

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

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The aim of this dissertation is indicated largely by its title " A Stylistic Study of Some of the Representative Poems of Robert Frost." The objective, by and large, is to discover empirically the peculiarities and patterns in Frost's use of language as a poet. It is also hoped that a stylistic analysis will eventually deepen our understanding of Frost's poems.

The focus in this dissertation is on practical analysis of Frost's poems, and not on theoretical discussions. But certain theoretical questions need to be discussed before we reach the actual text of Frost's poems. Some basic information about style and stylistics has been given in order to prepare the ground for analysis. The rest of this chapter has, therefore, been written to discuss some fundamental issues pertaining to stylistics, linguistics and Literary criticism.

1.1 What is Stylistics?

When we consider stylistics as part of linguistics we notice that there are many linguists who tried to

define and describe stylistics in various ways .

" Linguistics is the science of describing language and showing how it works; stylistics is that part of linguistics which concentrates on variation in the use of language. "¹ A very concrete and straightforward answer has been given by Leech: "I mean by stylistics simply the study of literary style or to make matters even more explicit the study of the use of language in literature. "² Leech further adds that such studies depend on the insights offered by linguistics. This means that stylistics is affiliated to linguistics; it is an intermediary discipline.

H.G. Widdowson makes clear the relationship between linguistics, stylistics and literary criticism: " By 'stylistics' I mean the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation and I shall take the view that what distinguishes stylistics from literary criticism on the one hand and linguistics on the other is that it is essentially a means of linking the two and has (as yet at least) no autonomous domain of its own. "³ He further says that linguistics contributes something to literary criticism , just as literary criticism contributes something to linguistics. But stylistics involve both literary criticism and linguistics, as its morphological analysis suggests; the 'style' component has relation to linguistics and the 'istics' component to the latter. On a given piece of literature, a poem for example, the linguist will be

interested in finding out how it exemplifies the language system. The literary critic however takes interpretation as his aim. He is interested in finding out that aesthetic experience or perception of reality the poem is attempting to convey, and his observation of how the language system is used will serve only as a means to this end. But the purpose of the stylistics is to link the approaches by extending the linguist's, literary intuitions and the critics' linguistic observations and making their relationship explicit. That is why the stylistician needs to begin with a theory of the linguistic scheme and relate it to particular speeches and writings.

Halliday makes this quite explicit: " In talking therefore of linguistic study of literary texts we mean not merely the study of language but rather the study of such texts by the methods of linguistics." ⁴ Fowler sees in stylistics an integration of linguistics and literature. Stylistics looks forward to linguistics for suitable methods and techniques of analysis. So it is not linguistics alone; it can be said to be linguistics "plus". A difference between these two is that linguistic analysis is by and large unselective, whereas stylistic analysis implies selective analysis of features. Fowler points out the difference when he says " The crucial point is that linguistic study is

essentially unselective. It describes everything and all data are of equal importance. Another difference between them is that linguistics is confined to language in the ordinary use, the language without any aesthetic dimension to it, but stylistics deals with the aesthetic use of language, the language of literature."⁵

Lastly stylistics unlike linguistics does not simply list all the features of the language of a text. It selects the relevant features for analysis, and then characterizes the style.

The value of styl^sitics lies in its objectivity of approach to the question of style. When it charac^terizes a particular language, it appeals to facts rather than subjective impressions. Most of the talks about style by critics leave much to be described. Many times we find labels like "baroque", "metaphysical", "modernist", "masculine", "terse", a "flowery", "grand", "plain", "middle", etc. All these are metaphors of vague and inexact explications proceeding from the impressions of the observer, not the object. Fowler tells us what objectivity (in stylistic description) is : " I suppose that in this context objectivity relates to an account of a literary work derived from the characteristics of the object itself rather than from those of the observer of

this object."⁶

Because of its affiliation with linguistics stylistics can help literary criticism in fruitful ways. It is wrong to say that because it is a form of linguistic analysis, it will destroy the value of literature. On the other hand it can be a necessary part of literary education and an invaluable tool for criticism. Linguistics, for example, can throw light on the question of deviance which plays a key role in poetic composition. Certain areas like phonology, register, dialect, etc. can be better treated by linguistics than literary criticism. Linguistics can provide specific information and analytic techniques. Fidelity to facts, close engagement with the mechanics of language would certainly help us to work out our hunches about the language of a piece of literature.

