# An Analysis of Linguistics-Based Approaches to the Classification of Literary Techniques: An Interdisciplinary Perspective

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## Abstract

Rhetorical figures correspond to what is now called "foregrounding" in linguistic studies. Extra-regularity and deviation are considered types of foregrounding. Based on the concept, and considering the distinctions, Haghshenas makes among literary modes. Safavi, in his book From Linguistics to Literature, separates verse-creating and poetry-creating tools, proposing "the rhetoric of verse" (Badi'-e Nazm), "the rhetoric of poetry" (Badi'-e She'r), and "the rhetoric of prose" (Badi'-e Nasr).The purpose of this study is to examine whether a clear distinction can be made between the tools of verse-creating and poetry-creating, meaning that we believe techniques based on extra-regularity, which operate outside of language, have no role in creating poetry, whereas techniques that operate within language always transform it into poetry. Drawing on Russian Formalism and employing a documentary method with an analytical approach, this study investigates this possibility. The arguments presented demonstrate that, since the concept of form in Formalism is an interconnected structure, separating word and meaning is inherently unfeasible. Moreover, poetry is a unified whole, and the role of each element becomes meaningful only in relation to other textual components. Thus, figures of word can also contribute to a text's poetic quality, and dividing rhetorical figures into "the rhetoric of verse" (Badi'-e Nazm), "the rhetoric of poetry" (Badi'-e She'r), and "the rhetoric of prose" (Badi'-e Nasr) does not appear logically justified. Although it is

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very helpful and valuable in understanding the structure of rhetorical devices and grasping the connection between language and literature.

**Keywords:** Russian formalism, Foregrounding, the rhetoric of poetry, the rhetoric of verse, the rhetoric of prose, literary modes, Extra-regularity, deviation.

## 1. Introduction and statement of the problem

Literary scholars, linguists, and literary critics have always sought to draw a clear distinction between language and literature. In modern linguistics and literary criticism, there have also been efforts to explain the literariness of a text. At the beginning of twentieth century, Russian formalists paid attention to the concepts proposed by Saussure in structuralist linguistics. In their search for the elements that define the literariness of a text, they first examined the differences between poetic language and ordinary language, arriving at the important conclusion that the role of art is not simply to recognize objects, but to see them anew. Through this approach, the principle of "defamiliarization" emerged as a key feature of literary works, whereby familiar concepts are presented in a different and unfamiliar way, thus creating beauty.

In *The Music of Poetry*, Shafiei-Kadkani adopts a Formalist perspective, describing poetry as an event in language (Shafiei-Kadkani,2005, p.3). Dr. Haghshenas considers this definition an intuitive inference, the essence of which can be unraveled through modern linguistics. In two articles—published in 1992 and 2004 under the titles "Verse, Prose, and Poetry: Three Literary Modes" and "Three Faces of One Art (Verse, Prose, and Poetry in Literature)"—both featured in the collected papers of Allamah Tabatabai's University and the Journal of Literary Studies and Research, he distinguishes between poetry, verse, and prose, arguing that poetry and verse can be differentiated based on the dichotomy of external form (surface structure) and internal form (deep structure), while prose occupies an intermediate position, balancing the two.

According to Dr. Safavi, these two articles represent the first linguistic study aimed at identifying modes of literary language and clearly distinguishing between the three literary modes of prose, verse, and poetry in Persian literature — a distinction that had not been made before. Following that in his works "*From Linguistics to Literature*" consists of two volumes: one dedicated to verse and the other to poetry[1].", he attempts to differentiate between the figures used in ordered

verse, prose, and poetry and advocates for the concepts of "the rhetoric of ordered verse" (badi'-e nazm), "the rhetoric of poetry" (badi'-e she'r), and "the rhetoric of prose" (badi'-e nasr). He striving to classify various rhetorical figures according to their role and function in creating different literary modes. (Safavi, 2004a, p. 57) As mentioned earlier, this classification is based on the premise of three literary genres – poetry, ordered verse, and prose – defined according to the external and internal dimensions of language.

