

# Minimalist poetry analysis

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Aram Saroyan, a leading minimalist poet in the 1960s, shows many aspects of the specific use of language of poetry in his complete collection. Poetry is exactly the right words put in exactly the right order, and Saroyan proves that he has mastered this concept. Aram Saroyan exhibits an exemplary use of the language to express thoughts in few, sometimes single, words, but his works tend to have a personal touch that excludes the reader from complete poetic enjoyment.

Saroyan manipulates words and language to fit his minimalist needs, and tends to completely throw out orthodox use of grammar and spelling while turning common colloquialisms on their heads. His misuse of grammar demonstrates that thoughts do not require entire sentences, or even coherent phrases, to completely express a thought. In one work he states the three words “ sky/every/day,” which, without verbs, punctuation, or even capitalization, expresses an entire thought: inevitability, or constancy, depending on positive or negative inferences made by the reader (19).

One of Saroyan’s most famous poems is one word: “ lighght” (31). This single word, not even spelled correctly, completely illustrates the concept of silent letters, the overlooking of sounds. The “ gh” in the correctly spelled word “ light” is not pronounced, and though we recognize it exists, we do not verbally acknowledge it, giving the impression that we do not appreciate it, that it is taken for granted. This impression can be compared to how we actually appreciate light. We know subconsciously that it is there, but do not fully register its presence.

Saroyan sees this, and by adding another silent part to the word, he has finally made us appreciate both the silent portion of the word “ light” and the

silence of its physical existence. Although Saroyan has cannibalized the English language and beautifully crafted completely new words and thoughts through such forceful manipulation, many of his poems contain meanings that are not entirely fathomable from a fresh point of view. For example, consider his piece “ A Poem to K. Q. ,” whose single line is “ I’m going to kill you” (53). Beginning from the title, who or what is K. Q.?

What is his/her/its significance to Saroyan, the implied speaker, and why would he want to kill it? Saroyan’s brilliance may be in the fact that the reader must ask himself these questions, and try to answer them himself. It may be that Saroyan is offering the reader an opportunity to write his own story that fits the context, but to the objective reader, it seems an entirely personal piece that has little to no real significance to the audience other than a curious statement that Saroyan makes about his feelings toward a certain object, its gender and humanity obscure.

Saroyan, though he has the tendency to create works that tend to be obscure, personalized, or entirely nonsensical, he does demonstrate his ability to use language to create vivid imagery. He appeals to an array of senses, and fabricates impressions in few words, but seems to focus on audial imagery. In one of his unnamed poems, he expresses audial imagery when he admires “ the noises of the garden among the noises of the room” (14).

He expresses another scene of distinct audial imagery in the unnamed poem that is the single observation of the “ incomprehensible birds,” which brings to mind an arboreal setting in which a crowd of avian mammals squawk and squabble in language unintelligible to people (70). Saroyan shows that with

his mastery of language and authority of poetry, though too personal at times, he creates poems with deep meanings and vivid imagery.