

The Shelleyan Stylistics

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1. Introduction

Style in literature has been the most unique way of expressing the authors' ideas. It is one of the authors' identities, one that distinguishes a given author from another. Apart from that, style is also one of the lines which should be drawn when the idea of the domain of literature is to be identified in contrast with those of social and natural sciences. While a precise and compact language is required to make a description in the sciences, the language of literature is the other way around. Style plays a distinctive role in the language of literature. It is "another way of saying" things. This is to say that both "what is said" and "how it is said"—"which are studied under stylistics—exist in any work of literature, that both are not to be taken for granted, and that the "way of saying it" is often more important than the thing said. The later often leads to the differences in the appreciation of literary works on the part of the readers.

In the appreciation of works of literature, the aesthetic aspects of the works are attributed to the relations between those "what" and "how," either in the form of a contradiction or harmony between them. One or both types of relations commonly exist in any work. These relations are studied in stylistics being the "objective" or "scientific" method of analysis of the style of literary texts (Abrams, 1981: 192).

Consisting of twenty two lines and written by Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Music" was chosen as the topic of the study. The focus of the study will be on the relation between the meanings of the poem and its style. The study is aimed at seeing the uniqueness of the poem's style.

One should bear in mind, however, that it is almost out of the question to

come to understand the style of "Music" without being able to grasp the meanings of the poem. Similarly, the later is non-sensical without figuring out the real experience undergone by the poet and underlying the poem. This is true especially of Shelley who belongs to the so-called "Romantic" movement, one that is considered to have laid emphasis on the poet's individual expression in literary works.

The last two arguments should shed light on the type of approach that is used in the appreciation. In this respect, Wellek and Warren's *Extrinsic and Intrinsic Approaches* are picked out to be the alternative for the appreciation. The former deals with the relation between the poet's experience and poem, leading to the revelation of the poem's meanings; the later concerns the meanings and ways of expressing them, this being the true business of literary aesthetics.

In connexion with that, the presented items would be, first things first, the paraphrasing of the poem to reveal the poet's ways of thinking and experiences as figuratively expressed through the work. Then follows the analysis on the relation between the meanings and style. Ending the study will be the conclusion, after which the poem is annexed.

2. The Poet's Experience

The first line tells us the "I" who is in the almost-despaired state. It is the poet who *pants* for the *music which is divine*, being "the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and rhythm" (Glover, 1951:839). The *music* points to the knowledge which leads to the love of God through these two principles. Love is interpreted as the union between two adverse things as a rhythm—being the first principle—which is "produced from

that which is quick and that which is slow, first being distinguished and opposed to each other and then made accordant", (Glover, 1951:839) or harmonious; this being the second one.

In the case of the poet, he desires that he—with his human love—would be able to perceive his God with His or Her divine love; the two being opposed to each other yet harmonious. By the statement, it is meant that the poet with his human love loves nature and attempts to perceive the phenomena in it. In return, his God will love him and will express it through the revelation of the principles of rhythm and harmony.

The desire for *music* arises from the *heart* which is *in its thirst* (line 2). The poet suggests that the desire to obtain the knowledge as having to do with the natural thirst. He mentioned that such a thirst is "probably in correspondence with this law that the infant drains milk from the bosom of its mother" (Glover, 1951:975), implying that he wants to be as pure and natural as when he was an infant and was not influenced by any evil element of life.

There is no best way to satisfy or fulfil the desire except that the poet has to ask his God to *pourth forth the sound like enchanted wine* (line 3). In other words, the poet needs the sound which refers to music (or knowledge). He compares the sound with wine with the purpose that from that point on the readers have to assume that *music* means *wine* and vice versa.

In *Loosen the notes in a silver shower*, the poet expects the shower to be "silver" referring to the brightness and preciousness of a silver. He regards the shower as being "bright and precious". In the shower, there is a distinct proof that God exists, for it is God who creates it. It is the precious access to the apprehension of God's existence and is something "bright" that leads the poet to the notion of His existence. The poet implies that the "shower" will hopefully lift him from a "dark" moment—the moment he loses his childhood's God in his adulthood; this being metaphorically asserted in the first

line to the "bright" one—the time he will find the way to discovering Him back.

