

Stylistic Analysis of Robert Browning's Poem "Patriot into Traitor"

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Abstract

The stylistic analysis of Robert Browning's poem 'Patriot into Traitor' is done by using graphological, phonological, morphological and lexico-syntactic patterns. This analysis is helpful in decoding the underlying meanings of the poem. It clearly brings to surface what the poet really wants to impart.

Keywords: Stylistic analysis, graphological, phonological, morphological, lexico-syntactic patterns

1. Introduction

Style and stylistics are interrelated terms. A style is a certain manner, approach or way in which something is said, done, expressed or performed. Style is a tag term. It is not formed consciously. From linguistic orientation it implies to the particular selection of sounds, words and syntactic patterns. The study of style is called stylistics. Stylistics deals with the description of formal features of a text and their functional importance. Short and Candlin (1989) said that stylistics is a linguistic approach to the study of the literary text. The concept of Style is based upon the use of language in different ways. Wales (2001) considers it hard to define these ambiguous terms.

1.1 Style

The word style has been derived from a Latin word 'stilus' which means spelling or writing instrument. The term style bears different connotations that add to its complexities. Leech (1969) believes that the characteristic manner in which a writer expresses him- or herself or the particular way of a literary work, is style. Style studies those components or features of a literary composition which give to it individual stamp and associate it with a particular author and produce a certain effect upon the reader. Style can also be defined as a person's speech and communicative ability which reflects his social identity such as ethnicity, age, gender and social background. Crystal (1987) also regarded style as a distinctive use of language. Style is the major dimension of linguistic variation. According to Carter (1989) style depends on linguistic levels. Bell (1997) emphasizes that style is an individual speaker's variety of speech. Style includes verbal repertoire and social context is its incorporating element. Olorunoba-Oju (1999) argues that style indicates variety in expression, according to certain social-context.

In Sociolinguistics, a style is a set of linguistic variations like syntactic, lexical and phonological. It focuses the literary style, especially the distinctive way of writing literary texts. It also refers to the blend of peculiar attributes of literary or artistic expressions of a particular person, group or era. Schopenhauer (2004) regards style as physiognomy of the mind, and a perfect asset for an individual than the face. Style is used as an embellishment and addition to the central thought.

1.2 Stylistics

Stylistics concentrates on the style of a literary text. Freeman (1971) describes stylistics as a sub-discipline which started in the second half of the 20th century. The scientific study of literary style and the methods used in written language is stylistics. Turner (1975) describes stylistics as a part of linguistics which concentrates on variations in the most conscious and complex uses of language in literature. The Dictionary of Stylistics describes 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.

It deals with accurate analysis and account of writing and speech style, by using a specialized vocabulary developed in linguistics. Stylistics attempts to make scientific, methodical, objective and precise analysis. Stylistics is the systematic and scientific study of literary style. Widdowson (1975) and Carter (1988) agree that stylistics is a bridge between linguistics and literature. It considers the devices used in a language like figures of speech and syntactical patterns. Moreover, stylistics is the study of the linguistic features of a literary text which directly affect the meaning of an utterance. As Verdonk (2002) says that the study of peculiar expression and its purpose in a language is stylistics.

2. Levels of Stylistic Analysis

Following are the levels of stylistic analysis:

2.1 Graphology

According to Crystal and Davy (1969) graphology is the analogous study of a language writing system or orthography as seen in the various kinds of handwriting or topography. Leech (1969) refers it to the whole writing system. Graphological elements are:

Punctuation

Paragraphing

2.2 Phonetics

Yule (1996) explains it as the study of speech sounds in general. So the study and classification of speech sounds in general comes under the level of phonetics.