The present study aims to investigate this possibility and answer the fundamental question: Can we truly establish a clear distinction between poetic and versification figures? That is to say, can we maintain that techniques based on extra-regularity, which operate on the external aspects of language, play no role in poetic creation, while those based on internal dimensions invariably transform language into poetry? This article employs Russian Formalist theory, utilizing both documentary research methods and analytical approaches to explore this possibility.

## 2. Literature Review

An issue raised in contemporary studies on the critique of rhetorical figures (badi'), which is relevant to the current research, is the classification of rhetorical figures into verbal (lafzi) and semantic (ma'nawi) categories. In recent research, some have questioned the accuracy of this classification.

"In his book 'Badi'-e Now' (Modern Rhetoric), Mahdi Mohabbati argues that this classification lacks logical foundation, methodological rigor, and substantive meaning. Rather, he considers it to be essentially an aesthetic and impressionistic division based on conventional norms and customary practices in rhetorical tradition.". "In his view, regardless of how we define them, some verbal figures may fall within the domain of semantic figures, and certain semantic figures could be considered part of verbal figures[2]" (Mohabbati, 2002, p. 60).

The author has contented himself with this brief mention and has not elaborated on the specific instances in question

The book also mentions Dr. Safavi's proposed classification system for rhetorical figures. While acknowledging that his approach represents one of the pioneering efforts to systematize the study of verbal artistry in Persian and is praiseworthy in this regard, it nevertheless raises some brief criticisms against it. The criticisms

raised against this proposed classification include: lack of precision, unnecessarily complex terminology that fails to enhance meaningful understanding, the Westernized foundations of the classification system that remain foreign to Persian literary traditions, and its failure to adapt properly to native contexts (Ibid. pp. 209-211). Elsewhere, it has also been considered as part of the problematic nature of dividing rhetorical figures into verbal (lafzi) and semantic (ma'nawi) categories, viewing it instead as a kind of alternative approach. The proponents argue that since the essence of artistic expression is unified across all three realms [of ordrerd verse, poetry, and prose], such distinction is unnecessary (Ibid.p. 60).

The article " Incorrect Categorization of Figurative Tropes into Verbal and Semantic" by Gordafarin Mohammadi and Akbar Sayadkoh published in the Journal of Grammatical and Rhetorical Studies, examines the inadequacy of the definitions of "figures of sound" and " figures of meaning," foregrounding their lack of clear criteria as well as the incorrectness of this division. In addition to discussing the differences between Formal Rhetorical Figures in this regard, the authors analyze certain verbal and Semantic techniques in terms of their interference with meaning and wording (Mohammadi and Sayadkoh, 2024, pp. 190–203). Although Dr. Safavi's classification system was not the primary focus of this article, it can nevertheless be indirectly related to his framework to some extent.

No specific research has been conducted to date critically examining Dr. Haghshenas 's studies on literary modes nor Dr. Safavi's classification system of rhetorical figures, despite the scholarly significance of these works. Given the importance of this subject, further academic investigation is imperative

## 3. Discussion and review

### 3.1 A look at the classifications of rhetorical figures

From the inception of rhetorical studies in Islamic civilization until the era of Sakkākī (d. 626 AH/1229 CE), Arabic treatises on rhetoric documented various classifications of rhetorical figures (badīʿ), which encompassed figurative language (bayān) as well. such as Abdallah ibn al-Mu'tazz, Qudamat ibn Ja'far, Abu Hilal al-Askari, Ibn-rashiq-qayrawani and Ibn Sinan Khafaji, proposed different classifications of rhetorical innovations. This intellectual tradition crystallized in the 5th/11th century when Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani seminal works Dalāʾil al-Iʿjāz and Asrār al-Balāgha systematically theorized the disciplines of semantics (ʿilm maʿānī)

and figurative language (ʿilm bayān). Building on this foundation, Sakkākī's *Miftāḥ al-ʿUlūm* later organized rhetorical figures as verbal and semantic subcategories within the broader framework of stylistic embellishments "maḥāsin al-kalām" (Al-Sakkākī, n.d, p.224). Subsequently, Badr al-Dīn Ibn Mālik treated these techniques as a distinct field of study and referred to them as Badi ʿ(Zif, 2004, p. 430). Accordingly, rhetorical innovations were classified into verbal and Semantic figures.

