

Stylistic Analysis of Robert Frost's Poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

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Abstract

This study purposes to explore Robert Frost's distinctive features in portraying figurative language, lexis and images in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". The current research suggests to make an exposition of a stylistic technique of Frost's poem by applying stylistic analysis which relies on stylistic features. Hence, the analysis depends on three stages: graphology, lexis and figurative language. Furthermore, what makes this study distinctive is the idealism of Frost's poetry in the sphere of Modern American poetry. This study points out a linkage between the given themes and the use of the lexical items in the poem. The figurative language concentrates on some literary devices in this study, namely, metaphor, symbolism, simile, imagery and personification. For instance, the clear personification positioned in the present poem is "He gives his harness bells a shake, to ask if there is some mistake"; aiding the horse with possession traits of bells and using a referring pronoun of a (He). Metaphor also operates a critical task in transmitting the overall notion of the theme, as seen in this poem which embraces the archetypes of death and life; Frost envisaged the idea of death into a simpler, but yet more approachable conception which is "sleep".

Keywords: Stylistics, Robert Frost, Qualitative Figurative Language, Graphology, Imagery, Lexis, Death, life

Introduction:

Literary critics depend heavily on stylistics as critical approach in order to critique and analyze literary works. They apply stylistics analysis to bridge the gap between literature and linguistics studies by using analytical tools that meet all the expressive aspects of language "phonology, morphology, prosody, syntax and lexicology (Ra, 2008, P.183). In addition, stylistics is a term used by linguistics devices that present a formal analysis for literary works and it concentrates on

the language characteristics of these works (Kacharu and Stahlk 1972). They also added in their book's introduction that literary style implies choosing and ordering of different forms which might be lexical, syntactical or phonological, etc.

The main aim of stylistics is to link "linguistic analysis with literary criticism" (Simpson 2004.3). The purpose of stylistics is to depict the formal patterns of works, to give the functional significance for the work interpretation or to show the relationship of literary works to linguistic features where these are considered important (wales 1989). Stylistics aims at analyzing and exploring language, more particularly, to find the creativity in language. Working and analyzing literary works may enrich thinking about the chosen language of these works. Halliday and Matthiesse (2004: 4) claim that stylistic analysis aims "to show why and how the text means what it does and why the text is valued as it is ". The analysis works in respect of stylistic consideration such as concerning with the uniqueness of the literary works under analyses and examinations instead of its conformity to its type and register as other kinds of literary works analyses may be involved. According to Halliday (1964), interpretation is one of the components in stylistics analysis, which employs the relationship of the literary work with other works that form its environment. Masud (2007) also added that the linkage between modernity and stylistics asserting that the essential idea of modernity is "Defamiliarization". As stated by Schlovisky (1917, 779), writers try to transfer familiar things into strange or unfamiliar. He distinguishes between two features 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". In this study, our work will be to debate Robert Frost's, an American poet, defamiliarization of the term "horse" in his poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". In this case, the poet is pretending himself as little horse.

Problem statement

This study approaches Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" through a stylistic viewpoint. This poem is intended to be analyzed by using the stylistics instruments with a way to find the three elements: figurative language types (personification, imagery, symbolism, hyperbole and metaphor), lexis and graphology, in addition to analyze the poem to make the meaning more obvious and comprehensible. Stylistics is considered as one of the linguistics branches that is valuable , helpful and beneficial to those who are particularly interested in poetry. Besides, a logical and scientific understanding of works may be reached by the stylists' devices, features and methods of linguistics.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this paper is to indentify and analyze the stylistics devices of "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". In a way, it concentrates on these devices used to show and describe implied meanings and features in this poem. Thus, it will use the stylistic framework to analyze graphology, lexis and figurative language types. This research aims at answering the following questions:

1. What are the figurative language types and stylistic features used in the poem?
2. What are the frequent themes used in this poem?
3. What are the lexical items that represent the themes of the poem?

Methodology:

Qualitative method is used in this paper to analyze the literary work. Hence, Stylistic analysis is carried out to reveal literary devices and figurative language types, and their tasks regarding the themes within the poem.

Stylistics

Stylistics is a critical strategy that uses the approaches and results of the linguistics subject in the analysis of literary works (Peter 2003: 203). In addition, the main aim of stylistics is "to show how the technical linguistic features of a literary work, such as the grammatical structure of its sentences, contribute to its overall meanings and effects" (Peter 2002: 203). The interpretation and analysis of "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" can be clear and obvious as a result of reflecting on and thinking of words in the literary work. So, Lexis, figurative language types, and graphology will be particularly explored and examined. An analysis and a close reading of the lexical items are suitable steps to begin with a more thorough linguistic analysis of the work. In addition, the affect and the contribution to the whole meaning of the poem by using these stylistic features will be studied ahead.