So acute has been the poet's desire for music that he is on the verge of despair. The poet's state is compared to the *herb-less plain* which "pants" for the *gentle rain*. Herbless plain denotes a dry land or desert, upon which gentle rain is badly needed. The process of imbibing the knowledge of nature is expected by the poet to be *gentle* (or slowly) so that the poet will be able to grasp the knowledge.

Then he wrote that he "gasps and faints" *till they wake again* (line 6). The psychological effort he makes in his attempt to free himself from the almost-despaired state is intended to make the *dying flower* lives on—which means to cheer up his gloomy feelings and the "herbs grow again in the *herbless plain*—"which denotes recalling the forgotten memory of God of the poet's childhood in his adulthood.

The poet's melancholic state, however, does not last long. In the next line, it is stated that he "drinks" *the spirit of that sweet sound* (line 7). What the poet means is that he imbibes the spirit (or essence) of the knowledge which leads to the love of God. The essence of the knowledge is the indefiniteness; the idea which causes him to feel unsatiated. The more he imbibes the indefinite knowledge of nature, the more he wants to know about it. *He cries, More, oh more—I am thirsting yet* (line 8).

Another effect of understanding the essence of the knowledge is that it frees him from the worry he suffers. He says that the essence of knowledge liberates him from the evil influence of the institutions which cause worry or fear in his heart; they suppress his freedom to tell the truth. All these are expressed in line nine and ten (*or It loosens the serpent which care has bound/ Upon my heart to stifle it*). This alludes to the event in which Shelley was expelled from the Oxford University due to his pamphlet "The Necessity of Atheism" which claimed that "God's existence cannot be proved on empirical grounds" (Abrams, 1962: 412)

Besides these, this analysis cannot be separated from a story when Shelley protested against the sentence passed upon Mr. Eaton who was considered a Deist. He wrote a letter to Lord Ellenborough, the judge who presided over Mr. Eaton's trial and punished him for his refutation of biblical stories through his book (Glover, 1951:887-889)

These two experiences affected Shelley deeply and influenced his views on the legal institutions he represents as *serpent*. Just as the serpent in the story of Adam and Eve is the source of evil, for it causes both to be driven away from the garden of Eden, so are the institutions. In Shelley's view, the institutions "blast the human flower/ Even in its tender buds" (Brailsford 1954:159). They thwarted his attempts to discover God in his own way even when he was just starting to seek Him.

Thus, the essence of the knowledge, namely the indefiniteness of God—as opposed to the virtually limited tyrannical authority of human beings; the two contradictory principles are a rhythm and should be harmonised—being imbibed totally, leads him to believe his God rationally as well as emotionally. This is what he expressed in the following line *The dissolving strain, through every vein/ Passes into my heart and brain*. Heart is the human faculty that is connected with emotion for feeling something, while brain being related to reason is that for thinking about something. He feels that, as a result of understanding the God's existence and indefiniteness, he is purified from the evil influence of the tyrannical institutions.

He compares the purification to the soul purification of the bodily influences. The purification process is metaphorically narrated through the notion of *the scent of a violet which is withered up* (line 13) in the third stanza. The violet dies because *the hot noon has drained its "leaf"* (or *dewy cup*). After the mist evaporates, there is nothing to make the violet survive (or *And mist there was none its thirst to slake*). So, it fades away and its odour is separated from it.

The death of the violet becomes the means to describing the death of human beings. The metaphorical separation between the violet and its odour or scent is the symbolic separation between the human bodies and their souls. The point Shelley wants to make is that the separation means the purification. This is in line with the conviction Socrates held during his conversation with Simmias who confirmed it (Rouse, 1959:470). The death of human beings amounts to the purification of their souls from their bodily needs.