2.3 Phonology

Lodge (2009) expounds that phonology is the study of linguistic systems, specially the way in which sound represents the differences of meanings in a language. The system and patterns of speech in a particular language are the part of phonology. It deals with the systematic organization of speech sounds. The poetic devices in this level are:

Rhyme

Alliteration

Consonance

Assonance

2.4 Morphology

Mark and Krishen (2005) put that morphology is the mental system which is used in the formation of words and it deals with the inner structure of words. Morphological elements are: Affixes, Compounding

2.5 Lexico-Syntax

It is the combination of two different terms 'lexis' means vocabulary and 'syntax' means sentence construction. It studies the patterns of words in different linguistic context, on the semantic level in terms of stylistics. It is concerned with the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. The semantic levels include:

Metaphor, Simile, Personification, Irony, Tone, Anaphora, Hyperbole, Imagery, Symbol, Allusion, Deictic words, Collocation, Metonymy, Synonym, Compounding, Antithesis, Linking words, Natural words, Old English words

The lexical elements are:

- Noun
- Pronoun
- Verb
- Adjective
- Adverb

3. The Poet and the Poem

3.1 Poet's Biography

Robert Browning (1812-1889) was the son of a well-read father and religious mother who had an artistic bent of mind. He inherited creative abilities from his parents. Browning was not formally well-educated. His use of diction, rhyme, symbols and modern poetic style distinguishes him from his peers. He wrote with usual words but it was not easy to compete with him. Most of his works manifest his own juvenile desires and apprehensions. He is well-known for his dramatic monologues. His explicit portrayal of central characters in dire circumstances, make the enigmas comprehensible. He focused on the subject not the form irrespective of its acceptance or denial.

3.2 "Patriot into Traitor" - Dramatic Monologue

A dramatic monologue is the speech of a single character with dramatic significance. During this speech, the speaker unveils the situation, setting, the audience and most interesting part is the revelation about his own personality. The dramatic monologue offers a psychological experience, through entering into the mind of a character. And see everything only via his perspective. In 'Patriot into Traitor' the speaker takes thorough account of his passed year as a political figure. He experienced a downright aversion for him. The political figure openly tells about the terrible ordeal, a change in the political and social order. He is not feeling any fear from the downswing of his career. The speaker reveals aspects of his character as a patriot through telling the story about what he has done to get where he is.

3.3 Title of the Poem

The title of the poem refers to a shift from patriotism to traitor. As it is obvious from the title that Robert Browning's poem 'Patriot into Traitor' tells the story of someone who was once considered nationalist. The one for whom the well being of country is most important and he never hesitated to go beyond the limits to defend his country from

adversaries. The poem also takes account of how he turned into a traitor. The title shows the impermanence of human nature. It implies that a man who has patriotic fervour, sooner or later develops treacherous approach. There are clear implications of status reversal, from peak to bottom. Furthermore, the title alludes to the social criticism also.

3.4 Introduction of the Poem

The poem "Patriot into Traitor" is structured around the themes of violence, death and a downfall from a high pedestal. Another underlying theme is the oscillating human attitudes and behaviors. Browning has presented a psychological portrait of a political leader.

This poem is a soliloquy type monologue in which the speaker tells about his political career. He puts in picture the brief description of his peak time. The speaker tells about his macabre span of career. He tells that a year back how the people revered him and gave him a warm welcome. The paths were adorned with roses and myrtle to greet the public star. There were hordes of people waiting to see him. The poet also recounts his tactful choices as a politician. The speaker mulls over his past. He made promises with them which proved false somehow.

After passing a year, the people have developed negative feelings for their leader. They are regarding him as a backstabber. He is being taken for execution. The poem also points out the fickle public opinion. They deprecated his sincerity and sacrifices. We get vicarious sympathy after reading this poem. No one considered his feat for the welfare of masses. Despite all his pains, he is not feather-bedded in any way.

4. Stylistic Analysis of the Poem

4.1 Graphological Levels

There are six well knit stanzas and each comprises five lines. The different punctuation marks are being used in them:

4.1.1 Exclamation Mark (!)

It is a punctuation mark usually used after an interjection or exclamation (which indicates strong feelings or shouting). Exclamation marks are placed after the emotional or sentimental words uttered by the speaker. In this poem, the poet has used exclamation mark three times:

- But give me your sun from yonder skies!
- To give it my loving friends to keep!
- Thus I entered, and thus I go!

