

‘Bereft’ By Robert Frost: A Stylistic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates Robert Frost’s poem “Bereft” from the outlook of stylistic analysis. The investigation is made by undertaking the aspects of Graphological, Grammatical, Syntactical, and Phonological patterns. The tropes and schemes present in the poem have also been found. The paper basically aims at analyzing the structure and style present in the poems by Robert Frost through his themes, views, and treatment of nature.

Keywords: Stylistics, Style, solitude, divergence, aggressive nature, devotion, phonological level, Graphological level.

INTRODUCTION

The word ‘style’ has been derived from the Latin word ‘elocution’ which means style in general and ‘lexis’ in Greek. The word Style in itself is a broader term, i.e., It has more than a few meanings in and outside of the pedantic world. A specific process by which a thing is done, a manner or a way of doing something is referred to as style. In broader terms, manifestation of everything or anything is style. The way of doing things, way of dressing, or the way of living is also style. A style reflects the opinion of a person’s mind. It describes a person through the way of communication, which can be physical, verbal or written.

Stylistics is a branch of applied linguistics linked to the analysis of style in texts. Earlier only the literary texts were chosen by the stylistics, but, it was after the 20th century that stylistics started to deal with non literary texts as well, like, law, religion, commercial, newspaper etc. Katie Wales aptly remarks in *A Dictionary of Stylistics* that,

“The goal of most stylistics is not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake but in order to show their interpretation of the text, or in order to relate literary effects to linguistics causes where there are felt to be relevant”.

Stylistics investigation provides an explanation which is intent and technical based on a concrete scientific data and applied in a methodical way. It employs specific technical terms and concepts which originate from the science of linguistics, which are totally poles apart from literary criticism. Literary criticism basically focuses on understanding and the field of linguistics has little to say concerning literature ahead of the sentence end.

What are the Levels of Stylistic Analysis?

What is Stylistics?

The below mentioned are the five levels of stylistic analysis on the basis of which the poem has been analyzed:

(i). The Phonetic level: The level where the assessment of sounds is done to study the distinctiveness and latent efficacy of sounds in the phonetic level.

(ii). The Phonological level: The level corresponding to the study of sound system of a particular language; in regard to the prescribed rules of articulation.

(iii). The Graphological level: The level deals with the analogous study of a language's writing method; the formalized rules of spellings.

(iv). The Grammatical level: The level where both the syntactic and morphological levels are discussed and the aim here lies to study the internal composition of sentences in a language and their functioning in sequences. At this level, the clauses, phrases, words, nouns, verbs, etc. are differentiated and are made to undergo an investigation to come across the foregrounding and the deviation.

(v). The Lexical level: The level that studies the medium through which the individual words and idioms tend to mold in various linguistic milieus; on the semantic level in terms of stylistics.

‘Bereft’: In a nutshell

Robert Frost, an American poet has a vast compilation of famous poems to his credit and ‘Bereft’ is one of those collections. The poem has menacing tone and there are diverse interpretations of this poem. The poem is although not well-knitted; as the organization of the events is unbalanced, but one can interpret the poet's solitariness in this world. Poet feels secluded in his life but he has a enormous faith in God. The close noticeably states that the poet is all by

himself in the world but he is not glum or pessimistic, he shows his faith in God.

There is a bottomless notion in the poem which brings out the solitude of man existing within the materialization of nature. The components of nature at times hoard in such a style as to be entirely and viciously antagonistic to man. It is at this sad and gloomy minute of separation that man feels all alone, unaided standing stripped against the harsh and hasty realities of nature. This is the time when he looks within himself and finds the charisma of his designer therein and this spiritual camaraderie gives him optimistic feelings to live his life.

‘Bereft’: Theme of the poem

Loneliness and solitude are the most important theme of the poem. Poet here feels unaccompanied. His formative years have passed away and now because of his loneliness, he is even scared of leaves. He considers nature to be very vindictive towards him. There is a conflict in the mind of the poet, he shows melancholy but also a well-built hope at the same time. Right through the beginning of the poem, the poet emphasizes on his aloneness and brutality of nature towards him. But at the end he shows his strong belief on God.

How theme is fore grounded in the poem?

The theme of loneliness and solitude is fore grounded in the poem with the help of glossary items. The theme of loneliness is revealed with the help of different words, like for example, the poet uses the word “Alone” twice in the poem, and the word “No one” is used to express his loneliness. Nature is intimidating towards the poet. The resentment of nature is well described with the help of the words like, “Deeper roar,

restive door, frothy shore, summer was past, sinister". The poet develops his burly faith on God which is revealed at the end with the last word of the poem "but God". These words overturn the entire premise of the poem. It shows poet's mind faculty for valor. He can believe only of God in his loneliness and therefore shows his tough faith in God.

Stylistic analysis of the poem:

Bereft as a lyrical poem

Bereft can be categorized as lyrical as it is fairly short consisting of a dozen and thirty

lines and it expresses feelings and thoughts of a sole speaker in a individual and subjective fashion. And all these are the traits of the lyrical poem.