1.2 Approaches to Style And Stylistics:

Though I have discussed stylistics, linguistics and criticism, yet explicit theory of style and uniform stylistic methodology has not been given. When we consider the current study of literature as a language act, it points broadly to four approaches to style analysis corresponding to the four-fold classification of style: (1) style as a choice, (2) style as the deviation from the norm, (3) style as convergence of patterns and, (4) style as a particular

exploitation of grammar of possibilities. Now we can discuss these four approaches separately and in some detail.

1.2.1 Style as a choice:

A modern version of the very frequent view of style as choice is that of Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. In the book Understanding Fiction style is used merely to refer to the selection and ordering of language. Selection of choices falls under three types: grammatical, non-stylistic and stylistic. Grammar distinguishes between the possible and the impossible, whereas non-stylistic and stylistic choice both involve grammatically optional selection in that they choose between different grammatically permissible alternatives.

Most of the time we get the feel of the text as a result of the density of choices, lexical, syntactic and phonological. A.A. Hill has his freedom of choice in mind when he comments : " Stylistics is a sum total of choices which the language offers to the individual speaker at each point within a sentence".⁷ A language has both constant and variable features, in lexis, syntax and phonology, which an author can manipulate according to his need. In every sentence the subject must precede verb and the
 /verb the complement, is an example of the constant feature in English grammar. But, the adjunct is variable ; it

can occur at different places in a sentence. The writer can make use of the mobility of the agent suiting his purpose and design.

Similarly the striking example of repeated /s/ sound in a sentence is the variable feature. For example: " She sells sea shells in the sea shore ". In English there is no rule as ^{"such show"} to how many /s/ sounds can occur in a sentence.

When a writer makes use of variable items like this, it would mark his style with a distinctness of character. In this regard Fowler says : " Stylistics is the branch of linguistics concerned with variables in an entire text. " ⁸

1.2.2. Style as deviation from the norm :

Nils Erik Enkvist quotes : " Charles E. Osgood's " definition as " Style is defined as an individual's deviation from norms for the situation in which he is encoding, these deviations being in the statistical properties of those structural features for which there exists some degree of choice in his code. " ⁹ In the above definition style is defined as deviation from norm. Now the question arises in our mind is whether it could be defined positively in terms of norms, rather than in terms of deviations. Because we can always

say that two texts which differ in the same way from a given norm are in the same style.

Fowler refers to "poetic act as privilege of breaking rules." ¹⁰ He further calls poetic language "modified and twisted". In his classic article "Poetic Language and Standard Language" Jan Mukarovsky makes similar observations: "Poetic language is an aesthetically purposeful distortion of standard language. To varying degrees different kinds of literature make a business of violating the rules of grammar." ¹¹

When we consider deviation in general, its degree may vary from the improbable to the anarchic proportions. In some cases the deviation is in the form of inversions or other such minor deviations with rules of grammar. In some other cases the deviations may reach "pathological degrees of abnormality". There are plenty of examples of such abnormality in the poetry of modern poets like e.e.cummings. Secondly deviation may occur in any stylistic areas of a text: phonology, graphology, lexis and syntax.

There is no agreement among critics about defining the norm from which language deviates in poetry. "Norm" for Bernard Block refers to language as a whole. But the London and Neo-Firthian linguists restrict the norm to register and dialect in connection with the literary work.

Thus a lyric must refer to the whole body of lyrics for its norm while an ode must be compared to genre of ode in a particular language. Linguists like Michael Riffaterre goes to the extent of restricting the norm to the text itself against which deviance must be judged. But, it is important to know that all deviance may not be significant. As Enkvist says, " All deviant language is not poetry as all poetry is not deviant language. " 12

In order to characterize a style deviation must be systematic and aesthetically motivated. Such type of deviation is in Cummings' line " spring is like a perhaps hand". In his essay, " Syntax and Phonology in Poetic Style " , John B. Lord Sr. gives a detailed analysis of this line. 13 Here Cummings violates the grammatical rule by allotting to " perhaps" the slot meant for an adjective. According to grammatical rules of English following the determiner "a" only a noun or an adjective modifying a following noun will occur. But in this line " perhaps" is neither a noun nor an adjective. So the line becomes ungrammatical. But here the violation is motivated and it seems to increase the informational load of the word.

G. N. Leech gives eight types of deviations in his A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry. 14 They are
 (a) Lexical deviation, (b) Grammatical deviation
 (c) Phonological deviation (d) Graphological deviation
 (e) Semantic deviation (f) Dialectal deviation (g) Devi-

-ation of Register and (h) Deviation of historical period. Out of the above deviations I am going to discuss some important deviations in the following passages.

