



Style and Stylistics

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Foregrounding, linguo-stylistics, literary stylistics, isotopy.

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ABSTRACT *Language and style never moves beyond a concentration on the supremacy of words. Style is a distinctive way of writing literary texts whereas Stylistics is the interpretation of texts from a linguistic perspective and has a long and often illustrious history forming parts of some of the most important monuments of literary studies, dating back to Aristotle's Poetics. In spite of its long tradition of importance, stylistics has been relegated to a minor role over the past few decades, for reasons that are multifarious, but most saliently include the augment of critical theory and the dominion of Chomsky's linguistics. The lexico - syntactic patterns and choices, the phonological, morphological and graphological devices are the main stylistic elements that trigger and play important roles in passing the intention of the writer across. This article is an attempt to elucidate and depict that style is effectively manipulated in ways that signal it as different from 'ordinary' language by stylistically analyzing a poem by Robert Graves.*

Stylistics comes from French *Stylistique* which means 'instrument for writing'. Stylistics can be described as the study of style of language usage in different contexts say, the language of advertising, individual authors, etc., or the language of an era in time, all concerned with a particular situation. The word 'style' has been derived from Latin *stylus* - a stick made of material for writing and style is generally used in literature, behavior, linguistics and other fields of human activity. A group of linguists and literary critics began to develop a very significant aspect of textual study in Stylistics, called foregrounding theory which suggested that some parts of texts had more effect on readers than others in terms of interpretation, because the textual parts were linguistically nonstandard or specially ornated in some way, thus making them psychologically outstanding (or 'fore grounded') for readers. The Russian Formalists were, in fact, the first stylisticians. But unfortunately, their work was not understood in the west because of the effects of the Russian Revolution in 1917.

In linguistics, the subject of style may be applied as a communicative means for the embellishment of language and adding colouring to language. It is the individual manner of an author in making use of language through a system of special devices called stylistic device. The concepts of 'style' and 'stylistics' in language rest on the general supposition that within the language system, the same content can be programmed in more than one linguistic form. Working at all linguistic levels (e.g. lexicology, syntax, text linguistics etc.), stylisticians appraise both the style of specific texts and stylistic variation across texts. These texts can be literary or non-literary in nature. In general, style may be regarded as a choice of linguistic means; as departure from a norm; as repetition of linguistic forms and as comparison. Considering style as choice, there are a large number of stylistic factors that lead the language user to prefer certain linguistic forms to others and these can be grouped into two categories: user-bound factors and factors referring to the situation where the language is being used. User-bound factors include the speaker's or writer's age; gender; characteristic preferences; and provincial and societal backdrop. Situation-bound stylistic factors depend on the given communication situation, such as medium (spoken vs. written); participation in discourse (monologue vs. dialogue); attitude (level of formality); and field of discourse (e.g. technical vs. nontechnical fields). With the stipulation that such stylistic factors work simultaneously and control each other, the effect of one stylistic factor on language use provides a supposed one-dimensional variety. Drawing on this methodological notion, stylistic research has identified many correlations between specific stylistic factors and language use. For example, noun phrases tend

to be more complex in written than in spoken language in many speech communities, and passive voice occurs much more frequently in technical fields of discourse than in non-technical ones.

According to I.R. Galperin, Stylistics deals with two mutually dependent tasks: The entirety of special linguistic means (stylistic devices and expressive means) to secure the desirable effect of the expression; study of certain types of text "discourse" which due to the choice and arrangement of the language are distinguished by the pragmatic aspect of communication. So depending on the school of thought there are: Linguo, Literary and Decoding stylistics. Linguo-stylistics is the study of literary discussion from a linguistic point of reference and is concerned with the language codes and their construction. Literary stylistics is to elucidate, interpret and evaluate literary writings as the works of art and Decoding stylistics can be presented in the following way:

Sender - message - receiver; Speaker - book - reader.

Stylisticians usually analyze a literary text using the apparatus of linguistics. It is, therefore, applied linguistics as it applies the tools and methodology of linguistic description and lays claim to a place within literary criticism. The corpus of criticism is made of description, interpretation and evaluation. If we take a metaphor:

Come, we may burn daylight, ho!

We have to know that daylight is the object of burn but in literal sense it cannot be burnt. It is only after deducting such information we construct a non literal meaning (e.g. 'we are wasting time') for the line. So Stylistics, by starting with linguistic facts, relates description to interpretation which is the core of the critical activity.

Stylistic analysis of a text may become possible if it is dealt at phonographic as well as morphological level. The phonographic level study of a text involves analysis at the phonetic level and graphic level. The stylistic approach to an utterance is not confined to its structure and sense but its sound. The sound of most words taken separately will have little or no aesthetic value but in combination with other words that word may acquire a desired phonetic effect. The phonemic structure of a word proves to be important for the creation of expressive and emotive connotations. The acoustic form of a word foregrounds the sounds of nature, man and inert objects, emphasizing their meaning as well by the means of literary devices like euphony, alliteration, rhyme, metre etc. At the graphic level, analysis may be done with reference

to all changes of the type (italics, capitalization); spacing of graphemes (hyphenation, multiplication) and of lines. Italics are used to single out epigraphs, citations, allusions etc. serving the purpose of emphasis and capitalization is used in personification making the text sound solemn and elevated. Intensity of speech is transmitted through the multiplication:

"Alllll aboarrrd!" - Babbit Shrieked.

