



A Stylistic Analysis of Alfred Lord Tennyson's Poem "Break, Break, Break"

Mr.B.Thangamarimuthu, Assistant Professor of English, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University Constituent College, Nagalapuram.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6016-1725>

Ms.S.Sindhu, Assistant Professor of English, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University Constituent College, Nagalapuram.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6011-047X>

Mr.M.Pandiyaraja, P.G.Scholar, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University Constituent College, Nagalapuram.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9263-6967>

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4469648

Abstract

Style varies from text to text depending on various factors like the form, meanings, grammar and structure. Stylistic analysis examines various aspects of the style of a text. This article aims to analyze Tennyson's poem "Break, Break, Break" from a stylistic point of view. The analysis is made under the aspects of graphological, phonological and semantic point of view. This sort of analysis helps in understanding the basic linguistic concepts and literary ideas of the poem with the ability to reasoning. Furthermore, it highlights the difference between ordinary languages used in daily life compared to the literary language that is used in the poetic text. Hence, the paper investigates the poem to decode the deep linguistic and literary insights of the poem.

Keywords: Stylistics, Literary Criticism, Tennyson, "Break, Break, Break"

Introduction

Stylistics is the branch of linguistics that interprets the texts from linguistic and literary perspective. As an interdisciplinary discipline, it links literary criticism and linguistics to understand the text with literary and linguistic sides of the texts. A stylistic analysis entails studying in details about the features of written or spoken texts and states the functions they perform in the context of the texts. The features of the text are commonly dealt in three modes. They are identification, description and purpose. The method of stylistic analysis is purely scientific. One of the stylistic experts Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics as the study of literary discourse from a linguistic perspective. He affirms that stylistics is the link between literary criticism and linguistics. He also adds that stylistics combines both literary criticism and linguistics, as its morphological construction suggests that the 'style' is related to the form or shape and 'istics' to indicate or relate the method of writing employed in it.

Introduction to the Author and the poem

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, is one of the most famous poets of the Victorian Age. Many of his poems are universal in theme and is apt to certain circumstances. There are lots of critical works on his works although some of his works are seen as vital and needs research to know about, his intellectual contributions to poetry, metaphysics and language. Such works



has been prescribed in the syllabus of many reputed universities and colleges. One such poem is “Break, Break, Break”. It is a sonnet that details about the rural of the nature and the themes such as ‘change’ and ‘death’.

Introduction of the poem "Break, Break, Break"

Alfred, Lord Tennyson composed the poem "Break, Break, Break" in the year 1835. It was written attitude sad demise of his dear friend and contemporary, Arthur Hallam. The speaker of the sonnet mourns the demise of a nearby associate, so the poem "Break, Break, Break" has been seen as an elegy written to Hallam. However the sonnet remains as a broad contemplation on mortality and misfortune through its ideas and themes. The sonnet was published in the year 1842 and it exemplifies much recognition for his friend Hallam.

In the poem, the speaker gazes the ocean breaking the rocks and wishes that he could communicate his profound distress over the departure of a companion. He seems quite stable and tries to point out the power of nature and the need to get such power of nature in him to teach the superior world. The themes employed such as death, change, and power of nature aids in the development of the poem. The poem also has peculiar linguistic elements. So, the poem has rich formalistic and literary elements and they become the subject of their power to decode in stylistic perspective.

Style

Cuddon (1998) elicits style as the characteristic method of expression in prose, verse or drama; “how a particular writer says things” (p.872). Harmon (2006) observes that style combines the two vital elements of the text: “the idea to be expressed and the individuality of the author” (p.503). Wales (2001) says that style refers to the “perceived distinctive manner of expression” in writing or speaking (p.71). Leech and Short (1981) further elaborate that style is the “dress of thoughts” (p.15). All of these definitions purport that style is a distinctive way of using language for expressing ideas, emotions, feelings, thoughts and messages in particular situations while speaking or writing. Style differs from person to person in the communication.

Stylistics

Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics as the study of literary discourse from a “linguistic orientation” (p.3) devolving the language and literary elements of the text. According to Short and Candlin (1989), stylistics is a linguistic approach to “the study of the literary texts” (183) in a perfect manner. Carter (1996) makes down the relevance of stylistics for literature teaching stating that stylistic analysis helps to foster “interpretative skills and to encourage reading between the lines” (p.5) of the text. He further points the advantages of stylistics stating that stylistics provides the close a method of scrutinizing texts, and lets a way to ensure complete interpretation. There are certain levels in stylistics approach to get full understanding of the text in linguistic and literary perspective. They are: Morphology, Graphology, Phonology, Syntax and Lexico-Semantics.

