



Imagism Unveiled: A Modernist study of Kamal's poetry and the defiance of Realism

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Abstract

This study explored the poetry of Daud Kamal within the setting of modernist literary theory, focusing on his opposing of realism and traditional poetic conventions. Through a qualitative analysis of Kamal's work, employing close reading as the primary strategy, the study examines his innovative use of imagery, symbolism, and non-linear structure. Kamal's poetry embodies the experimental ethos of modernism, as proven by his subjective interpretation of the world and neglecting formal traditions. By rejecting realism, embracing ambiguity, and defying traditional forms, Kamal's poetry represents a significant commitment to the development of poetic expression within the modernist development.

Keywords: Realism, imagism, traditional poetic conventions, modernism, daud kamal, and traditional poetic

Introduction

In the domain of Pakistani English poetry, the name Daud Kamal shines as a beacon of artistic innovation and scholarly prowess. Born in Abbottabad, Kamal's literary journey traverses the landscapes of spiritual displacement and cultural erasure, offering piercing reflections on the human condition amidst the tumultuous background of brutality and societal commotion. Hulme stated about the language of poetry as "visual concrete one....Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence." (Hulme, 1908). This thesis endeavors to dig into the unpredictable tapestry of Kamal's poetic oeuvre, unraveling the thematic complexities and stylistic nuances that characterize his work. Vital to Kamal's poetry is the theme of spiritual displacement, a profound sense of alienation and estrangement notwithstanding cultural commotion and societal discord. Through his verses, Kamal navigates the overly complex corridors of human experience, wrestling with the existential angst that accompanies the erosion of cultural character and the fragmentation of aggregate memory. His poems serve as strong meditations on the delicacy of human life, resonating with readers who track down solace in the artist's introspective musings amidst the chaos of contemporary life. Kamal's poetry is distinguished by its intense hug of imagism, a literary development that eschews conventional realism for striking and suggestive imagery. The influence of literary giants such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound is discernible in Kamal's work, as he masterfully employs imagist techniques to transcend the confines of traditional account and dig into the depths of the human psyche. By infusing his poetry with rich sensory imagery and symbolic motifs, Kamal invites readers into a universe of uplifted sensory perception and emotional resonance, where each word becomes a brushstroke on the canvas of the reader's imagination. To be sure, Kamal's status as the "modern T.S. Eliot of Pakistan" speaks to the profound effect of his poetry on the literary landscape of the nation. His inheritance as a visionary wordsmith and cultural icon endures, inspiring generations of poets to investigate the boundaries of language and expression. Through this thesis, we set out on a journey of discovery and illumination,

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unraveling the puzzling excellence of Kamal's poetry and revealing the timeless truths that lie underneath the surface of his verses.

