Stylistic Analysis of Emily Dickinson's
It Sifts from Leaden Sieves

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates Emily Dickinson's poem 'it sifts from leaden sieves' from the outlook of stylistic analysis. The investigation is made by undertaking the aspects of graphlogical, grammatical, syntactical and phonological patterns. The tropes and schemes present in the poem have been found. The paper basically aims at analyzing the structure and style present in the poems by Emily Dickinson through her themes, view and treatment of nature.

الملخص

الأسلوبية Stylistics فرع من اللسانيات linguistics، لها جذورها العميقة في البلاغة وعلم اللغة، وبالرغم أن للبلاغة دورها في التحليل الأدبي لكنها ضيقة المجال مقارنة بالأسلوبية التي يكون نطاقها أوسع، وتعتبر البلاغة فرعا لها.

التحليل الأسلوبي يتناول أو يشرح اكتشاف الابداع في اللغة وأثره على النصوص الأدبية من خلال تحليل عناصر النصوص الأدبية حيث أنَ البلاغيين يجملون النصوص الأدبية بأعلى قدر من الجماليات لجعل النصوص أو الخطب اغنى باستخدام الأدوات البلاغية مثل السجع والجناس والاستعارة والكناية والتورية، بالإضافة إلى معرفة علم الأوزان والايقاع والقافية، وبذلك تكون أكثر اقناعا.

تحلل هذه الورقة قصيده اميلي دكنسون "أنّها تنخال من غربال رصاص" من منظار أسلوبي. تم اجراء البحث عن طريق عده عوامل أهمها التحقيق في الجانب الرسمي، والنحوي التركيبي ،والصوتي. وتم التعرف

على التعابير المجازية وبنيه الكلمات. وتبدأ هذه الورقة بالمقارنة بين المصطلحين الأسلوب والأسلوبية، حيث

تعطى نبذه مختصرة عن الكاتبة دكنسون، والقصيدة المختارة "أنها تنخال من غربال رصاص" ثم تحللها وفقا

للبنية والأسلوب عن طريق الموضوع ونظرتها وتحليلها للطبيعة.

KEYWORD: Stylistics, style, Dickinson, poetry.

الكلمة المفتاح: التحليلية، الأسلوب التحليلي، دكنسون، شعر

1. Introduction

Stylistics involves the close study of linguistic features of a text in order to arrive at an understanding of how the meanings of the text are transmitted. Crystal (1998) observes that "in practice, most stylistic analysis has attempted to deal with the complex and 'valued' language within literature i.e. 'literary stylistics'. In such examination, emphasis is placed on the more deviant and abnormal features rather than the broader structures found in discourse or texts".

This paper explores the role of interpreting literature through analyzing Dickinson's poem 'It sifts from leaden sieves' from a stylistics view. It gives a brief introduction of the author and the poem, defines and differentiates between style and stylistics, mentions the tools stylistics uses in analyzing literary texts, then dives in deeper, and applying these tools in line by line analysis of the poem. Then concludes with the findings and recommendations.

1.1 Introduction to Emily Dickinson

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was an American poet who commanded a singular brilliance of style and integrity of vision. Born on December 1830 in Amherst, Massachusetts, she led a reclusive life of self-imposed social selection. She attended Amherst Academy and Mount Holyoke College. She was well educated, and wrote 1700 poems which were all published posthumously once discovered by sister Lavinia in 1886. Due to her secrecy, she was not recognized as a poet in her own time; she wrote poetry of great power; questioning the nature of immortality and death. Her poems were about fame and success, faith, grief, freedom through poetry, intensity of emotion and love. Habegger (2001: 16)

1.2 Introduction to 'It Sifts from Leaden Sieves'

'It Sifts from Leaden Sieves' reads like a riddle, the subject of the poem seems to change from line to line giving hints for the reader to guess what the poem is addressing. Although all hints suggest that the poem is talking about snow, it is not mentioned once in the poem. Just as familiar things become unrecognizable when deeply covered in snow during a snowstorm; the language is simple and straightforward, however the meaning is left heavily for the reader to interpret. As Grabher (1998: 150) puts it "nature in the form of a snowstorm obfuscates the visible, making it unrecognizable, as negation cognizable".

