

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S POEM "THE DAFFODILS" OR "I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD"

Deepak Prasad Verma*

Abstract

This paper attempts to present the stylistic analysis of William Wordsworth's poem "The Daffodils" or "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud". Here linguistic aspects are applied in the analysis and the interpretation of the poem. Apart from discussing title, lexical and syntactical deviations or foregrounding features are taken into account. While analyzing the poem, phonological aspects which provide the poem a quality of incantatory are discussed in detail such as rhythm, rhyming scheme, assonance, consonance etc. Here overall structure, mode of narration as well as cohesive devices such as anaphora, cataphora, coordinators, subordinators, repetition and parallelism are given due importance in the analysis and the interpretation of the poem so that close knit structure of the poem can be appreciated along with its thematic significances.

Keywords:

Linguistics, Stylistics, lexical and syntactical deviations, phonological and cohesive devices.

* PhD Scholar, Dept. of English, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

Introduction

As stylistics relies on the linguistic means for the analysis and interpretation of a literary text. So it becomes imperative to understand what linguistic means. Linguistics is generally considered as “the scientific study of language” (“linguistics,” Oxford) where science is described as “(the) knowledge about the structure and behavior of natural and physical world, based on the fact, that you can prove, for example by experiments” (“Science,” def. 1) and the scientific study deals with the finding out the facts, observing the fact, scrutinizing the fact, analyzing the fact and thus proving hypothesis by using “rigorous logical thinking” (Bharti 11). So linguistics can be elucidated as “a field which classifies the pronunciation, grammar, meaning and use of language and hence provides **terminology** to talk about these matters” (Bharti 5). Linguistics can also be explained as “The study of the nature, structure, and variation of language, including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics” (“linguistics,” def. 1, American).

Next to linguistics is the term stylistics which is considered as “the study of style and methods in languages” (“stylistics,” def. 2) where style is “an exploitation of all the resource of a language” (Sriraman 56). Peter Barry defines stylistics as “a critical approach which uses the methods and findings of the science of linguistics in the analysis of literary text ... its aim 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” (196). As language plays a crucial role in the stylistics so it is a field of great enquiry/concern for the stylisticians to ponder deep into it so that its nuances/ significances in a literary text can be pointed out for its better understanding/ analysis/ interpretation.

Analysis

So coming to the poem, let’s start with the **title** first, then we come to know that the title “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” is a sentence starting with the personal pronoun “I” which indicates that the poem is going to be a subjective account or the experience of the poet. The past form of the verb “wander” indicates that that poet has already visited a place in the past without having any particular purpose and without having any company of anybody which is described by the adverb “lonely”. The poet has described his wandering by comparing it with the

movement of a cloud. As a cloud moves aimlessly in any direction in the sky so the poet has wandered in a place when he was all alone. Thus the title of the poem presents the past experience of the poet when he wandered alone in a place for peace like a cloud.

The alternate title of the poem “The Daffodils” gives another view of the poem. The title starts with the definite article “the” which marks the specific daffodils of a place. Daffodil is a kind of flower but the plural form “daffodils” and the definite article “the” points out the particular place full of daffodils.

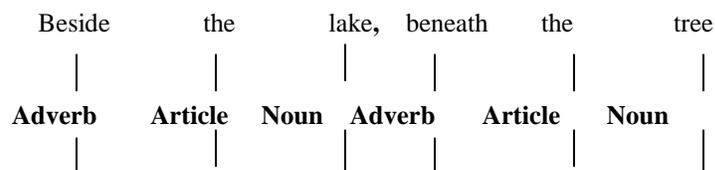
So if we look at both the titles, then we come to know that the poem is about the one of the experiences of the poet who is in the search of a peaceful and soothing environment, wandered alone in a place full of daffodils like a cloud.

Next we look at the **overall structure** of the poem. The poem is divided into four stanzas, having six lines each. The poem is descriptive in nature of the past experience of the poet. First three stanzas are in the past tense presenting the graphical description of the place which is full of daffodils. But in the fourth stanza, the tense changes from past to present and marks the effect of past experiences. Thus there is a cause-effect relationship in the poem. First three stanzas cumulatively present the cause and the last fourth stanza presents the effect.