Literature Review

Roona& Maqbool (2022) is concerned with the stylistic analysis of the poem "The street of nightingale" by Kamal. Stylistics and level of dialects like phonological and semantic, structural and syntactical, semantic and pragmatic, morphological and lexical analysis of the poetry is done in this study. The review means to depict the clarification and understanding of stylistics a part of linguistics and its concern while development of building the literary text. This research likewise gives a broad conversation to the degree of dialects utilized in delivering the design of poetry and making of thoughts in the poetry. This research manages the analysis in understanding the fundamental ideas and thoughts of the poem. The study investigates the tone and mind-set of the poem and portraying that poem contain the bit of heartfelt life and glumness of the cutting edge life is additionally portrayed by the poet. In this poem, researcher break down the range of topics and handling of profound way of thinking of progress of time, period and customs in life. By the use of lexico-syntactic pattern of style poet conveyed his massage of delight and love of nature. He additionally put emphasis on the fast difference in climate. Daudkamal in this poem criticized the rush of modern day life and praise the natural life romantic time. Aftab& Haroon (2024) was pointed toward finding the stylistics highlights utilized in the poem "An Ode to Death". The researcher has investigated the poem from five degrees of stylistics specifically phonological, graphological, semantic, morphological, and lexical. The poet has featured the subject of death in Kamal's "An Ode to Death". The poet has utilized different symbolic expressions and other metaphorical gadgets to make his statement of death's certainty and life's delicacy. The poet has likewise major areas of strength for utilized that makes clear visual scenery in the reader's mind. The discoveries likewise show that the poet has involved language in a best manner. The utilization of language in "Ode to Death" by Daud Kamal is so straightforward and customary that even an ordinary reader can grasp the poem in a better manner. The poet has not involved any difficult vocabulary for embellishment or style. The type of the poem is extremely straightforward and the topic of death is exceptionally obvious from words like "pine tree", "match-stick", and "ashtray". Readers can find out about decline and decay, and most importantly the possibility of death from the previously mentioned words. **Imagism and Modernism: A Synergy in Kamal's Poetry. Imagism, a key facet of the Modernist literary movement, sought to reject the conventions of romanticism and realism in favor of precision, brevity, and visual clarity. Kamal's poetry, drawing from the Modernist tradition, exemplifies these traits by focusing on clear, direct images that evoke emotion without relying on elaborate descriptions. According to Smith (2016), imagist poets aimed to present an "objective correlative a specific set of images to evoke a particular emotion in the reader without unnecessary commentary. Kamal's minimalist style, rich with precise imagery, aligns with this imagist philosophy, thereby offering a defiance of traditional realism, which often emphasized elaborate descriptions and linear narratives. His use of imagery as the focal point of expression disrupts the narrative conventions of realism, where the depiction of everyday life and detailed social settings are dominant (Johnson, 2018). Kamal's modernist approach challenges the principles of realism by moving away from its typical representation of objective reality and social conditions.

Realism often sought to depict the world as it is, with a focus on moral and social issues, but Kamal's imagist poetry instead highlights the internal, subjective experiences of individuals through symbolic and fragmented images. Carter (2019) argues that imagism, with its commitment to economy of language and focus on the image, inherently resists the realist tradition, which tends to favor long-form narratives and comprehensive character development. Kamal's poetic works, in particular, represent moments of experience through vivid imagery that evoke emotion and thought without engaging in explicit narrative detail. This modernist defiance is also evident in his rejection of traditional verse forms, opting instead for free verse to allow the images to speak for themselves (Rosen, 2020). The defiance of realism in Kamal's poetry is not only a stylistic choice but also a reflection of the broader modernist worldview. The Modernist movement, as argued by Long (2017), responded to the disillusionment with traditional societal structures and realist forms of art, especially in the aftermath of major historical disruptions like World War I. Kamal's poetry captures this ethos by eschewing the realist tendency to depict an ordered, knowable world. Instead, his imagist poems present fragmented, fleeting moments, which symbolize the chaotic, unpredictable nature of modern existence. Through sharp, precise images, Kamal offers a glimpse into the subjective experience of the individual, challenging the realist presumption of an objective, shared reality. This modernist technique, as exemplified by Kamal, enables a deeper exploration of personal emotion and perception, offering a nuanced defiance of realism (Jackson, 2021).

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the specific elements of traditional realism rejected by Daud Kamal in his poetry.
2. To investigate and sort the motifs that arises in Kamal's poetry as an outcome of his transition from Realism to Imagism.

Research Questions

1. How does Kamal's work reject the traditional conventions of poetry?
2. What motifs arise in Kamal's poetry as a result of his transition from Realism to Imagism?

Research Methodology

This qualitative research employs a close reading model as its primary research strategy to investigate Daud Kamal's rejection of traditional poetic conventions within a modernist framework. Close reading, a method rooted in literary analysis, allows for an in-depth examination of the text, focusing on the nuanced use of language, imagery, and structure. This method is particularly well-suited to analyzing Kamal's imagist poetry, where each word and image contributes to the overall meaning and emotional resonance of the poem.

Text Collection

A purposive sampling approach is employed to select a representative collection of Daud Kamal's poems that reflect his modernist tendencies. Poems are chosen based on their use of imagery, symbolism, and thematic depth key indicators of Kamal's departure from traditional poetic conventions and his alignment with modernist principles. The research focuses on a combination of his

earlier and later works to trace the evolution of his poetic style and to assess the consistency of modernist features throughout his career.

