

A Stylistic Analysis of Alfred Tennyson's Poem "The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls"

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Abstract

Stylistics is not only useful to students but it is also useful to teachers of English language and literature, whether English is taught as a first, second or foreign language. The purpose of this study is to find out the poetic techniques which the poet used to enhance the emotions of the reader. This paper presents a stylistic analysis of Alfred Tennyson's poem "The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls". This paper analyzes the poem using the tools of linguistics with a view to make their meaning explicit. The analysis covers the different aspects: phonological, graphological, morphological, and semantic. The analysis would be helpful in understanding the basic concepts of the poem. This paper presents a stylistic analysis of Alfred Tennyson's poem "The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls". The analysis is helpful to analyze the structure and style of Alfred Tennyson's poem and his themes.

Keywords: phonological, graphological, morphological, and semantic

Introduction

Poetry is an art form in which human language is used for its aesthetic qualities in addition to, or instead of, its notional and semantic content. It consists largely of oral or literary works in which language is used in a manner that is felt by its user and audience to differ from ordinary prose. It may use condensed or compressed form to convey emotion or ideas to the reader's or listener's mind or ear; it may also use devices such as assonance and repetition to achieve musical or incantatory effects. Any poem sets out to convey a great deal more than an idea. Every poem has unique and special qualities of its own. If we are to appreciate poetry, it is necessary to learn how to organize the special qualities of the poem. Poetry is a compact language that expresses complex feelings. To understand the multiple meanings of a poem, readers must examine its words and phrasing from the perspectives of rhythm, sound, images, obvious meaning, and implied meaning. Therefore, the readers need to know the analysis of the style of the poem. As stylistic analysis is detailed and explicit, it shows how the learners reach or begin to reach complete interpretation of the poem. This can give the learners increased confidence in reading and interpretation on the poem. Therefore, stylistic analysis is very interesting and it is worthy to be examined carefully.

The poem "The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls" is about the fading sounds of a bugle falling onto castle walls, snow capped mountains, lakes and cliffs. They fade off into the sky and the echoes go on forever. One imagines a castle on a cliff overlooking lakes nestled into the mountains. It must either be sunset or sunrise and the light from it causes long streams of light to dance over the lakes. The first four lines of the last stanza stand out due to their appeal to the human soul. It seems Tennyson is relating the dying sounds of a bugle to our cries of human emotions being carried from one soul to another and the beauty of it. What is interesting is how Tennyson treats the last two lines of each stanza. They seem to be a plea to the bugle to keep repeating the process. The last lines of the first and last stanzas are an encouragement to have the bugles blow, but the last lines of the first and last stanzas seem to be the narrator's resignation to the fact that while the bugle creates beautiful music and echoes, the echoes will eventually die. The speaker describes echoes in the mountains and the

poem itself is filled with “echoes” of various kinds. The alliteration, internal rhyme, and the end rhyme echo specific sounds.

Aim and objectives

The aim of this paper is:

- to investigate the poem “The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls” at different levels of stylistics.

The objectives of the poem are:

- to analyse the poem in terms of different levels of stylistics and
- to analyse how meaning is conveyed through different stylistic features of the poem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Every poet or author has his/her own style of writing that distinguishes him/her from others. Broadly speaking, style in literature centres around the way that the author uses vocabulary and sentence structure, it also involves sentence length. It relates to an author’s liberal or conservative use of sensory details. It also relates to the author’s use of figurative language, metaphors and similes that work together to establish mood, images and meaning in a text. Some authors focus on sound devices such as alliteration, onomatopoeia and rhythm. In brief, style is the way the author uses words, phrases and sentences. Leech (1969) states that style is the way in which something is spoken, written or performed. It refers to the use of words, sentence structures and speaking style. Broadly speaking, style provides the foundation to the personality of a person. Style reflects the thoughts of a person’s mind. Different scholars define stylistics in different ways. Widowson (1975) defines stylistics as the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation. Davy and Crystal (1969) claim that stylistics is one part of applied linguistics which represents scientific study of style by applying linguistic principles and theories. Carter (1988) states that stylistics is a bridge (link) discipline between linguistics and literature. According to Coyle (1993), most of the early work in stylistics was on poetry because (1) short texts were most amenable to the detailed treatment demanded, (2) the formalist and structuralist work on poetry was relatively easy to build on and (3) the emphasis in linguistics at that time was on phonetic and grammatical structure, the result of which were relatively easy to apply to poetry. So when analyzing an author’s style, one should bear in mind the author’s point of view, his type of writing and its structure and organization, his use of figurative language and overall tone.

