

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE POEM “LOVELIEST OF TREES, THE CHERRY NOW” BY A.E. HOUSMAN

Ashique Ali

Senior English Language Teacher, The Punjab School, Khayaban e Jinnah Campus, Lahore

Email: ashiqali34564@gmail.com

Abstract

The current study is about the stylistic analysis of the poem “Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry Now” by A.E. Housman. The basic purpose of this study is to investigate the writing style of Housman in the poem. In the current study, qualitative research method has been used for carrying out the stylistic analysis of the poem where the analysis was carried out on graphological, morphological, phonological, semantic and pragmatic levels by employing various literary devices. The message of the poet has been explained explicitly. Assonance, consonance and alliteration have been used to create a deep effect on the reader.

Key words: *Nature, Cherry trees, nostalgia, life, Easter.*

Introduction

Style is a specific way of expressing ideas and thoughts. In the method of representing a literary work, style suggests a specific creative method of presentation of work of literature (Aftab, Shabir, Khan & Khan, 2024). In addition, when style is brought to writing it is writer's individual and unique manner of writing through, they are different from others. Each literary writer bears a distinguished writing style. Style not only differs the writer from others but also differs from other piece of literature.

Style is the fundamental trait of writing while expressing any genre of literature (Mukhtar, 2017). It is because style is the particular and distinctive way of presenting ideas that a writer adopts which makes the writers different in their writing. Ali et al. (2016) stylistics is derived from the word “style” and style is derived from Latin word “Elocutio”. This analysis will be structured into three sections, exploring the semantic, syntactic, and phonological aspects of the poem to offer a comprehensive understanding of its meaning. Al-Shara and Alseid (2025) have explored the comprehensive aspects of stylistic analysis like semantic, syntactic, and phonological structures of the poem “After Apple Picking” by Robert Frost.

Style refers to the form and structure, model and how the words are combined to formulate a verbal or written sentence (Leech, 1969). According to Widdowson (1975) a lot of researches have been embedded to investigate the real tendencies of an author and the true main ideas of the literary works of the writers by using the literary criticism. Leech and Short (1981) says that the style can be defined as using lexical items in a specific context to describe a particular phenomenon. In addition to it, they define style is just like a dress to be used for our thoughts to beautify them and a way of conveying the writer's or speaker's ideas, thoughts and messages to their reader or listener. According to Whales (1981) style is a contextual scenario that is different to different people and in the same way it varies from one context to another. More about the style of a literary text, Whales argues that it is the similar portrayal of similar theme in the different contexts.

According to Ra (2008), on the basis of stylistics, literary critics use the critical methods so that can criticize and to resolve the complex issues of a piece of literature. Critics build a bridge between the linguistics and literature by applying the stylistic approaches with help of analytical tools that fulfill all the language expressions like lexicography, morphology, phonology, prosody, syntax etc. According to Simpson (2004), the central role of stylistics is

to correlate the analysis of linguistics and literary criticism. According to Wales (1989), the aim of stylistics is portray the standard structures of a literary work to highlight the importance of work according to its function or to depict the analogy of literary works and linguistic characteristics wherever they are given importance.

The aim of stylistic analysis is to depict why and how the literary work existed in its similar meaning and what is the reason that the text is given value in its context (Halliday & Mathhiesse, 2004). Furthermore, Halliday (1964) says that in stylistic analysis the explanation of the text is one of the important aspects that establish the relation between two different texts that creates a new context. According to Schlovisky (1917), the writers of literary works tend to convey the common ideas in a very odd and unknown manner. He differentiates the two aspects of imagery; imagery is a way of practical thinking and to put the things in according to their types; and in a poetic sense imagery is way of visualizing an impression.

Stylistics is a branch of applied linguistics that deals the scientific analysis of the style of a text under the canon of linguistics and its theories. Therefore, stylistics deals with biodiversity of literary texts, especially with the style of writing. Stylistics is considered in present era embellished with linguistic qualities in its forms (Davy & Crystal, 1969).

According to Galperin (1971), stylistics is patterns and structures of a commonly shared language that incorporates in communication.

Style is defined as the primary level of linguistics, argued by Galperin (1971). It is because style is the basic approach that splashes a new thought to the every literary writer. According to Birch (1989), the boundary of the language and style remains same under the structure and patterns of words, as words wear contextual meanings; that's why, these are distinguished from common diction.

Study style is defined as the study of different feature of the languages and studying the style of a language is called linguistic variety (Haynes, 1989). Yule (1996) argues that style is just the changing of language in accordance with it use and context. Yule considers the manners more important in which the speaker or writer uses the language. Trasky (1997) also advocates the same school thought as Yule does that the use of language by a user in different contexts. According to Lawal (1997), there some feature of language that deal with writing style, phrases and sentences and linguistic properties that solidly bound with the thematic features.

Stylistics is considered as a critical tool that utilizes the results of linguistic science in the analysis of literary text at discourse level. British Contextualism is a different kind of tradition but same in thought presented by British linguists in 1930s. Stylistics or linguistic stylistics for the first time presented a mechanical and technological trend for the critical analysis the style of a text. For the establishment of basic ideas and different levels, there is a need of accurate theory for the study of style.

