

FOREGROUNDING OF THE THEME OF LOVE IN “IN THE RAIN

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ABSTRACT

This research paper studies the unique style of E.E Cummings in his poem “In The Rain”. The study of the style of a writer helps us in tracing his tendency. In this research paper, linguistic features of the poem are studied with the help of foregrounding technique. The poem is foregrounded in deviations and parallelisms. The poem is foregrounded on graphological, syntactical, grammatical, lexical, phonological and semantic levels. These levels are very helpful in finding out the love theme of the poem.

Keywords: Stylistics, foregrounding technique, love theme.

INTRODUCTION

According to Leech (1969) “style is the way in which something is spoken, written or performed”. Style refers to the words usage and speaking style of a person. Leech and Short (1981, p.11) defines style as selection of the words from a grand linguistic vocabulary. Style involves spoken and written, literary and nonliterary types of language but is particularly associated with literary texts. They take style as a “dress of thoughts”. So it is the way of a writer in which he conveys his message.

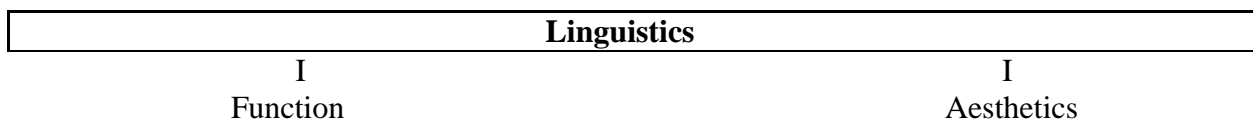
“Stylistics is the (linguistic) study of style, is rarely undertaken for its own sake, simply as an exercise in describing what use is made of language”.

Leech and Short (1981, p.13)

Short and Candlin (1989, p.183) said that “stylistics is a linguistic approach to the study of the literary texts. It thus embodies one essential part of the general course - philosophy; that of combining language and literary study” According to Leech ‘Literature cannot be examined in any depth apart from language.’

Stylistics explains the usage of language and its effects also. So Stylistics has two types:

- Literary stylistics
- Attribution stylistics



Attribution stylistics involves the statistical study of style. It tells about linguistic qualities including 'vocabulary and sentence sequence'. This involves author's interests in it.

Principles of Stylistics

In every discipline, there are certain rules and principles to define the areas of that discipline. In stylistics, we need a yardstick both evaluate linguistic features of a literary text. There are three principles for the stylistic analysis of a text.

- 1) Foregrounding
- 2) Norms
- 3) Deviations

Foregrounding is the opposite of backgrounding. In back grounding technique, we explore those features which are hidden. It is very close to Critical Discourse Analysis. Foregrounding is the study of an apparent picture of the text. Through this technique, we try to explore highlighted feature of a text. In Halliday's language, it is called Prominence. It is comprised of two techniques: Parallel Foregrounding and Deviatonal Foregrounding

Parallelism is the study of revised similar patterns in a text. Deviation is the violation of apparent patterns. Deautomatization and Thematization belong to deviatonal foregrounding. Deautomatization is the exploration of abnormal, hocking and unexpected features of a text. In thematization, initial position of sentence is highlighted.

THE POEM

The poem 'In the rain' is written by Edward Estlin Cummings. E.E. Cummings, an American poet is well known for his unique poetic style and is a representative of modern age. He adopted a thoroughly different and untraditional style in his poetry. In past, some critics were strongly against of his unconventional style. They rejected his style and were of the view that his style had no significance. It had nothing to do with the subject of his poems. It did not add anything to the themes of his poems. R.P Blackmur was also belonged to this school of thought. He talked about the strange linguistic features of his poetry:

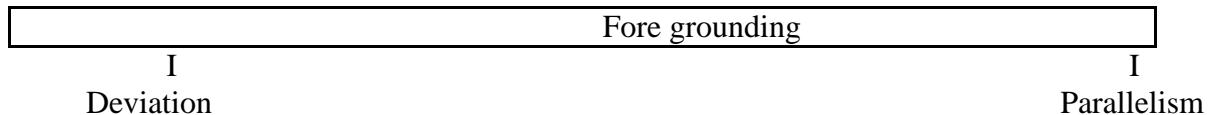
"Extensive consideration of these peculiarities today has very little importance, carries almost no reference to the meaning of the poems" (Blackmur 1954: 320). He uses lowercase letters in his name to make it peculiar from others. He was an American poet, author, and essayist. He wrote two autobiographical novels, four plays and several essays. He is remembered as an eminent voice of 20th century. Some of his poetry is with free verse. Cummings used typography to paint the picture.

