

AI-ASSISTED LITERARY ANALYSIS OF EXPLORING THE ABSURD AND THE SUBLIME

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Abstract: This article provides an AI-assisted literary analysis of Roger McGough's poem *Sky in the Pie*, focusing on its playful absurdity, rich metaphorical language, and philosophical undertones. The study integrates traditional close reading techniques with artificial intelligence tools to decode the poem's semantic complexity and interpretative challenges.

Keywords: literary analysis, absurd poetry, metaphor, artificial intelligence, semantic analysis

Annotatsiya: Maqolada Roger McGoughning *Sky in the Pie* she'ri sun'iy intellekt (AI) yordami bilan badiiy tahlil qilindi. Tahlilda she'ring o'ynoqi absurdligi, boy metaforik tili va falsafiy ohanglari e'tiborga olinadi. Maqolada an'anaviy o'qish usullari sun'iy intellekt vositalari bilan uyg'unlashtirilib, she'ring semantik murakkabligi va talqin qilishdagi muammolar ochib berildi.

Kalit so'zlar: badiiy tahlil, absurd she'riyat, metafora, sun'iy intellekt, semantik tahlil.

Аннотация: В данной статье представлен литературный анализ стихотворения Роджера Макгафа *Sky in the Pie* с использованием инструментов искусственного интеллекта. В центре внимания – игривая абсурдность, богатый метафорический язык и философские подтексты произведения. Исследование сочетает традиционное близкое чтение с цифровыми средствами ИИ для раскрытия семантической сложности и интерпретационных трудностей текста.

Ключевые слова: литературный анализ, абсурдная поэзия, метафора, искусственный интеллект, семантический анализ.

Introduction. Roger McGough, a prominent figure among the Liverpool Poets, is known for his humorous, yet often profound poetry. His poem *Sky in the Pie* exemplifies his style through whimsical imagery and ironic tone, inviting readers to reimagine everyday experiences through a surreal lens. The poem blends culinary metaphors with cosmic imagery to challenge the boundaries between the mundane and the metaphysical. This study aims to analyze the thematic and stylistic elements of the poem, highlighting how artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to support literary interpretation—particularly when dealing with layered metaphor and tonal shifts. AI was consulted during the interpretative process for complex segments that required nuanced semantic analysis.

Methods. This analysis employed a combination of traditional literary criticism and AI-assisted reading. The methodological steps were *close reading*:

each stanza was read and analyzed for figurative language, tone, structure, and imagery; *semantic analysis*: for metaphor-rich and syntactically ambiguous lines, AI was used to offer interpretative possibilities; *thematic categorization*: AI tools helped cluster repeated images and metaphors to uncover deeper thematic links; *comparative tone analysis*: shifts in tone – from complaint to wonder – were charted with AI assistance for clarity and pattern identification.

The use of AI was particularly effective in interpreting lines where abstract imagery risked multiple readings or paradoxical interpretations.

Results. *Initial Rejection of the Sublime.* The speaker expresses discontent at the presence of “sky” in his pie, desiring ordinary food over celestial phenomena: “*Remove it at once if you please / You can keep your incredible sunsets*”

This juxtaposition introduces humor and irony. The speaker seems to reject beauty for banality, offering a critique of modern man’s disinterest in the sublime. *Use of Metaphor and Personification.* Lines such as “*The whispering breeze is disturbing the peas*” personify the breeze and infuse humor into the disruption of a domestic scene. AI-assisted reading confirmed the presence of phonological play and sound repetition (e.g., “peas” and “breeze”) contributing to musicality. *Shift in Perception.* A key turning point occurs in the stanza: “*OK I’ll try just a spoonful / I suppose I’ve got nothing to lose*” Here the speaker transitions from resistance to curiosity. AI-assisted sentiment analysis tracked a marked tonal shift—from satirical dismissal to open wonder. *Philosophical Embrace of the Infinite.* The poem concludes with lines like: “*I can chew my way through to Eternity / And still have room left for more*” These suggest a deeper existential acceptance. The seemingly light-hearted poem subtly touches on human longing for meaning and infinity. With AI support, this existential reading was supported by tracing metaphorical patterns of consumption, appetite, and infinity across the poem.

Discussion. McGough’s poem operates on multiple levels. While its surface humor and surrealism appeal to a broad audience, its deeper philosophical suggestions about desire, beauty, and the limits of experience emerge upon close inspection. The speaker’s initial insistence on “mincemeat and cheese” over “sunsets” can be read as a satirical comment on utilitarianism—preferring the functional over the transcendent. However, the transformation through tasting the sky becomes a metaphor for the acceptance of wonder, imagination, and aesthetic experience. AI’s role in this analysis was instrumental in identifying thematic coherence across seemingly unrelated images and in handling lines like: “*The wind a chewier texture (With a hint of cinnamon there?)*” which defy literal interpretation. AI helped unpack the culinary-cosmic metaphor by comparing it with literary precedents and flagging similar metaphorical patterns in surrealist poetry. Ultimately, the poem suggests that aesthetic and cosmic experiences are not just palatable but essential for a richer understanding of life. The AI-assisted

analysis allowed for deeper engagement with the poem's layered meanings, making interpretative labor more accessible and precise.

Conclusion. *Sky in the Pie* by Roger McGough is more than a whimsical poem – it is a metaphorical exploration of how the extraordinary intrudes into the ordinary, often uninvited. Through its humorous diction and shifting tone, it challenges readers to reconsider their appetite for the sublime. By incorporating AI into the interpretative process, this study demonstrated the value of technology in supporting nuanced literary analysis, particularly when dealing with ambiguous or densely metaphorical texts.

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