The development of Persian rhetorical treatises was profoundly influenced by Arabic literary traditions. The seminal work in this field is Rādūyānī's Tarjumān al-Balāgha, composed in the late 5th/11th century. As Rādūyānī explicitly states, his primary reference was Abū al-Ḥasan Naṣr ibn Ḥasan al-Marghīnānī's Arabic treatise Maḥāsin al-Kalām - a foundational text by this influential Iranian rhetorician (Rādūyānī, 1983, p. 2). Written in Arabic, this work also incorporates discussions of figurative language (ʿilm bayān) and served as the secondary source for Ḥadāʾiq al-Siḥr. Among the foundational Persian rhetorical treatises—including Ḥadaqq al-Siḥr of Waṭwāṭ, al-Muʿjam of Shams-i Qays, Miʿyār-i Jamālī of Shams Fakhrī, Daqāʾiq al-Shiʿr of Tāj al- Ḥalāwī, Ḥaqāʾiq al-Ḥadāʾiq of Sharaf al-Dīn Rāmī', and Badāʾiʿ al-Afkār of Wāʿiẓ Kāshifī —none of the authors proposed systematic classifications of rhetorical figures (badīʿ) (Kārdgar, 2007, p. 148).

From the time of the compilation of Badāʾiʿ al-Ṣanāʾiʿ (898 AH), a new phase of Arabic influence—particularly from works such as *Miftah al-Ulum* by Sakkaki, *Talkhis al-Miftah* and al-Īḍāḥ of Khatib Qazvini, and Mukhtasar and Mutawwal of Taftāzānī —began in Persian rhetorical literature. This influence continued through the Qajar period, culminating with Madarij al-Balagha by Riżāqulī Khān Hidāyat (ibid, p. 149). During this period, Mazandarani, in his Anwār al-Balāghah, classified the rhetorical figures into three groups: verbal, Semantic, and written. He asserted that Semantic figures could influence verbal ones, but the beauty of verbal techniques lies solely in the words themselves (Mazandarani, 1997, p. 319). Similarly, in Ravish-i Goftār, rhetorical figures are divided into verbal, Semantic, and combined (verbal- Semantic) categories (Zahedi, 1967: 30). Since then, other classifications have emerged, most of which adhere to the basic division between verbal and Semantic techniques. Occasionally, alternative groupings have been proposed, such as those suggested in *figures of speech, a new outline*. In some works, like Abdaʿ al-Badāʾiʿ of Shams al- ʿUlamāʾ Gurkānī, rhetorical figures are arranged alphabetically. Additionally, there are more recent classifications that fall outside the scope of our current discussion and will not be addressed here.

The classification of the rhetoric of poetry, the rhetoric of verse, and the rhetoric of prose (Safavi, 2004a, p. 8) is based on an idea derived from Dr. Haghshenas's articles on literary modes and rooted in the principles of structural linguistics. It continues the line of thought developed by Leech in his explanation of foregrounding. Before Dr. Safavi, a similar view—with significant differences— appeared in Naqd al-She'r by Zakaei Bayzaei. However, Bayzaei's classification was formed independently of linguistic foundations and relied solely on the constituent elements of poetry.

In Naqd al-She'r, rhetorical figures are classified into two categories: first, into verbal and Semantic types, and then further based on their appropriateness to the context of speech and modes of literary language[3]. In Bayzaei's work, "poetry" and "verse" are considered synonymous. Additionally, the topics of expression—namely simile, metaphor, and irony—are regarded as part of the creative semantic rhetorical figures, used jointly in both poetry and prose (Zakaei Bayzaei, 1985, p. 113–115).