2. What is Style

The concept of style according to Leech (1981:10) is proposed generally as the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on. Style is something that has to do with language in use, whether in written or spoken form. Saussure tries to make the concept of style narrower by introducing the concept of langue and parole. Langue is the code or system of rules common to speakers of a language, while parole is the particular use of the system, or selections from the system, that speakers or writers make on particular occasions".(ibid)

Furthermore, Leech gives an example of comparing terms of weather forecasting official style (bright intervals, scattered showers, etc) with some expressions of everyday conversational style (lovely day, a bit chilly, etc). In this case, the official weather forecasting and everyday conversation are the langue, while the expressions (bright intervals, lovely day, scattered shower, etc) are the parole. The example implies the idea that style pertains to parole. Furthermore, a style is constituted by the selection from total linguistic repertoire. Leech states that "this concept is important as the starting point in investigating style in literary works". (1981: 11)

2.1 Style in Literary Works

In relation to text, style has a more suitable concept. In this respect, style can be defined as the linguistic characteristic of a particular text. Leech (1981:12) sees it as how the language is used to represent authors ideas that become the main consideration. Style has traditionally been defined as the manner of linguistic

expression in prose or verse, as how speakers or writers say whatever it is that they say. "Style combines two elements: the idea to be expressed and the individuality of the author" (Harmon 2012: 460). Leech associates style with written literary texts rather than spoken form. "It is simply because a text can show observable authentic evidence or records of how language serves a particular artistic function so that people can be more specific in doing the analysis. In addition a text whether considered as a whole work or as an extract from a work, is the nearest people can get to a homogeneous and specific use of language". (1981:12).

As stated by Hough (1969) "A study of styles for the purpose of analysis will include – in addition to the infinity of personal detail- such general qualities as diction, sentence structure and variety, imagery, rhythm, repetition, coherence, emphasis and arrangements of ideas".

By analyzing the style of Dickinson, one comes to the inclusion that she likes to distort grammatical rules and express her ideas in her own way. For example she capitalizes common nouns, and instead of using commas and full stops, she replaces them with dashes.

For example: *It makes an even Face*   (capitalization of Face, which is a
                common noun at the end of

                                                    the sentence; also, she does not use a
comma at the end).

        Of Mountain, and of Plain-   (capitalization of Mountain, Plain, and
the use of dash instead

                                                    of a full stop at the end of the sentence).

2.2 What is Stylistics

Stylistics applies linguistics to literature in the hope of arriving at analyses which are more broadly based, rigorous and objective. Because form is important in poetry, stylistics need not be reductive and simplistic. It's the method of communicating the meaning of the text through a linguistic scoop, according to Lazar (1993:31) "stylistics is a method which uses the apparatus of linguistics description to analyze

how meanings in a text are communicated". In Widdowson's (1975:12) view "stylistics is an area of mediation between two disciplines: linguistics and literary criticism, so that the link between the two is stylistics which uses linguistics analysis to understand how messages are conveyed". Lazar (1993) says that "stylistics has the advantage of illustrating how particular forms function to convey specific messages", While Levin (1962:6) states that "stylistic analysis in terms of relation between linguistic items in the text which would seem to yield information about the style of a genre, and it is the latter that we are interested in. "Stylistics is the formal and objective study of style. It concentrates on the choices available to a writer: vocabulary (familiar or not, plain or fence, and so forth); level and texture of diction, and acoustic and graphic effects." Harmon (2012: 461).

2.3 Previous Studies

As Jaafar (2014:238) states "the rapid growth of linguistics into an independent discipline and its application to the study of literature has opened new horizons in the field of literary criticism in the twentieth century". She quotes Carter and Stockwell (2008:44) in stating that, "with its objectivity, insights from linguistics and useful terminology, stylistics makes our interpretation valid and enhances our enjoyment of literature …. The fabrication of situations and resulting moral evaluation are the writer's purpose and this purpose cannot be entirely separated from the style which is its means and its fine texture. The linguistic and literary patterns fuse as colour and composition in a painting".

Aslam et al (2014) state that "the goal of most stylistics is to give an interpretation of the text in order to relate literary effects to linguistics causes where they are felt to be relevant. Stylistic analysis provides an objective and scientific based explanation which is derived from the science of linguistics and is applied in a systematic way".