According to Tayagi (2015: 28) "Frost's poems create a memorable and pulchritudinous impression by the overwhelming presence of Nature". And so, Frost professionally applies the uniqueness of his language tools into merging the admirable simplicity of straight forwarding lexis and fashioning controversial proposition of life and death are considered universal themes casted by many poets before.

Stylistic analysis of Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening", will be achieved by studying and analysing three main aspects divided into as follows: Lexis, figurative language and graphology. Each single division will be discussed thoroughly within illustrations, indications and references from Frost's poem.

Lexis

Lexis means "all the words in a language, the entire vocabulary of a language" (Caro and Mendinueta 2017: 206). It is considered to be a distinctive pillar, structuring learning and teaching language, laying on voluminous and profound background of scholars and researchers enticing to include its functions into one collaborative definition. One of these scholars is Nordquist (2019) who stated that lexis refers to the words of language. It means "word" or "speech" in Greek. Lexical items are features of the poem's language, their significance to the various themes, the exchanging between themes and how these lexical items are linked to a poem's style. In stylistic analysis, the lexical distribution and the repetitions of some forms or

themes are measured by using some statistical aids that could be of big help for researchers in stylistics field. In addition, the relationship between the following terms is stressed such as: antonymy, synonymy, hyponymy and so on. In Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," the distribution of lexical sets has been classified and divided into two groups. This distribution concerns to sum up whether these lexical sets "word choices" provide the themes of the poem or not.

Frost's text had fortunately presented the universal theme of the binary opposition of life and death within a concealed technique read differently, but agreed upon among all readers. As it is known in nature there is no eternal life, so living in love or dark our life ends with death. The human long-lasting conflict between fulfilling the desirable temptations of dying still and between carrying on with life obligations was interpreted into this poem. Supporting the theme mentioned above, the lexis (word choice) engaged in the poem can be portrayed into two sets, as shown in the table (1) below.

Death	Life Obligations
Woods	Horse
Village	Thinking
Snow	Bells
Frozen lake	Shake
Farm-house	Mistake
Darkest evening	Promises
Flake	Miles
lovely	Stopping
Dark	Keep
Deep	Harness
Sleep	House

Table1: Lexical Distribution

Evidently, Frost's discussion of death and life was fruitful, lexically speaking, forasmuch as shown, death is presented metaphorically into the darkest evening of the year, and of easy wind and downy flake, read in the second stanza, a manifestation of the last settlement and the eternal relief of the shadowy end which is death. Meanwhile, life is represented in a horse giving his harness bells a shake as a resemblance of life intriguing matters and urgent incidents as exhibited

in the first line in the third stanza. The narrator being a carriage restrained by two antagonistic horses tearing him apart between the true desire of the last eye lid, and enduring life burdens.

One last portrayal was also conveyed at the very end of the fourth stanza, where the narrator's parallelism of life affairs with miles that must be taken by the narrator, before they come they finally come to sleep, the abiding sleep, death. Such binary oppositions shall be characterized into bold and yet, distinctive language putting a firm line between the two themes, and so was the choice of the employed lexis in this investigated poem, which supports the explained theme previously.

Figurative Language

According to Rohani, et al (2018: 1) "Figurative language is a language aspect in which an expression is stated in the opposite way than its usual way". In addition, it does not use direct words and could not be understood literally (Stull, 2001). It is asserted that the language of different poets is often pictorial and visual (Mays, 2013). Instead of relying basically on abstract thoughts and themes, poems rely more on particular ideas and words that compose various pictures in our minds. In "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," some probable linguistics strategies are used to organize images for the readers of poetry.

Figurative language is a stylistic device applied methodologically in order to examine and state the relationship between lexicon, and literature and language. It is more to be considered a key map of the antagonist genuine reflection, and personal aspect of what the literary work provides. This paper discusses the precise themes of life and death, conveyed into five main figurative language devices, branching into: personification, imagery, metaphor, symbolism and hyperbole. Each device shall be discussed thoroughly within references extracted from Frost's "Stopping by woods on a snowy evening".