1.2.2.1 (a) Lexical Deviation :

1.2.2.1 Lexical deviation is also called Neologism or invention of new words. It is one of the most obvious ways in which the poet may exceed the normal resources of the language. Some of the widely used English words invented by famous poets are : "blatant" (Spenser), "assassination" (Shakespeare), "pandemonium" (Milton), "cauistry" (Pope), etc. To Leech it is misleading to suggest that neologism is a 'violation of lexical rule?'. But an existing rule of word formation is applied with greater generality than is customary.

1.2.2.2 (b) Grammatical deviation :

1.2.2.2 Grammatical deviation means breaking the rules of morphology i.e. the grammar of the words and syntax. There is also deviation of deep structure and surface structure. Dylan Thomas' phrase "a grief ago" is a fine example of violation of deep structure. In this case, a position reserved for words of certain class is filled by a word from different class. Most deviations of deep structures can be treated as cases of 'mistaken selection'. Many times we find grammatical

deviation in the syntactic styles of the modern literature. For instance, in "The Wanderer", W.H. Auden evolves a subjectless, articleless style which suggests the exile of loss of a sense of identity and of a co-ordinated view of life.

1.2.2.3 Phonological deviation :

1.2.2.3.1 Patterns of phonology are more 'on the surface' than those of surface syntactic structures. That is why phonological deviation in English poetry is of limited importance. But this is not true of all languages. In English the only irregularities of pronunciation we should note are conventional licences of verse composition; elision, apharesis, apocope, etc. and the special pronunciation for convenience of rhythm, as when the noun "wind" is pronounced like the verb "wind".

1.2.2.4 Graphological deviation.

1.2.2.4.1 While writing poetry on a printed page its arrangement should be in line by line, with irregular right hand margins. The typographical line of poetry like the typographical stanza, is a unit which is not parallel in non-poetic varieties of English. It is independent of and capable of interacting with, the standard units of punctuation. If the poet violates such pattern, its called graphological deviation.

As we have seen that various deviations we come to the conclusion that the analyst while trying to describe a style with reference to deviation must compare the deviant features of the text at different levels with other undeviant features of the text at those levels. Comparison is inevitable for the style as deviation approach to the literary texts.

1.2.3 Style as a particular exploitation of grammar of possibilities :

Linguists like Ohmann, Halle and Keyser, the followers of this school take help of transformational grammar for stylistic analysis. According to them the deep structure of a grammar is the source of semantics or content of the utterance, whereas the surface structure contains syntax and phonology. The deep structure can be mapped up to the surface structures by a number of transformations. Out of the general transformational possibilities offered by the deep structure, the author chooses one suiting his design, his "cognitive orientation." ¹⁵ That is why when a poet selects a particular structure he keeps in mind the role it will play in controlling the reader's "set" to the message.

1.2.4 Style as convergence of Patterns :

According to this school style is a complex

of inter-related patterns at different levels of a text. A text is a system in its own right, a unified whole, not a random string of sentences.

According to Jakobson the poet while selecting individual items at different places of the syntactic chain of a poem tries to project equivalence between them. This equivalence might be based on sounds, meaning or even syntactic positions. By examining such patterns in a text the analyst can know whether the text enjoys unity of language and meaning.

Halliday and G.N. Leech suggest this approach to style as the convergence of patterns. According to them these patterns are simply the lexical and grammatical means of unifying a literary text. This point has been illustrated by Leech in his famous analysis of Dylan Thomas' poem "This Bread I break".¹⁶

1.3 Some limitations of stylistic analysis :

Like its virtues stylistic analysis has some limitations. They arise from linguistics on which it is based. We must remember that literature is not only a language act. It has also aesthetic dimension that stylistics alone cannot determine.

There is no doubt that literature is linguistic

code. But there are also other codes like the mythological codes, symbolic codes, metaphysical codes and social codes. Stylistics cannot analyse these codes. This alone cannot throw light on the author's attitude and sensibility. Unaided by non-linguistic codes stylistics would produce lukewarm response from the reader. So it has been said that "stylistics misses the historical, social and human import".¹⁷

1.4 Application of Stylistics in literature, poetry in particular:

A brief look at some of the stylistic analyses of poems undertaken in recent years might provide us certain insights, into this discipline. This would also help us to recognise the inadequacy of only one particular approach to stylistic interpretation of poetry.

M. H. Short in "Prelude I to Literary and Linguistic Stylistics" proved successful in providing that literary interpretation and linguistic analysis can complement each other. The author first makes a sentence and clause analysis of Eliot's "Prelude I" on Hallidayan model and from the linguistic evidence proposes that the poem has a "simple and witty style". The simplicity and wittiness has been suggested by abundance of plain statements, irregular rhyme scheme, clausal fragments, lack of cohesion between elements in the poem etc. The

wittiness of style corresponds to the mood of the poem, a poem that creates an atmosphere of decay, lack of communication and darkness.