### 3.2 The essence of verse and the essence of poetry

The question "Where does literature begin and where does language end?" is a fundamental one that, according to Dr. Haghshenas, can be answered through linguistics. In her view, poetry relies on the external structure of language, with its purpose centered on the form of language and all its non-semantic features, such as meter, rhyme, puns, and so forth. Therefore, poetry can also be used to express non-literary material, as it is semantically similar to ordinary language, although it differs from it in terms of form—much like Alfiyyah of ibn Mālik[4], where Arabic grammar is presented in poetic form. In contrast, true poetry is based on the inner workings of language, often examined at the level of meaning. Poetry initiates literary creation by manipulating meaning; thus, it cannot function as ordinary language, because it disrupts the conventional system of communication. Prose, on the other hand, is positioned between the internal and external structures, maintaining a sense of moderation (Haghshenas, 1992, p. 110). By proposing two literary essences—"the essence of verse" and "the essence of poetry"—he constructs a triangular model with poetry, verse, and prose at its vertices. The position of any literary work within this triangle is determined by its degree of reliance on these two essences (Ibid, p. 113).

The background of this opinion dates back to ancient Greece and Rome. Aristotle was the first to write a treatise on poetry[5], which later became the foundation for all subsequent discussions in both the East and Europe. As evident

from his writings, he contrasted poetry with prose, referring to poetry as rhythmic speech, and it is clear that, in his view, poetry is inseparable from rhythm. He sought the essence of poetry in its meaning and content, and did not regard its form—bound by meter and other rhythmic rules—as part of its essence. Therefore, he believed that many poetic utterances whose subject matter is, for example, medicine or the natural sciences, should not be considered true poetry. Nevertheless, since ancient times, the concept of poetry has been closely associated with meter. Islamic scholars also considered meter an essential element in defining poetry, even though they emphasized its imaginative nature, believing that meter inherently demands the use of imagination. Literary figures, including Shams Qais, have used the terms "verse" and "poetry" interchangeably (Natel-Khanlari, 1988, pp. 13–14).

Dr. Shafiei-Kadkani also does not separate verse from poetry. In his view, if we accept that the boundary between poetry and non-poetry lies in the "resurrection of words," this resurrection carries different meanings for various individuals and social classes (Shafiei-Kadkani, 2002, p. 6). Poetry, according to him, begins with meter and rhyme and ultimately aspires to reach the unattainable heights found in the works of Rūmī and Ḥāfiẓ (Shafiei-Kadkani, 2013, p. 371, quoted in Mohammadi and Eslami, 2018, p. 209).

Similarly, Jakobson does not draw a strict line between poetry and rhyme, noting that "when discussing poetry, he refers to balances such as meter, rhythm, and rhyme" (Safavi, 2004b, p.99). The most serious linguistic effort to distinguish between poetry and prose is found in an article by Dr. Haghshenas (Mohammadi and Eslami, 2018, p. 209).

## 3.3 foregrounding

In their exploration of the factors constituting a literary text, formalists identified two types of linguistic processes: automatization and foregrounding. Automatization refers to the use of language without drawing attention, while foregrounding involves deviation from linguistic norms to capture the reader's attention. According to Leech, foregrounding can occur in two ways: through deviation from the rules of automatized language (rule reduction) or through the addition of new rules to it (rule addition) which are respectively called deviation and extra-regularity (Safavi, 2004b, pp 36–40).

Dr. Safavi, while stating that there are no absolute boundaries between literary modes and that every literary work can be analyzed along a continuum of these three

modes (Safavi, 2004a, p.57), categorizes rhetorical figures into three types using foregrounding principles: "the rhetoric of verse" (badi'-e nazm), "the rhetoric of poetry" (badi'-e she'r), and "the rhetoric of prose" (badi'-e nasr). In this classification, meter, rhyme, and various verbal rhetorical figures such as alliteration, puns, repetition, and phonetic figures are referred to as "the rhetoric of verse" (badi'-e nazm) associated with the process of extra-regularity.

