

Stylistic Analysis of Robert Bridges' Poem "I Have Loved Flowers That Fade"

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Abstract

This paper aims at exploring Robert Bridges distinctive style in portraying themes, images, and figurative language in his poem "I have Loved Flowers that Fade". The present study proposes to make an exposition of a stylistic device in the poetry of Robert Bridges by applying stylistic analysis. The analysis depends on stylistic features underlying Robert Bridges poetry. The analysis takes up three levels: Lexis, figurative language, and graphology. Furthermore, Robert Bridges poetry is considered as a good example of Modern British poetry. The paper concludes that there is a relationship between distribution of some lexical items and themes of the poem. The figurative language of the poem focuses on certain literary devices such as personification, imagery, simile and metaphor. For example, visual imagery that invokes colors, shapes, or things that can be seen in the following line "Notes, that pulse with fire". Moreover, the frequent use of exclamation marks in this short poem is also visible.

Keywords: Stylistics, Robert Bridges, Lexis, Figurative Language, Graphology, Imagery poetry

Introduction:

Stylistics might operate as a tool for the literary critic. Stylistic analysis is an attempt to bridge the gap between linguistics and literature by using the analytical techniques available within the sub-discipline of language study known as stylistics. In the introduction to their book *Current Trends in Stylistics* (1972), Kacharu and Stahlk shed light on the general notion of stylistics :

The term stylistics is used for that area of linguistics which presents a theory and methodology for a formal analysis of a literary textfocus is on the language features of a literary text. The linguistic exponents are then 'structured' at various levels to contextualize the

text Also, literary style implies selection and ordering of various patterns. These may be phonological, syntactic or lexical, etc.

Purpose of stylistics is to analyze and explore language, and more specifically, to explore creativity in language use. Doing stylistics thereby enriches thinking about the language of the literary work. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, P:4) state that stylistic analysis has goals like "to show why and how the text means what it does and why the text is valued as it is ". The analysis functions in the light of stylistic consideration such as being concerned with uniqueness of the text under examination rather than its conformity to its kind and register as other types of text analysis may be concerned. Halliday (1964) emphasizes that stylistic analysis has its main components like interpretation, the relation of the text to other texts that form its environment. In her book, Masud (2007) highlights the relationship between modernity and stylistics stating that the starting point of modernity is defamiliarization. According to Schlovsky, writers attempt to change familiar language into unfamiliar. He differentiates between two aspects of imagery; "imagery as a practical means of thinking, as a means of placing objects within categories; and imagery as poetic, as a means of reinforcing an impression (779)". In this paper, our major concern will be to discuss Robert Bridges's, a well-known British poet, defamiliarization of the concept of happiness in his poem "I Have Loved Flowers that Fade."

2. Statement of the Problem

This paper attempts to approach Robert Bridges's poem "I Have Loved Flowers that Fade" from a stylistic point of view. The researchers intend to analyze the poem using the stylistic tools with a view to analyze the three levels: Lexis, figurative language, and graphology and make their meaning explicit. It is worth mentioning that stylistics, as a branch of linguistics, is beneficial to those who are teaching and studying English poetry in particular. Thus, stylists with their tools and methods of linguistics can help reach a logical and scientific understanding of the literary texts based on linguistic evidence.

3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the stylistics features of "I have loved Flowers that fade". It will focus on these features that are used to depict inner meaning and

themes in his poem. Also it will apply the stylistic framework to study the representation of lexis and figurative language. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- A. What are the various literary and rhetorical devices used in the poem?
- B. What are the recurring themes of the poem?

4. Methodology:

In this study, the researcher adopts the qualitative approach. Thus, the researcher carries out stylistic analysis to find out literary and rhetorical devices and their functions related to the theme of the poem.

5. Stylistic Analysis:

Stylistics is the use of linguistic elements to criticize the literary texts and it gives a thorough analysis because it has lots of elements and tools that can cover many literary areas (Peter 1995). Initial interpretation of "I Have Loved Flowers that Fade" comes solely as a consequence of looking at the words in the poem. Stylistic devices like Lexis, figurative language, and graphological elements in particular will be investigated. An examination of the lexical features, then, is perhaps a proper place to start with a more detailed linguistic analysis. How these stylistic features affect and contribute to the overall meaning of the poem will be investigated ahead.

5.1 Lexis:

The term lexis refers to "all the words in a language, the entire vocabulary of a language" (Caro and Mendinueta 2017, P:206). Lexical sets are characteristics of the poem's language, their relevance to the theme, the overlapping between them and how these lexical sets are related to a poem's style. In the stylistic analysis, some statistical aids are used to measure the repetition of some patterns and lexical distribution. Besides, the relation between words is stressed, e.g. synonymy, antonymy, etc. In Robert Bridges's "I have Loved Flowers that Fade," the lexical distribution of some lexical items has been traced out. To conclude whether these lexical items "word choices" support the theme of the poem or no, this distribution matters.