The poem is aptly **punctuated** with commas (,), colons (:), semicolons (;), dashes (–), apostrophe (‘), hyphen (-) and full stops (.). Commas are effectively used as a pause which results in a successive progression of the idea/ thought in the poem where as semicolons function as a greater pause which marks greater intensity of thought and like commas, semicolons also help in achieving coherence in the thought structure of the poem. Colons which are used only two times but provide a rich and final effect to the graphical description of the poem. Full stops mark the end of sentence or the end of one thought/sense of the poem. Here dashes are used for continuity and function as a attention catcher. Thus it adds weight to the description of the action in the poem. Apostrophe serves the function of economy in the poem. Hyphen is used to form compound words in the poem as “out-did” (excel) which provides in the new meaning to the poem (Wordsworth 7).

Next we turn to the **lexis**, and here we notice the two types of vocabulary. First is related to the nouns describing nature such as “daffodils”, “vales”, “hills”, “trees”, “waves”, “cloud”, “lake” etc. and the other is related to the action verbs such as “floats”. “fluttering”, “dancing” etc. Here what is most striking is the use of nouns of human beings for the daffodils. So human actions or qualities are assigned to the daffodils. Thus the foregrounding technique is achieved by the use of personification device which enables the poet to make reader feel the same as he felt when he first looked at the daffodils. We also have repetition such as “gazed – and gazed” which marks the shocking/ surprising/ mesmerizing moment for the poet having deep impact on his thoughts.

Coming to **syntax**, we come to know that the first paragraph containing six lines makes one complex sentence with well punctuation marks of commas, semicolons, dashes etc. In the first paragraph, first line functions as the principle clause having ‘that clause’ which is a subordinate clause. This subordinate clause functions as the complement to the first line. Similarly third line adds sense to the first line and the fourth line adds description to the third line. In the same way, the sixth line adds description to the fifth line. So in the first paragraph, continuity is well achieved. Apart from this, we also have parallel structures such as



Here parallelism puts emphasis on the location of the daffodils and achieves continuity in the poem.

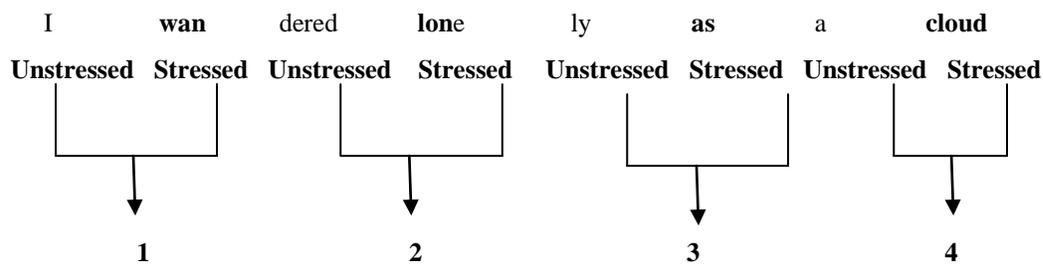
In the second paragraph, the sentence starts with the subordinate clause without having any subject and another subordinate clause is imbued in the previous subordinate clause which adds continuity in the description of the daffodils. It is the third line in which we get the subject as “they” which prompts the reader to retain the sense of previous clauses so that full meaning of the sentence can be understood.

The third and fourth paragraph containing twelve lines, make one long sentence which is full of coordinators and punctuation marks. In the third paragraph, we have only coordinate clauses having a coordinator “but” which functions as a contrast to the previous line. The fourth paragraph has coordinator clauses with “And”. The last two lines starting with “And” marks

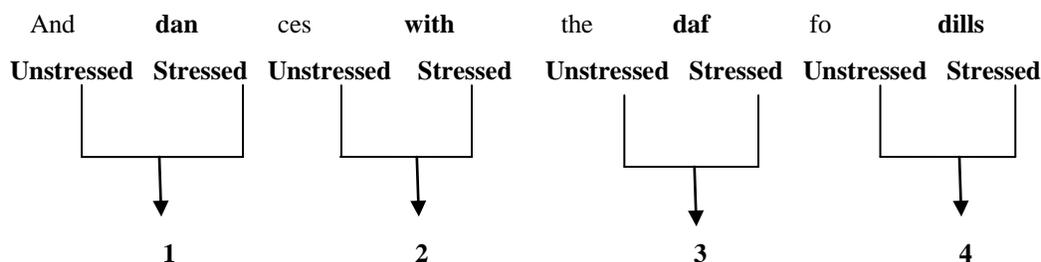
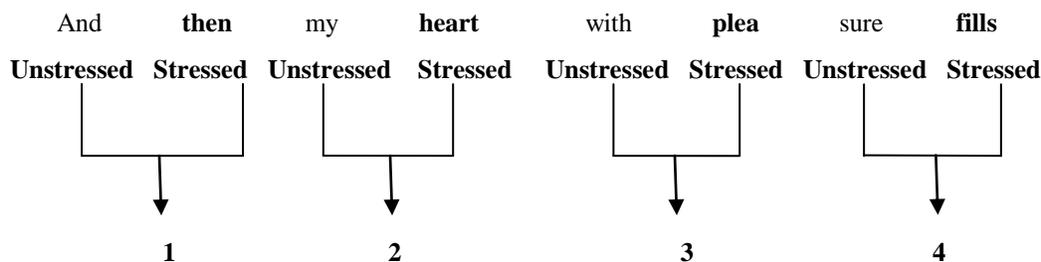
emphasis/ intensity of the feeling of the poet and serve the incremental as well as conclusive function in the poem.

