



# **Critical Analysis of the Metaphorical and Metonymic Poles of Language and the dichotomy between Culture and Nature in the Young Adult Novel *The Seventh Western Floor***

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## **1. Introduction**

Ecocriticism addresses the relationship between literature and environment and is an attempt to engage with nature that has been marginalized by humanistic thought. In this context, literature, through the imagination employed in literary works, exposes nature to human perception more than anything else, and can thus accommodate ecocritical thinking better. One way of creating imaginative discourse is the use of metaphor and metonymy. Accordingly, examining the functions of metaphor and metonymy in conveying environmental themes is of significant importance. In this study, the young adult novel *The Seventh Western Floor* will be examined in terms of the horizontal and vertical axes of language and its relation to ecocriticism, "Culture and Nature" and "Innocence and Experience".

## **2. Literature Review**

In the discussion of imagery and ecocriticism, the article "Metaphor and Ecocriticism: A Case Study of Two Narratives 'Gileh Mard' and 'Az Kham Chamber'" (2016) analyzes ecocriticism and metaphor in these two narratives. In the Article "Ecocriticism in the Mind and Language of Nima Youshij and Manouchehr Atashi" (2023), the poems of Nima Youshij and Atashi are examined from

an ecocritical perspective, including figurative language such as simile, metaphor, and metonymy.

### **3. Methodology**

According to Jakobson, language works on two distinct semantic directions; this continuity is either based on similarity (metaphor) or on contiguity (metonymy). Jakobson posits two axes in language: the axis of juxtaposition and the axis of substitution. In his view, metaphor relates to the vertical axis based on selection, replacement, and similarity; and metonymy relates to the horizontal axis based on combination, context, and contiguity (Chandler, 2015: 208-209). The manner of selecting and applying words among other options on these two axes determines the role of language (Saffavi, 2015: 43). Thus, by examining the vertical and horizontal axes, the text can be read and analyzed.

Innocence and Experience, like Culture and Nature, are two concepts that stand in opposition to each other. These two concepts originate from the works of William Blake. According to him, “innocence is a state in which a child’s imagination follows its path of growth, and experience is the time when this innocence encounters the world of laws— whether scientific or social— morality and exclusions. Blake’s poems are, in fact, a critique of adults and social institutions, which, in his terms, hinder the path of human innocence” (Khosronejad, 2010: 48-49). For Blake, neither innocence nor experience alone is desirable. What he sought was a state between these two. In his view, “innocence, pure and naive, must necessarily pass through experience and assimilate it... and arrive at a third state that encompasses these two yet is superior to both” (Ibid: 76). Blake considered innocence and experience to be opposing forces within humans that manifest in the encounter between the individual and the environment. In this struggle, experience assimilates innocence and leaves it behind, arriving at a new form of innocence: systematized innocence (Ibid: 60).

### **4. Discussion and Results**

In the young adult novel *The Seventh Western Floor*, Amir-Ali, a poor teenager, is hired to nurse a solitary and ill elderly man who resides in a tower in the uptown. Amir-Ali serves as the caregiver for one day. The elderly man, depressed and frail, discovers a renewed vitality in Amir-Ali’s presence and becomes his interlocutor and companion. Amir-Ali, who has lost his father,

regards the old man as his father. Amir-Ali's father was a forester who died in a forest accident. The following day, when Amir-Ali goes to the tower with hopeful anticipation, he learns that the old man has died.

The narrative comprises two days of Amir-Ali's presence in the tower. The story opens with the narration of the second day; at this point Amir-Ali is influenced by the old man's language and way of thinking, and the language of the narrative tends toward the metaphorical pole (Khaniyan, 2017: 7). By contrast, in the narration of the first day, when Amir-Ali had not yet met the old man, the metonymic pole is active (Ibid: 8).

In this literary process, what is placed on the axis of horizontal are elements of nature and rural life rather than culture and urban elements; thus, nature stands in opposition to culture and substitutes it. Indeed, the old man embodies culture, experience, and metaphorical language, while Amir-Ali embodies nature, innocence, and metonymic language; therefore, all these deployments on the vertical axis can be analyzed in light of the old man's aspiration to return to childhood and to village life and nature. The old man longs to return to his childhood, the period when he lived in the countryside. This longing manifests as a form of aphasia, and his language takes on a metaphorical state. He, as a symbol of adulthood and experience, achieves his longing in his encounter with Amir-Ali. Amir-Ali embodies nature and innocence. In his language, the metonymic axis is more salient, because due to financial constraints he is compelled to work during adolescence and is driven from the world of innocence into the world of experience. In this trajectory, the old man and Amir-Ali move toward one another, and their destination is the same: the attainment of a cultivated form of innocence and the synthesis of culture and nature, or in the other words, the dominance of nature over culture.

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