Extra-regularity.is based on balance and can be examined at three levels: phonetic, lexical, and syntactic[6]. Some Semantic rhetorical figures and figurative language (bayān) have also been grouped under a field known as "the rhetoric of poetry," " (badi'-e she'r), resulting from deviation (rule reduction) (Safavi, 2004b, p.88). In Safavi's view, the field known as "the science of meaning" (ma'āni) is neither related to the creation of poetry nor to the creation of verse; rather, it is a collection of grammatical practices tied to the art of rhetoric (Ibid. p.114). Therefore, it does not fall within the category of the rhetoric of poetry.

According to Leech, there are several types of deviation (reductionism). Deviations operate on the content of language, creating meanings that differ from the automatic or conventional meanings. Among the eight types of linguistic deviation (phonetic, syntactic, dialectal, temporal [archaism], stylistic, orthographic, lexical, and semantic), Dr. Safavi considers temporal, stylistic, orthographic, lexical, and particularly semantic deviations as poetic devices, and maintains that stylistic deviation is specifically employed in poetic prose (Ibid. p.86).

### 3.4 Literary language is one of the roles of language or an independent system

Dr. Haghshenas also argues that literature is an independent semiotic system, consisting of semantic and motivated signs distinct from the language system. This implies that the goal of literature is not to establish communication or convey a message, but rather to create contexts and situations where the audience, by engaging with these situations, produces a message similar to that of the creator (Haghshenas, 1992, p.106). Some Western structuralists, such as Greimas, Barthes, and Todorov, also consider literature as an independent semiotic system. However, Jakobson, in his "Theory of Communication," published in 1960 in the article "Linguistics and Poetics," clarifies the specific role of the aesthetic message. He believes that language should be examined in terms of its various functions, with literary language being one of these functions. Therefore, he does not view poetry and literature as a separate system from the language system, but rather as the poetic

function of language (Sajudi, 2005, p.96). Accordingly, the communicative role of poetry and its messaging remains, though it exists on the margins. In fact, poetry still conveys a message. Implicit and implied meanings, or the "meaning of meaning" in poetry, are present to create a greater impact and convey emotions and feelings, which in itself constitutes a communicative function.

It is noteworthy that in our literary tradition, there are two major definitions of poetry. The first definition views poetry as "thoughtful speech, semantically ordered, rhythmic, repetitive, and equal, with the last letters being similar to each other" (Shams-e Qays, 1994, p. 188). The purpose of this Semantic order is to distinguish poetry from meaningless, disorderly speech. The second definition, however, emphasizes emotional and sensual passivity, considering poetry as imaginative speech that requires passivity, regardless of whether it demands affirmation or whether it has a clear meaning. A large portion of Persian poetry fits the first definition, while many prose poems fall outside this scope (Pournamdarian, 2002, p.27).

Many classical poems contain thoughtful meaning. What occurs in the explanation and interpretation of these poems is the "meaning of meaning," a concept that also applies to language. Although the poems in the second category may lack a specific meaning, those who understand them can connect with the poem and receive a message. Nimā Yushij believes that poetry is understood by those who are poets themselves. This interpretation seems to hold true for the second definition. However, in either case, there is a message, which is conveyed through language.

### 3.5 Definition of poetry from the perspective of formalism

Dr. Shafiei-Kadkani, in line with the views of Russian formalists, defines poetry as follows: Poetry is an event that occurs in language, such that the reader perceives a distinction between the language of poetry and ordinary language. In ordinary language, words are "dead" and do not attract attention in any way. However, in poetry, these "dead" words come to life through a brief exchange. If we accept, as Shklovsky suggested, that the boundary between poetry and non-poetry lies in the resurrection of words, then many factors and forms can contribute to this resurrection. The concept of word resurrection carries different meanings for different individuals, classes, and cultures (see Shafiei-Kadkani, 2002, p. 3–6).