4.1.2 Question mark (?)

All the question marks employed in this poem are rhetorical. The poet used signs of question mark three times in the poem:

Line 9. But give me your sun from yonder skies?

Line 10. They had answered: And afterwards, what else?

‘Paid by the world, what dost thou owe,

Line 29. Me?’ –God might question; now instead,

4.1.3 Semi-colon (;)

The poet used semi-colons three times in the poem:

Line 13. Naught man could do, have I felt undone;

Line 17. Just a palsied few at the windows set;

Line 22. A rope cut both my wrists behind;

4.1.4 Colon (:)

The colon is used to clear the meanings. The poet used colon twice in the poem to clarify what he means:

Line 30. Tis God shall repay: I am safer so.

Line 10. They had answered: And afterward, what else?

4.1.5 Full Stops (.)

Full stops are used on the completion of an idea. In this poem Browning used five full stops at the end of each stanza. There are two internal full stops as well.

4.1.6 Comma (,)

Commas are used to add a certain profundity of thought in the poem. They are placed to provide brief pauses or for separating thoughts. Browning has used commas 29 times in this poem.

4.1.7 Apostrophe (‘)

It is a rhetorical term for a speech addressed to a person, idea or thing. It refers to possession or used as a mark to indicate omission of letters. The use of apostrophe in literature indicates the arrangement of words addressing a non-existent person or an abstract idea in such a way as if it were present and capable of understanding feelings. The poet used apostrophe five times in this poem:

- There’s nobody on the house-tops now—

- At the Shambles's Gate—or, better yet,
- By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.
- Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.
- 'Tis God shall repay: I am safer so.

4.1.8 Hyphen (-)

Hyphen is used to create new vocabulary which adds colour to the literary expressions. The hyphenated words used by Browning in this poem are:

house-roofs church-spires house-tops

4.1.9 Quotation Marks (“ ”)

Quotation marks are placed to enclose some information which is important. These are also used when something requires special attention. When the writer wants to convey something ironically, he encloses it into quotation marks. The poet used quotation marks three times in this poem:

- Had I said, “Good folk, mere noise repels—
But give me your sun from yonder skies!”
- “They had answered, And afterwards, what else?”
- “Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
Me?”-- God might question; now instead,

4.1.10 Dashes (--)

Dash has been used to depict the urgency of situation in the poem and it also elevates emotional effect. Robert Browning used dashes due to stress and strains. He employs dashes to cover unexpressed emotions. This graphological feature makes the text attractive.

- Had I said, ‘Good folk, mere noise repels—
- There’s nobody on the house-tops now—
- At the Shambles Gate—or, better yet,
- Me?’—God might question; now instead,

4.2 Phonological Levels

4.2.1 Rhyme Scheme

The poem comprises six stanzas: each with five lines in it. The rhymes are end rhymes which are perfect rhymes (way, mad, sway, had, day). Each stanza of “Patriot into Traitor” has the pattern of the rhyme scheme: ABABA, CDCDC, EFEFE, GHGHG, HIIHI and JKJKJ pattern. The same rhyme pattern is repeated in all the six stanzas. The poem is being written in iambic meter; stressed syllables followed by unstressed syllable, which add pace to the poem. The rhyming words used in the poem are:

Way, Sway, Day	Mad, Had	Bells, Repels, Else	Cries, Skies
Sun, Undone, Run	Keep, Reap	Now, Allow, Trow	Set, Yet
Needs, Bleeds, Misdeeds	Behind, Mind	Go, Owe, So	Dead, Instead

4.2.2 Sound Devices

The sound devices used in poem like alliteration, assonance and consonance are:

Alliteration	Assonance	Consonance
<u>M</u> yrrtle, <u>m</u> ixed, <u>m</u> y, <u>m</u> ad	<u>M</u> yrrtle, <u>m</u> ixed	<u>W</u> as, <u>r</u> oses
<u>S</u> eemed, <u>s</u> way	<u>S</u> eemed, <u>h</u> eave	<u>M</u> ixed, <u>m</u> ad
<u>F</u> lamed, <u>f</u> lags	<u>F</u> lags, <u>h</u> ad	<u>F</u> lamed, <u>h</u> ad
<u>B</u> roke, <u>b</u> ells	<u>M</u> ist, <u>w</u> ith	<u>O</u> ld, <u>r</u> ocked, <u>c</u> rowd
<u>C</u> rowd and <u>c</u> ries	<u>S</u> ee, <u>r</u> eap	<u>W</u> alls, <u>c</u> ries
<u>S</u> un, <u>s</u> kies	<u>B</u> etter, <u>y</u> et	<u>H</u> ad, <u>s</u> aid, <u>g</u> ood
<u>N</u> obody, <u>n</u> ow	<u>R</u> ope, <u>b</u> oth	<u>N</u> oise, <u>r</u> epels
<u>B</u> oth, <u>b</u> ehind	<u>W</u> rist, <u>b</u> ehind	<u>Y</u> our, <u>y</u> onder
<u>F</u> eel, <u>f</u> orehead	<u>F</u> eel, <u>b</u> leed	<u>H</u> ad, <u>a</u> nswered, <u>a</u> nd, <u>a</u> fterward
<u>F</u> or, <u>f</u> ling, <u>w</u> hoever, <u>h</u> as	<u>B</u> y, <u>m</u> y	<u>M</u> an, <u>u</u> ndone
<u>M</u> e, <u>m</u> y, <u>m</u> isdeeds	<u>M</u> e, <u>m</u> isdeeds	<u>H</u> arvest, <u>w</u> hat
<u>D</u> ropped, <u>d</u> own, <u>d</u> ead	<u>Q</u> uestion, <u>i</u> nstead	<u>A</u> t, <u>s</u> et, <u>b</u> est, <u>s</u> ight, <u>a</u> t, <u>g</u> ate, <u>y</u> et
<u>W</u> orld, <u>w</u> hat	<u>R</u> epay, <u>s</u> afer	<u>B</u> etter, <u>o</u> r
<u>M</u> e, <u>m</u> ight		<u>I</u> n, <u>r</u> ain, <u>t</u> han
<u>S</u> afer, <u>s</u> o		<u>C</u> uts, <u>w</u> rists
		<u>F</u> or, <u>w</u> hoever
		<u>S</u> tones, <u>m</u> isdeeds
		<u>E</u> ntered, <u>a</u> nd, <u>d</u> ropped, <u>d</u> ead
		<u>P</u> aid, <u>w</u> orld, <u>g</u> od, <u>i</u> nstead.

4.3 Morphological Levels

4.3.1 Affixes

It is the formation of new words through prefixes and suffixes. It consists of free morphemes and bound morphemes.

Suffixes

Roses	-	rose + s
Mixed	-	mix + ed
Seemed -		seem + ed
Flamed	-	flame + d
Flags	-	flag + s
Bells	-	bell + s
Repels	-	repel + s
Answered	-	answer + ed
Leaped	-	leap + ed
Cuts	-	cut + s
Wrists	-	wrist + s
Bleeds	-	bleed + s
Stones	-	stone + s
Friends -		friend + s
Triumphs	-	triumph + s
Dropped-		drop + ed
Cries	-	cry + ies
Loving	-	love + ing
Palsied	-	palsy + ied
Windows	-	window + s
Question	-	quest + ion
Safer	-	safe + r
Walls	-	wall + s
Rocked -		rock + ed

Pre-fixes

Undone -		un + done
Instead	-	in + stead
Misdeeds	-	mis + deed + s
Repay	-	re + pay

4.3.2 Compounding

The compounding used by Browning in the poem is:

Forehead , whoever, nobody, afterward.

4.4 Lexico-Syntactic Levels

4.4.1 Semantic levels

Metaphor

Line 4. The church-spires flamed, such flags they had

Line 14. And you see my harvest, what I reap

Simile

Line 2. With myrtle mixed in my path like mad

The word 'mad' refers to the state of extreme or intense feelings or acts. Here in the poem this simile is used to describe the passionate and welcoming feelings of public for their leader.