Stylistics is the sub discipline of linguistics that started in the late 20th century (Freeman, 1971). Stylistics is analytical approach of literary text which depicts the linguistic representation (Widdoson, 1975). According to Turner (1975), stylistics is branch of linguistics that deals with variant and complex usage of language. According to Crystal (1981), linguistics is field of study that covers and analyze language on the basis of scientific approach and stylistics is also part of linguistics that study the changes in language features. Stylistics is considered to analyze a literary text in light of linguistics (Short & Candlin, 1989). What makes this paper distinct is that many researches have been done on the other literary works but there is no research on "Loveliest of trees, the cherry now" on the basis of stylistic analysis. This paper covers the stylistic levels and literary devices of the poem.

Stylistics

Stylistics is defined as the field of linguistics that deals with literary texts to analyze the application of linguistic devices in a literary text. Hence, it is utilization of linguistics for analysis of literature (Semino & Short, 2004).

Levels of Stylistic Analysis

Here are the levels of stylistic analysis:

Graphology: It is the study of writing principles, especially spelling rules. According to Leech (1969), graphology goes to orthography.

Phonology: It includes the sound system of any language. It encircles rules of correct pronunciation and intonation. It tells that arrangement of sound system in English (Ofuya, 2007).

Morphology: It is the process of word formation – origin, affixation and gender and numbers.

Lexicon –Syntax: it deals with lexical items and word order in a sentence. Tellerman (1998) says Lexico -Syntax selections are gained by using devices like collocation, parts of speech and use of simile and metaphor.

ELEMENTS IN STYLITIC ANALYSIS

There are some elements of stylistic analysis:

Graphological devices

Punctuation: It deals with full stop/period (.), comma (,), semi colon (;), question mark (?), exclamation mark (!), hyphen (-), ellipsis (...), parenthesis (), asterisk (*) and capitalization.

Paragraphing: It includes combination of sentences having more than one idea.

Phonological Devices

Alliteration: It is a figurative device that shows the same sound at the beginning of words.

Consonance: the repetition of consonant sounds is called consonant.

Assonance: the repetition or resemblance of same vowel sounds in words is called assonance.

Morphological Devices

Affixation: It is the process of making new words by putting the morphemes at the beginning or at the end of root word.

Coinages: It is process of making new words by the existing words.

Lexico-Syntactic level: it deals with the sentence structure, arrangement of words, dropping pf certain segment of a sentence and use of unusual lexical items.

Grammatical Level

It deals with construction of a sentence with phrase and clauses. At this level diction, patterns of lexical items and how nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives and foregrounding have been used (Perveen, Hafeez & Shabaz, 2020).

Pragmatic and Discourse Level

It deals with the context of the conversation that is contained of a peculiar use of language in a certain situation. It explores that how a poet chooses the different linguistic choices and narrative style in a pragmatic and discursive level. It is very important to explain the hidden meaning (Perveen, Hafeez & Shabaz, 2020).

Introduction of the poem

The poem “Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry Now” has been composed by Alfred Edward Housman (1859). This poem is extracted from the collection of **The Shropshire Lad**. This poem is on the beauty of the nature and human life that is very short. Nature is very beautiful but human life is too short to enjoy it completely. The poet regrets that human life is very short to observe the beauty of nature. Here poet gives a biblical reference that human life is

seventy years according to The Bible. The speaker of the poet has spent twenty years of his life and the remaining years are just fifty years that are very short to enjoy the beauty of the cherry trees.

Themes

The most dominant themes of the poem is the themes the beauty of the nature. Nature's beauty is eternal as the Easter event comes after year by year. The second theme is the nostalgia of the poet that he regrets for the past years of his life. He has very short period life to enjoy the beauty of the cherry trees. He has only fifty years left to overjoy the nature. So, here brevity of life has been discussed.

Methodology

This study is based on the qualitative method. The poem "Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry Now" has been selected for the stylistic analysis. This poem has been analyzed at the graphological, phonological, morphological, semantic and pragmatic and discourse level.

Stylistic analysis of the poem "Loveliest of Tree, the Cherry Now"

According to graphological level, this poem is consisted of commas and full stops.

Commas: This poem is consisted commas for six times. Comma is a little pause in any written text or spoken speech.

Is hung with bloom along the bough,
Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
Fifty springs are little room,

Full stop: full stop shows the completeness of any talk. There three full stop in this poem.
Wearing white for Eastertide.

It only leaves me fifty more.

To see the cherry hung with snow.

Caesura: Caesura can be defined as the metrical break or pause in a verse when the poet ends a phrase and begins another phrase. It can be a comma, slash etc.

Line 1: Loveliest of trees, the cherry now

Enjambment

Enjambment is poetic technique used by the poets when they leave the line incomplete. It also means run over or step over to next line from the first line.

Line 9:

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,

Line 11:

About the woodlands I will go

To see the cherry hung with snow.