In this paper the researcher has taken Alfred Lord Tennyson’s Poem “Break, Break, Break” for stylistic analysis to understand the linguistic and literary features of the poem.



Morphological Level

Adedimeji and Alibi (2003. p.30) characterize morphology "as a degree of language investigation which manages the interior plan of words and their enunciations". This approach tries to break down, depict and group important linguistic units and how these units are coordinated during the time spent word development. Spencer and Zwicky (1999. p.1) characterize morphology as an investigation of word design and words at interface between the linguistic elements phonology, grammar and semantics. It is the subfield of semantics that reviews the innermost construction of words and the connection among words. Consequently, the survey gives ideas on the organization of morphology. In the poem, the poet has made use of morphological formation to create certain effects. Compounding of words is seen in the poem and it gives us a clean understanding that how a morph works in a word or more to give collective meaning. There are also free and bound morphemes. A list is also added to understand them.

Compounding

The poet defines compounding as the combination of two or more words. The combined forms can be with a hyphen or without it. Some of the examples are given in the poem: **cold gray stones, (line 2), fisherman's boy, (line 5), sailor lad (line 7) and tender grace (line 15)**

Free Morpheme	Bound Morpheme
stones, sea, thoughts, boy, sister, boat, ships, hill, hand, sound, voice, foot, crags, grace, dead	tongue, fisherman, sailor, stately, tender,

Graphological Level

Ribs (2001, p.150) states that graphology is the investigation of character examination. Gem and Davy (1969, p.18) characterizes graphology "as the comparable to investigation of a language’s composing framework or orthography as found in the different sorts of composing or geology.” Crystal (2008, p.220) characterizes graphology as a term utilized by semantics in alluding to the composing arrangement of a language and its similarity with phonology.

Rad Ford (1997, P.1) thinks that grammar is worried about the manner by which words can be joined together to structures expressions and sentences, it assists with realizing how words identify with each other and this is generally demonstrated by the request in which the words are orchestrated. Olujide (2007, P.41) states ‘grammar’ signifies "putting together" for the most part it alludes to the level at which the etymologist represents the manner in which words are assembled to shape a sentence, despite the fact that words, which are essential units of syntactic investigation, are significant on the grounds that all human exercises include words, the words not the focal point of linguistic structure, Rather, it is a mix of words; word gatherings and sentences that punctuation is worried about. They portray about the idea of language structure. For example: (.) full stop, (,) comma, (!) exclamation mark and (‘) apostrophe are used in this poem.

Noun	Pronoun	Verb		Adjective	Adverb	Preposition
stones, sea, tongue, thoughts, fisherman, boy, sister, sailor, boat ships, hill, hand, sound, voice , foot crag, tender, grace , dead	thy, i, my, me, he, his	Main Verbs break, arise, utter, shouts, play, sings, go, haven, touch, come back	Auxiliary Verbs would, is, will	cold, gray, well stately,	still	on, in, for, with, at, on, to, of,
Noun+Noun tender grace						

Phonological Level

Precious stone (2008, p.365) characterizes phonology "as a part of semantics which considers the sound arrangement of language". Phonology concentrates how discourse sounds are organized to work definitively in a language. Pennigton (1997, p.1) portrays phonology "as the investigation of the sound examples of language or of the elocution examples of speakers". In this way, the linguistic critics clarify about phonology. In the poem, the poet has made use of some phonological devices that allow the rhythmical flow of words. A number of figures of speech have been found in the poem that five certain phonological affects to increase the tone of the poem.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the initial consonants sounds of combustive words in a sentence. Examples in the data include the following:

That he shouts with his sister at play! (line-6)

And the stately ships go on. (Line-9)

To their haven under the hill. (Line-10)

Under lexico semantics, choice of words are obtained through devices such as the use of hypernyms, figure of speech and proverbs, collocates, and extra repetitions.

Anaphora

Anaphora is a figure of Speech in which words repeat at the beginning of successive clauses, phrases, or sentences. For example, Tennyson’s famous "Break, Break, Break" contains anaphora. In the first stanza and the fourth stanza the anaphoric meaning is used to visualize image of sea water breaking the stones that gives a rhythmic pattern and strong impulse on the idea of supports the decorate the inner heart of the speaker.



Repetition

Repetition is a literary device in which a word or phrase is repeated two or more times to give much stress the situation.

Break, break, break- (line-1)

Break, break, break- (line-13)

The meaning of these words stresses the painful heart of the speaker. Ever he has used the image of sea water that breaks the crag's in the boat of the sea. His heard as referred to his soul as the sea hear yearns to break down the nostalgic, thoughts that hinder his happiness.