1. Graphological level:

- i) There is no splitting up of stanzas in the poem.
- ii) The poem is on paper as a whole. It is lyrical.
- iii) There is customary capitalization.
- iv) There is use of punctuation in the poem. For example: full stop, comma, colon and apostrophe are used in this poem.

2. Lexical level:

| Nouns | Pronouns | Common nouns | Collective noun |
|---|---|---|--|
| Wind, Hill, Summer, Day, Clouds, West, Shore, Door, Porch's, Floor, House, God. | I and Me. | Day, Hill, Cloud, Door, Porch, Floor, House, Shore, Leaves, Knee, Tone. | World. |
| Proper noun | Verb | Adverb | Adjective |
| God, Summer, West. | Heard, Standing, Looking, Massed, Hissed, Struck, Missed, Change. | Abroad, Blindly. | Deeper, Restive, Frothy, Sombre, Ragging, Coil, Sinister, Alone, Left. |

3. Grammatical level:

The use of Punctuation marks, use of question mark shows that the poet is undergoing some conflicts in the poem, he is dazed.

- i) Use of colon: Colon is used where poet talks about his loneliness. He feels lonely not only in his house but in his life as well.
- ii) Use of full stop: Poet has used full stop at three places in the poem. Each full stop shows the end of one poet. Firstly, poet tells about the transience of human life. Summer

or the youth is passed away and poet is shown in his old age that is winter. Secondly, the poet talks about the nature which is not friendly, but is cruel towards him. And thirdly, he emphasizes about his aloneness but displays his great faith in God.

4. Phonological level:

The Poem has sixteen lines and the rhyme scheme followed is-
AAAAABBACCDDDEDE



There is a use of alliteration, but there is no refrain in the poem.

There are many rhyming words in the poem.

These are as follows:

Before-Roar, For- Door, Shore- Flour,
Hissed- Missed, Tone- Known- Alone,
Abroad- God.

Schemes and troops in the poem Bereft

Schemes and troupes are the figures of speech used to fashion a meticulous style of writing.

1. **Tropes:** A literary trope is the usage of figurative language through words, phrases, or even an image. Tropes are used for creating an artistic effect along with describing the commonly persisting literary and metaphorical devices, motifs or clichés in artistic works.

Tropes are a kind of figures of speech having meaning different from their literal meanings.

Scheme: Scheme is basically a change in a standard word order or pattern, it is the kind of figure of speech that works out with letters, word order, syntax and sounds rather than meaning of the word.

Anaphora: The Scheme where the same words or phrases are repeated at the beginning of successive, clauses or sentences. For example,

- i) Word I was in the house alone.
- ii) Word I was in my life alone.
- iii) Word I had no one left but God.

“Word I” is anaphora in this poem.

Antithesis: The scheme where opposite words, phrases, sentences, or ideas are used for emphasis. For example: ‘Word I had no one left but God’, “no one left” and “but

God” are contrasting phrases used in the poem.

Epistrophe: The scheme where the same words are recurring at the end of phrases, clauses or sentences is called Epistrophe. For example: ‘Word I was in the house alone’ ‘Word I was in my life alone’. The word “alone” is repetitively used in the above sentences.

Metaphor: A trope where a word or phrase is transfused from its literal connotation to stand for something else. A metaphor makes a comparison between two objects or things without using the words "like" or "as". For example: “Blindly struck at my knees and missed”, “Leaves got up in coil and hissed”.

Personification: A trope where human qualities or capabilities are assigned to generalization or lifeless object is known as personification. For example: ‘the leaves are embodied as some sort of snake considering how coiled, hissing and striking’.

Imagery: It is an author's use of vibrant and eloquent language to add depth to their work. It appeals to human senses to grow deeper the reader's perceptive of the work. In this poem the use of imagery emphasizes the overall embodiment of nature that the author desires to fashion. For example: “restive door”, “frothy shore”, “sagging floor”, and “coiled and hissed”.

Tone: Tone is the poet's approach towards his or her subject or readers. It is similar to tone of voice but should not be confused with mood or atmosphere. An author's tone might be ironic, honest, entertaining, miserable etc. In this poem the author's tenor is melancholic.

Metaphorical questions: A Trope where the foremost questions are asked is called metaphorical question. For example “Where had I heard this wind before”.



CONCLUSION

“Bereft” is a poem that describes the feelings of a lonely person, the poet. The person is unaided not only in his own house but also in the whole world. Everything, even the nature seems to be antagonistic towards him but he has a firm belief in God. Poet makes the use of metaphors and personification to justify this brutality of nature. But, the poem also gives a ray of hope. It implies that even though the evil spirit inside you tempts you with trepidation and lonesomeness, if you have firm belief in yourself, you cannot be tempted.

APPENDIX

*Where had I heard this wind before
Change like this to a deeper roar?
What would it take my standing there for,
Holding open a restive door,
Looking down hill to a frothy shore?
Summer was past and the day was past.
Sombre clouds in the west were massed.
Out on the porch's sagging floor,
Leaves got up in a coil and hissed,
Blindly struck at my knee and missed.
Something sinister in the tone
Told me my secret must be known:
Word I was in the house alone
Somehow must have gotten abroad,
Word I was in my life alone,
Word I had no one left but God.*

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