



University of Tehran press

# Research in Contemporary World Literature

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p-ISSN : 2588-4131 e-ISSN: 2588 -7092

## A Study of Jean Cohen's Theory of Figures of Speech and its Adaptation in the Language of Classical Persian Poetry

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### Article Info

### ABSTRACT

**Article type:**

Research Article

**Article history:**

Received: 18 March 2022

Received in revised form: 10

June 2022

Accepted: 16 June 2022

Published online: 01 August  
2023

**Keywords:**

contradiction, figures of speech, Hafez' poetry, Jean Cohen, language of Persian poetry, oxymoron.

Jean Cohen has attempted a thorough study of the figures of speech founded on contradiction from a logical and semantic point of view in a long and difficult article titled "Theory of Figures". His views on figures of contradiction can be fruitfully applied to Persian poetry with its plentiful and rich contradictory expressions inherited from mystical literature and culture. In the current study, and in the first step, the main core of Cohen's theory is explained and then the definitions of figures are compared precisely with their Persian counterparts and examples drawn from Persian poetry and especially those of Hafez. This comparison has been done by passing from the lexical and syntactic structures to the deep structures of the figures. On the other hand, based on Cohen's theories about contradiction grades, a wide range of logical and linguistic constructions can be developed to explain all kinds of contradictions and contrasts. The findings of the research not only confirm the general appropriateness of Cohen's theory to study the contradictional figures in Persian poetry but also it shows that the unknown dimensions of these figures require to be restudied in detail by developing a comprehensive and appropriate model. Cohen's focus is more on several types of literary figures, whose definitions and names in modern French are not necessarily exactly the same as their correlates in Persian literature. This has added to the problems of understanding the Persian translation of Cohen's article especially since there are two or more different terms for each figure in the Persian language. Therefore, in order to solve this obstacle, instead of getting involved with the different terms of these figures in both French and Persian languages, we have focused more on the definition and formation of figures and finding concrete evidence and examples. According to Cohen, although the concept of semi-contradiction is not accepted from a logical point of view, there is undoubtedly a difference between the complete contrast of "black and white" and the semi-contradiction of "white and gray" or "black and gray". Therefore, he tries to show different degrees of contradiction in his theory of figures by presenting examples such as "white sunset" in Mallarmé's poem against "white night" or "discolored light" in Baudelaire's poem against "black light" or "dark light". It is thus established that in the language of poetry, we can acknowledge weak or middle contradictions. The contestation is then pursued in Persian literature to find whether examples of semi-contradictions or weak contradictions could be found in Persian poetry. Through exploring Hafez's poetry, it is conspicuously realized that there is a very strong tendency to create some kind of oppositional structure throughout his sonnets; however, it is obvious that these oppositions cannot be made of strong contradictions in all the verse lines of a sonnet, and, depending on the meaning, sometimes elements whose degree of opposition is less severe are used.

**Cite this article:** Amini , Mohammadreza. " A Study of Jean Cohen's Theory of Figures of Speech and its Adaptation in the Language of Classical Persian Poetry". Research in Contemporary World Literature, , , 2023 28 (1), 93-117. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/jor.2022.326511.2183>



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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/jor.2022.326511.2183>

Publisher: University of Tehran Press.