

Nostradamus and his quatrains

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Michel Nostradamus was a 16th century French physician and astrologer who had the figure of a prophet as perceived by his disciples. However, Nostradamus' predictions were usually muddled and obscure before so-called predicted event but crystal-clear after the event had occurred. He wrote four-line verses that were particularly meaningless until an event had occurred; hence, the verse of prediction was considered as “shoehorned” into a prophecy, which can be sometimes classified as retroprophecy of his quatrains or four verses predictions. Hence, within this study, the discussion aims to link the concepts of quatrains with Nostradamus' predictions.

Michel de Nostredame, born in December 14, 1503 and died in July 2, 1566, had been considered as one of the mythical seers of prophetic fields.

Nostradamus had been his popular name throughout ages, and with this, the subject of prophecies links with his name. The French so-called “prophet” by his disciples was significantly known for his poetic quatrains that depict some sort of indirect and unclear predictions. However, the magic of his statement only occurs right after its occurrence. Most of his prophecies

revolved in world state issues but try to conceal their meanings with the literary way in Nostradamus writings.

Overview on the Concept of Quatrains

From the historical perspective, Nostradamus' quatrains had been published in 1555, which he entitled Centuries. His book contained his visions and all his predictions about the future of the world. Nostradamus was able to conceptualize 10 chapters of the book with 100 quatrains present each except for chapter 7, which only contained 42 quatrains. In addition, the quatrains of Nostradamus did not indicate any signs of time or date; hence, the actual interpretations of these predictions became vague and somehow literary severed. The quatrains in his book had this jumbled characters and the arrangements of its meaning took a long time before being organized.

Most evidently, Nostradamus used the literary poetic style of four-lines in a verse or known as Quatrains. The most evident characteristic of his statements was the absolute use of figure of speech that made it hard for the reader to interpret the predictions initially; however, these statements somehow magically revealed their meaning right after the event had passed.

The quatrains of Nostradamus, according to the book of Cannon (1992), contained obscure and foreign words wherein beneath possessed severely unexplainable interpretations (4). Although some can be interpreted, most of Nostradamus quatrains had used the vague identities of the statements in order to conceal their true meaning for a while. Cannon (1992) added that most of Nostradamus' statements had not been interpreted in satisfactory manner so far (4). Nostradamus' quatrains were so vague that they could

have applied to many possible events, or symbolisms that could be convoluted with many possible interpretations.

Nostradamus was able to cleverly disguise the meaning behind his quatrains in order to confuse those attempting to interpret the prophecies before their fulfillment. As supported by Oliver (2004), Nostradamus' quatrains were hand-written in Old French, which could be very difficult to translate (11). Through these clever literary disguises, Nostradamus was able to veil the predictions prior to its occurrence; hence, saving the world from preparing prior to tragic events or future world disasters.

Out of more than 900 prophecies of Nostradamus, none of them comprised of date, which further complicated the interpretations of these quatrains. However, despite of the vague identities and thoughts of Nostradamus' quatrains, he had used some patterns that could be used as guides in understanding his quatrains. Although, most of the modern observers and readers did not considered the applications of Nostradamus' predictions towards the globally occurring events. As for the explorers of Nostradamus' predictions, they had considered the quatrains of Nostradamus' as predictions of the future; however, from the term itself, a prediction should first be relayed and interpreted prior to the occurrence of the events.

With the proposed argument of Diamond (2004), after the President Kennedy was shot, everyone jumped on the Nostradamus quatrain bandwagon and said that through his quatrain, he had clearly predicted the Kennedy shooting. However, this is not predicting since predicting means successfully calling a circumstance prior to its occurrence rather than using post-hoc

reasoning to explain something (161). From his supporting statement, the predictions of Nostradamus and the vagueness of his quatrains had somehow initiated the concept of retroprophecy or the revealing of truth to his prophecy only after its occurrence.

Despite of diverse critics on Nostradamus' quatrains and predictions it conceived, some of these were extraordinarily and undeniably accurate. According to Goldberg (1999), the style of predictions made by Nostradamus may or may not be intentionally being veiled for future assumptions of interpreters (218). The retrograde characteristics of Nostradamus' prophecy cannot be entirely considered as due to his intention of hiding it to the readers, since he had conceptualized this during his time and possibly without the knowledge of the changing French language.

However, arguments would rise from this reason, since Nostradamus did not only use Old French language to veil his prophecy but also his figurative way of expressing his predictions. Arguments on whether or not to consider the validity of Nostradamus' predictions aroused because of the retrograde characteristics of his predictions.

On the other hand, the mystery of these quatrains was more understood in relation with American society and, as against to the early translations, the European society. As the twentieth century entered in, some of the predictions of Nostradamus regained its clarity and application not with the European society, but most often to the United States (e. g. September 11, 2001 bombing, etc.).

As supported by McClaine (2000), Nostradamus had mentioned the birth of different personages who were born after his death and the rise of nations that were unknown or unthinkably despicably in his day (20). Nostradamus' predictions may even faced this character of revealing itself right after the scenario occurred; however, his quatrains had somehow considerably predicted most of the events occurring within the global context, most especially with the American society; hence, the quatrains of Nostradamus did provide significant means of hiding its meaning and further exposing it right after fulfillment.

Nostradamus and his Predictions

Many of Nostradamus' readers had long attempted to translate the prophecies in his statements. Unfortunately, even the original translations were not as accurate as it seems, and so far, no significant changes in the translations had been made.