Another comparison of the poet's act of imbibing the essence of the knowledge is—as he wrote in the fourth stanza of the poem—to the Christian eucharist. The ceremony is to commemorate Jesus Christ by eating bread and drinking wine and is to express thanks to him, for he, "conceived as the new Adam,—with his body and blood, both are symbolised by the bread and wine—is, according to the Christian tradition, the salvation of human beings from the Adam's original sin (Preece, 1974:266). However, the Shelleyan eucharist is quite different from it. For him, it is to recall the childhood's memory. The act of imbibing the essence of knowledge that leads to the love of his God reminds the poet of his childhood; the time when he was pure and natural. Arising with it is also the time when he was an infant and had drained milk from the bosom of his mother. In his adulthood, he wants to purify himself from the evil elements by "drinking milk from his mother". Yet, the milk is not the same as it used to be; it is not milk. Rather, it is wine provided by a *mighty Enchantress* (or *Mother Nature*). It is the knowledge that leads to the belief that God exists and *invites him to love with her kiss divine*. In other words, after the poet watches, contemplates and understands the phenomena in nature, he comes to realise that he—with his human love manifested in the stated actions—is led to the notion that God loves him. She makes him perceive the essence of the knowledge in nature. Hence, the salvation in the Shelleyan

eucharist is that from the evil influences of the tyrannical human beings.

The "eucharist" derived from Greek means "thanksgiving". This idea--as celebrated by Christians by drinking wine--is also implied in the fourth stanza. This stanza is also a way of expressing thanks by the poet to his God because he is able to free himself from the evil influence of the tyrannical power of human beings.

3. The Poet's Stylistics

Rhetorical figures imbue most lines of the poem, "Music". The examination accordingly will be made on the lines of which the figures are part. However, before carrying out the analysis, the figures would be divided into two groups. There are both single-figure and compound-figure groups.

There are three-single figures that can be included in the first group. The figures are allusion, metaphor and personification.

The allusions are found in the title of the poem, line one, the third and fourth stanzas. They are classified as the allusions to words, concepts and a religious event.

The allusion to word is recognised in *Music* (or the title), or *music* in line one. It cannot be denied that, to the Platonic readers, "Music" rings a bell. The term is mentioned by Eryximachus in "The Banquet of Plato (or Symposium)"; one of which translations was done by Shelley.

The second type is the allusion to a concept. It is clearly seen in the third stanza of the poem in which the story of a *dead violet*, of which *scent flew* is told. Underlying the stanza is the body-and-soul dualism, a philosophical concept brought up as the topic of discussions in "Phaedo". The concept admits the separation between the "visible and the unseen" parts of human beings (Rouse, 1959:483). In the event that a human being dies, his soul "parts from the body, and goes out like a breath or a whiff of smoke" (Rouse, 1959:472). Such a dual-

ism is manifested in a different way by Shelley. He depicts the dualism through the natural phenomenon, namely the separation between a violet and its odour, one which impregnates the third stanza.

There is probably no other well-known religious event about someone who drinks wine but the event or ceremony of Eucharist. The ceremony becomes the paragon of the fourth stanza. The allusion to the ceremony is the third type of allusion, viz. allusion to the religious event.

In line eight, a metaphor is noted in *More, oh more—I am thirsting yet*. It is in fact not the poet's thirst in the physical sense; it is metaphorical. The poet needs music or wine, that is the knowledge that leads to the belief of God. So intense has been his thirst that, after he imbibes the knowledge, he still feels "thirsty".

A metaphor is also identified in line ten (or *Upon my heart to stifle it*) which is used to refer to the suppression of freedom as experienced by the poet. He feels suppressed because the religious and governmental institutions forbade him to express his opinions freely.

The next example of metaphor can be found in line thirteen (or *As the scent of a violet withered up*). It is a way of telling the readers about the distinction between the human bodies (or *a violet*) in contrast to their souls (or *the scent and/or odour*).

The second type of the figures is the compound. The first instance is in line two in which a personification is combined with a metaphor (or *My heart in its thirst is a dying flower*). The personification is hinted by *My heart in its thirst*. The poet personifies his heart as a human being who feels thirsty. The personification attempts to describe the inner (psychological) state through the physical condition. The desire of the poet for *music* which is psychological is described as the physical thirst.