Levels of stylistic analysis

Following are the four levels of stylistic analysis. By using these levels, we analyze any given piece of text.

Phonological Level: Basically this level deals with the study of sound patterns of a given language, rules of pronunciation, the rhyming scheme and utterance of the word in the sentence. Lodge (2009) is of the view that phonology is the study of linguistic systems, specifically the way in which sound represents differences of meaning in a language. Phonological devices are rhyme elements, alliteration, consonance and assonance.

Graphological Level: Crystal and Davy (1969) said that graphology is the analogous study of a language’s writing system or orthography as seen in the various kinds of hand writing or topography. These are the formalized rules of writing. Leech (1969) claims that graphology exceeds orthography which refers to the whole writing system: punctuation, paragraphing and

spacing. In short it deals with the systematic formation, structure and punctuation in the sentence.

Morphological Level: Morphological level deals with the construction of the word by adding prefixes and suffixes to the root words. The main aim of the analysis at this level is to study the words, internal structure of sentences and their formation. To find out foregrounding, the deviation, clauses, phrases, nouns, verbs etc. are to be analysed.

Lexical Level: This level examines the way in which individual words and idioms tend to pattern in different linguistic context; on the semantic level in terms of stylistics. It studies words in relation to inner expressiveness. These words are with emotive and referential message. It is related to figurative language.

Elements in Stylistic Analysis:

The following elements of the levels of analysis are discussed briefly.

Phonological devices include:

Rhyme elements: They consist of rhyme patterns: the stressed pattern, the rhyme scheme followed in the poetry.

Alliteration: It is the use of same letters or sounds at the beginning of words that are close together. It was used systematically in old English poetry but in modern English poetry it is generally used for a particular effect.

Assonance: It is the effect created when two syllables in words that are close together have the same vowel sound but different consonants or the same consonant but different vowels.

Onomatopoeia: It is the effect produced when the words used contain the similar sounds to the noises they describe: e.g. “murmuring of innumerable bees”.

Graphological Devices include:

Punctuation: Punctuations are the marks used in writing that divide sentences and phrases. It is the system of using the punctuation marks. These marks include full stop, comma, colon, semicolon, question mark, exclamation mark, apostrophe, hyphen, ellipsis, quotation marks, parentheses, brackets, etc.

Paragraphing: Paragraph means a separate part which contains information, usually of several lines or sentences. The first sentence of a paragraph starts on a new line.

Morphological devices include:

Affix: It is a process of forming new words by putting morphemes before some words. It further divides into prefix or suffix. These are two popular types of morphological operations. Prefix generally alters the meaning of the word and suffix changes its part of speech.

Coinage: It is a process of forming new words from the existing ones.

Lexical devices include:

Anastrophe: It is a scheme in which the writer inverts the words in a sentence. Poets often use it in order to help maintain rhythm or rhyme scheme.

Anaphora: In grammar, it is the use of a word referring back to a word used earlier in a text or conversation, to avoid repetition, for example, he, she, it and they and the verb “do” in “I like it” and “so do I”. It is the repetition of the same words at the beginning of the lines.