Looking at the **mode of narration**, we can say that the poem is a personal account of the poet's past experience as the poem is started with the first person pronoun "I". It is a kind of monologue where the poet expresses his feelings to the unknown listeners or perhaps the readers of the time when he saw the vast field of daffodils and makes the reader feel the same as the poet felt and view the daffodils from the poet's eyes in a more pleasant, different and authentic manner.

Phonology is the another rewarding area in which we come across meter, rhyme, alliteration, consonance, assonance along with metaphor and simile which provide incantatory quality to the poem. Let's first look at the meter which is defined as the recurring pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. The poem is written in iambic tetrameter which provides the poem a quality of music. For example

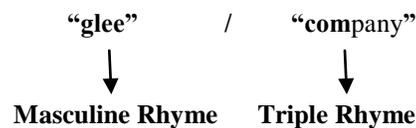


As there are four feet of unstressed and stressed syllables, so it is an iambic tetrameter. Let's see another examples:

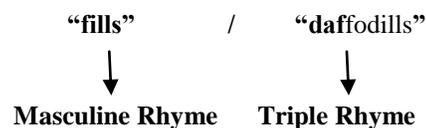


The incantatory quality is also achieved in the poem by the rhyming scheme where the last syllable of first and third lines, the second and the fourth lines and the fifth and the sixth lines are the same in all the four paragraphs of the poem. So the rhyming scheme of the poem is read as ababcc, dedeff, egeghh, ijijbb.

If we look at the types of **rhyme**, then we can find that in the poem we have **masculine rhyme**. In a masculine rhyme, the rhyme falls on the final syllable at the end of the line (Seturaman et al 45). Here we have the examples of masculine rhyme as “cloud”/ “crowd”, “trees”/ “breeze”, “shine”/ “line”, “way”/ “bay”, “glance”/ “dance”, “they”/ “gay”, “thought”/ “brought”, “lie”/ “eye”. But there are some stances of **triple rhyme** also along with masculine rhyme. In triple rhyme, we have a rhyme of three syllables (Seturaman et al 46). In the poem masculine and triple rhyme is achieved as



And



Apart from this, musical effect is also achieved by the **assonance** such as “float on high o’er”, “Which is the bliss of solitude” etc. and **consonance** such as “as stars that shine”. We have fine example of **alliteration** also. Such as “beside the lake, beneath the trees”, “stars that shines” etc.

Next we have **metaphor and simile** which provide aesthetic quality to the poem as “I wandered lonely as a cloud” (Simile), “Continuous as a star that shine/ And twinkle on the milky way” (Simile), “I saw a crowd” (Metaphor) and “A host of golden daffodils” (Metaphor).

Next we have personification as here in the poem human like qualities are assigned to the daffodils such as “dancing”, “tossing”, “fluttering” etc.

Finally let’s study the cohesive devices used in the poem such as anaphora, cataphora, coordinators, subordinators, repetition etc. If we look at the anaphora and cataphora then we can find a number of noun clauses with ‘that’ demonstrative adjectives or determiners such as “that floats on high o’er vales and hills”, “continuous as the stars that shine/ And twinkle on the Milky Way”. We also have noun phrases with the definite article “the” such as “the lake”, “the trees”, “the breeze”, “the milky way” etc. All these work as the identifying function and help the reader to understand the context in which they are effectively employed to give the poem a quality of cohesiveness.

At the same time, coordinators such as “And”, “or” and subordinators such as “which”, “when”, “that” etc. which are used intensively and bound up the lines effectively without losing even a single sense in a long sentence of six or twelve lines and thus provide a close knit structure to the poem. Use of “And” coordinator in the clauses can be seen to combine two thoughts into one to make it a perfect cohesive structure such as “And then my heart with pleasure fills, / And dances with the daffodils.” “And” coordinator also functions in the phrases such as “vales and hills”, “fluttering and dancing”, “gazed – and gazed” etc. “or” coordinator is used for the alternative opinion as in the line “in vacant or in pensive mood” and “but” coordinator is used to present the contrastive statement or the sudden change in the mood of the poet. For example, “I gazed – and gazed but little thought/ What wealth the show to me had brought”.

