

Pragmatic Study of Deixis in Some Elegies

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ABSTRACT

This study offers justifications for some poet's use of deixis in their elegies. It is divided into an introduction which provides definitions for dsixis and its types. It studies the role of personal deixis in some elegies. It explains how the person deixis "you" and "he" are used interchangeably where proximity and distance, presence and absence are directed by the world of illusion and reality. It also tackles the roles of other deixis in this field: place, time and social and how they participate in formation of the poet's movements between illusion and reality where again proximity and distance, presence and and absence form the movements.

1. Introduction:

Deixis cannot be understood properly unless one alludes to its linguistic and semantic relations and functions. In linguistics, Lyons (1977: pp. 636-724) argues that deixis refers to the phenomenon wherein understanding the meaning of certain words and phrases in an utterance requires contextual information. He goes on to say that words which have a fixed semantic meaning and at the same time these words have their own denotational meaning that continuously changes according to the time, place of their use

are deictic. Hence, any word whose meaning requires this contextual information, for example, English pronouns, adverbs of time, place ...etc. are said to be deixis. Deixis is closely related to indexicality where they are both frequently used interchangeably and both concern nearly the same idea which is contextuality-dependant reference. However, both have different histories and traditions associated with them; deixis, for instance, is associated with linguistics, while indexicality takes philosophy as a realm of study. (see Levinson, 2006: 980-987).

Since pragmatics concerns how a given sentence is uttered in a context, hence context definitely plays a role in "specifying what proposition the sentence expresses on this occasion of utterance". (Levinson, 1997: 59). Hence to understand the intended meaning one must analyze the context of the utterance. In this field deixis plays a further developed role for it "concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance" (Levinson 1997, 54) or it is "a process where by words and expressions rely absolutely on context" (<http://www.lingualinks>) where "every utterance has this context dependency" (Levinson, 1997: 56).

2. Types of Deixis:

Possibly the most common categories of deixis are person, place and time. Filmore (1971: 31) calls them the "major grammaticalized types" of deixis. While Levinson (1997: 62-63) talks about a further type of such deixis which is social deixis, he calls the first three types "the traditional categories of deixis".

2.1. Person Deixis:

Person deixis concerns people who are involved in an utterance. It concerns both those who are directly involved such as the speaker and the addresser or not directly involved (e.g. over hearers - who hear the utterance but are not addressed). It also concerns those who are mentioned in utterance. (see Levinson, 1997: 54-96). In English, this is generally, concerns with pronouns. In most elegies, there are speaker and addressee where the second is the dead. In such situations the dominant deixis is "he", "you" and to some extent "I" and "we". Psychological factors play a vital role in the use of "you" and "he" and the controversy of presence and absence sometimes direct the speaker and form his mind concerning this matter. Furthermore, the conversational act in poetry is imaginative and the poet is directed by his imagination and memory when he deals with such situations.

In Milton's "Lycidas" which is an elegy written after the death of his friend Edward King – who was drowned in the Irish Sea before he achieved his full potential – Milton identifies himself with "Lycidas' " death, see (Bush, 1962: 86-89). He uses personal deixis to carry out this mission and it is highly functional in expressing the main theme of his poem. And since person deixis is a process whereby words and expressions rely absolutely on context (<http://www.lingualinks>), he employs it in certain situations where the events are in their highest peak and the context is flexible enough to give way to deixis to work in a proper manner. Moreover, deixis cannot be fully interpreted and understood unless one is aware of the fact that "it is a reference by means of expression whose interpretation is relative to the (usually) extra linguistic context of the utterance" (<http://www.wikipedia>). The controversy of presence and absence, proximity and distance shows itself here and there in the poem and represent a mediator between the near

living friend in the world of illusion - and the far dead friend in the world of reality. In other words, when the poet recalls some remembrances and casts his memory back, Lycidas becomes close to him sharing the same job and never departs him:

**For we were nursed upon the selfsame hill, ...
We drove a field, and both together heard.
What time the grayfly winds her sultry horn.
(Lycidas, LL. 23-28) ⁽¹⁾**

In the act of remembrance, Bodkin (1974: 6) argues that everything is modified and "the contemplated characters of things are broken from their historical setting and made available to express the needs and impulses of the experienced mind". Hence the poet achieves this by using the inclusive (we) to show Lycidas' close relation to him, for deixis identifies "objects, person... in terms of their relation to the speaker in space and time". (Palmer, 1984: 6).