Analysis Framework

The analysis is divided into three primary areas: images, symbolism, and themes. Each poem is carefully examined for its imagistic qualities, following the principles of imagism as articulated by Modernist poets like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. Special attention is paid to Kamal's use of concise, precise imagery that seeks to evoke an emotional or intellectual response without reliance on elaborate narratives or descriptive detail. The symbolic elements in the poems are also analyzed to understand how Kamal imbues simple images with complex meanings, often tied to broader existential or philosophical questions, which align with Modernist concerns. Lastly, the thematic analysis focuses on identifying recurrent Modernist themes such as alienation, fragmentation, and the breakdown of traditional social and cultural narratives.

Data Collection and Coding

Each poem is systematically coded using a thematic coding system to identify instances of modernist characteristics. The images and symbols are categorized based on their function. This thematic coding allows for a structured comparison between different poems, highlighting recurring motifs and symbols that signify Kamal's defiance of realism and his commitment to modernist techniques. The data collection is iterative, where initial readings guide further exploration and deeper thematic connections.

Theoretical Framework

This research employs a qualitative approach to examine the poetry of Daud Kamal, emphasizing his rejection of traditional poetic conventions through a modernist focal point. "The language of verse must be always concrete and pictorial, because the poet is always dealing with objects" (Hulme, 1924). Integral to this framework are the principles of modernist artistic theory, especially those enunciated by key figures, for example, Ezra Pound "An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (Pound, 1918), Innovation, portrayed by a break from ordinary forms and a journey for new articulations, underpins this analysis. Pound's promotion for Imagism, which stresses accuracy, economy of language, and the immediate show of images, serves as a crucial foundation. The Imagist poet does not describe an object but sets it down directly; thus, he gives the feeling of surprise, like the first impression which the object made upon him." (Aldington, 1915) and "Use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation" (Flint, 1913) showed the importance of pictorial qualities of verses. By analyzing Kamal's innovative use of use of vivid images and themes, this study seeks to demonstrate how his poetry exemplifies modernist ideas, challenging and rejecting traditional poetic norms.

Discussion

In the hands of modernist poets, imagism turns into a revolutionary tool for dismantling the constraints of Realism and traditional modes of representation. Rather than adhering to linear storytelling or descriptive prose, modernist poetry prioritizes the promptness and intensity of sensory impressions, inviting readers to draw in with the poem on an instinctive level. This dismissal of reality in favor

of subjective interpretation permits modernist poets to explore themes of alienation, existential tension, and cultural fragmentation in new and innovative way.

Poem "Reproductions" By Kamal

*"Reproductions
Of Moghul miniatures
Cut out
From last year's calendar
And fragments of Ghandhara
Sculpture
Bought for a song
Prince Siddhartha
Gone into the night
With channa
And old tajiks
In their tents
Drinking China tea
Almond blossoms
Fall
And crow
Carved out of the ebony
Pushes itself through the rain
I sit scraping
The rust off my ancient coins"*

Daud Kamal's poetry represents the vital attributes of innovation, especially through his capable utilization of imagism and free verse structure. In his poem "Reproduction," Kamal exhibits a dismissal of customary shows and realism by presenting brief visual images that summon distinctive sensory impressions. The shortfall of a fixed rhyming scheme, metrical pattern, or regular verse in "Reproduction" underscores Kamal's acceptance of free verse, a hallmark of modernist poetry.

The poems unique structure mirrors the fragmented nature of modernist thought, with three stanzas each offering a preview of the poet's considerations as he encounters paintings, sculptures, and miniatures from the Mughal Empire in the Gandhara Museum. Through compact and evocative language, Kamal paints a series of vivid images that transport the readers into the domain of his imagination.

Reproduction exemplifies the essence of Daud Kamal's modernist poetry, with its emphasis on visual imagery, free verse structure, and dismissal of traditional poetic conventions. Through this analysis, we gain insight into Kamal's innovative way to deal with poetry and his capacity to challenge and rise above laid out literary norms.