The metaphor in line two is shown by the comparison between the heart which desires *music* with a *dying flower*, a state which implies an almost-hopeless atmos-

phere. The flower is not dead yet; it is dying.

Line three offers another compound figure. The apostrophe is used by the poet to call his God. He asks Her to *pour forth the sound like enchanted wine*.

The sound in the line cannot be interpreted anything but *music* as referred to as in line one. The relationship between music and sound can be pointed out in that music is the arrangement of sounds. Sound is the most important part, or the constituent element, of music; such a relation is commonly termed metonymy.

A simile is outstanding in the line. It is characterised by *like* to compare *sound* to *wine*. The simile is used to parallel them.

An apostrophe is found in line four where the poet asks his God to *loosen the notes in a silver shower*. Besides, the line offers the representation of music by the notes; such is known as a synecdoche.

In line five, a simile is shown by *like a herbless plain, for the gentle rain*. The line is the comparison of the lyrical I's state in which he "gasps and faints" *till they wake again*.

There is also a tendency to a hyperbole in *herbless plain*. Plain which commonly denotes a flat land where there is no plant growing on it is said to be herbless. In fact, the land is herbless. However, the poet makes the idea too clear by stating that it is herbless; such being a way of emphasising how desperate he is.

Physical descriptions are employed by the poet to describe his psychological struggle in line six (or *I gasp, I faint, till they wake again*). In point of fact, the poet unlikely gasps and faints over and over again in the physical sense. Rather, he merely suggests that his psychological state can be compared to such physical acts. The acts are to show how hard his efforts to obtain the music has been. Or, to call a spade a spade, he is saying that he is almost hopeless in hoping to acquire the knowledge which proves the existence of his God. This is a symbolic expression.

In addition, a metaphor is found in the line. It is in *till they wake again*. The clause does not refer to any animate thing who or that is able to *wake*; it does refer to the *flower* and to the *herbless plain*. The *dying flower* which represents the desire for music is supposed to "wake", viz. to rise. Similarly, the *herbless plain* which is comparable to the poet's forgotten memory that has to do with his childhood—being close to nature as a means of perceiving the existence of God—is supposed to emerge.

Line seven (or *Let me drink of the spirit of that sweet sound*) offers compound figures consisting of an apostrophe, an allusion, a synesthesia and a metonymy. The apostrophe can be seen from the way the poet asks his God to let him drink the spirit of the sweet sound.

By the line, the poet is saying both that there is the *spirit of wine* and that he wants to *drink* it; and that there is the essence of *sweet sound* (or *music*) and that he wants to imbibe it. The two ways of saying are combined and then comes up the line which said that the poet wanted to *drink the sweet sound*; a poetical style called synesthesia.

To put the line under a further examination can produce a more interesting finding. When saying that he wants to *drink the spirit of that sweet sound*, the poet is actually stating that he wants to imbibe the knowledge that leads him to the existence of God. Such an expression is a metaphor. Yet the metaphor does not stand alone; it is then expressed in a synesthesian way; thus, it is the synesthesianised metaphor.

Outstanding in line nine (or *It loosens the serpent which care has bound*) are the contrastive verbs which are *loosens* and *bound*. The former is to suggest looseness; the later tightness. Looseness is the characteristic of freedom—thing the poet wants strongly to possess in expressing his opinions—in contrast to the tightness referring to the characteristic of the suppressing institutions.

Other thing to be taken into consideration of line nine is the allusion to ser-

pent of the biblical story. The allusion cannot be separated from the Genesis III from verse one to twenty four where the story of Eve being beguiled by a serpent into eating the fruit of the forbidden tree is narrated (Gideons, 1976:2-3). The biblical serpent which is thought of as the source of evil and becomes the human enemy is—in the poet's point of view—the representation of the "positive institutions...that have poisoned and distorted the natural good in man" (Brailsford, 1954:159). What is so strange about the allusion is that the poet uses it in an ironic way. It is absurd to regard the religious and governmental institutions as serpents—the serpent in Bible being considered the enemy of the religious people. In fact, Shelley could be—and had to be—considered the enemy of the religious people or institutions in his community as he wrote "The Necessity of Atheism"; a pamphlet which threatens the religious dogma on the community's God. In the poem, however, it is Shelley who points his finger at the institutions and names them serpent due to the practice they do in punishing Mr. Eaton, the Deist and him.