Deviations play an important role in the theme of the poem. Blackmur and other critics of the same thought are present no more. Now everybody considers his unique way of writing and its significance. His capitalization is not a traditional capitalization. He never uses it in the beginning of sentence and when he uses upper class words it gives extra meanings to the poem.

He never capitalizes “I” which is a grammatical deviation but it shows that self is not always important. He gives the idea to his readers that one should come out of himself and think about the other people of the universe. He does not use punctuation marks in their conventional way. But they are used very unconventionally in his poems and of great significance in the themes of the poems. He never uses sentence markers which is the deviation of general norms of English language. All these deviations of general norms of English language and Poetic genre are of great significance and they show his powerful feelings and uncontrollable passions. His major focus is on the theme of CHILDHOOD and LOVE in his poetry. His most of the poems deal with these two themes. “Love always was Cummings”. It works as a propelling force behind his poetry.

FOREGROUNDING “IN THE RAIN”

The technique of foregrounding is used to analyze the poem. It is tried to find out the linguistic features of the poem with the help of foregrounding technique. The theory of Foregrounding is divided into two categories.



The features of the poem “In The Rain” by E.E Cummings are traced on the six levels of Stylistic Analysis:

- ☐ Graphological level
- ☐ Grammatical level
- ☐ Syntactic level
- ☐ Lexical level
- ☐ Phonological level
- ☐ Semantic level

Graphological Level

“It refers to the whole writing system: punctuation and paragraphing as well as spacing” (Leech 1969, p.69). These are the graphological features in a text which strike our mind at first sight. They play a major role in analyzing the text before noticing lexical and grammatical features. They carry “pragmatic force” as an important factor in a text. Graphology is very useful and subtle. A text layout, presentation, use of parenthesis, bullets, font styles and underlining creates a great impact and produces powerful influence on the minds of readers.

The poem is divided into six stanzas and four stanzas of the poem consist of four lines and one is of two lines. The patterns of lines are very awkward. The length of every line is not same but it is completely unusual. Awkward spacing is being observed. Punctuations are used to divide sentences or phrases e.g. full stops, commas, semi-colon, colon, exclamation mark, apostrophe, parenthesis and brackets etc. But there is only one full stop in the whole poem. Two commas are observed in the poem. The title of the poem is in lower case which is very unusual.

Sentences are not started with capital letters and no full stop is observed at the end of the sentence. Even a single capital letter is not observed in the whole poem. Paragraph spacing is very awkward in the poem. "I" personal pronoun is used twice in the poem and it is used in lower class which is very unusual. The poem comprises of striking features which are generally not observed. The poem seems very untraditional at first sight and shows a very unique poetic style of E.E Cummings.

Grammatical Level

Grammar is set of rules and it follows language. In grammatical level, sentence markers, capitalization, punctuations and sentence structure are observed. Sentences are started with capital letters but the very beginning of the poem is in lower-case even the title of the poem is in lower case. Sentences do not start with capital letter and even single capital letter is not used in the poem. Absence of capitalization is the deviation of general norms of grammar.

No sentence marker is used neither did the sentences start with capital letter nor did end on full stop. Only one full stop is observed in the whole poem. Even a single capital letter is not used in the whole poem. He does not use punctuation in the poem which are used to distinguish phrases and sentences. Only two commas are used in the whole poem. According to grammarian rule personal pronoun "I" must be used in upper class but Cummings uses it in lower class which is the deviation of general norm of language. "I" is used two times in the poem and is in lower class.

Line patterns are not used according to language norms. Line patterns are unusual. Line spacing is very awkward and violates language norms. Paragraph spacing also violates language norms and is used very awkwardly. Sentence structure of the poem is the deviation of general rule of grammar. It does not follow grammar rules. There are many grammatical deviations in the poem and the whole poem violates the norms of grammar rules.

Lexical Level

This poem has many instances of lexical parallelisms and deviations. Open class words are also used which link the words together to create the meanings whether they are parts of speech.

NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES	ADVERBS
Rain	Sit	Shy	holy
Darkness	Think		
Sunset	Float		
Face	Drowsy		
Cheeks, lips			
Smiles, eyes, hair			
Streets			

This poem is comprised mostly of nouns and verbs. Physical as well as abstract nouns are used in this poem e. g darkness.