A large number of subordinators such as “what”, “which”, “when”, “that” are also used in the poem that provide additional, complementary or relative information to the main point/ topic. These subordinators are used in the depended clauses which functions with the main or principle clauses or we can say that these subordinate clauses provide extra information to the main/ principle clauses. We have “that” subordinator in the lines such as “that shine/ And twinkle on the milky way” and “they flash upon that inward eye”. “what” subordinators can be seen as “what wealth they show to me had brought” and “which” subordinator is used in the line as “which is the bless of solitude”. So all these subordinators refers back to the main clause/ main events and helps the reader to keep in contact with all parts of the poem which allows the reader

to hold the previous information to understand the new information and thus serve the powerful function in providing the cohesiveness to the poem.

Repetition of phrases and structures also provide cohesiveness and intensity in thought of the poem. Repetition of the phrase can be seen such as “gazed – and gazed” and repetition of the structure can be seen as “in vacant or in pensive” where preposition + Adjective structure is repeated and mark the structure as compact and close knit.

So by studying apparently the signifying linguistic feature of the poem, we are imperceptibly moving towards the interpretation. The poem “Daffodills” or “As I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” is basically in a form of monologue where the poet is describing his past experience of visiting a field which is full of daffodils to the unknown listeners or perhaps the readers. The poet uses the strategies of simile, metaphor as well as personification to present/recall his past experience. He recalls his past wandering as a cloud which moves carelessly/aimlessly in a peaceful environment above the vales and hills. Then the poet moves to the strategy of metaphor and recalls his sudden encounter with the daffodils which he describes as a crowd and a host. He also graphically describes the location of daffodils as the side of lake and under the trees which were moving in the breeze. In the second paragraph, the poet again moves to the simile and calls daffodils as the stars that shine and twinkle in the sky. He recalls daffodils spreading in a huge area along the bay that he could see ten thousand daffodils at one sight which were moving along the breeze. The poet then compares the beauty of daffodils with that of the waves of the bay where the daffodils outshine the waves. The poet recalls being so happy among the daffodils in the past and was succumb by their beauty so he did nothing but only looked at the daffodils and he felt as if got a precious wealth. In the last paragraph, the poet points out as how he recalls all the previous incidents as he lies down in the bed and starts thinking. Then suddenly the view of daffodils comes to his mind. Thus he feels bliss and becomes excited like daffodils.

Conclusion

Thus we can say that the poem has perfect rhyming scheme and iambic tetrameter along with assonance and consonance that infuse musical quality in this poem suited to feelings and pleasure experience of the poet. Lexical and syntactical areas are handled with excellence along

with rich cohesive devices and close knit structures of sentences which make the reader to keep concentrate the while reading the poem and to feel exactly the same while reading the poem as poet felt by looking at the daffodils.

References

- [1] Barry, Peter. *Beginning THEORY: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Third ed. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2015. 196-213.
- [2] Bharti, Surbhi. *INTRODUCTION TO INGUISTICS BLOCK I: General Introduction “PGCTE.”* Eds. Tapas S Ray and Surbhi Bharti. Hyderabad: English and Foreign Language U, 2007. 5-11.
- [3] “Linguistics.” *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*. 8th ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. CD-ROM.
- [4] ---. Def. 1. *American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, Fifth Edition. 2011. Web. 10 Sep. 2016. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/linguistics>
- [5] “Science.” Def. 1. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*. 8th ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. CD-ROM.
- [6] Seturaman, V.S et al. Eds. *PRACTICAL CRITICISM*. Chennai: Macmillan, 2007. 1-59.
- [7] Sriraman, T. *STYLISTIC BLOCK I: History, Theories and Definitions “PGDTE.”* Ed. K. Lavanya. Hyderabad: English and Foreign Language U, 2012. 41-58.
- [8] Sriraman, T and M. I. Shastri. *STYLISTIC BLOCK II: Stylistic Analysis “PGDTE.”* Eds. T. Sriraman and K. Lavanya. Hyderabad: English and Foreign Language U, 2012. 1-30.
- [9] “Stylistics.” Def. 2. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*. 8th ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. CD-ROM.
- [10] Wordsworth, William. “As I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud.” *William Wordsworth – poems-*. Classic Poetry Series. PoemHunter.com - The World’s Poetry Archive, 2004.