Things come and go in life. Thus, life has its ups and downs. People will experience things that will have ever lasted. There is no eternal smile, beauty, person, and love. However, there is no eternal sorrow as well. And there is an end for everything. All people were awesome, young at the beginning of their life but they become old people with gray hair at the end of their life. This poem represents universal themes such as life and death, beginning and end, growth and decline. The following table will show how lexical items represent these themes within the poem.

Losing love	Finding love
Fade (flowers)	Song
Flower	Ages
Air	Song
Die	Breath
Fire	Tender
Wither	Bloom
Unmemoried scents	Honeymoon
Death	Pulse of fire
Tomb	Spirit's desire

Figure 1: Lexical Distribution in the poem

4.2 Death lexical set:



Figure 2: Frequency of Death Expressions

Figure 2 shows the frequency of death expressions in this poem. One of the major themes in this poem is death which is an inevitable result and a natural phenomenon. For all the creatures including humans on this planet; there is no eternal life. In the poem, the speaker expresses the

death of feelings to portray sadness and parting lovers. The last stanza means to let a song go or die and not be afraid of anything, not be afraid of dying or whatever is coming in the way. The poet uses a group of lexical items that portray a metaphorical death image. This metaphorical death of his beloved foregrounds the poem starting from the second stanza till final one. "I have loved airs that die" here the speaker uses the verb die to indicate "lost love" that is the central theme of the poem.

In "My song be like a flower" and "My song is like air!" Bridges uses the comparisons of a song to a flower and air to portray the eventual end. Neither flowers nor breezes can last forever, just as a song cannot be sung forever. My song here can be his beloved. However, the speaker declares separation from his song by drooping the possessive pronoun " my," for example, " Die, song, die like a breath " .

4.3 Graphology:

Through the use of the "colon" and "Exclamation mark" in "I have Loved Flowers that Fade", Robert Bridges adopts a unique style in his writing. Punctuation marks are very important in his works, especially the colon which plays a distinguished role in his poetry in general. For example, "winter nightfall", he uses the colon five times. However, the use of the colon is not arbitrary. The poet has made the use of a colon to convey a certain message or to enhance a certain theme within the poem. It is important to highlight the reason of the overuse of the colon in Robert Bridges poetry.

Stylisticians assume that visual effects, mainly punctuation marks have a poetic use in poetry. There is the difference between conventional grammatical use and poetic use of punctuation marks. Punctuation features add aesthetic aspects to poetry and ultimately, these patterns of visual design "punctuation features" are related to certain underlying meanings and themes in the poem. To prove or negate this assumption and analysis, the punctuation features like colon and exclamation mark are as appended:

“With sweet memories scents”:

“A honeymoon delight,”

“A joy of love at sight,”

Normally, the colon is used to introduce lists; to introduce quotations, to join two parallel sentences; to connect general ideas with following explanation or sub idea, and to introduce a definition. In the three lines above, the colon is used here to mark shifting to something different that accompanies the subject. The poet compares his love to flowers that fade, and then describes the beauty of fresh flowers. The use of colon highlights this transition between withered "flowers" and "fresh flowers." The idea of the end and beginning presents here through the poetic use of punctuation features like colon. It means that people's happiness or love starts off small and eventually grows to a point where it is beautiful ... but then it dies.

Untermeyer (1920: 23) claims that the tone of this poem is very fanciful, treatment optimistic and classical. The poet uses this tone to allow the reader to understand that sometimes the end of something is not sad but a sign that something new must begin. For example, the word marriage is used in place of a "mixture" or "blending" to allow insight into the symbolism of flowers being a representation of people. Marriage is between two human individuals. I agree that the speaker's tone is optimistic but not in all parts of the poem, for example, "Rich hues have the marriage made". In contrast, the final stanza calls death moments. Use of exclamation points makes the tone of the poem despairing, melancholic and even sarcastic. All emotions and images described point to the speaker's feeling of despair. The poem quite literary portrays the poet's despair as it is phrased in the title "I have Loved Flowers that Fade".

Robert Bridges uses exclamation points four times in this poem. The functions of the use of exclamation points are to turn a simple indicative or declarative sentence into a strong command or reflect an emotional state like despair, amazement, sarcasm, and outburst. For example, the poet uses exclamation points to express his feelings towards life and death, especially in the Third Verse. The use of "!" is associated with poem despair tone.

“Dread not an airy tomb!

“Fly with delight, fly hence!

