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***Poetic structure and structure of love :***  
**A PHONOLOGICAL APPROACH TO A**  
**SHAKESPEAREAN**  
**SONNET**

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ABSTRACT

This study proceeds on the hypothesis that the sound patterns of a poem contribute a great deal to build the poet's world – view .The study is an attempt to investigate the texture of sound in Shakespeare's sonnet ( 55 ), " Not marble , nor gilded monuments " . The sonnet will be approached as a phonological unit of meaning. The study falls into three parts . Part I introduces the key concepts of modern phonetics and phonology . Attention is drawn to the phonological aspect of the verse structure by showing the " stress-producing pulses " and the " syllable – producing pulses" which either of the processes exists in nearly all human languages . Part II deals with the phonological mechanisms which create the poem as an aesthetic form . Of these mechanisms are the widely known sound devices such as , " rhythm " , " rhyme " , " alliteration " , " onomatopoeia " and so on . These terms will be looked at from a phonological perspective. Shakespeare's sonnet will be investigated in terms of Cummings and Simmons's " Systemic Description "in its phonological aspect . The analytic mode will show how the language operates to produce the poem as a linguistic and aesthetic form.

**PART I : key concepts of modern phonetics**

Though phonology and phonetics are organically rooted into modern theory of linguistics , they are different in some respects . Abercrombie , in his seminal essay " A Phonetician's View of Verse Structure , " ( 1973 : 6-13 ) argues that " the study of the sound of the speech , in all its aspects , and of the bodily movements which produce the sound , is the province of phonetics . " He ( ibid. ) concedes to say that " phonetic techniques of observation and analysis can be applied to verse structure as successfully as they can to any other aspect of language where the sound is important . " It

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is fairly clear that Abercrombie is interested in the texture of sound in the poetic structure . But still , there are some significant terms necessary to be identified .

Phonetics studies the sounds of humans in all languages according to the organs of speech . It is interested in how sounds are articulated , i.e. , the way sound are produced . The term " phonetics refers to the way in which the individual sounds are formed by the apparatus of speech , or detected by the apparatus of hearing .

Phonology , on the other hand , is connected with the phonemes of a certain language .It studies the sound system of a particular language . That is to say , it describes sounds according to their functions and positions in words in accordance to their relations with each other . Cummings and Simmons ( 1963 : 7 ) maintain that the term " phonology " refers to the way in which language is encoded in its medium as sounds . The human vocal activity is articulated by what has been called " a source of energy " which is provided by an air – stream expelled from the lungs . Modern phoneticians are on the belief that the lung ( pulmonic ) air is required for sound articulation .( Gimson, , 1970 , Abercrombie , 1973 , Roach , 1983 ) .

Speech sounds in English are of two categories : vowels and consonants . Roach ( 1983 : 10-11 ) points out that " vowels are sounds in which there is no obstruction to the flow of air as it passes from the larynx to the lips . "Consonants , on the other hand are the sounds that may be produced with or without vocal cord vibration ( voice ) and very often have a " noise " component in the acoustic sense. " (see Gimson, 1970: 28 ). The phoneticians, moreover , have made more elaboration on the " place of articulation " and the " manner of articulation " . The speech sounds , in this case , are not distinguished according the criteria mentioned herewith, but also by the presence or absence of voice and by the degree of breath and measure effort involved in the articulation ( *ibid.* ) .

Modern linguists, stylisticians, and literary critics agree that language is central to literature . So , it is significant to study the language of literature in terms of linguistic theories and models . Meaning , in general , is the product of the interrelation of certain linguistic levels . To Halliday and Hasan ( 1971 : 5 ) language can be explained as a multiple coding system comprising three levels of coding , or " strata " : the semantic ( meanings ) , the lexicogrammatical ( forms ) and the phonological and or the graphic ( expressions ) . They go on to say that meanings are realized (