Related to human	Related to nature
Face, cheeks, smiles, eyes, lips, kiss, hair	Rain, Darkness, Sunset, flowers, star

The theme of the poem is foregrounded by the vocabulary items. There are many love epithets which highlight the love theme of the poem

“Think of you”, “the holy
 city which is your face”,
 “your eyes half-
 thrush
 half-angel and your drowsy
 lips where float flowers of kiss”

These are the words and lines which clearly indicate the love theme of the poem. The poet is greatly benefitted by poetic license. He uses many words to refer his beloved and for showing his emotions which are generally not used in that sense. He uses the metaphor of city for the face of her beloved and street for her smile. Her treatment of metaphor is very unusual. He uses metaphor of thrush and angel and adds the word “half” with them for her lips. Hair of her beloved are called “sweet shy pirouette” which is very unusual.

There are examples of **Nonce Formation** in the poem. He forms new words with the compilation of two words. He uses the words ‘half-thrush’ and ‘**half-angel**’. These words are not regular words. He coins these words to show the beauty of her beloved. These words are only used once by E.E Cummings and never used again.

Phonological Level

Phonological level deals with the sound patterns. The poem is foregrounded on phonological level.

Rhyme Scheme: There is no rhyme scheme in the poem. **Consonance** is the repetition of consonant sounds. Examples of consonance are found in the poem. In first stanza, “sunset” and “sit” are the examples of consonance. In second stanza, “streets” and “smiles” are consonance sounds. In last stanza, “Song”, “soul”, “single” and “Star” are the consonance sounds. Example of **Repetition** is also found in the poem. Lines are repeated in the poem. The line “think of you” has come two times in the poem.

Contracted forms: There are no contracted forms in the poem.

Alliteration: There are examples of “**Alliteration**” in the poem. ‘Float flowers’, ‘single star’ ‘song soul’ are the sentences which give a definite repetition of the sounds.

Semantic Level

Semantic deals with the function of lexicology for example Irony, Metaphor, Pun, Hyperbole etc. this poem is foregrounded on the level of semantic because it has many semantic parallelisms and deviations. E.E. Cummings uses **Metaphorical language** to highlight the beauty of his mistress. There are many examples of metaphor “In The Rain”:

the holy
city which is your face
these lines are the example of metaphor.
Your little cheeks the streets
Of smiles
Another example of metaphor is in third stanza:
“your eyes half-
thrush
half angel”

He achieves great benefits from poetic language. Usually metaphors of ‘city’ and ‘street’ are not used in poetry to describe the beauty of mistress. But he does this and gives a very unique touch to his poem. Thrush is a singing bird he puts the word ‘half’ with it and makes a new word which is used as a metaphor by the poet to describe the beauty of her beloved’s eye. He treats ‘half-angel’ in a same way to describe the beauty of her lips. The beauty of her beloved’s hair is described as sweet shy pirouette which is also very unusual because ‘pirouette’ is a part of dance.

Hyperbole is the figure of speech used to exaggerate. Hyperbole is used by E.E Cummings to exaggerate the beauty of his mistress. He calls the eyes of her mistress half-angel and half thrush.

Syntactic Level

At syntactical level, sentence structure of a text is studied. On syntactic level, there are many deviations in the poem. Sentence structure of the poem is very irregular. The sentence structure of the poem is quite shocking and the violation of language norms is observed. The regular sentence structure is usually observed as:

Subject + Predicate

I go to Karachi.

But the poem does not follow regular structure and sentences are started from “of” and “and”.

FINDINGS

The theme of love is being introduced in the poem. The poem deals with the theme of traditional love. He is talking about his mistress. This theme is revealed clearly by the vocabulary items. He portrays a picture of his beloved with the help of similes and metaphors. The poem shows very powerful feelings and uncontrollable love of poet for his beloved. The poem is foregrounded in the deviations of the poetic genre and general rule of grammar. Cummings poetic style is very

unique and different. He violates the rules of poetry and language and creates his own authorian norms.

CONCLUSION

Theme of the poem “In The Rain” is love theme. His deviations and specific poetic style is of much significance in the theme of the poem. Wordsworth says: ‘Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling.’ Poetry is a spontaneous overflow of feelings for E.E Cummings. He is so full with feelings and emotions that he finds it a hindrance to put punctuations, sentence-markers and capitalization. Deviations signify the love theme of the poem and describe his immense love and passions.as it is said “love always was Cummings”.

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APPENDIX

In The Rain

in the rain-
 darkness, the sunset
 being sheathed i sit and
 think of you

the holy
 city which is your face
 your little cheeks the streets
 of smiles

your eyes half-
 thrush
 half-angel and your drowsy
 lips where float flowers of kiss

and
 there is the sweet shy pirouette
 your hair
 and then

your dance song
soul. rarely-beloved
a single star is
uttered, and i

think
of you