Accordingly, part of this resurrection may be related to the formal aspects of language, that is, features related to sound and the surface structure of language; such as meter, rhyme, parallelism (saj')[7], puns, assonance, and generally what is

called as "verbal music." Dr. Shafiei argues that although imagination has been separated from meter, the connection between poetry and music is strong and cannot be ignored[8]. Meter in poetry is not merely decorative; it is a natural phenomenon that serves to express emotions, and it cannot be disregarded under any circumstances. Meter is an intrinsic virtue of poetry, and from the poet's perspective, it is neither optional nor discretionary. Rather, the poet is naturally inspired by the subject matter itself, and when the subject comes to mind, the meter naturally follows. This reveals the secret behind the beauty of many memorable poems, compared to other poems of the same meter (ibid.pp. 48 and 50). In other words, the role of meter in different poems varies; sometimes it is the sole factor in creating verse, and at other times, it harmonizes with the meaning.

### 3.6 The two-way relationship between word and meaning

If we accept the theory of stylistic scholars, we must acknowledge that "one meaning" can only be expressed through "one form." A slight change in the arrangement of words or in the use of synonyms and quasi-synonyms in a sentence alters the meaning, and the meaning we intended is no longer conveyed. (Ibid. p.40) In other words, any change in form leads to a change in meaning, and verbal rhetorical figures that alter the form are no exception to this rule and can interfere with meaning.

In her book *Truth and Beauty*, Babak Ahmadi quotes Carl Theodor Dreyer, one of the greatest artists of the 20th century, as saying, " Where words fail, music begins." In other words, whenever we are unable to express or convey a reality, event, or human experience using linguistic signs and logical or scientific conceptualization, we turn to art. Art can achieve something that no other medium can, ultimately benefiting from the expressive nature of language (Ahmadi, 1995, p 1). Therefore, verbal music can also have expressive aspects, and disregarding them as irrelevant to meaning is inaccurate in many cases.

Dr. Safavi herself writes about Phonetic Patterning:

"extra-regularity affects the surface structure of language and does not interfere with meaning. For this reason, the result of extra-regularity is nothing more than a musical form of automatic language." "Therefore, repetitions that interfere with meaning, such as what is called the art of 'alliteration' in the tradition of literary studies, should not simply be classified as techniques for creating verse" (Safavi, 2004b, p.37).

Among the ancients, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī also believed that the beauty of puns and wordplay is not solely tied to their phonetic qualities. In his view, good and bad puns are beneficial in terms of meaning, even if their word count is small. The superiority and virtue of puns arise from their meaning, as this virtue can only be achieved with the aid of meaning. If the virtue were tied to the words themselves, puns would not take on inappropriate forms. This is why Jorjani rejects excessive reliance on verbal rhetorical figures, as he believes that words are the servants of meaning, and it is the meanings that control the words. Consequently, puns and saj' are only acceptable when the meaning of the word demands it and directs toward it. This occurs when there is no equivalent or substitute for the pun, and its use is inevitable (al-Jurjānī, 1995, p. 3-5).

### 3.7 Theory of Nazm

Another important point in this context is Jurjānī's theory of Nazm. Through this theory, he explains the miracle of the Quran, asserting that the Nazm of the Quran cannot be imitated. For him, Nazm refers to the arrangement of words and their interrelationship. Therefore, words do not have inherent superiority over one another; rather, their superiority emerges from the harmony and smoothness of their meaning in relation to the meanings of surrounding words. This is why a word may seem beautiful in one context but heavy and unfamiliar in another (Zif, 2004, p.220).

Dr. Shafiei refers to this Nazm as a "system"(structure) and writes: "The greatest poets in the world have always been the greatest organizer(composer)." This concept of Nazm, like the concept of poetry, is indestructible. It leads to the point where it can be said that poetry is essentially Nazm, and nothing else. What is meant by this is a state of association among words that exhibit the utmost power of combination and Versification, to the extent that if a word is displaced, the sequence and Versification are disrupted. Shafi'i believes that no word is inherently good or bad; rather, it is within the collective arrangement of words that we perceive beauty or ugliness (Shafiei-Kadkani, 2002, p. 238).

