

CHAPTER IIAMBIGUITY OF THE SECOND TYPE

Empson's concept of ambiguity covers wide range and his seven types are not merely 'conventional frame work but they are intended as the stages of advancing logical disorder'.¹ Grammatical or logical disorder, conscious apprehension of ambiguity, and psychological complexity these are three dimensions along which ambiguities may spread out, according to Empson. However, conscious apprehension of ambiguity and psychological complexity are given importance by Empson and in the light of these principles he discusses his 'types'.

The second type is defined as - " an example of the second type of ambiguity, in a word or a syntax, occurs when two or more meanings are resolved into one".² The definition mentions clearly that when two or more meanings are resolved into one word or syntax it is ambiguous. When we try to analyse such words or syntaxes we can extract one more meaning. But at the same time, as Empson writes, such alternative meanings as conceived by the reader may be present in the mind of the author.

Cupid is winged and doth range;
 Her country so my love doth change.
 But change the earth, or change the sky,
 yet I will love her till I die.

The lines quoted above are from Oxford Book by Anonymous Poet, express deep, sincere and intense feelings of love, as the strong determination of lover is expressed by the last line, " yet I will love her till I die. " That he would like to love her in any circumstances.

Here the two words - 'change' and 'earth' express many possible meanings. Empson gives fairly a long list of different sort of changes. That suggests how the speaker in the poem will go on loving her in any circumstances. The various possibilities of changes are mentioned by Empson in his analysis. But in conclusion he points out 'change' may be 'move to another' or alter the one you have got', and 'earth' may mean lady's private world or the poet's or that of mankind at large.³ All possible meanings mentioned by Empson in his analysis are resolved into two words : 'earth' and 'change'. Here Empson observes that the feelings expressed by the poet in the poem are direct but thought is complicated.

The example of metaphor falls under the 'first type'. However, Shakespeare uses several different metaphors at once, from which a single resultant meaning we can extract

and hence the following example can be considered as an example of the 'second type'.

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
 It were done quickly;
 (double syntax since you may stop at the end of
 the line).

If th' Assassination
 could trammell up the consequence, and catch
 With his surcease, success; that but.....

(Macbeth, Act I, Sc vii)

These are the opening lines of the scene, uttered by Macbeth. This speech of Macbeth runs in almost twenty seven lines which express hisitation of Macbeth. If the deed were done with when once it is executed, the sooner it were executed the better. If the act of the murder could catch in its toils the evil results of the murder and thus in the moments of its completion secure successfully its object, it should be done.

While interpreting these lines from Macbeth Empson points out different meanings of 'consequence', 'Trammell', 'Surcease', and 'assassination'. However, there is not much difference of the meaning stated by Shakespeare's critics and editors who edited his text. G. K. Hunter explains the first line ' If it were done 'tis done', as if the doing of the deed were end of it. And the word trammell]up consequences

catch up (as in a net) the trial of consequence that follows any action, and ' with the surcease' as either by Duncan's death or by putting an end to the consequences.⁴

However, the alternative meanings given by Empson indicate that the speech is ambiguous and the resultant meanings we can take from those words as explained by Empson. It is then clear that to express hesitation of Macbeth Shakespeare employs ambiguity. Empson frequently quotes from Shakespeare because to him, " It is impossible to avoid Shakespeare in these matters, partly because his use of language is of unparalleled richness and partly because it has received so much attention already; so that the inquiring student has less to do, is more likely to find what he is looking for, and has evidence that he is not spinning fancies out of his own mind".⁵ S. E. Hyman shares the same view and calls Shakespeare ' the supreme ambiguiist'.⁶

But true nobility is of the Mind;
Not given by chance, and not chance resigned.

- Dryden.

The couplet states the character of true nobility of man. As it is the heighest quality of a human nature that it is not discarded by chance, nor even in the adverse

circumstances. Empson considers that participle brings compactness to the heroic couplet. The participle used here is 'resigned' as it brings compactness so also it creates ambiguity. According to Empson, 'resigned' conveys - 'not given back when adverse chance demands it' or kept back from the control of the chance, or 'not dependent on the chance as its fundamental cause'.⁷

How adjectives play important part to bring ambiguity in the poem is given in the following lines quoted from Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well.

But we are old; and our own quickest decrees
Th' inaudible, and noiseless foot of time
Steals ere we can effect them.

(Act V/Sc 111)

The approaching time during the old age as it appears so quick and that passes so swiftly that one hardly notices. Shakespeare's use of two adjectives to describe movements of the time brings ambiguity to these lines. The two adjectives 'Inaudible' and 'noiseless', appear synonymous they convey different meaning. Empson points out in his analysis as - " 'Not only can nobody hear the foot of the time but it actually never makes a sound; even when safely alone, like a clock in an empty

room, even at its headquarters, it is silent; you might be hearing in a different way sounds outside the human range, and yet this all important reality, ' this devouring giant, would make no sound'.⁸ Thus here Empson's interpretation of these two adjectives covers almost everything that is possible to be suggested by them. Here the very force of the time lies in two adjectives and the dimension is given to these lines by the adjectives. And because of that we conceive different meanings of these adjectives.

' In the dead wast and Middle of the night '
(Hamlet Act I/Sc ii/Line 198)

There is a pun on 'Wast' and Empson gives various meanings of the word. Bernard Lott explains the word 'dead wast' as ' huge emptiness, still as death'.⁹ Dowden and Kittiredge explains as 'that vast of the night (when the spirit works)'.¹⁰ Harold Jenkin, who edited the text Arden Shakespeare : Hamlet has stated in the foot notes that though 'wast' would be an easy misreading of vast, it was a normal spelling of 'waste', the sense of which is reinforced by dead; and associated with its homonym 'wast' - 'waist' may have suggested middle'.¹¹

While interpreting the line Empson points out that though there is a pun on 'wast' there is the common factor in 'waste' 'vast' and 'waist', and 'the night seems longest when you are in the middle of it', and 'the middle is desolate region put to no good', 'during one of these periods of night which seems vast and yet are only a small part of the middle of 'it'.¹² Further in his analysis Empson points out the personification - the night as one of the terrible women of the destiny.¹³

The dividing line between the 'first type' and 'the second type' is not clear. We see in the 'first type' a word or a syntax or a grammatical structure is effective in several ways while making the statement. Hence 'bare ruined choirs' make different interpretations possible. Whereas in the second type we see that 'two or more meanings are resolved into one' so different grammatical structures play important role. In the 'first type' metaphor and dramatic irony take the form of ambiguity.

Word suggests different meanings, and one can interpret the lines of the poem as Empson does. It requires careful and close reading as he states that only such reading will suggest different meanings.¹⁴

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- NOTES AND REFERENCES -

1. William Empson, Seven Types : P. 48.
2. Ibid., P.48.
3. Ibid., PP.48-49.
4. G.K.Hunter, Macbeth ed.
(Penguin Book : 1967, Rpt 1978) P. 148.
5. William Empson, Seven Types. P.49.
6. S.E. Hyman, The Armed Vision P.240.
7. Willian Empson, Seven TypesPP.76-77.
8. Ibid., P.95.
9. Bernard Lott, Hamlet ed.,
(London : Longman, 1968). 29
10. Ibid., P.29.
11. Herold Jenkin. ed., Hamlet,
(Methuen, : London and New York, 1982) P.192.
12. William Empson, Seven Types PP.96-97.
13. Ibid., PP.96-97.
14. Ibid., P.63.

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