Reiteration

In this poem reiteration, is used as "Break, break, break" in the one of the first line of the first stanza and fourth stanza. This effect creates a solid musicality to the lines that impersonates the development of the waves.

Semantic Analysis of the Poem

Ribs (2001, p.233) says lexis implies words it is utilized as an overall more specialized term for jargon or expression. The Oxford Dictionary characterizes lexis as all the words and expressions of a specific language. Adedimeji and Alabi (2003, p.32) report that semantics "is the investigation of importance both as a rule and hypothetical terms and concerning explicit language". semantics is a wide sub-order of etymology which alludes to the examination of the chosen poetic text.

'Break, Break, Break' by Alfred Lord Tennyson is a four refrain sonnet that is isolated into sets of four lines, known as quatrains in English Literature. These quatrains don't follow an exacting rhyme scheme. However, there are some genuine instances of wonderful rhymes, for example, "Sea" and "me" in stanza one. Concerning the meter, there are different examples that change all through the sonnet. There are numerous examples of trimeter, in spite of the fact that the burdens change areas, there are different lines with more or less syllables.

In the sonnet, the speaker tends to the waves and instructs them to keep running into the shore. He additionally ponders his more profound musings on the insight of the nature. At that junction, the speaker wishes that he could communicate how he is inclined and then he investigates the role of water in breaking up the stones in the sea. Also he sees an angler's child shouting and a youthful mariner singing at the time. He watches everything that happens around him.

The speaker also points out the boats cruising and considers that they are moving towards a superior world but everything becomes fertile. All of these sights can't divert him from the torment he has been enduring by the sad death of his friend Hallam. Finally, the sonnet finishes up with a refrain of the first lines and an articulation that he is never going to get the former satisfaction again in his life.

In the first stanza of the poem 'Break, Break, Break' the speaker converses straightforwardly to the waves. This act of literal meaning is a procedure known as anaphora. He addresses to the waves in spite of the fact that they can't react. The speaker guides them to



break capably against the “cold gray stones” of the shore. The words hold a bleak force that addresses his passionate state. Even he wishes to get his tongue to “utter /The thoughts” that are frequenting him but up to this point he is not able to communicate his passionate state. It seems excessively perplexing, or maybe excessively dull, for him to discover the words to explain his inner inclination towards melancholy of the poet.

In the second stanza, there is an illustration of anaphora with the reiteration of "O, well for the" toward the beginning of lines second and third lines. This expression presents two distinct encounters that the speaker sees around him. The “fisherman’s boy,” his “sister” and the “sailor lad” are altogether encountering the ocean uniquely in contrast to him. These are genuine instances of juxtaposition, particularly the youngster who is singing “on the bay”. He's discovering delight in his life and the capacity to communicate his feelings and the other side of him that could not able to elicit his feeling and emotions.

In the third stanza, the speaker observes “stately ships” that are cruising off into the distance. He compares it to his life and trusts that they are going to another land, a place he connects with contact. However, the exquisite sight of the vessels doesn't keep the speaker's mind involved in the thought to a long time. He is immediately taken back to the encountering of contacting a "vanish'd hand". These words are the indication of his friend Hallam’s hand and his yearning to clutch hold of his hand. The poet’s voice gets lost in tone and gives a sad stone.

The fourth and final stanza starts with the reiteration of the line "Break, break, break". The poet advises the waves again to break against the shore at the “foot of thy crags”. Hence, Tennyson express at the end of the poem to accentuate his mood through the speaker. It finalizes that the day’s tender blessing has gone and he cannot get the grace again in his life. Such ideas of the poet give us the understanding that nature is more powerful of change and death becomes invincible in his life.

Conclusion

The stylistic analysis of the poem gives a lucid understanding on the morphological, grammatical, phonological and semantic aspects of the poem. 'Break, Break, Break' is a short poem that has rich linguistic elements and aesthetic flair. The poem has sad and nostalgic tone. The poem presents a sea-side image, complete with a wild sea, playing children, fishermen and sailing boats, but Tennyson manipulates these elements to reveal the poem with his despair on the death of his friend. The emotion of the poet indirectly describes his loss and has used the aesthetic medium to describe it. This sort of study will aid anyone who wants to understand the poem in a functional and aesthetic manner

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Annexure

Break, Break, Break

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

Cite this Article in English (MLA 8 Style) as:

Thangamarimuthu et.al. “A Stylistic Analysis of Alfred Lord Tennyson’s Poem “Break, Break, Break”.” *Literary Druid*, Vol. 3, Issue. 1, January 2021, pp. 20-26. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4469648

Author (s) Contribution Statement: Nil

Author (s) Acknowledgement: Nil

Author (s) Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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