3. Methodology

The methodology the researchers have adapted in this paper is stylistic analysis. As it has been said above: stylistics is the analysis of a poem from a linguistic point of view.

The researchers explored Dickinson's characteristics of her poetic language from a stylistic perspective through analyzing her poem 'it sifts from leaden sieves'. The reason for choosing Dickinson is because she is considered as one of the major voices in American Literature and stands out in world literature. Her style is unique and startlingly original. It is characterized by dramatic openings, striking visual images, widespread personification, dense metaphors and great economy of language. Her poetry has an unusual use of dashes, capitalization of nouns, and punctuation. Her poems are written in quatrains with ABAB or ABCB rhymes or half rhymes, and often contain rhythmic devices such as interrupted meter and run-on lines. All of which have become major characteristics of Dickinson's poems.

Example: It reaches to the *F*ence-

It wraps it *R*ail by *R*ail

Till it is lost in *F*leeces-

It deals *C*elestial *V*ail

Due to the fact that stylistics works as a linking bridge between two important fields: linguistics and literature, the researchers intend to introduce the tools of stylistics and their practical application in the analysis of poetry. They also aim by analyzing the poem stylistically, to come to a better understanding of Dickinson's style through her poems.

4. Data Analysis

We can analyze this poem on various levels as follows:

4.1 Phonetic Level

On a phonetic level, stylistics deals with words, how many syllables each word has and where the stressed and unstressed syllables are.

a. Masculine rhyme (single rhyme) : words that rhyme have one syllable . Abrams (2012: 349) defines it as "the rhyme that has a single syllable".

   Example: It wraps it Rail by *Rail*

It deals Celestial *Veil*

To Stump, and Stack, and *Stem* –

Recordless, but for *them-*

As Ankles of a *Queen* –

Denying they have *been-*

b. Feminine rhyme (double rhyme) : words that rhyme have two syllables. Abrams (2012: 349) defines it "as 'the rhyme consists of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. Since it involves the repetition of two syllables is known as double rhyme".

Example: It Ruffles Wrists of *Posts-*

                    Then stills it's Artisans like *Ghosts-*

4.2 Phonological Level

This level deals with phonemes (sounds).

a. The rhyme scheme of the poem is abcd efgf hiji klmk nono. A rhyme scheme is the pattern of rhymes at the end of each line of a poem or song. It is usually referred to by using small letters of the alphabet to indicate which lines rhyme; lines designated with the same letter all rhyme with each other.

Example:	It sifts from Leaden *Sieves-*	a
	It powders all the *Woods.*	*b*
	It fills with Alabaster *Wool*	c
	The Wrinkles of the *Road-*	d
	It makes an even *Face*	e
	Of Mountain and of *Plain-*	f
	Unbroken Forehead from the *East*	g
	Unto the East *again-*	f

It reaches to the *Fence*-	h
It wraps it Rail by *Rail*	i
Till it is lost in *Fleeces*-	j
It deals Celestial *Veil*	i
To Stump and Stack and *Stem*-	k
A Summer's empty *Room*-	l
Acres of joints where Harvests *were* ،	m
Recordless, but for them-	k
It Ruffles Wrists of *Posts*	n
As Ankles of a *Queen*-	o
Then stills its Artisans – like *Ghosts*-	n
Denying they have *been*-	o

b. It is written in iambic tetrameter. Iambic tetrameter is a rhyme scheme in which each line consists of six syllables, these six syllables are further divided into three pairs called feet. An iambic foot is a metrical unit in which one unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable.

Example: (Capital letters indicate where stress is applied, small letters indicate unstressed syllables).

It sifts from Leaden Sieves-	it SIFTS/ from LEA/den SIEVES
It powders all the Woods.	it POW/ders ALL/ the WOOD
It fills with Alabaster Wool	it FILLS/ with ALBAS/ter WOOL

The Wrinkles of the Road-   the WRIN/kles OF/ the

ROAD

syllable structure is as follows, *V* stands for vowel, *C* stands for consonants.

it   FILLS/   with   ALBAS/ter   it   SIFTS/   from   LEA/den
WOOL   SIEVES

vc/ cvc vcvc/ cv cvc   vc cvc/cvc cv/cvc cvcvc

the WRIN/kles OF/ the ROAD   it POW/ders ALL/ the WOOD

cv cvc/ ccv vc/ cv cvc   vc cv/cvc vc/ cv cvc

4.2.1 Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of initial consonant sounds in words. Abrams (2012:10) defines it as "a speech sound in a sequence of nearby words. Usually the term is applied only to consonants, and only when the recurrent sound is made emphatic because it begins a word or a stressed syllable within words".