Biography of the Poet

On August 5th, 1908, Alfred Lord Tennyson was born in Somersby village, England. His parents were the Reverend George Clayton Tennyson and Elizabeth Fytche Tennyson. He had seven brothers and four sisters. His father was an educated man, but was relatively poor. He was a country clergyman (church official). Though he was not very wealthy, he did have a large library. Alfred read widely in this library, and he learned to love reading, especially poetry. As Tennyson's father grew older, he became more passionate and melancholy (sad). He began drinking heavily, suffered from lapses of memory, and once even tried to kill his eldest son. Misfortune, not surprisingly, haunted the whole Tennyson family. The year he died, the elder Tennyson said of his children, "They are all strangely brought up." With a depressed father and a sick mother, Tennyson started writing poetry when he was eight years old. He wrote his first blank play at age fourteen. As Alfred grew up he beat out other poets in contests and competitions. In much of his poetry, Tennyson used mythological themes, like *Idylls of the King*, based on the story of King Arthur. He has coined several famous phrases now used in everyday English, like "nature, red in tooth and claw" and "better to have loved and lost". His first solo collection of poems, *Poems Chiefly Lyrical*, was deemed too sentimental by many critics; but two of his most famous poems, *Claribel* and *Mariana*, were included in the collection. After his best friend, Arthur Hallam, died, Tennyson was devastated and wrote *In Memoriam* for his beloved friend. Tennyson died in 1892, with his wife and his writings by his side. The poem "The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls" was written in 1848 shortly after Alfred Tennyson visited Killarney in Ireland. The poem succeeds on its own merits as a lyric by creating a mood and evoking powerful emotions in readers. Tennyson is famous for making his poems sound like what they are meant to describe, and this poem is no exception.

Theme of the poem

"The Splendor Falls on Castle Walls" could be interpreted as having an unnamed speaker marveling at the nature around him. The speaker is urging the bugles to reply to their echoes of sound that are fading. The things that connect the various events produced through the imagery other than the types of nature are that they all depict endings, the fading of sound, light and sight. The theme of this poem is that death is inevitable. Sound ends, things fall out of sight and light eventually fades. No matter what happens in the stanza, it ends with a bugle blowing and the repetitive "dying, dying, dying". An ending will come no matter what happens. There will be an ending to the speakers awe-inspiring just like there will be an ending to the echoes and an ending to his life. The theme is supported by the specific words that Tennyson uses that insinuate a finite end. Things roll out of sight and faint when they are startled. Fainting ends calm. The connotation of bugles adds to the somber reminder of how humans celebrate the end humbly. In "The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls", the theme that death is inevitable is shown through the repetition of the word "dying", the somber connotation of the word "bugle", refer to more explanation, and through the personification and synaesthesia given to abstract ideas.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to study the style of the poem, "The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls" is chosen. This poem is one of the prescribed poems of a course book for Second Year English specialization. Firstly, the poem was carefully read. And then the stylistic features of the poem "The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls" were examined systematically through different linguistic levels: phonological level, graphological level, morphological level and lexical

level. These levels pave the way for the analysis of the poem. The whole analysis will be done by keeping in mind the specific features of these levels.

ANALYSIS

Phonological level

Assonance: This is the repetition of the vowel sounds in words placed near each other, usually on the same or adjacent lines. Assonance is present in the first and third lines of each stanza in the poem. Halfway through each line is a word that rhymes with the word at the end.

In the first line of the first stanza “The splendor **falls** on castle **walls**”, both falls and walls end in “alls” and have the same sound /ɔ:ls/. And also, in the third line of the first stanza “The long light **shakes** across the **lakes**” “akes”, in the first line of the second stanza “O, hark, O, **hear!** How thin and **clear**”, “ear” and “O, sweet and **far** from cliff and **scar**” in the third line of the second stanza, “ar” has the same vowel sounds /ɑ:/. In the third stanza, the first line “O love, they **die** in yon rich **sky**” have the same sound /aɪ/ and the third line “Our echoes **roll** from **soul** to **soul**” also have the same vowel sounds /əʊ/.

Consonance: This is the repeated consonant sounds as the ending of the words placed near each other, usually on the same or adjacent lines. Consonance is seen in the first and third lines of the first stanza. The first line “The splendor **falls** on castle **walls**”, the third line “The long light **shakes** across the **lakes**” and “Our echoes **roll** from soul to soul”, the third line of the third stanza, have the same consonant sounds /l/ at the ends of the words on the same line.