1. Personification.

Paxson (1994: 1) states that "[literary] personification has long been taken for granted as the master trope of poetic language". It also means the attribution of characters to inanimate things (Kenndy 1983). Giving a non-living object features of a living object, figuratively, is the ultimate function of personification; to embrace a humane quality into non-humane creature in order to attain a deeper convention of the proposed theme.

Back to Frost's poem, the second stanza, first line reads: " My little horse must think it queer, to stop without a farm-house near". The antagonist is embodying his horse into a logical-thinking creature considering the odd and yet sudden stop in the woods at such dark and cold night, where no human would station there with the resting snowflakes, unless there was a problem urging them to. Whereas again, at the introductory line in the third stanza: "He gives his harness bells a shake, to ask if there is some mistake", aiding the horse with possession traits of bells and using

a referring pronoun of a (He), are all examples of personifications the poet used into the poem to enrich the literal perception.

2. Imagery.

Perrine and Thomas, (in Damanhuri, 2011: 9-14), declare that "imagery is a term presenting as a mental picture in a poem, where the readers can sense what the poem conveys". Imagery consists of engaging the literal work with the human sensual perception by drawing approachable visual images, setting an auditory background sounds and structuring a sensory comprehension-based images.

Frost is well-known for excessively using imagery in his works, signifying the associating themes into vivid and substantial images. Frost's use of imagery in this poem will be reviewed in three main outlooks; visual, auditory and tactile imagery.

Visual imagery

(Sulaiman, 2017) declares that visual imagery is such an imagery which engages to the visual perception of the reader and it is a kind of imagery that emerges mostly in the poem when the majority of words represented in the poem are recognizable, visually speaking.

In this paper, the visual imagery is spotted in the first stanza, " His house is in the village though;" where the poet associated the rustic life, with its simple characteristics, with the vintage image of a farm-house, as read in the second stanza "to stop without a farmhouse near".

Frost is a poet notable for his voicing of rustic life, as a unique bouquet of integrated elements, combining farm-houses, as discussed earlier, and the astonishing drawing of the secluded woods, referring to in this poem in the first and the fourth stanzas, "to watch his woods fill up with snow".

These dynamic, eloquent and dramatic images are critical to the fulfilment of the poem's theme of bewildering in the affection of nature, which gradually leads up to the most secluded conclusion, and evidently serving the literal frame of the poem.

Auditory Imagery

According to (Halpren, 2015) auditory imagery examines for verbal, musical, and environmental sounds and involves separate subscales for vividness and for control. The solitude of nature preserved initially and basically on the silence of human and the enchanting of natural elements of a still environment, still there is an abundance of interchangeable sounds creating the sense of nature confound.

Frost accompanies his own vision of the woods with few auditoria surrounding him. As read in the third stanza, when the horse, quoting:" he gives his harness bells a shake". The alarming voice of the bells can be obviously heard when reading the poem. Moreover, Frost draws and spells the auditory image of the wind swaying in the air, holding particles of the snowflakes until

they settle on the ground sooner or later, as written in the third stanza as well:" The only other sound's the sweep of easy wind and downy flake".

Sensory/ Mental Imagery

Sensory imagery contains the five senses: taste, sight, sound, smell, and touch. It functions as a vital role in many cognitive development. It plays a vivid role in information processing and in the acquisition of skills and abilities (MacInnis & Price, 1987, Aylwin, 1990). A completed portrait of the woods cannot be obtained unless there are senses cultivated during the reading of the poem. Frost's proprietary of the woods excluded with the obscurity of darkness that provoked him to feel the beauty of the night and the absence of light, as an indication to death, which enveloped him with convenience. As shown in the fourth stanza:" The woods are lovely, dark and deep,". Employing these images in the poem had the essential impact on the reader's perception of the tranquillity of the woods, by importing all the senses inflamed during the interaction with nature, or death figuratively speaking, so it's a highly considerable acknowledgment that all these blended devices functioned adequately for the sake of the theme.

In addition, the poem also suggests a tactile impression of a touch embracing of the frozen lake as mentioned in the second stanza: "Between the woods and the frozen lake"; giving sense of the whitish frosting covering the outward face of the lake with the sense of its coldness.

3. Symbolism

According to (Charles Baudelaire 1857 cited in Alam, 2014: 38) "symbolism was a late nineteenth-century development of many European countries such as: France, Russia and Belgium, originated in poetry and other arts". Symbolism acts as the back side of a mirror holding the meaning underneath the elements mentioned in the poem. In Frost's poem, symbolism lies within the personification of the horse, which represents life's obligation embodied into a nagging creature leading up to an obeying will, with a wish to stop and never obey again.