In the realm of rhetorical figures, simply belonging to the external or internal aspects of language cannot determine a work's type—whether it is poetic or prose, or, as the ancients used to say, verbal or Semantic. For instance, metaphor is considered one of the elements that create poetry, yet many metaphors have lost their aesthetic function over time, becoming so commonplace that they are now part of ordinary language.

Shklovsky writes in her famous article " Art as Technique " that some still believe the main characteristic of poetry is thought based on images, and therefore its history must be the history of changing images. However, she argues that images are transmitted from century to century and from poet to poet without any change, being borrowed from one another. In poetry, we remember images more than we focus on their usage (Shklovsky, 2001, p. 53).

Jakobson believes that poetic innovations and versification techniques should be studied together as tools for poetic creation. Poetry is based on the principle of similarity. The metrical symmetry of verses or the phonetic equivalence of cognate words raises the issue of semantic similarity and contrast (Jakobson, 2001, p. 123).

Professor Homāyī also discusses the distinction between verbal and semantic rhetorical figures:

Semantic rhetorical figures are directly tied to meaning, and even if words acquire some literary beauty, they remain subordinate to meanings. In contrast, in verbal rhetorical figures, the aesthetic merit (badi'i) primarily resides in the words themselves. If these devices influence meaning, it is through the words' form rather than through independent meanings. Thus, it is incorrect to assume that the beauty of semantic figures is confined solely to meanings without affecting words, just as it is wrong to suppose that verbal figures have no impact on the appreciation of meanings. Rather, the effects of both may intertwine. (Homāyī, 1992, pp. 225–226).

The author of *Hanjār-e Goftār* also, although he divides rhetorical figures into verbal and Semantic categories, believes that the distinction between verbal and semantic rhetorical figures is a matter of taste (Taqavī, 1983, p. 206).

## 3.8 The concept of form

The Formalists liberated themselves from the traditional association of form and content, as well as from the concept of form as a mere container into which content is poured. For them, the concept of form acquires a new meaning, becoming a dynamic and objective whole (Eikhenbaum, 2006, pp. 44-45). For the Formalists, the meaning of form refers to the specific shape of a work of art, which is closely related to the concept of structure. They agreed that every work of art has a foundation, and that each element follows a rule derived from its relationship to the main structure. Tynyanov wrote in 1929: "A literary work expresses a system of interdependent

elements. The relationship of each element to another is its function within the framework of the system of the work." Therefore, the smallest sign in the form of a work is a path to meaning. In other words, when a single message is expressed in different forms, each form will carry additional meaning compared to the original. The slightest change in form results in a change in meaning (Ahmadi, 2001, p. 52).

When Shklovsky said, "New form creates new content," he was proposing a new and expanded understanding of form. The Formalists believed that the emergence of form is the result of two opposing functions: organization and disorganization. Deformation refers to the transformations that occur in materials, such as how poetic vocabulary contrasts with the vocabulary of prose and standard language. However, this material must be systematically unified. For this reason, the Formalists not only considered elements like sounds, vocabulary, poetic meter, syntax, and literary genres, but also took into account the aesthetic function of themes, plot, and rules of expression (ibid. p.53).

The most significant weakness of traditional poetry is its failure to consider the overall structure of speech and the context in which it is used, as well as its neglect of language as a harmonious system that, as a whole, creates the text and its associated elements. The ancients paid little attention to the structure of the literary text or the overall form of poetry and prose, and they did not perceive beauty in the entirety of a work. Yet, the most important criterion for beauty is the harmony and coherence of a literary work. Therefore, the biggest flaw of traditional literature is the failure to understand the literary text as a unified entity (Mohabbati, 2002, p.59). Part of this weakness can be attributed to the characteristics of classical poetry, where the unit of poetry is the couplet (beit), and the dominance of meter, rhyme, and predetermined meaning are often essential. However, with the changes that have occurred in modern poetry—such as the shift from the couplet to the stanza (band) and the reduced dominance of meter and rhyme—poetry finds a way to emerge in a more unconscious state, allowing it to better express the concept of its structure and text. Barthes distinguishes between two types of text: one directed at the reader, called a closed text, and one directed at the author, called an open text. In an open text, the reader is not passive; rather, the reader is the creator of the text, not just its recipient (Webster, 2003: 159).