Alliteration: In the poem, alliteration is found in many lines. Alliteration is the repeated consonant sounds at the beginning of words usually on the same or adjacent lines.

Line 2. And **s**nowy **s**ummits old in **s**tory: (/s/ sound)

Line 3. The **l**ong **l**ight **l**shakes across the **l**akes, (/l/ sound)

Line 4. **B**low, **b**ugle, **b**low, set the wild echoes flying, (/b/ sound)

Line 7. O, **h**ark, O, **h**ear! **H**ow thin and clear, (/h/ sound)

Line 9. O, sweet and **f**ar **f**rom cliff and **s**car (/f/ sound)

Line 14. They **f**aint on hill or **f**ield or river; (/f/ sound)

Line 17. **B**low, **b**ugle, **b**low, set the wild echoes flying, (/b/ sound)

Rhyme scheme: The rhyme scheme for the poem is **A/ABC/CBDD**. This pattern is repeated for all three stanzas as follows:

The splendor falls on castle walls	A/A
And snowy summits old in story ;	B
The long light shakes across the lakes ,	C/C
And the wild cataract leaps in glory .	B
Blow, bugle blow, set the wild echoes flying ,	D
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying .	D

This rhyme scheme is for the first stanza and the rest stanzas' rhyme schemes are the same as the first.

Internal rhyme: In the above rhyme scheme, **A/A and C/C** mark the internal rhymes that appear in the first and third lines of each stanza. An internal rhyme occurs when two words rhyme within a line, instead of at the ends of lines. In the first and third lines of the second and third stanza of the poem, we can see internal rhymes.

Line 7. O, hark, O, **hear!** How thin and **clear,**

Line 8. O, sweet and **far** from cliff and **scar**

Line 13. O love, they **die** in yon rich **sky,**

Line 15. Our echoes **roll** from **soul** to **soul,**

Those internal rhymes are pretty catchy and they are part of what makes the poem sound particularly musical.

End rhyme: End rhyme occurs at the end of the lines. In this poem, end rhymes appear as follows:

Line 2. And snowy summits old in **story;**

Line 4. And the wild cataract leaps in **glory.**

Feminine rhyme: It consists of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. Moreover, it always ends on an unstressed syllable. They have two rhymed syllables so they are also called double rhymes in poetry. These rhymes can be seen in

Line 2. And snowy summits old in **sto ry;**

/ u

Line 4. And the wild cataract leaps in **glo ry.**

/ u

Blow, bugle blow, set the wild echoes **fly ing,**

/ u

Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, **dy ing.**

/ u

The words “story and glory” and “flying and dying” have two syllables and they rhyme.

Repetition: The words “dying, dying, dying” and “blow, bugle” are the repetition of the same sounds.

Scansion: “The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls” is written partially in iambic tetrameter. This means that it follows an unstressed syllable that is followed by a stressed syllable.

The	splen	dour	falls	on	ca	stle	walls
u	/	u	/	u	/	u	/
O	love,	they	die	in	yon	rich	sky,
u	/	u	/	u	/	u	/

This poem is written in iambic syllabication but the metre changes from line to line. The rhyme scheme for “The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls” is aabccbdd for all three stanzas. The following are three columns of numbers. Each column represents one stanza and shows the number of iambic feet represented in that line. The “½” represents that the line ends with an unstressed syllable.

Stanza 1	Stanza 2	Stanza 3
1.4	7.4	13.4
2.4½	8.4½	14.4½
3.4	9.4	15.4
4.5	10.4½	16.4½
5.5½	11.5½	17.5½
6.6½	12.6½	18.6½

Graphological level

Style: Tennyson's style, as derived from this poem, involves lots of punctuation. In every line there is at least one comma, semicolon or period except for the first line of the first stanza and the third line of the third stanza. When reading poems, these punctuations form how it is read out loud. Therefore, when read out loud, "The Splendor Falls on Castle Walls" has many pauses where the reader can contemplate what they have read and internalize it. At the graphological level, the use of "full stops", "commas", "semicolons" and "exclamation marks" can be seen.