Example: *s*ifts *s*ieves   *Wr*inkles *r*oad   *F*orehead
*f*rom

           *Wr*aps *r*ail *r*ail   *R*uffles *wr*ists   *s*tump
*s*tack *s*tem

4.2.2 Assonance

Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in nearby words to create rhythm within the line of poetry. Harmon (2012: 43) "refers to same or similar vowel sounds in stressed syllable that end with different consonant sounds' ; Abrams (2012:11) defines it as "the repetition of identical or similar vowels especially in stressed syllables- in a sequence of nearby words".

Example: *I*t f*i*lls w*i*th   M*a*kes f*a*ce
*U*nbroken *u*nto fr*o*m

           Unbrok*e*n foreh*ea*d ag*ai*n   T*i*ll *i*t *i*s *i*n

*A*s *a*nkles of a queen   St*i*lls **i**ts art*i*sans

4.2.3 Eye Rhyme

When words look like they are going to rhyme but they do not. Harmon (2012:349) defines it as "words whose ending are spelled alike and in most instances were once pronounced alike, but have in the course of time acquired a different pronunciation".

Example: It powders all the ***wood***

            It fills with alabaster ***wool***

4.3 Graphological level

This section treats the orthography or typography of the text. There is a kind of graphological deviation which needs to have no counterpart in speech. "The typographic line of poetry, like the typographical stanza, is a unit which is not parallel in non-poetic varieties in English: it is independent of and capable of interacting with, the standard units of punctuations". (Leech 1981: 47)

a. There are 20 lines in the poem.

b. There are five stanzas of four lines each.

c. There are 100 words in the poem.

d. Punctuation marks are used in the poem. For example: full stop and dash.

e. There is use of capitalization in nouns that ate not proper names.

f. There is no use of italic, bold or underlined words.

4.4 Grammatical Level

According to Radford as cited in Nation (2008: 3) "grammatical categories are linguistic categories which have the effect of modifying the forms of some class of words in a language.

a. Full stops are used to indicate the end of the sentence, thus the idea is complete.

b. Dashes are used to indicate that it is a run on line (enjambment), read on to fully understand the sentence. "The continuation of the sense and grammatical construction of a line onto the next verse or couplet". Harmon (2012:174).

4. 5 Lexical Level

On a lexical level, words are categorized and divided into nouns, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, verbs, auxiliaries, prepositions, conjunctions and articles.

Nouns	Pronouns	Adverbs	Adjectives	Verb/stem & Auxiliaries	Prepositions	Conjunctions	Articles
sieve	it	where	leaden	sift	from	and	the
wood	them	again	alabaster	powder	with	but	an
wool	they		even	fill	of	then	a
road			unbroken	make	to	as	
face			lost	reach	by		
mountain			celestial	lost	of		
plain			empty	deal	unto		
forehead				stump	till		
east				stack			
fence				stem			
rail				ruffle			
vail				still			
fleece				like			
room				deny			
summer				have			
acres				be			
joint							
harvest							
record							
less							
wrist							
post							

ankle queen artisans ghosts wrap wrinkles							

The researchers calculated the percentage of each category in the poem 'It Sifts from Leaden Sieves' and the results were as follows: nouns 39.4%, pronouns 0.04%, adverbs 0.02%, verbs / stem and auxiliaries 0.22%, prepositions 0.11%, conjunctions 0.05%, and articles 0.04%.

4.5.1 Tropes

"Greek for turn, in general it denotes any rhetorical or figurative device, but a special development in its use occurred during the Middle Ages when it came to be applied to a verbal amplification of the liturgical text". Cuddon(1999:948) . These figures of speech include:

4.5.1.1 Personification

Personification is the attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something non-human, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form. Harmon (2012: 361).

