academic field.

Acknowledgments

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