In the following lines, the speaker addresses his song by asking it to remain a flower or air. The function of "!" is to indicate strong feelings or a loud voice, the speaker is not talking rather he is shouting to his song "beloved". The exclamation mark indicates the intensity of emotion or loudness and can indicate the writer's astonishment.

“My song be like a flower!”

“My song be like air!”

4. **Figurative language:**

Figurative language is the language that has a metaphorical meaning and cannot be understood literally, and it avoids using direct and plain words (Stull 2001). In addition, Mays (2013) assert that the language of poetry is often visual and pictorial. Rather than depending primarily on abstract ideas and elaborate reasoning, poems depend more on concrete and specific words that create images in our minds. In “I Have Loved Flowers That Fade,” the poet uses maximum possible linguistic strategies to re-create images and pictures for its readers. It seems like portraying by words. The use of figurative language is much like foregrounding which in literary studies and stylistics, is defined as linguistic strategies that call attention to themselves, causing the reader's attention to shift away from what is said to how it is said. In lines ahead, the use of images and figures of speech like metaphors, symbols, similes, and their relevance to the themes of the poem will be discussed:

6.1 **Personification:**

Kennedy (1983: 487) stated that "personification is the attribution of a personal nature or character to inanimate objects or abstract notions, especially as a rhetorical figure". In the lines, “Fear not a flowery death” “Dread not an airy tomb!" the speaker is speaking directly to his/ her song in these lines that may mean "beloved" advising not to fear death as if it is a human who can listen and speak. This personifies the song in that the song is not capable of feeling fear. The reason for this personification is to give the song and flowers human characteristics while speaking directly to the song and flowers. “Beauty shall shed a tear". In this line the beauty is being personified to emphasize the true novelty of the song. When it is to die, Beauty itself will mourn for its loss.

6.2 **Simile:**

Simile is a figure of speech which is used to compare two unlike things often introduced with the word "like" or "as" (Dennis 1996 and Macmillan 1984). For example, "My song is like a flower" indicates that love and happiness start off small and gradually grow to reach a beautiful and pleasant period, but it finally dies and fades away. In this line "wither as a bloom" which is linked with the previous "die, song, die like a breath", these lines mean that one can go and live

free, and do not be scared of what will happen either living or dying. Nothing can make it impossible if you have the power to be in the right track. In addition, the miserable results cannot let you grow up unless you leave everything behind.

Imagery:

Imagery refers to the use figurative language to illustrate objects, actions and ideas in such a way that it links with the physical senses. Imagery naturally finds specific words that express the visual representations of ideas and actions in mind and soul. In addition, the term imagery is highly linked with mental images. For example, words “memorized” and “sweet” when associated with scents have an effect on perception and sense. The image depicting true feelings of love and describing it as a timeless relationship, especially in its beginning "with sweet memories scents," is a fine example of use of imagery by the poet. Visual imagery that invokes colors, shapes, or things that can be seen in the following line "Notes, that pulse with fire". In this image, the red color represents the spark of love even though this strong color will become ash after the period of time. Another example of imagery is “A joy of love at sight”.

6.4 Metaphor:

Metaphor is a general term for almost any figure of speech involving comparison; more commonly a particular figure of speech in which two unlike things are compared implicitly (i.e. it compares things with others directly) that is without use of singles such as like and as (Peter2002). Thus, metaphor means implicit comparison. Here, flowers are compared with people who departure, die, or cheat. I argue that cheating represents metaphorical death here:

"I have loved flowers that fade".

“I have loved airs that die”.

The controlling metaphor is so extensive that it dominates or organizes an entire literary work, especially poems. In this poem, we have a controlling metaphor regarding death, love, human relationships or nature.

7. Conclusion

The poem "I have Loved Flowers that Fade" is written, by Robert Bridges having three stanzas. There is a distinctive style in portraying images within the poem. This paper concludes that there is a relationship between distribution of some lexical items and themes of the poem. This paper also concludes that the figurative language of the poem focuses on the certain literary devices such as personification, imagery, simile and metaphor. The frequent use of exclamation marks in this short poem is also visible. However, the paper cannot provide crucial answers behind the use of this punctuation style; it only considered modest application of stylistic analysis.

The poet indicates that love is like a journey for readers. He also refers in his poem that there is a sappy love message with a clear ending that we have already read for years. His wonderful writing and burning passion delivers that this poem is like a magnificent masterpiece. In the first two stanzas, The researchers find the excitement of finding and losing love and how the writer uses figurative language to describe both finding and losing. On the other hand, the last stanza is full of positive energy that gives us a feeling to be happy and move on this means that people who are really happy have the ability to forget and forgive to find a new love.

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