Use of Full stops:

"Full stop" is used five times in this poem. Each full stop shows the completion of one sense or a final end to the thought.

Line 4. And the wild cataract leaps in glory.

Line 6. Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

Line 12. Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

Line 16. And grow forever and forever.

Line 18. And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

This finding shows that the full stop can take the poet to stop to think about what has been written so far.

Use of Commas:

On the other hand, one of the punctuation marks: comma is used many times in the poem. It shows a separation of ideas or elements within the verse and can also be used to ellipsis some words. For example:

Line 8. And thinner, clearer, farther going!

Line 18. And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

In these lines, the poet ellipsis the conjunction "and".

Use of Semicolons:

In some lines of the poem, semicolon is used to connect two independent clauses in a verse or at the end of the verse as follows:

Line 2. And snowy summits old in story;

Line 3. The long light shakes across the lakes,

Line 14. They faint on hill or field or river;

Line 15. Our echoes roll from soul to soul,

In these lines, the poet tries to connect two independent clauses.

Use of Exclamation marks:

The poet uses the exclamation mark three times in the poem. It denotes excitement, astonishment, wonder, surprise, pain, joy and other such strong emotions.

Line 7. O, hark, O, hear! How thin and clear,

Line 8. And thinner, clearer, farther going!

Line 10. The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!

This finding shows the poet's wonder, surprise and astonishment.

Morphological level

Table (1): Morphemes

Free	Bound	Root	Suffix
The	<u>falls</u>	<u>falls</u>	<u>falls</u>
splendour	<u>walls</u>	<u>walls</u>	<u>clearer</u>
on	<u>snowy</u>	<u>snowy</u>	<u>snowy</u>
castle	<u>summits</u>	<u>summits</u>	<u>echoes</u>
And	<u>shakes</u>	<u>shakes</u>	<u>fly<u>ing</u></u>
old	<u>sakes</u>	<u>lakes</u>	<u>faintly</u>
in	<u>leaps</u>	<u>leaps</u>	
story	<u>echoes</u>	<u>echoes</u>	
long	<u>fly<u>ing</u></u>	<u>fly<u>ing</u></u>	
light	<u>dy<u>ing</u></u>	<u>dy<u>ing</u></u>	
across	<u>thinner</u>	<u>thinner</u>	
wild	<u>clearer</u>	<u>clearer</u>	
cataract	<u>horns</u>	<u>horns</u>	
Blow	<u>faintly</u>	<u>faintly</u>	
bugle	<u>blow<u>ing</u></u>	<u>blow<u>ing</u></u>	
answer	<u>glens</u>	<u>glens</u>	
set	<u>reply<u>ing</u></u>	<u>reply<u>ing</u></u>	
hark			
hear			
how			
thin			
clear			
sweet			
far			
from			
cliff			
scar			
of			
Elfland			
let			
us			
purple			
love			
they			
die			
yon			

Table 2: Parts of Speech

Noun	Pronoun	Verb	Adverb	Adjective
splendour	us	falls	faintly	snowy
castle	they	summits	forever	old
walls		shakes	how	long
story		leaps		wild
light		Blow		thin
lakes		set		clear
cataract		flying		thinner
glory		answer		farther
bugle		dying		sweet
echoes		hark		far
cliff		hear		rich
scar		blowing		yon
horns		replying		
Elfland		die		
purple		faint		
glens		roll		
love		grow		
sky				
hill				
field				
river				
soul				

Table 3: Parts of Speech

Preposition	Conjunction	Article	Interjection
on	And	The	O!
in	or		
across			
from			
of			

Lexical level

Personification: Tennyson uses personification to give qualities normally associated to human to abstract ideas or inanimate objects. In the poem, there are many personifications used by Tennyson. For example:

Line 3. The long **light shakes** across the lakes,

Line 4. And the wild **cataract leaps** in glory.