Imagery over Realism: Instead of depicting realistic scenes or occasions in a straightforward way, the poem presents fragmented images and impressions, drawn from different sources, for example, Moghul miniatures and Gandhara sculpture. This takeoff from realism stresses the poet's abstract insight and imaginative interpretation of the world.

Non-linear Structure: The poem misses the mark on linear narrative or consistent movement, opting instead for a collection like structure that juxtaposes dissimilar images and thoughts. This unconventional approach difficulties traditional thoughts of coherence and order in poetry, suggesting a rejection of established narrative conventions.

Symbolism and Allusion: The poem incorporates symbolic components and allusions to historical and social references, for example, Prince Siddhartha and the imagery of almond blossoms. These symbolic layers add complexity and depth to the poem, moving beyond straightforward portrayal and disturbing traditional poetic conventions.

Free Verse Form: By adopting a free verse form with no strict rhyme or meter, the poem rejects traditional formal rules, allowing for experimentation with language and structure. This rejection of traditional poetic conventions mirrors a more extensive dismissal of established norms and a willingness to explore new methods of expressing.

Poem "Prayer Beads" by Kamal

*Under
The shade
Of a willow tree
Where the river bends
In a rock-pool
Prayer beads rise
To the surface
From the mouth
Of an invisible
Fish*

Precise Imagery: The poem employs precise and vivid imagery to create a clear mental picture for the reader. Phrases such as "shade of a willow tree," "river bends," "rock-pool," and "prayer beads rise" summon specific visual images with economy of language. These images are presented straightforwardly, without elaborate description or embellishment, in line with Imagist principles advocated by poets like Ezra Pound.

Non-Traditional Structure: The poem's structure lacks a clear narrative or logical progression, opting instead for a concise, enigmatic snapshot of a second. This non-linear approach to storytelling disrupts traditional conventions of poetry, which often adhere to formal structures such as sonnets or ballads. By eschewing formal constraints, the poem emphasizes opportunity and experimentation in poetic expression.

Sensory Impressions: The pictorial quality in the poem appeals to the senses of a reader, engaging them to the scene and enhancing the quality of the poem. The mention of the "shade of a willow tree" conjures a sense of coolness and tranquility, while the description of prayer beads rising from the mouth of an invisible fish adds a surreal and mysterious element to the scene. These sensory impressions engage the reader's imagination and add to the overall impact of the poem.

Conclusion

In examining Daud Kamal's poetry through a modernist lens, this research has demonstrated his profound departure from the conventions of realism and

traditional poetic forms, situating him firmly within the modernist tradition. Kamal's poetry embodies the core tenets of modernism—fragmentation, ambiguity, and a deep engagement with subjective experience—through his innovative use of imagery, symbolism, and non-linear structures. Unlike realist poetry, which prioritizes detailed depictions of social realities and linear narratives, Kamal's work strips away excess description to focus on precise, emotionally charged images. This aligns with the principles of imagism, where the poem's power lies in its ability to evoke complex ideas and emotions through sparse, vivid imagery. Kamal's embrace of ambiguity is another key modernist trait uncovered through this research. His poems often resist definitive interpretations, encouraging readers to actively engage in meaning-making. This refusal to offer clear moral or narrative conclusions further separates him from realist traditions, which typically aimed to reflect and critique societal norms. Instead, Kamal's poetry operates within the symbolic and fragmented world of modernism, where individual perception and emotion take precedence over external reality. His frequent use of symbolism enhances this, as symbols in his poetry often function on multiple levels, contributing to both the richness of the text and its resistance to simple interpretation. Furthermore, Kamal's non-linear approach to structure—evident in his use of free verse, disjointed syntax, and the absence of formal constraints—represents a conscious defiance of the formalist expectations of traditional poetry. This experimental form aligns with the modernist rejection of conventional structure and the desire to express the chaotic, fragmented nature of modern life. Kamal's use of this non-traditional form is not merely a stylistic choice but reflects the broader modernist critique of a cohesive, ordered worldview, as his poetry frequently explores themes of alienation, disillusionment, and the fractured human experience.

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