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coded ) as expressions. Text , in this linguistic model , is viewed as a " unit of meaning " . Phoneticians , in return , attempt to link the phonological stratum to the poetic structure . Abercrombie (op.cit., pp. 6-7 ) argues that the " stress – pulses" or the "stress producing pulses" and the " chest – pulses " or the "syllable – producing pulses" are but two systems present when human languages are being spoken . " Abercrombie ( ibid. ) thinks that either the stress-producing pulses or the syllable – producing pulses can be in isochronous sequence , and in the former case we have a " stress – timed rhythm , in the latter a " syllable – timed rhythm " . Abercrombie is on the belief that the languages of the world fall into two classes , depending on whether the rhythm with which they are spoken is stress-timed or syllable – timed . English is a typical example of a language with a syllable – timed rhythm ( ibid . )

Focusing on one stratum in the organization of language does not mean that this level or stratum can operate alone to create meaning in the poetic structure . Rather , the levels of literary language are interwoven to create the text as a meaningful net . Fowler ( 1971 : 95) explains the point clearly by assuming that

the interrelationship of syntax and semantics in poems becomes peculiar interesting . The semantics of a poem does not constitute a bald , extractable " content " divorced from the mechanical forms of syntax and phonology : they are a fragment of society's linguistic conceptualization of its experience , activity arranged by the syntax to induce novel fictional perceptions in a reader .

For the phenomenon of rhythm and its significance to the poetic process , attempts are made to link music to poetry since they are variants of the same kind of aesthetic object . The phonological level ; therefore , is that one which gives the text its euphony . The powerful bond between the text and melody in actual practice was affected by the fact that a common over-all rhythm governed both of them (see Preminger et al , 1974:533 ) .

### **PART II : PHONOLOGICAL MECHANISMS OF VERSE**

This part explores the language of poetry versus the ordinary language . It also looks at the mechanisms that create meanings in poetic structures , more specifically , sound mechanisms . This part suggests the theoretical background on which the Shakespearean sonnet will be analyzed .

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Though they descend from one origin , the poetic language and the standard language distinct in some respects . The language of poetry is not the brand of the norm . Rather , it violates the norms of the standard. Mukarovsky (Freeman, , 1970 : 40 – 56 ) wittingly shows that distinction .

So Mukarovsky :

Poetic language is thus not a brand of the standard . This is not to deny the close connection between the two , which consists in the fact that , for poetry , the standard language is the background against which is reflected the esthetically intentional distortion of the linguistic components of the work , in other words , the intentional violation of the norm of the standard .

The poetic language , in this sense , has its own unique form and function .

The poet is the creator of the verbal imaginative art , i.e. , poetry . Emerson ( 1843 ) speculates that " by virtue of this science the poet is the language – maker " and " the poets made all the words , and therefore language is the archives of history , and if we must say it , a sort of Tomb of the Muses . " Emerson's words may suggest that poetry is a process of a conscious word – making rather than divine inspiration . Albeit the poet is the " language – maker " , the language of poetry has its own mechanisms. Critics traditionally have classified these mechanisms into certain categories : sound devices, sense devices and structure devices. The category which is of interest to our study is the first one .

Meaning is created by and through a set of interrelated levels or " strata ". These levels operate together to produce the text , the meaningful unit. In their analytic framework " systemic description " , Cummings and Simmons ( 1963 : 7 ) elaborate on the levels of language. They say that the factors that create meaning in language are grouped into three " levels " . The first is the phonology / graphology – the organization of physical substance as noises or marks which we use to transmit language . The second is level of " forms " – the conventions of lexical meaning and grammatical patterning . The third is the level of " context " – the relationship of certain kind of language to certain kind of situation .

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In his introduction to Cummings and Simmons' "Language of Literature", Halliday argues that literature is made of language so "the most creative scrutiny is an analysis in linguistic terms, an analysis whereby the sound and forms and the meanings of the text are interpreted by reference to phonology; the lexicogrammatical and the semantics of the language of which it is an instance. So, the analysis of a text as a piece of literature – stylistic analysis – always involves acts of interpretation (Ibid.). The analytic process involves two phases: the analysis and the interpretation. To realize the sound patterns in a piece of a literary work of art, it is helpful to manifest the sound devices in verse structures, as follows.

Rhythm, in the broad sense, is the flow of accented and unaccented syllables. Cummings and Simmons (op.cit., p.45) think that "stress and time together produce rhythm, which is stress at regular intervals. This stylistic view is on the line with the phonological view expressed by Abercrombie. The recurrent stress-pulses in a line of English verse give rise to units which we may call "feet", in this usage, to be defined as the pace in time from the incidence of one stress – pulse up to, but not including, the next stress – pulse (Abercrombie, op.cit., p. 11).