Line 11. Blow, let us hear the purple **glens replying**,

In these lines, the words “shakes”, “leaps” and “replying” are human qualities and the poet personifies the objects with words “light”, “cataract” and “glens” by describing them with human actions.

Synaesthesia: Synaesthesia is like personification except that non-physical thing cannot perform an action that contradicts its nature. Echoes cannot really fly. Glens cannot reply; they are narrow valleys. Echoes are products of sound, they cannot fly. Lights cannot shake, they cannot do anything without a person moving them. By using synaesthesia, Tennyson makes these abstract, non-human things relatable to his audience.

Apostrophe: The speaker of the poem addresses love when he says “O love, they die in yon rich sky”. Because he directly speaks to love, love has a connection with death.

Cliché: The cliché of overusing the word “dying” three times in every stanza helps Tennyson share his opinion with the readers. Death is eternal and you know it is going to show up but you hope it won’t be there. This also applies to “Blow bugle”. How many times can you blow a bugle before getting out of breath? The concept that death is inevitable is definitely shown through the obvious over-repetition of various words throughout the poem.

Connotation: In the poem, the speaker uses a connotation with two different things: death and royalty. The sound of the bugles playing in the background of cemeteries and funerals in television and in movies denotes the death. They sound so alone and sad. When important/royal people enter a room in shows and movies, the sound from the bugles indicates the fancy marches. Usually in this context bugles are not alone, they have other bugles playing different parts so it sounds full and bright. In the context of this poem, I think that the bugle relates more to the isolated relating to death. But, the announcing aspect of the royalty connotation fits because the bugles are inviting a response from the “purple glens” and causing the echoes to fly. They are bringing attention to themselves.

Hyperbole: Echoes cannot really roll “forever and forever”. Tennyson is using the hyperbole to fight the inevitability of an echo fading from seashore as an example of how feeble an idea escaping the end is.

Anaphora: It is the repetition of the same words at the beginning of the lines. In this Alfred Tennyson's poem, the use of anaphora can be found as follows:

Blow, bugle; answer,

Blow, bugle; answer,

Blow, bugle, blow,

By using different stylistic devices, the poet successfully presents his point of view. The readers can determine the connections between the form and effects within the particular poem from studying the style. Stylistic devices give deeper meaning to any literary piece of writing and stylistic analysis helps to dig out the hidden meaning. The poet uses simple words and phrases to make it understandable and to clarify and develop his intentions. By using different figures of speech, sound devices and rhyme patterns, the poet makes the poem more effective to convey his message.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the stylistic analysis, we find out that the poem is very carefully constructed and the readers can see the use of Tennyson’s words that creates an irregular rhyming pattern give the poem a musical quality, which adds to the mood and tone of the poem. In this poem, Tennyson’s tone is full of awe and marveling at nature and the many ends that can be associated with it. The speaker does not fear death, nor does he gripe about it. It will happen to everyone and everyone should deal with it when it comes for them. Tennyson wants the readers to accept death and if they spend their lives being afraid of what is to come, they will waste their lives. Interpretations need not to be the same for everyone. There can be hundreds of interpretations and everyone may be right. In other words, it convinces that stylistics is a useful tool for anybody interpreting literary texts.

CONCLUSION

In the poem, the speaker is looking across a valley with a castle, a lake, a waterfall and snow-capped mountains. But he is not alone. The sound of a bugle horn echoes and fades across the valley. The songs he hears are the horns of Elfland and they continue to echo and fade. This poem deals with the echo that a person has after he, she has died, precisely the memories left by. Although the poem's beautiful words mingled with the reverie of the poet is bound to influence the reader, this poem can leave an essence in one's mind. Moreover, as the speaker uses many figures of speech, it succeeds on its own merits. It also creates a mood and evokes powerful emotions on readers.

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Appendix

The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls

The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O, hark, O, hear! How thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O, sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow forever and forever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

Alfred Tennyson