Line eleven (or *The dissolving strain, through every vein*) is an interesting line to give a note on, for it presents compound figures. The fact that the line retains synesthesia and metaphor is identified from *the dissolving strain* which reveals the assumption that *strain*—which represents the notes of music—is taken as or parallel to *wine*. The parallelism has been pointed out before in line three (or *Pour forth the sound like enchanted wine*). In line eleven, *strain* "dissolves", so to speak, in "blood" and permeates *through every vein*. It is impossible that music which is the abstract knowledge dissolves, in a physical sense, in blood. The poet metaphorically takes the knowledge as being a sort of liquid that mixes with his blood.

As for line seventeen (or *And the violet lay dead while the odour flew*), a pair of personification is presented by *the violet lay (dead)* and *the odour flew*. They

are the poet's ways of saying that the violet was dead and its odour disappeared.

Not only are personifications found in the line, but also an antithesis. The figure comprises the contrasted verbs which are *lay* and *flew*. The former denotes earth. A violet, when fading away, will fall down on earth. By contrast, its odour will disappear along with wind and supposedly go up to the sky. The contrast is to show the separation between the human being's bodies that will be buried in the earth when they die and their souls which will supposedly go up to heaven.

Besides, the reference to the *silver lake* (line 14) is made in the line by *waters blue* to produce an end rhyme which consists of *blue* (line 18) and *flew* (line 17)

Line twenty one exemplifies the compound figures consisting of the allusion and personification. The allusion to Mother Nature is made with the presence of a *mighty Enchantress*.

In lines twenty one and twenty two, the personification is discriminated by the *mighty Enchantress* which is described as *filling up the cup with wine*.

The poet is led to believe that God exists as a result of his imbibing the knowledge of nature. The contemplation on the phenomena of nature leads him to the conviction that there is "a Power by which we are surrounded...This Power is God" (Glover, 1951: 985). He adds further that "those who are pure in heart shall see God, and that virtue is its own reward" (Glover, 1951:985)). This is what he meant when he wrote that a *mighty Enchantress ... invites one to love with her kiss which is divine*; that God will give one who contemplates on the phenomena of nature the idea of His/Her existence.

4. Conclusion

It should be clear from the foregoing analysis that rhetorical figures in the poem are designed to provide the poet with "another way of saying" his experience. For the readers to understand the figures best, therefore, the full knowledge

of the poet's experiences and his views as figuratively expressed through the poem is a requirement in the interpretations of the poem. This being done, the aesthetic values colouring the poem will eventually come into notice.

Other thing to take note of the rhetorical figures is that in the poem are found the compound-figure group, a very unique characteristic of the poem. This type of figures is not commonly used. The poet's ingenuity in creating them deserves credit.

Appendix

Music I

- 1 I pant for the music which is divine,
- 2 My heart in its thirst is a dying flower;
- 3 Pour forth the sound like enchanted wine,
- 4 Loosen the notes in a silver shower;
- 5 Like a herbless plain, for the gentle rain,
- 6 I gasp, I faint, till they wake again.

II

- 7 Let me drink the spirit of that sweet sound,
- 8 More, oh more! am thirsting yet;
- 9 It loosens the serpent which care has bound
- 10 Upon my heart to stifle it;
- 11 The dissolving strain, through every vein,
- 12 Passes into my heart and brain.

III

- 13 As the scent of a violet withered up,
- 14 Which grew by the brink of a silver lake,

- 15 When the hot noon has drained its dewy cup,
- 16 And mist there was none its thirst to slake
- 17 And the violet lay dead while the oocour flew
- 18 On the wings of the wind o'er the waters blue

IV

- 19 As one who drinks from a charmed cup
- 20 Of foaming, and sparkling, and murmuring wine
- 21 Whom, a mighty Enchantress filling up,
- 22 Invites to love with her kiss divine...

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Tentang Penulis

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