Blackstone (1965 : 4) distinguishes between two prosodic terms, i.e., "rhythm" and "meter". Meter is "the organization of rhythms into regular and recurring patterns. Rhythm is unconscious, meter is conscious. Relevant to the field of rhythm are "melody", "timbre" and "tone". Melody is usually related to the characteristics of musicality and harmony of the poem. Millar and Currie (1970 : 21-2) think of "melody" as the fitness of a sound pattern to express the idea being conveyed to us. "Timbre", as Gimson (op. cit., p.19) has put it, is the variation of voice quality, whereas "tone", from the critical point of view, is the attitudes to the subject matter and to the audience implied in a discourse or literary piece. The tone of a passage might be characterized, for example, as formal or intimate, solemn or playful, serious or ironic, corresponding or obsequious (see Abrams, 1957 : 95).

Rhyme is the agreement in sound of an accented vowel in a word, usually the last one, with all the sounds following. (See Wood, p. 35). Rhyme is considered the most obvious regular sound patterns in poetry. It serves to structure ideas by linking lines together through similarities in the sounds of final words (see Millar and Currie, op. cit., pp. 15-16). Rhyme is not used without relevance to the structure of the poem as a whole.

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Rhyme , in this sense, is functional . Harmony and musicality can not be produced without a recourse to that poetic device . The function of the rhyme may be manifested in various types of rhyme . Abrams ( op.cit., p. 80 – 1 ) argues that " if the rhyme includes an unaccented syllable following the accented syllable , it is called a " feminine rhyme; otherwise it is called a masculine rhyme . " Abrams concedes to say that " a feminine rhyme of two syllables is also called a " double rhyme ; if it consists of three syllables , it is called a " triple rhyme " ( Ibid.) .

Alliteration is the repetition of the previous consonants , with or without vowel repetition or repetition of the end consonant – but not with both. ( Cummings and Simmons , 1963 , Abrams , 1957 ) . In Shakespeare's line of verse (cited in Hayward , 1956 : 67 ) , " Full fathom five thy father lies , " the systematic repetition of the voiceless consonant / f / may suggest the depth of the sea where the heroine's father is buried in his watery tomb .

The sound device of "alliteration" is different from " repetition " which mainly deals with the repetition of certain words . Reeves ( 1956 : 149 ) comments on the " alliterative verse " saying that " alliteration is the practice of using two or more words beginning with the same letter near together ." He goes on to say that "alliterative verse is the old English verse form based on this practice , first appearing in Anglo-Saxon times and continuing into the fourteenth century ( Langland ) and later . " What is characteristic about this type of verse is that it is " unrhymed , the lines are loosely dactylic four –stress lines continuing as a rule two words beginning with the same letter in the half - , and or two in the second (ibid.).

Though " assonance " and " consonance " are phonologically related, they are distinct in some respects . " Assonance " is the repetition of the vowel but with a different end consonant , and the same , or different , or no previous consonant : feat / fear / bleed / eel (see Cummings and Simmons , p. 28 ) . " Assonance " , according to Wood (op. cit. , p.38 ) , has come to be called vowel rhyme , i.e. , the use of the same vowel sound , where the consonants differ . "Consonance " , on the other hand , is basically repetition of the end consonant , but with a different vowel and the same , or different , or no previous consonants : feat / fight / hate / it . Cummings and Simmons ( ibid. ) think that the effects of vowel pattering in the poems can be seen in three areas : rhyme , assonance and onomatopoeia .

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Onomatopoeia , in the general sense , is the imitation of the nature sounds. Abrams (op.cit. , p. 62 ) defines ' onomatopoeia " as the use of words whose sounds seem to resemble the sounds they describe : " hiss , " "rustle," " bang " . Abrams ; however , argues that there is no exact duplication of the inanimate by the verbal sounds; the apparent similarity is due as much to the meaning as to the physical character of the word . But Cummings and Simmons (op.cit. , p 14 ) are on the belief that this poetic device may suggest the close relationship between sound and sense .