End Rhyme: End Rhyme is used to make the stanza melodious. For example, "now/bough", "score/more", "go/snow" and "bloom/room"

Phonological level

Phonologically the poem is consisted of proper patterns of rhyme scheme, assonance, consonance and alliteration. There are two types of device; sound devices and literary device. The poet uses the musical device to make the poem more lyrical.

Rhyme scheme

Rhyme scheme is similar sounds at the end of the verses. So, the rhyme scheme of this poem is *AABB/CCDD/EEFF*. There are 12 verses in this poem.

Now, Bough

Ride, Eastertide

Ten, Again
Score, More

Bloom, Room
Go, Snow

Alliteration

It is a figure of speech. The repetition of same sound at beginning of words is called alliteration. There are four sound are repeated that are 'S' and 'W'

"**B**loom and **b**ough", "**w**oodland, **w**earing and **w**hite", "**t**en and **t**wenty", seventy, springs, and score"

Assonance

The repetition of vowels sounds in verse is called assonance. O sound is repeated in the poem.

Line 2: is, with= I , loveliest, trees, cherry= e

Line 3: and stands about= a

Line 9: since, things, in= I

Line 9: look, bloom= oo

Consonance

Repetition of the consonant sound in the verse is called consonance.

Line 3: hung, along = g

Line 4: and, woodland = d

Metrical Composition

The poem consists of 4 stanzas and 12 lines. The meter of a poem is its rhythmical pattern. This pattern is determined by the number of stresses, or beats, in each line. This poem is composed in **Iambic tetrameter**.

Iambic: a foot of poetry that follows the pattern of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

Tetrameter: a line written in tetrameter (tetra=4) will be of four feet and eight syllables.

Is HUNG with BLOOM along the BOUGH,

Morphological level

The poem has been composed in a simple structure. Mostly the words are monosyllabic but there are some disyllabic.

Monosyllabic words

Cherry, now, is, hung, bloom, the, bough, and, ride....

Disyllabic words

Loveliest, woodland, Eastertide,

Every line of the poem has different number of words.

Stanza 1: 6,7,6,4,

Stanza 2: 8,5,7,6

Stanza 3: 8,5,6,7,

Lexico- Syntactic level

This level includes which lexical items and what kind of diction has been used in the text.

There are multiple lexical features have been used.

Lexical items	Stanza 1	Stanza 2	Stanza 3
Nouns	trees, cherry, bough, woodland, ride,	years, ten, twenty, seventy, springs,	things, fifty, springs, room, woodlands,

	Eastertide	score, leaves, fifty	cherry, snow
Verbs	is, hung, stands,	will, come, take, leaves,	look, are, will, go, see
Adverbs	Now, along,	Now, again,	Since,
Adjectives	Loveliest, wearing, white,	Three score, only, more	Bloom, little, hung

Literary devices

Personification: The cherry tree (wearing white for Eastertide). Here cherry has been showed as human being wearing the white for Eastertide.

Metaphors: Springs (years), look at things in bloom (making the most of things), snow (white blossoms).

Symbols: The cherry tree (youth and beauty), blooms (life and rebirth), Eastertide (death and resurrection), snow (coldness and death).

Tone: The tone of the poem is of Lighthearted, sorrowful and revitalized.

Themes: theme of nature is a towering in the poem. Beauty of nature has been given much importance. Beauty of nature is eternal. The other theme is of regret of the speaker that he has not seen the beauty of the cherry trees in his last 20 years. The third theme deals with brevity of human life. There is a reference of religious event Easter. At the time of this event the cherry trees are stood with full blossoms for Easter.

Imagery

Imagery is a figure of speech that makes and an image in the mind of the reader or listeners like trees, cherry, bough, woodland, Easter, spring and snow.

Is hung with bloom along the bough

Wearing white for Eastertide

I will go

To see the cherry hung with snow.

Findings

Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry Now is a simple poem by Alfred Edward Housman but deep in meaning. Housman composed the poem on nature and human being. There all the literary ornaments like rhyme scheme, phonological, graphological, morphological and pragmatic elements. The use of imagery and symbolism make poem more fantastic. Nature is abundance in the poem. It deals with pastoral, transience of life, rebirth of nature. Assonance and consonance make poem a lyrical master piece of the literary work. The poem proves that nature is long lasted but human life is so short to observe it. The tone of the poem is mournful because speaker has spent his twenty years of seventy that is the total age of man according to the Bible.

Conclusion

Loveliest of trees, the Cherry Now a very thought provoking poem by A.E Housman. The poet conveys the message to the reader that life is so short. The stylistic analysis explores that the poem is embellished with all the artistic ornaments like rhyme scheme, literary devices, themes of nature, transience, rebirth of nature and semantic and pragmatic meaning. One can get inspiration to spend life with all sort enjoyment in the company of nature.

This study just deals with stylistic analysis and explores the graphological, phonological, morphological, semantic and pragmatic level but researcher can analyze this poem on the basis of critical discourse analysis and symbolism.

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