In the world of reality the poet announces a sharp cut with inclusive (we) and he turns to the exclusive where the addressee is not included:

**Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.
(Lycidas, L. 193)**

In the last line of the poem where reality is dominant and the world of fantasy is absent, the poet believes in the fact that the living must go on and the dead has no more hope of accompanying them. The person deixis (thou) and (he) deepens the controversy of proximity and distance and presence and absence in so far subjectivity plays a vital role in this matter for "deictics are always subjective in the sense that they can be interpreted only with reference to the speaker" (Allwood, 1977: 119). Again, it is not an easy task to talk about this matter "for the simplicity of these forms disguises the complexity of their use" (Yule, 1995: 10). The poet

(1) All the lines of Milton's Lycidas are taken from Hughes, 1975.

uses (thou) five times when he addresses Lycidas. He addresses him as if he were alive and standing in front of him or at least is not out of his sight ; now standing at the shore ; guarding every place and person where death is incapable of preventing him from playing an active role ; now suffering the harshness of death;

**But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!
(Lycidas LL. 37-38)**

In another moment of contemplating where his friend is in the endless sea, he addresses his friend as if he could see him:

**Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit's the bottom of the monstrous world'
(Lycidas LL. 157-158)**

In the world of illusion, the poet addresses his friend and asks him to answer his inquiry as if he were alive and present. Even when he receives no answer, he cannot imagine or confess the death and absence of his friend. Instead he adds sanctity to him by addressing him as the guard of the shore:

**Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore
(Lycidas L. 183)**

In the world of reality when the poet returns from the illusive world, his friend becomes far and absent and (thou) gives the way to (he). He urges himself and other poets to lament Lycidas, the absent, the dead and the distal:

**Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
(Lycida, LL. 10-11)**

The poet doesn't address Lycidas face to face. He informs us that Lycidas will resurrect and will enjoy eternity in the other world:

**Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor,
so sinks the day star in the ocean bed,
(Lycidas, LL 167-168)**

And when he further develops the idea of Lycidas, immortality as a consolation, Lycidas becomes far and absent:

**With nectar pure his oozy locks helaves
(Lycidas L. 175)**

Meditating the world of reality, the poet accepts the fact that Lycidas can neither hear nor can he be seen. Hence, he sees that (he) is convenient to address his friend:

**At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
(Lycidas, L. 192)**

The controversy of presence and absence which results in proximity and distance which springs from the continuous movements between the world of illusion and that of reality is enriched by the successful use of some person deixis represented by the second and the third person pronouns in addition to (we).

In Tennyson's "In Memoriam", person deixis, specially "thou" and "he" are used interchangeably to express the same idea that is expressed in Milton's "Lycidas". In the world of reality where the addressor (the poet) is fully aware of his friend's absence (death) he addresses him as (he):

**He is not here ; but far away
The noise of life begins again
(In Memoriam S.7 / LL. 9-10)⁽¹⁾**

And again in another stanza, he addresses his friend as absent:

**Sleep, gentle winds as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love,**

(1) All the lines of Tennyson's In Memoriam are taken from Buckley, J. H. and George Benjamin Woods, 1965.

(In Memoriam S.9 / LL. 14-15)

In the moment of contemplation where things are formed according to the poet's dreams, the addressee (the dead) comes to be in front of the addressor as if he had come from an unpleasant journey:

**Thou comest, much wept for ; such abreeze
Compelled thy Canvas, ...**

(In Memoriam S.17 / LL. 1-2)

And:

Come quick, thou bringest all I love

(In Memoriam S.17 / L. 8)

In another moment of contemplation, fact and illusion are mixed together. The addressee, though in front of the addressor, yet he has changed and he does not seem as he was:

But thou art turned to something strange

(In Memoriam, S.41 / L. 5)

In the interchangeable use of "thou" and "he" proximity and distance direct the poet's use of this deixis ; it is sometimes accompanied with some other place deixis ; a matter which highly participates in expressing the poet's desired theme.