### **PART III : POETIC STRUCTURE and STRUCTURE OF LOVE :**

#### **A PHONOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE 'S SONNET**

##### **55**

The sound mechanisms, as have already been illustrated, are fundamentally important to express the poet's world – view . The success of the poem lies in the poet's proper choices into a proper context . So , this basically deals with the analysis of the sound texture in Shakespeare's sonnet ( 55 ) .

Not marble , nor the gilded monument,  
Of princes shall out-live this powerful rime ,  
But you shall shine more bright in these contents  
Than upswept stone , besmeer'd with sluttish time .  
When wastefull warre shall *Statues* over-turne ,  
And broiles roote out the worke of masonry .  
Nor *Mars* his sword , nor warres quick fire shall burne  
The living record of your memory .  
Gainst death , and all oblivious enmity  
Shall you pace forth, your praise shall stil finde roome ,  
Even in the eyes of all posterity  
That weare this world out to the ending doome .  
So til the judgment that your selfe arise ,  
You live in this , and dwell in lovers' eyes.

( cited in Hayward1956:60)

The sonnet is a poem consisting of 14 iambic pentameters rhyming in one of several ways . The two main forms of the sonnet are the Petrarchan , as used mainly after the Elizabethan Age by Milton , Wordsworth , Keats and others; and the Shakespearean . The

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Shakespearean sonnet consists of three quatrains ( four – line verses ) followed by a rhymed couplet sonnet (see Reeves , p. 154 ) . The sonnet was the most flourishing form of the lyrics in the Elizabethan age. Being so, the sonnets became sequences or cycles as in Shakespeare's sonnets. Shakespeare's sonnets were first published in 1609 and are considered the supreme masterpieces of love poetry . They deal with various themes such as love , beauty , friendship , death , immortality and so on .

Shakespeare's sonnet (55 ) is deviant in its thematic structure . Seymore – Smith ( 1963 : 139 ) comments on this sonnet by tracing back its source . So Seymore – Smith :

Much has been written about this famous sonnet , chiefly on the subject of whether Shakespeare borrowed his theme of the triumphant immortality of his celebration of his love in verse from Horace , Ovid or from a paraphrase of Ovid in Merers's *palladis tamia* . It seems most likely that the source was Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid , with which we know Shakespeare to have been familiar ; but the point is of little importance , since this theme was commonplace and may be found in Spenser, Drayton , Danial and others . What is more important is Shakespeare 's use of it .

Seymore –Smith's final words are of seminal importance since they may refer to the poet's style which gives the worn theme all that uniqueness because of the unfamiliar options , i.e. the stylistic variations of the poet's language. So, the most revealing characteristic of Shakespeare's sonnet ( 55 ) is its own style , that is to say, the deferential mode of expression on the levels of phonology , lexicogrammar semantics and context . So far the thematic structure is concerned, the sonnet manifests self – worth not only the bright aspects of love and beauty but also the poet's egoism as a creator. The sonnet , in general , is about the immortality of love against the domain of death .

The poet, in the first quatrain, praises the greatness of his rhymes . His verse will live more than stately precious stones . it is everlasting . Being so , it will immortalize nothing but the beauty of his lover . The lover will glow into his verse.



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Stylistically , the Shakespearean sonnet consists of a set of alliterative instances . The repetition of the alveolar nasal consonant / n / can be anticipated in the first line of verse ,

*Not* marble , *nor* the guilded monument,

Of princes shall out-live this p[owerful rime .

Not only that , but we could find the alliterative stances of the palato – alveolar fricative / ʃ / and the biblical plosive / b / in the third line of verse,

*But* you shall shine more *bright* in these contents .

Notice the initial repetition of alveolar fricative / s / and the interior voiceless / s / in the fourth line of the first quatrain , *than upswept stone , besmeared with sluttish* time .