Donald Ross Jr. in his : " Stylistic Contrast in Yeats' Byzantium Poems " adopts a different strategy of analysis to bring out the difference between Yeats' two poems " Sailing to Byzantium " and " Byzantium".¹⁸ Both these poems belong to the same author, same period of composition, same genre (short stanzaic lyrics) and similar themes but earlier poem is simpler than the latter. Ross brings out the difference between these two poems by frequency __ count of sounds, words, clauses, syntactic pattern etc. Thus the author is able to support his literary interpretive thesis by stylistic analysis of the poem.

Randolph Quirk takes Elizabeth Jennings' "Ghosts" for analysis in his " Focus, Scope and Lyrical Beginning".¹⁹ Before reaching the actual analysis Quirk examines some of the devices of syntax which can show that the attempt to begin a discourse with strangers is not a starting point really but a continuation of discourse. He also illustrates some of the focussing and scoping devices used by authors in different circumstances. After these observations Quirk passes on to the poem " Ghosts" and shows that it begins in ' medias res', that an unspoken argument has preceded the

poem. The focussing devices relate to inversions and the scoping relates to the use of negatives.

In his Essay: "The Poem, the Poet and Reader " Sidney Greenbaum attempts to analyse Milton's sonnet 19.²⁰ Greenbaum shows that syntax can mimic effectively the thought process of the speaker that it can symbolize the speaker's mental experience. For instance, the syntax in the first stanza of Milton's poem has been involved, elaborate in confusing, thus projecting the poet narrator's agitation, conflict and bewilderment. But in the second stanza syntax reaching , itself to normalcy indicates possibly the resolution of the crisis. The syntax here reflects the vision of things.

Michael J. O'neal explores the intimate relationship between syntax, theme and structures in his "Style as Mimesis in the Poetry of Earnest Dowson".²¹ The author states that the poem represents to the reader a tissue of argumentation mirrored effectively in syntax. The salient features of Dowson's poems are the use of parallelism, density of phrasal structures, tense mood and voice.

1.5 Methodology used in this dissertation:

Approach to stylistic analysis in this dissertation is an ^clectic approach that draws upon different concepts

of style, stylistics and modes of analyses discussed earlier. Such an approach may be found in "This Bread I Break, Language and Interpretation" by G.N. Leech.²²

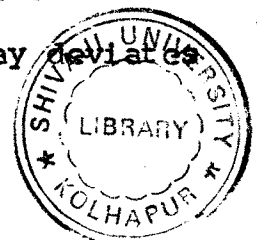
While breaking down language into different levels and sub-levels we should follow the guidelines provided by Leech's "Anatomy of Language". Here Leech divides language into the primary level : consisting of "Realization" " Form " and " Semantics" and secondary level; consisting of " Register " " Dialect " and " Historical Period".²³ In the primary level "realisation" refers to both phonology and graphology; "form" refers to grammar and lexis, "semantics" refers to denotative or cognitive meaning. All the tropes like metaphors and similes etc. would be discussed under semantics. Leech has called these "foregrounded irregularities of content".

The other features that I am going to discuss in this analysis are metrical system, lexical sets, cohesive devices, imagery, collocation, parallelisms, the poetic contexts, tone and attitude, etc.

1.6. Some Important Notions in Our Analysis:

1.6.1 Foregrounding:

"Foregrounding" is a general principle of artistic communication that work of art in some way deviates



from norms".²⁴ In poetry the foregrounded figure is the linguistic deviation and the background is the language,— the system taken for granted in any talk of deviation. The deviation from the norms of the language may take two opposite forms, the form of irregularities as well as the form of extra-regularities. The example of irregularities of content are metaphors similes, paradoxes and other tropes which deviate from the normal use of language. Inversions and deletions are the examples of syntactic irregularities. Syntactic and phonological parallelisms are the cases of extra-regularities Alliteration and rhyme etc. are some examples of sound parallelism.

1.6.2 Metre and Rhythm:

"Prosody (the study of versification) is an area which, like grammar and rhetoric, has suffered from scholars' disillusionment with traditional theory and their failure to replace it with an agreed alternative".²⁵ This is so because matters are not so clear-cut as they were when rules of Latin scansion were religiously applied to English verse on the mistaken assumption that the accentual rhythm of English could be handled in the same terms as the quantitative rhythm of Latin. But we find in recent years there has emerged a certain amount of agreement on the nature of verse structure.