Hyphenation of a word suggests the rhymed or clipped manner in which it is uttered:" e.g. "grinning like a chim-pan-zee" (O'Connor)

The morphological level of stylistic analysis includes morphemic foregrounding to add rational, emotive and communicative implication. Morphemic repetition involves repetition of a morpheme, both root and affixes stressing on contrast, negation, smallness in words with the help of different affixes: anti, -ling, -ette etc.

E.g. "She unchained, unbolted and unlocked the door. (A. Bennett)

Extension of the normative valency causes the appearance of occasional words (new, unique and logical in form and morphemic structure) and adds emotive and evaluative connotational meaning in degrees of comparison of the occasional character:

"I love you mucher! Plenty mucher? Me toer!" (J. Br.)

Here is a stylistic analysis of the poem 'Flying Crooked' by Robert Graves:

The butterfly, a cabbage white,
(His honest idiocy of flight)
Will never now, it is too late;
Master the art of flying straight,
Yet has---who knows so well as I?-
He lurches here and here by guess
And God and hope and hopelessness.
Even the aerobatic swift
Has not his flying-crooked gift.

- Title: It is an 'animal poem' describing the flight distinctiveness of a butterfly. The word 'flying' has positive connotation whereas the word 'crooked' has a negative connotation thereby adding an evaluative slant by calling the butterfly's flight "crooked".
- Syntax: Line 1 of the poem has an embedded clause in it and the phrase 'a cabbage-white' describes the peculiar colour of the butterfly. Later in the text, the flying-animal isotopy is taken up again when the butterfly's manner of flight is compared and contrasted to that of "the aerobatic swift". "Flying straight", in contrast, is termed an "art" and clearly marked as a positive opposite to "flying crooked". Line 3 consists of a set of two adverbs 'never now' in sequence and serves as a good example of al-

iteration with repetition of -n- consonant sound. It is a head rhyme as the first letters of words are the same. The line 6 and 7 of the poem indicate the syntactic break that is suggestive of the flight of the bird. The syntax indicates tentativeness of tone and line 8 consists of an adverbial phrase 'hope and hopelessness' which is contradictory in sense. And "yet" in line 6, though less noticeable at first, increasingly foregrounds certain positive qualities in the butterfly's way of flight, which is also a way of life. Already in line 2, the butterfly's "idiocy of flight" is accompanied by "honest", an unexpectedly positive term. In line 7, the butterfly is granted a "just sense of how not to fly", and when the speaker finally compares the butterfly and the swift, the concluding oxymoron of the butterfly's "flying-crooked gift" surprisingly privileges the butterfly's erratic behavior over the mastery and craftiness of the swift. Over all, the poem's strategy is to reverse the 'natural' value judgments inbuilt in expressions like crooked, straight, art, etc. Most of the lines of the poem contain semantic or rhythmical stumbling blocks, reversals, and inconsistencies, imitating the unpredictable nature of the butterfly. For instance, line 2 is not linked either syntactically or isotopically to its preceding framework. Line 9, is a metrically fluid line which formally imitates the elegant and smooth flight of the swift.

- Lexis: It is the stock of words in a language or the level of language consisting of vocabulary, as opposed to grammar or syntax. A close look at the collocation indicates the habitual concurrence of a particular word with another word(s) with a frequency greater than chance. The examples of collocation used in the poem are: Honest idiocy (opposite words); here and here (instead of here and there); an incoherent polysyndetic list at the reader: "by guess/ And God (with mystery involved) and hope and hopelessness; flying crooked (classifier).
- Mode of Narration: The first-person narrative "I" is in effect in Line 5 when the poet is placed directly within the situation by identifying himself with the butterfly. It indicates that the speaker is not at all interested in a "neutral", objective or logical account of the behavioral patterns of butterflies. The butterfly is referred to not by the normal neuter pronoun but by "he", a rhetorical strategy that personifies the animal and makes it the speaker's counterpart. Interestingly, the speaker then fails to specify more overtly what, for him, the flying-crooked gift might be. Indeed, it is this gap that makes Graves's poem so inspiring and thought-provoking.

So it may be said that though style has several connotations, the word stylistics makes sense and is useful in referring to an enormous range of literary contexts, such as John Milton's 'grand style', the 'prose style' of Henry James and 'ballad style' of classical Greek literature, etc. In addition, stylistics is a distinctive term that may be used to determine the connections between the form and effects within a particular variety of language. Therefore, stylistics looks at what is 'going on' within the language and what are the linguistic links that the style of language reveals.

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