Personification

In this poem house roofs have been personified:

Line3. The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway

In this poem the house-roofs have been presented as living being. They are not static but rather moving to and fro.

Irony

The poet talks about the poor mentality of illiterate common masses ironically as:

Line 24. For they fling, whoever has a mind

The dramatic irony lies in the situation of the popularity and downfall of the political leader. It springs out from; how the people who were at the beck and call of their leader, treat him as a traitor after passing a year.

Tone

The poem opens with an admiring and adoring tone. The poet gives the details of an effusive welcome in nostalgic mood. The poet gives the description of situation after the passage of one year. Here the tone gets lamenting as the poem moves forward. The overall tone and mood of the poem is down-beating.

Anaphora

The anaphoric words in the poem are:

It was roses, roses, all the way

Thus I entered, and thus I go!

Hyperbole

There is hyperbolic exaggeration in the poem:

Line 2. With myrtle mixed in my path like mad

Line 9. But give me your sun from yonder skies?

Line 11. Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun

Imagery

Browning has used images in the poem:

Line 3. The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway

Line 6. The air broke into a mist with bells

Symbols

Roses: In the poem roses symbolize the welcome with respect, honor and passion.

Path: It is used in the poem to symbolize the political career.

Myrtle: It is a symbol of purity, love, innocence and generosity.

Spires: A symbol for hopeful gestures and strength.

Sun: The sun stands for something which is unreachable or beyond access.

Palsied: This word indicates annoyance and the sufferings of the people.

Windows: In this poem windows symbolize freedom or lack of it thereof.

Forehead: Symbolizes good luck but in the poem bleeding forehead symbolizes bad-luck of the political figure.

Rope: Its symbolic meanings deal with confinement or restriction. Also refers to state of non-action or devoid of power.

Rain: Symbolizes loss, death or tears, sadness and sometimes despair as well. In this poem it symbolizes a period of trial.

Allusion

Line 11. Alack it was I who leaped at the sun

There is an allusion towards a Greek myth of Icarus, whose father gave him a pair of wings adhered on a wooden frame with wax. His father warned him not to go too near the sun, otherwise the wax will melt. Icarus became so rapturous with the ability to fly that he forgot his father's warning. The wax melted. Icarus fell into sea and died.

There is allusion towards the crucifixion of Christ in the fifth stanza.

Deictic Words

The spatial, personal and temporal deictic words used in poem are:

It, there, this very day, a year ago, they, I, you, me, now.

These are also known as demonstratives.

Collocation

The collocations employed in the poem are:

Church-spires, Shambles Gate, House-roofs, Loving friends, House-tops, Good folk, Old walls.

Metonymy

Sun/Sky

Reap/Harvest

Scaffold/Shambles Gate

Synonym

The words **Way** and **Path** are synonymous.

Compounding

Forehead, whoever, nobody, afterward.

Natural Words

The poem comprises following natural words:

Roses, myrtle, air, mist, sun, sky, rain.

Linking words

Browning used certain linking words in the poem:

Like, and, for, yet, but, thus, just.

Old English Words

Browning uses archaic words to show the time in which the poem is being written. The following words in the poem show that they are taken from old English as they are no more used in modern English:

Folk, yonder, naught, undone, trow, thus, dost, thou, tis,

Antithesis

Line 26. Thus I entered, and thus I go

In the above mentioned line 'entered' and 'go' are antithetical to each other.