We find that it has been widely accepted, for instance, that versification is a question of the interplay between two planes of structure; the ideally regular pattern called 'metre' and the actual rhythm of language some times called 'the prose rhythm.' Here our concern is to metre and not to prose rhythm.

The kind of metre which has dominated English prosody is strictly known as 'accentual syllabic', that is, it is a pattern of regularity both in the number of syllables and in the number of stresses. When we consider the metrical system, it is clear that the measure, begins with an accent which may begin either with a stressed or unstressed syllable. The main types of foot in English verse are, ' Iamb- / x / Anapaest - / xx / / , Trochee - / / x / , and Dactyl / / xx / . The foot is actually the unit or span of stressed and unstressed syllables which is repeated to form a metrical pattern. When the line of a poem has two feet, the metre is called dimetre, when it has three feet, it is trimetre, four feet it is tetrametre, five feet it is pentametre and six feet, it is called hexametre. Most of the English poetry is written in these six types of metres.

1.6.3. cohesion:

cohesion is such a device by which the poet or reader brings together the different features of the poetic discourse. Charles Hocket says, " A poem is a long idiom,

it is not a random string of sentences or ideas". So the poem should be a coherent whole. Cohesion is mainly connected to three features ; (1) topic or the discorsal units revealed by lexical sets, imagery etc. (2) focus; - foregrounding of words, clauses or sentences (3) Linking devices between sentence and clauses.

1.6.4, Register, Dialect and Historical Period:

In linguistics " Dialect " refers to the use of language according to geographical area. "Register" refers to the use of language according to situations." Historical period" refers to the use of language according to the conventions of the age. They can deviate from the norm with reference to these three secondary levels of language. In his " The Waste Land " Eliot deviates from the Register of the lyric poem by juxtaposing lyrical description with a journalistic phraseology:-

"The nymphs are departed,

----- Departed have left no addresses, "

Deviation of Historical period may be indicated by the use of archaic forms of langauges in poetry.

Similarly by borrowing features from other ^adi^alects the poet may deviate from the norms of the ^adi^alect.

1.6.5 Lexical set:

When we find the vocabulary items refer to a particular category of experience they are said to form a set. There may be different sets of lexis in a single poem depending on the configuration of the theme. For instance, a poem dealing with conflicting ideas might have contrasting sets of vocabulary items.

1.6.6 Collocations:

Certain words have the tendency to take the company of certain other words in a language. This is called lexical collocation. According to Halliday collocations can be neutral or powerful in effect. A collocation can be described as deviant when the two items put together "clash" with each other.

Most often metaphors take the form of deviant collocations. Such deviant collocations have been described as a "cases of mistake of selection" i.e. putting an element into a context which it does not fit. Thus in "water has eaten kindness" or "Is the music green" "kindness" and "green" are put in wrong contexts. These are all cases of deviant collocations like "a grief ago". Such collocations need metaphorical interpretation.

1.6.7. Tenor, vehicle and ground of metaphor:

"Tenor" is something that is under discussion, "vehicle" is an image in terms of which something is described; and ground is the likeness between the "tenor" and the "vehicle". Thus in the sentence "She is as beautiful as a rose" "she" is the tenor, "rose" is the vehicle and "beautiful" is the ground of comparison. In a simile the tenor, vehicle and ground are explicitly stated, but in a metaphor the ground of comparison must be absent. The reader will have to find it **out** from the context.

1.6.8. Parallelism:

In order to foreground the message the poet uses the device of parallelism. In this respect it is compared with deviation. Though both are foregrounding devices, parallelism consists in the introduction of extra regularities into the language, while deviation introduces irregularities into it. In this sense parallelism is the opposite of deviation.

Parallelism can occur mainly on three levels of the language: Phonological level, syntactic level and semantic level. For instance the line, "The furrow followed free", is parallelistic in the sense that it has the patterned regularity of syllable, rhythm and sound. It can also occur in the semantic and syntactic level. Leech gives

the following example. "Where wealth accumulates and men decay". Here the two clauses have identical structures; subject + verb, and subject + verb. Parallelism suggests an external connection between elements. The connection may be either of similarity or as in the above example- (wealth ... decay) of ironic contrast.

This ^achapter provides us with some important information about the theory and methodology of stylistic analysis. However, it has not yet equipped us fully to analyse the poems of Robert Frost. We ~~will~~ do not know what type of poet Frost is and what his major concerns as a poet are. Granting that such a knowledge is not necessary for stylistic analyses of poems, it cannot be denied that such a knowledge, when the analyst has ~~it~~, would be an advantage to him. The next chapter , therefore, deals with Frost as a poet and his theory of poetry.

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