Adding into the complexities of Nostradamus' quatrains, the Old French meanings had been modified by time for the last 400 years; hence, most of the words can no longer be applied to the translations of modern French. Two points were common to his predictions, which were the presence of allegory and deep literary disguise. According to Ned (1999), the predictions of Nostradamus utilized codes, patterns and oracles that had been camouflaged in references to the past and molded in to rhyme of verses (8).

Nostradamus simply wrote down the prophesies that arrived to his thinking; however, he was able to document it properly without further giving patterns via place, time, or events. From the complex meaning and diverse possible

interpretations from Nostradamus' predictions, it should have been easier if Nostradamus' indicated the dates of his predictions; however, as supported by Halley (1999), Nostradamus himself did not consider placing it for good reasons (8).

Overall, the vocabularies that Nostradamus used within his predictions were approximately 8, 000 words; however, some of these, despite of similar means, were used in differently in a poetical form. As supported by Thurston (2004), some of the predictions in his quatrains seem unarguable accurate, and particularly fulfilled in his own society and time (39). However, only few of Nostradamus quatrains would possess significant linkage to historical events. The sense of ambiguity and enigma still governed the multiplicity of meanings in his predicting quatrains.

Some of the skeptics would consider the predictions of Nostradamus by either problematic or significantly true. In the sense of being problematic, Thurston (2004) argued that some of the articles in Nostradamus' predictions were impossible to have been conceptualized or even grasped (e. g. aircraft vessels, guns, sky-scrape buildings, etc.) four hundred years before its actual occurrence (39). On the other hand, the same reason could be applied to justify Nostradamus' realistic predictions since there were no possible means to grasp these ideas except for truthfully seeing them through predictions (Desrosiers 46).

For the sake of interpretations, some critiques in this study would defend the presence of pattern in Nostradamus' predictions; however, Welch (2000), argued that Nostradamus' punctuations were wildly erratic, apparently

following no particular rule or pattern (7). There were no patterns employed in any of Nostradamus predictions in order to facilitate the revealing of his quatrains message only after the occurrence of the incident.

In some perspective, Popkin (1992) provided the statement that even Nostradamus claimed that his capacity to predict came as a divine providence from God, which allowed him to predict the coming future (182). According to his argument, Nostradamus had to ensure that the revelations of his quatrains will only occur after the events had already pass in order to avoid the change of predictions and the future.

If human civilization can to obtain control over these predictions, the chances of its failed occurrence will be likely since humans will eventually prepare prior to the event's occurrence (Frank 204). Somehow, Nostradamus had to ensure the retrograde character of his quatrains in order to protect predictions stored with it, and further prevent warnings from ever arriving to human thinking.

An Analysis to Nostradamus Four-Line Verses

The disguises of Nostradamus' quatrains involved various confusing parts because of some sort of punch lines that he had incorporated, which, if interpreted correctly, could provide a new picture of interpretation. In one example, Nostradamus' Quatrain 87 from Chapter 1 says (cited in Oliver 12):

Great symbols on fire in the center of the mainland

Will cause trembling in the towers of New York City

Two great skyscrapers will be continuously attacked,

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This is when Arethuse turn-around to a new course.

This has been one of the famous quatrains from Nostradamus' prediction, which gained its popularity during the bombing of 1993. Civilians and believers of Nostradamus' predictions had thought that this was the fulfillment of his statements; however, things went clearer during the September 11, 2001 attack in the World Trade Center twin towers. According to Oliver (2004), quatrain 87 refers to the World Trade Center as the French Old English suggest, " Enno-sigee", which connoted enno as great one and sigee as standing silent; hence, depicting the great ensigns of the New York skyline (12).

After the event had occurred, the statements from media repeatedly reported the downfall or incident of the symbols of American capitalism or in translation, the great ensigns or symbolisms (Ward 117). Lastly, the Arethuse in the last statements of Nostradamus' prophecy did not actually appeared in the modern context of French language, but rather considered to be the Old French language.

From etymological analysis, Arethus could be translated to Aerthuse and if interpreted right, " Are" should mean air, while " thuse" should mean tubes. If these words were translated, it could somehow mean " air-tubes" or " air-vessels", which if interpreted with the statements, " this is when Arethuse turn-around to a new course", could mean the aircraft that changed its course to hit the twin towers during the September 11, 2001 disaster (Oliver 12-13). Hence, as for the thesis of this study and with this statement analysis, the predictions of Nostradamus could be composed of vague and

unclear statements; however, upon the fulfillment of events, these prophecies revealed their meaning to the readers with correct interpretations.

This was only one of the many prophecies of Nostradamus that provided a significant character of being “retroprophecy” or revealing of predictions after its fulfillment. Ironically, Nostradamus distributed his Centuries of 1955 in order for men to possess basis that these significant global events were destined and already plotted, but clearly not to warn or save humanity from the impending disasters and conflicts that future had in store for human civilization.

Conclusion

In response to the thesis of the study, Nostradamus had indeed utilized a retrograde feature for his quatrains or four-line verses in order to hide the predictions from humans preventing them to possess warnings and prepare for the upcoming future. Evidently, Nostradamus purposely disguised and used Old French in order to conceal the meanings, provide multiple interpretations, and hide the actual predictions of his quatrains. However, after the fulfillment of the given statement had been fulfilled, the events were being revealed to human minds. Scholars had suggested possible patterns in his quatrains that may hold access to deciphering his predictions; however, so far, little portions of success had been made due to the complexities his quatrains.

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