In Dylan Thomas' "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" the poet violates the rules of proximity and distance. He uses both the proximal person deixis "you" and the distal place deixis "there" in the same line:

**And you, my father, there on the sad height,
(Do Not Gentle into That Good Night, L 16)⁽¹⁾**

In such case, pragmatic rules give a space to psychological interpretation. The person deixis "you" which refers to a proximal addressee is used to refer to a distal one. Hence to say that he imagines his father as being close to him and as being far from him in his grave in the same time is quite convenient. In the same manner the controversy of life and death, presence and absence works.

Person deixis is also functional in W.H. Auden's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" when he addresses his dead friend who has disappeared and been distal and far:

**He disappeared in the dead of winter
(In Memory of W.B. Yeats, L. 1)⁽²⁾**

Then, in the world of illusion and remembrances he addresses his friend as if he were in front of him ; consequently he uses the proximal person deixis you:

**You were silly like us: your gift survived it all
(In Memory of W.B. Yeats, L. 32)**

2.2. Spatial Deixis:

Spatial deixis "concerns itself with the spatial locations relevant to an utterance" (Filmore, 1971: 35). Like person deixis, different factors play notable roles in expressing the desired or the intended meaning of the speaker. Besides, the locations can be those of the speaker and addressee. The most notable examples in English are the adverbs "here" and "there" where the first is near to the speaker and the second is far, if we take the deictic system of

(1) The line is taken from Ackerman, 1964.

(2) All the lines of Auden's In Memory of W. B yeats are taken from Replogle 1969.

proximity and distance into account. In literature, however, things take other directions for the use of spatial deixis, sometimes, violates the pragmatic rules where proximity and distance harmonize with psychological projection in the act of saying. The dead person is again presented as an addressee who has a natural existence in front of the speaker and close to him in the act of remembrance and as far and absent when reality works. The Proximal spatial deictic expression "here" in Lycidas is almost absent ; it gives the way for the distal "there" to work. The poet inquires the nymphs as –semi gods- creatures to save the drowned Lycidas where the place he assigns for the incident is far and distal:

**Had ye been there ... for what could that
have done?**

(Lycidas, L. 57)

The poet uses the distal place deixis "there" when he imagines Lycidas as entertained by saints in heaven:

**There entertain him all the saints above,
(Lycidas, L. 177)**

In "In Memoriam" Tennyson uses both forms of place deixis ; the proximal and the distal. When the poet comes to the house where his friend was alive, he addresses the house as he is standing by it:

**Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street
(In Memoriam, S. 7 / LL. 1-2)**

And then:

**He is not here ; but far away
(In Memoriam, S. 7 / L. 9)**

In another occasion the poet wishes his friend to be close to him even for an hour:

**Might I not say, "yet even here,
But for one hour, ...
(In Memoriam S. 35 / LL. 5-6)**

As soon as the poet accepts the fact of death, he turns to his friend's tomb; again it is far and distal; he dreams of planting a flower on it ;

**That if it can it there may bloom,
Or, dying there at least may die
(In Memoriam S. 8 / LL. 23-24)**

2.3. Time deixis:

Time or temporal deixis concerns itself with the various time involved in and referred to in an utterance. It includes adverbs of time where "now" and "then" are the most functional ones. In addition, there are other adverbs like tomorrow, yesterday, next day ... etc.

It, however, concerns with the time when the utterance or the encoding time, as Filmore terms, is made (see Filmore, 1971). In elegies where the speaker is the poet, he definitely breaks the rules of time for he is indulgent in an imaginative act. In the moment of contemplation everything is modified.

In Milton's *Lycidas* where deixis is highly functional in the real world the poet returns to; every thing says that *Lycidas* is dead and he never comes back:

**But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return.
(Lycidas, LL. 37-38)**

The poet is talking in a moment where present and its reality dominates over the poet's thought and past - with its illusion-departs. Again when the poet is fully aware of his friend's death and

the impossibility of his coming back, he turns to consolation represented by the promised immortality.

**Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more
Henceforth thou art the genius of shore;
(Lycidas, LL.182-183)**

In the last stanza, reality is fully dominating both the scene and the thoughts of the poet, there is no room for illusion. The poet uses now in two successive lines. He brings the image of the sunrise and sunset to express two ideas; the first is that sun is a symbol of fact where illusion is defeated and the second is that everything has an end not only Lycidas:

**And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropped into the western bay;
(Lycidas, LL. 190-91)**

In Tennyson's "In Memoriam" the same thoughts concerning reality and illusion, proximity and distance are repeated. When the poet returns to the world of reality, he knows that he is foolishly dreaming for his friend is dead and his body is cold:

**So, dearest, now the brows are cold
(In Memoriam, S.74/L.5)**

Then the poet, doesn't have but hope which seems rather impossible. He wants to be reunited with his dead friend even in a grave:

**If thou went with me, and the grave
Divide us not, be with me now
(In Memoriam, S.122/ L.9-10)**

2.4. Social Deixis:

Social Deixis participates in expressing social information about the speaker and the addressee; such as social status and familiarity. There are two major forms of this deixis which

pragmatists call T/V distinctions and honorifics. T/V distinctions are named after the Latin "tu" and "vos" (informal and formal inversions of "you") (see William, 1997). This distinction is given when a language has two different second-person pronouns. The varying usage of these pronouns indicates something about formality, familiarity and, or solidarity between the interactants see (Yule, 1995: 10-11).

Hence when someone speaks to a friend or a person who is socially equal to him he may use T, while V is used when a person talks to a stranger or a social superior person. In English, however, there is no such distinction but it finds its way in literature where all paths are open to different cultures and languages and where intertextuality with other nations' literature is regarded as an aspect of education.

In addition to the important role "thou" and "tu" play in personal deixis, they play a further complicated role in social deixis. This deixis needs a closer test for the poet uses both forms: the old (thou) and the modern (you) a matter which obliges one who writes on such a subject to offer a justification for such use. In English, as we know, there is no such T/V distinction (From French for (tu) and (vous) see (Yule, 1995: 10-11).

Hence social deixis, which "is a reference to the social characteristics of, or a distinction between the participant or referent in speech and events" (Levinson, 2006) plays a remarkable role in this respect. Milton "turned his hand early to the writing of verse, both in Latin and in English" (Abdul aziz, 2003: 7). Hence he was aware of such a distinction. His knowledge of Latin, however, helped him adopt this technique by which "the form of word used indicates the relative social status of the addressor and the addressee" (<http://www.wikipedia>). In the body of the poem, the poet uses (thou) five times to refer to Lycidas, while he uses this

deixis to refer to gods as well. Milton knows that he addresses a person of a higher status or he wants to make him so. And since English does not provide him with such distinction, he turns to the old and modern forms of this person deixis to carry out his intention.

3. Conclusion:

Since the controversy of death and life is a controversy of absence and presence, deixis is highly functional in this subject. In elegies poets wander between two worlds, the world of illusion when the ones whom they mourn over become close to them in the world of remembrances and the world of reality where they become far and distal. Hence, they use deixis to express this controversy. The person deixis "you", the place deixis "here" and the time deixis "now" are used to form the first world, while "he", "there" and "then" are used to refer to the world of death where everything is proximal in existence, place and time. The social deixis has also its notable role in showing the social status of the dead whom the poets mourn over. The use of the old form (thou) and the modern (you) expresses the sacral and high social status of the dead.

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دراسة تداولية للإشارات في بعض المراثي

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الملخص

تقدم هذه الدراسة تبيرات لاستخدامات بعض الشعراء للإشارات في مراثيهم وتقسم إلى مقدمة تعرض فيها بعض تعاريف الإشارات وأنواعها. وتعالج دور الإشارة الشخصية في بعض المراثي وتوضح كيف أن الإشارات الشخصية "أنت" و "هو" تستخدمان بصورة متبادلة حيث القرب والبعد، الحضور والغياب، تحددان بعالمي الوهم والواقع. كما تعالج أيضاً دور الإشارات الأخرى في هذا المجال كالإشارات المكانية والزمانية والاجتماعية وكيفية مساهمة هذه الإشارات في تشكيل تنقلات الشاعر بين الوهم والواقع حيث القرب والبعد والحضور والغياب تشكل تحركات هذه المراثي.