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**STYLISTICS ANALYSIS OF THE POEM “THE CHARACTER OF
LOVE SEEN AS A SEARCH FOR THE LOST” BY KENNETH
PATCHEN**

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Abstract

This paper attempts a stylistic study of a poem, " The Character of Love Seen as a Search for the Lost by Kenneth Patchen. It aims to reveal the deeper underpinnings of semanticity in condensed literary pieces, particularly in poetry, as a consequence of the author's style. It brings to the fore the heavy use of deviation and parallelism to drum home the poem's theme. This analysis is conducted under the aspects of graphology, syntax, grammar, lexis, and phonology. And finally, a fundamental literary feature used, worthy of note and clearly drawn attention to in the analysis, is the parallelism of the entire literary piece, which gives it a unique outlook. On the surface, one might not notice the effect of this literary technique, but the study has meticulously pointed this out.

Keywords: stylistics, poetry, parallelism, foregrounding, literary technique, deviation

Introduction

Short and Candlin (1989) said that “stylistics is a linguistic approach to the study of the literary text. It has embodied one essential part of the general course – philosophy; that of combining language and literary study”. Stylistics is the application of linguistic knowledge to the study of style. The word stylistics is derived from the style. Stylistics is the path that links the thought of style in the analysis of a literary text with the help of linguistic tools. Stylistics refers to the study of appropriate use of words or language in a sentence or writing. Stylistics is the application of linguistic knowledge to the study of style. Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics as “The study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation”. According to him stylistics is the bridge between literary criticism and linguistics. And has no independent branch of its own.

Stylistic analysis illustrates how writers with the help of foregrounding enhance the impact of the text thereby creating a magical effect in their writings. The more the text is foregrounded, the more attractive it becomes. With the use of techniques like deviation and parallelism, writers enhance the impact of their text. In the poem *The Character of Love Seen as a Search for the Lost* the poet grips his readers by foregrounding the text through deviation and parallelism. With his wonderful use of metaphors, allusions and similes, the poet successfully enhances the impact of his poem. There is a touch of mysticism in Patchen’s



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poetry. In most of his poems we see excessive use foregrounding and deviation. And this poem is not an exception. Moreover, with deliberate repetition of words and phrases he creates incantatory effect. This Paper analyses how he produces magical effect with his masterful approach. This paper shows how the poet successfully grabs the attention of his readers right from the word go and never lets them look aside even for a second. There is a display of artistry in almost every line of this poem and this paper tries to find out how the poet is able to do this.

About Kenneth Patchen

Kenneth Patchen was born on December 13, 1911 and died on January 8, 1972. He was an American Poet and novelist. In his earlier years as a poet he experimented with different forms of writing and incorporated painting, drawing, and jazz music into his works. He was quite often compared with William Blake largely for his interest in mysticism. His biographer wrote that he "developed in his fabulous fables, love poems and picture poems a deep yet modern mythology that conveys a sense of compassionate wonder amidst the world's violence. Fredrick Eckman believed that Patchen was more akin to Blake than any other contemporary poet. He was of the view that there was the same sense of deep isolation, partly self-willed, from the mass of humanity; of choking rage at shoddy secularity, orthodoxy, and materialism; of a tender, childlike wonder for the beautiful, pure, and innocent; of a desire for joy and freedom that leads at last into mystic contemplation. According to him Patchen's poems, like Blake's, are of three kinds: lyrics of purity and gentleness; fierce satires directed at the modern world; poems of mystic prophecy. He is not conscious of deviating from traditional way of writing poetry in fact it is the researcher who randomly choose this poem and has applied the stylistics features on this piece of work and after applying these features, researcher comes to know that this poem is replete with parallelism and deviations.

Methodology

The researcher will try to analyze the text of the poem *The Character of Love Seen as a Search for the Lost* by tracing the role of Graphological Deviation, Syntactic Deviation, Semantic Deviation, Syntactic Parallelism, Phonological Parallelism, and Verbal Repetition in the text of the poem.

General Interpretation of the Poem

In this poem the speaker who happens to be a man is addressing a woman. The use of word "the" before both Man and Woman indicates that both the man and woman represent all mankind. There is a sense of mystic touch in this poem as the speaker says that almost all things in the world are connected to each other.



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“Each is the work of all.”

Fredrick Eckman says;

“There is a sense of deep isolation, partly self-willed, from the mass of humanity; of choking rage at shoddy secularity, orthodoxy, and materialism; of a tender, childlike wonder for the beautiful, pure, and innocent; of a desire for joy and freedom that leads at last into mystic contemplation.”

This poem is no exception. At the start of the poem the poet looks in a positive mood as he quite romantically talks about all the beautiful things around. There is a child-like wonder for the beautiful and pure that ultimately leads both the poet and the readers into mystic contemplation.

In the presence of a woman who seems to be his beloved as well he tries to find beauty in almost all the things around the world. He talks about the dancer, the nun, the wren, the Jesus wing and he romanticizes the stars, the muffled sound in the snow, he remembers Caesar and Socrates the two great historical figures. Maybe the poet is a monist and believes that everything in this world rather universe came from one source and each thing has the portion of all the things.

The tone and mood of the poem drastically changes in the last line when the word “beautiful” that the poet so cheerfully used in the last line of the first stanza gets replaced by the word “desperate”.

Stylistic Analysis

Graphological Deviation:

If using punctuation marks to create an incantatory effect in the poem is an art, Kenneth is a master of this art.

“You, the woman; I, the man; this, the world:”

The poet has foregrounded this line with the unusual use of punctuation marks. There is enjambment in the first line of every stanza because of these punctuation marks.

