

A Formalist Criticism of Qase'eh Sermon¹

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Abstract

Formalist criticism is a new method of literary criticism that investigates the literary value of the text by putting the text into focus of attention and disregarding the external cases such as author's personality and social, economic and psychological issues. It also tries to examine the level of coherence and literary value of the text by highlighting its basic forms. This objective is attainable through investigating the context of the literary text and also its component elements such as vowels and consonants, syllables, imaginary forms and figures of speech. By applying the principles of formalistic criticism, the present study is an attempt to analyze the aforementioned elements in Qase'eh sermon of Nahjul Balaghah and to investigate the functions of each part in relation to the whole in a way to demonstrate the aesthetic aspect of the text to readers. It has been found that letters, vocabularies and sentences of this sermon

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are thoroughly coherent and the collection of phonemes and the specific arrangements of lexical items are in such a way to convey meanings beyond their literal meanings. Coherence and specific application of lexical items do not lend themselves only to the apparent features, but their figurative and metaphoric application illustrate novel meanings in line with sermon's objectives like avoiding Satan and his arrogance.

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