In modern poetry, verbal rhetorical figures are more prominent. (Pournamdarian and Tehrani Sabet, 1390/2011: 31) Verbal figures are among the associations based on similarity (ibid., 2009: 10), and since they involve a form of repetition, they can,

in addition to creating musicality, also convey implicit meanings. The ancients were also aware of this matter; for example, Ibn Athir does not consider the repetition "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful," which appears at the beginning of the surahs of the Holy Quran, as mere repetition. Rather, he believes that it carries new and additional meanings in each surah. Similarly, Ibn Rashīq, in his al-ʿUmdah, enumerated nine functions for repetition, since repetition was generally considered undesirable by the ancients (Tehrani Sabet, 2019: 127).

## 4. Conclusion

There is no doubt that literary works differ in both the amount and quality of their literary content. Literary figures also come in various types and serve different functions, which is why multiple classifications have been proposed to better understand them. One of the fundamental classifications is the traditional division into verbal and Semantic figures —a division that many today consider illogical, arguing that no clear boundary exists between the two.

Dr. Safavi has proposed an alternative classification based on structural linguistics, incorporating the concepts of extra-regularity (rule addition) and deviation (rule reduction) into the tools and techniques found in the sciences of semantics, rhetoric, and poetics. He regards prosody, rhyme, and most verbal techniques in poetics as instances of rule addition, while he considers rhetoric and aspects of Semantic poetics as examples of rule reduction, referring to them respectively as " rhetoric of poetry " and " rhetoric verse. "In this framework, extra-regularity (rule addition) serves as a tool for creating verse, whereas deviation (rule reduction) fosters the creation of poetry. Formalists, meanwhile, maintain that any change in form results in a change in content—an idea that also finds support in traditional rhetorical studies.

In modern poetry, we often encounter poems that employ various types of repetition, alliteration, puns, phonetic patterns, and other forms of extra-regularity. These elements not only create musicality but also contribute significantly to the coherence of the text and the generation of additional meanings. Although extra-regularity (rule addition) is associated with the external structure of language and deviation (rule reduction) with its internal structure, what ultimately matters is how these techniques are applied, how they combine within the text, and their relationship with meaning—factors that together produce poetry.

Verbal figures, either independently or alongside semantic figures, can foster and intensify the imaginative quality of a poem. Therefore, a strict separation between the " rhetoric of verse " and the " rhetoric of poetry " does not seem feasible. Instead, these elements, when harmoniously and originally combined, can collectively lead to the creation of poetry. In fact, in poetry, what matters most is the dynamic interplay between words and meaning and their relevance to the subject matter.

## Endnotes

1. "Dr. Safavi's planned work on The Rhetoric of Prose ('Badi'-e Nasr') remained unfinished."

2. An article titled **'Pathology of Badi' with Regard to Its Evolutionary Process**' by Zahra Soleimani, published in the Daneshnameh Journal, has addressed this very issue with direct reference to the same book (Soleimani, 2011, p. 51).

3. Verbal figures specific to poetry; verbal figures specific to verse and prose; semantic figures specific to poetry; semantic figures specific to verse and prose.

4. Abū ʿAbd Allāh Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Mālik al-Ṭāʾī al-Jayyānī (1203-1274).

5. Poetics

6. Dr. Safavi emphasizes that "extra-regularity" operates on the surface structure of language and does not interfere with meaning" (Safavi, 2004b, p.36).

7. "Sajʿ (a form of rhythmic parallelism in Arabic/Persian rhetoric) "

8. Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī in Miʿyār al-Ashʿār writes: "Meter is among the instruments of poetic imagery and an intrinsic constituent of poetry."(Shamisa, 2014, p. 76)

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