Line 4: “The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing:”

In line 4 the poet again makes an effective use of punctuation marks which helps him to successfully foreground the text.

Line 12:” You, the sought for; I, the seeker; this, the search:”

Line 21:” You, the village; I, the stranger; this, the road:”

Line 30: “The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing”

There is the same unusual use of punctuation in lines 12, 21, 30 by the poet to foreground this poem.



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Lexical Parallelism:

The repetition of a word, phrase, or a clause in a regular pattern is called lexical parallelism. The poet has used the word “the” thrice in the inaugural line of this poem and this unusual repetition of “the” creates a musical effect which foregrounds the contents and, as a result, it catches the attention of the reader more effectively.

Line 3 and 4: “There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;

The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing”

Then again in third line the poet has used the word “the” thrice and in line 4 the word “the” has been used four times and with this repetition text becomes foregrounded.

Phonological Parallelism:

There is a wonderful use of alliteration throughout the poem which creates the magical effect.

Line: There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;

Line 3 there is a repetition of sound “s” at the beginning of the word “step”, “snow” and “Stranger.” This is an example of loose alliteration.

Then again in lines 12 and 13 there is loose alliteration of “w” sound in the words “with”, “world”, “where” “we” and “s” sound in the words “Sought”, “Seeker” and “Search”.

“Look, with idiot eyes, on the world where we two are.

You, the sought for; I, the seeker; this, the search:”

Syntactic Parallelism:

Poets more often than not deliberately repeat the same sentence structure but change the words to enhance the impact of their poetry. The deliberate repetition of the same sentence structure but not the same wording is called syntactic parallelism. The first line of this poem is a perfect example of syntactic parallelism.

Line 1:” You, the woman; I, the man; this, the world:”

While analyzing this poem one striking use of parallelism was observed by the researchers namely the poet quite expertly repeated almost the whole first stanza at the end of this poem. Lines 3, 4, 5 and 6 are repeated are almost perfectly identical with the last stanza but the poet quite cleverly changed one word which changed the whole meaning of the stanza.



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Line 3: There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;
Line 4: The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing
Line 5: Over the walkers in the village; and there are
Line 6: Many beautiful arms around us and the things we know.
There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;
The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing
Over the walkers in the village; and there are
Many desperate arms about us and the things we know.

Notice how the poet quite cleverly replaced the word beautiful by desperate. By changing one word the poet successfully changed the tone of the poem.

Semantic Deviation:

Poets quite often use simile, metaphors, paradoxes and other figures of speech to heighten the impact of their poetry. The images that are used in the figure of speech usually suggest two layers of meanings namely superficial meanings and actual meanings.

Metaphor: into the quiet cave of God, night's tense meadow,

Allusions: where Caesar, And Socrates,

Paradox: Line: 16. But genius is an enormous littleness,

Simile: Line: 10. And Socrates, like primitive paintings on a wall,

Line: 18. How smoothly, like the sleep of a flower

Conclusion:

This stylistic analysis of Kenneth Patchen's poem "The Character of Love Seen as a Search for the Lost" tries to concentrate on Patchen's digging for stylistic pins tracing through the poem from lexical, phonological and syntactic parallelism and semantic deviations as well. These aspects help the reader clarify the concentration of the author, relating the poem and context. The reader is able to see how this poem highlights the post-war scenario and not only the subsequent change in the character of love, but also leaves it sceptical for ages. And that gap will be filled by mysticism. In relation to that point, this stylistic study relates the text to postwar traumatic reading and mysticism through a linguistic viewpoint. It is revealed that each category of this stylistic study functions as a meaning decoder relying on the structural features of the text. Not only does it clarify the borders of Patchen's style and show its extensibility, but it also contributes to postwar reading by bringing disastrous aspects of wars and the subsequent danger to mysticism. This poem provides extensive data on the role of parallelism and semantic deviations to have an intoxicating impact on the mind of the reader. Parallelism and deviation are directly linked to foregrounding, which helps in perceiving the desired meaning of the poem. Stylistics, then, is helpful in explaining parts of a text which we might not otherwise understand



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Appendix

The Character of Love Seen As a Search for the Lost

1. You, the woman; I, the man; this, the world:
2. And each is the work of all.
3. There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;
4. The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing
5. Over the walkers in the village; and there are
6. Many beautiful arms around us and the things we know.
7. See how those stars tramp over the heavens on their sticks
8. Of ancient light: with what simplicity that blue
9. Takes eternity into the quiet cave of God, where Ceasar
10. And Socrates, like primitive paintings on a wall,
11. Look, with idiot eyes, on the world where we two are.
12. You, the sought for; I, the seeker; this, the search:
13. And each is the mission of all.
14. For greatness is only the drayhorse that coaxes
15. The built cart out; and where we go is reason.
16. But genius is an enormous littleness, a trickling
17. Of heart that covers alike the hare and the hunter.



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18. How smoothly, like the sleep of a flower, love,
19. The grassy wind moves over night's tense meadow:
20. See how the great wooden eyes of the forrest
21. Stare upon the architecture of our innocence.
22. You, the village; I, the stranger; this, the road:
23. And each is the work of all.
24. Then, not that man do more, or stop pity; but that he be
25. Wider in living; that all his cities fly a clean flag...
26. We have been alone too long, love; it is terribly late
27. For the pierced feet on the water and we must not die now.
28. Have you ever wondered why all the windows in heaven were broken?
29. Have you seen the homeless in the open grave of God's hand?
30. Do you want to acquaint the larks with the fatuous music of war?
31. There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;
32. The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing
33. Over the walkers in the village; and there are
34. Many desperate arms about us and the things we know.