4. Metaphor

Metaphor "consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy" (Aristotle, 1987). Metaphor operates a critical task in transmitting the overall notion of the theme, as seen in this poem which embraced the universal theme of death and life; Frost envisages the idea of death into a simpler, but yet more approachable conception which is "sleep".

The similarity between death and sleep had been repeatedly laid out previously by many poets and writers, being sleep is a grading stage of death upon the same calmness, stillness and equanimity of both; body and soul.

Other poets included death with the same resemblance of sleeping such as the theme found in Emily Dickinson's poems, as Karolina Sikora referred to sleep as "Sleep is a peculiar state

determining the rhythm of human life. The opposite of vigilance expressed through stillness characterizing a body status and the form of consciousness". Hence, sleep is thought out to be another form of awakening as a pause of life obligations that blinds us from seeing the definite and actual existence of us, throwing us under the heavy rains of questioning our presence and conceptions on earth.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech used in our daily life. It "over exaggerates the speaker's meaning through his/her intense feelings and sincere attitude towards the listener, and hence, it reflects the speaker's real intention" (Al-Takriti, 2016: 126). In addition, it has usually been used as a creative literary device and is still currently linked with the production of literary texts and works (Mora 2009).

The imposing of the woods within a realistic vision might be presented by an enlargement of the actual scene based on the responsive echo of the natural vibes received. Frost deploys his major perception of the snow in the woods by constructing an exaggerating line as read in the first stanza: "To watch his woods fill up with snow,". Hereby, a reader can anticipate the hyperbole of the protagonist when fantasizing the snow spreading all over the woods, in a frosting atmosphere until the woods are covered completely with snow.

Graphology

Graphology is regarded as a linguistic device of analysis that matters with the research of graphic view of a language. Graphology, basically, is the study of language in character. The concept of graphology as "a linguistic level of analysis is particularly noticeable in stylistics and multimodality" (Nkopuruk, 2019: 1). Graphology is an investigation hunting the poet's / speaker's personality traits, by laying assertions that these typing traits perchance indicate the psychological status of the writer, and thus hints the emotional and experimental features of them. It also explains its meaning and contains other characteristics beyond the letters of the alphabet such as punctuations and spacing (Wales 2001).

One might notice the variety of punctuation marks Frost's has explicitly used into this poem. This application was operated and branched into three main categories: the use of the comma, the use of the semi-colon and the use of the full-stop. These three applications were not only used for the novelty of literature, but also for the linguistic sake in the act of displaying where and for what causes they were used.

Moreover, "Only in the former thirty years had punctuation become a focus of empirical linguistic research, away from prescriptive rationalizations of its usage" (Calhoun, 2015: 25). Tracing the questions and declarations of the writer might be an indispensable key for entering the poet's realm into language use. The end-punctuation mark; the full-stop, has been applied in the first and last lines of the first stanza, where the period holds the meaning of stating a

declaration of establishing a firm stand, as noticed in the last line of the second stanza: "The darkest evening of the year.", as well as noticed in the last line of the fourth stanza where it reads: "And miles to go before I sleep.", giving a firm sense of the obligation of life matters.

Non-end punctuation marks were applied as well in the poem; the comma, and the semi-colon. The latter is used inducing the merging of two complete sentences together as shown in the first stanza, in the second and the third lines. In addition to that, the comma was repeatedly typed in the poem, exclusively shown, in the fourth stanza, within the first, second and the third line. This use was for two objects: the first occurring is in the first line in the fourth stanza as read: "The words are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep". These four commas are used for three purposes; the first one is for addition matters, and the second one was preceding the conjunctions (but) and (and). And the last one used as fulfilment of repetition of the same line as an emphasis of the idea of moving along implementing life chores, obligations and finally life promises.

Conclusion

Robert Frost poem "Stopping by woods on a snowy day" includes four stanzas. A distinctive style is used to portray images in the poem. This study sums up the distribution of lexical sets and the themes within the literary work. It also concentrates on the figurative language types and literary devices, namely, metaphor, simile, symbolism, imagery and personification. Punctuation marks are clearly visible in the first and last stanzas, and their functions in the poem such as using commas for addition matters, preceding the conjunctions (but) and (and), and an emphasis of the idea.

At the first glance, the poem seems to be very humble and modest; however, it has a hidden message to it. The explicit and straightforward terms, and the rhyme scheme of the poem provide it with a simple flow, that gives the tranquility of the poem. It is about the poet's experience of stopping by the dark woods in the winter.

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