4.4.2 Lexical Levels

The lexical levels in the poem are:

Noun and Pronoun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
Roses	Mixed	Myrtle	All the way
My path	Seemed	Heave and sway	A year ago
House-roofs	Flamed	Such flags	Now
Church-spires	Broke	Like mad	Yonder skies
They	Rocked	House-tops	Afterward
It	Repel	Mist	Else
This	Give	Crowd and cries	Very day
Nobody	Answered	Good folk	The windows set
The air	Leaped	Mere noise	All allow
Old walls	Keep	Loving friend	Yet
I	Felt	Undone	By the very
Me	See	My harvest	More than need
Shambles Gate	Reap	Palsied few	Behind
Rope	Run	Mist	By the feel
Whoever	Go	Best of the sight	Thus
Triumph	Entered	Better	Down
People	Cuts	Scaffold's foot	By the world
Thou	Think	Both my wrists	Now instead
God	Feel	My forehead	So
	Bleeds	Mind	
	Fling	My year's misdeeds	
	Stones	Dead	
	Owe	Paid	
	Might question	Safer	
	Repay		

5. Conclusion

The poem begins with the scenery which shows a poor locality with shabby houses. The beginning two stanzas indicate the enthusiasm and madness of people on the arrival of their political leader who appeared as a patriot to them. There are clear notes of optimism. In second stanza there is an allusion towards a Greek myth of Icarus. The poet has used rich imagery to explain the setting of the poem.

The third stanza opens with a complaining and grumbling tone. The poet says that he has played his role sincerely but what about the people? They have forgotten the things he did for them. Their behavior is not justified. He never swindled them. He utilized all the powers to comfort them. But now after passing a whole year, they are treating him inadequately. He is suffering now due to his over ambitious nature.

The first and fourth stanzas are parallel to each other. As in first stanza the speaker tells that: 'The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway' and in fourth stanza he adds: 'There's nobody on house-tops now'. It shows the state of deterioration in the patriot's fame and it also connotes towards the fluctuating nature of public views. The fourth stanza paints a word picture of the grotesque reaction of the public for a politician, who is no more a patriot or sincere to them. The speaker considers himself as a sedulous politician when he says: 'Alack, It was I who leaped at the sun'.

The fifth stanza provides detailed description of the intense reaction of people for a traitor. There is an element of poignancy in this stanza. The traitor is being taken to the gallows. The so-called intellectuals stoning at him and his forehead is bleeding. There is an allusion towards the crucifixion of Christ.

In the last stanza there is an acceptance and submission to the fate and death as well. But still the patriot is optimistic about the reward, which will be granted to him hereafter. The thought of that perpetual reward reanimated him.

There is a swing from past to present tense in the poem as the opening stanzas of the poem deal with the description of the emergence of the patriot and passionate response of public a year ago and the concluding stanzas encompass vehement denial for the leader by the public that how they relegated him to traitor-ship. They erred in judging him. In this poem the speaker is not considering the truth. The fixity of his perspective does not let him accept death as a punishment.

The structure aptly relates with the time and pattern of the poem. It reveals the optimistic setting as the poem starts and when the poem comes to final point, the setting turns into pessimistic. As in first stanza 'It was roses, roses, all the way' and at the end 'For they fling, whoever has a mind, Stones at me for my year's misdeeds'. The poem ends with notes of tranquility. The politician feels satisfied that God will surely reward him in a better way.

Browning's poem "Patriot into Traitor" stimulates careful consideration and attention. The poem explains that how the fame and stardom is fleeting. It does not last long and is not something to rely upon. The people with power also face music at a certain stage of their life. This poem is an acrid evaluation of the tensions and complexities of society. The poem is a commentary on the ebb and flow of politics, power and human nature also. The stylistic analysis of the poem has brought all the underlying meaning to the surface and added to make it transparent. The stylistic devices, tone, diction and all the other details in the poem enhance the appeal.

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Appendix
“Patriot into Traitor”

Robert Browning

It was roses, roses, all the way
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day.

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
Had I said, “Good folk, mere noise repels—
But give me your sun from yonder skies!”
They had answered, “And afterward, what else?”

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
To give it my loving friends to keep!
Nought man could do, have I left undone:
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

There’s nobody on the house-tops now—
Just a palsied few at the windows set;
For the best of the sight is, all allow,
At the Shamble’s Gate—or, better yet,
By the very scaffold’s foot, I trow.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year’s misdeeds.

Thus I entered, and thus I go!
In triumph, people have dropped down dead.
“Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
Me?”—God might question; now instead,
‘Tis God shall repay: I am safer so.