So, the cohesion of the sound texture in the first quatrain is created by these phonological illustrations .The occurrence and the juxtaposition of the fricatives and the plosives with their distinctive sound characteristics build up the phonological level as an aspect of meaning . This alliterative verse may suggest the sluggish process of time to destroy the lover's beauty in contrast to the brightness and glamour of the lover in his dwelling – place , i.e. the rhymes. We, of course , look at the words as sound clusters, operating on each other, rather than purely separate phonemes. Moreover , the rhyme scheme of the Shakespeareans sonnet/ababbcbccdcdefefgg/ fundamentally contributes to the texture of the sound, not only to the quatrain as a fragment but to the poetic text as a whole .

In the second quatrain , the poet describes the phenomena that destroy mortal things . The quatrain focuses on the wasteful consequences of the destructive structure of war . Even Mars , the god of war with his sword has no power to destroy the beauty of the lover who eternally lives in the poet's rhymes . It is of interest to point out that the bilabial semi – vowel / w / is repeated in the fifth line of the sonnet,

*When wastefull warre* shall statues overturn .

Moreover , the word " *nor* " is repeated in the line of verse , too . The alliteration , here as elsewhere , serves to give the poem its unity allied with the other interrelated levels. The image of death through the destructive

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force of war stands in contrast to the image of love which is immortalized by and through the creative force of poetry .

The third quatrain stresses the poet's belief in the doctrines of love and beauty through poetic immortality . If man can be immortalized through posterity ,he will certainly visage the lover's image by and through verse. the image of the lover will be sighted forever by that imaginative craftsmanship . The image will be seen not only by this generation but by the generations to come .

What is characteristic about this quatrain is the exchangeable position of the labio – dental fricative / f / and the palato – alveolar fricative/ ʃ / in addition to the initial position of the unrounded palatal semi – vowel / j / followed by / u: / or / o :/ and the occurrence of the bilabial plosive / p / in ,

*Shall you pace forth, your praise shall still find room ,*

Notice also the occurrence of the interior diphthongal glide / ei / in " pace " and " praise " and the repetition of / w/ in " wear ' and " war ' in the eighth line of verse.. Halliday and Hasan (op. cit . , pp , 4-6 ) are on the belief that " cohesion is expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary : so ,

they refer to grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion." They think that cohesion is a semantic relation, all components of the semantic system, it is realized through the lexicogrammatical system (ibid.) . Moreover, Halliday and Hasan argue that a text is not " a structural unit " and " cohesion " is not " a structural relation". They insist that cohesion refers specifically to these non-structural text forming relations ( ibid.). They are semantic relations , and the text is a semantic unit However, it is worth noting that the powerful presence and the operation of the sounds in the poetic structures create the internal unity which insures that they all express part of the text . They , in other words , display texture. The phonological level fundamentally contributes to the creation of meaning.

The Shakespearean sonnet rounded up with two – rhymed lines of verse  
So til judgment that your selfe arise ,

*You live in this , and dwell in lover's eyes .*

So until the doomsday , the lover will live immortally in the poet's verse .The last two line , as Burton ( 1974 ; 53 ) thinks , introduce a

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distinctly new turn of thought . Beauty will be seen and evaluated in the eyes of the admirers . Beauty will never die and death shall have no domain on the lover . But However, in fact , what is immortalized is not the " unknown " lover , but the sonnet itself as a unique piece of imagination.

Once more, the mild juxtaposition of the lateral phoneme / l / with its clear allophone / l / , with a relatively front resonance , normally before vowels and / j / ( Gimson , p. 201 ) , on one hand , and the labio – dental fricative / v / in " live " and " lovers " in the compound structure. This juxtaposition can be traced back into " outlive ( line 2 ) and " oblivious " ( line 9 ). The juxtaposition may add a kind of euphonic movement to the whole structure and the end of the sonnet .The sonnet that starts in the alliterative line verse ends in mild sounds which properly fit the harmony of love and beauty that dominate the whole poem.

### **Concluding remarks**

In addition to the compelling images that build up the imaginative world of Shakespeare's sonnet ( 55 ) , the instances of the sound patterning contribute a great deal to the creation of meaning . The study has clearly shown that the repetition of the alveolar nasals , the bilabial semi-vowels, the labio - dental fricatives and the laterals with their allophones through the mechanism of alliteration has built up the musical tempo of Shakespeare's fourteen iambic five – foot lines of verse . The study has also proved that the internal unity of the sounds invents the texture of the sonnet as an aesthetic form .

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