> Example: The *wrinkles* of the road
>
> It makes an *even face* of mountain and of plain
>
> Unbroken *forehead* from the east

4.5.1.2 Metaphor

Metaphor is the transference of names based on the likeness between two objects; it is economical and immediate, and its economy makes for immediacy- two things fused in a single word. "It is an implying comparison or symbolism of two things that are very different from each other without using words such as (like, as, than); it states that one thing is another". Harmon (2012: 295).

Example: It sifts from *leaden sieves* (metaphor for dark clouds)

Till it is lost in *fleece* (metaphor for snow)

A summer's *empty room* (metaphor for field)

4.5.1.3 Similie

Abrams defines similie as "a direct comparison, that states that one thing is like another using (as, like, than)" (2012: 130). Example: then stills its artisans- **like** ghosts

Imagery

The word 'image' most often suggests a mental picture, something seen in the mind's eye. Lewis (1951:18) as cited in Abrams (2012: 69) defines imagery as "in its simplest terms it is a picture made out of words" he further adds that "a word is a picture charged with emotion or passion". Most poets use images to make abstract ideas concrete and easier for readers to communicate.

Imagery is divided into the following:

a. Visual Imagery

It creates mental pictures in the mind of the reader, it describes shape, size, pattern and colour. It plays the largest role in imagery in literature. Lye (2008)

Example: It deals *celestial veil*

b. Auditory Imagery

"It describes sounds one hears, they can include onomatopoeia such as pop, bang, crash or it could describe complete silence". (Ibid)

Example: To *s*tump, and *s*tack, and *s*tem

The repetition of the 's' sound serves as the silent sound of falling snow.

c. Tactile Imagery

Tactile imagery appeals to the sense of touch. "It describes what we feel or touch such as smooth, ragged, or feeling of scratched fabric on one's skin". (Ibid)

Example: ***Albaster*** mineral hard in touch

                Wool soft

                Till it is lost in **fleeces**

 d. Kinesthetic Imagery

"Describes the movement or action of objects or people". (Ibid)

Example: It **sifts** from leaden sieves-

                It **powders** all the woods.

                It **fills** with alabaster wool

                It **reaches** to the fence

                It **wraps** it rail by rail

                It **ruffles** wrists of posts

4.5.1.4 Eye rhyme

As the name suggests eye rhyme is rhyme that appeals to the eye, words look the same in print either by the same vowels and/or same word ending. But when pronounced they don't sound the same. It is also known as half-rhyme or para-rhyme. Abrams (2012: 349) defines it as "words whose endings are spelled alike, and in most instances were once pronounced alike, but have in the course of time acquired a different pronunciation".

    Example: It powders all the **Wood**

                It fills with Albaster **Wool**

4.5.1.5 Hyperbole

A figure of speech composed of a striking exaggeration. Hyperbole usually carries the force of strong emotion. A type of hyperbole is adynation where exaggeration is

taken to a great extreme where it seems impossible or impractical. (Delaney et al 2009: 182)

Example: It makes an *even face of mountain and of plain*

4.5.1.6 Oxymoron

"A figure of speech that brings together contradictory words for effect . Cuddon (1999: 406)

Example: Alabaster Wool

The snow is described as a cover that is soft and gentle with whatever it falls upon.

4.5.2   Scheme

"Scheme comes from the Greek word for 'form', it has to do with the ordering of words". Abrams (1999:130)**.**

4.5.3   Anaphora

Cuddon (1999: 37) defines anaphora as "a rhetorical device involving the repetition of a word or group of words in successive clauses. It is often used in ballad and song, in oratory and sermon (qq.v.), but it is common in many literary forms". Harmon (2012: 124) defines it as "one of the devices of repetition, in which the same expression (word or words) is repeated at the beginning of two or more lines, clauses or sentences".

Example: **It** sifts… , **It** powders… **,** **It** fills…

            It reaches… , **It** wraps… , **It** deals…

4.5.4   Ploce

Ploce is the intermitted repetition of words. Harmon (2012: 366) defines it "as a kind of repetition whereby different forms and senses of a word are 'woven' through an utterance".

Example: It wraps it *Rail* by *Rail*

5.   Conclusion

Stylistic uses the scientific and the objective look of linguistic analysis to give us the opportunity to enjoy the creativity of literature. We come to know that a text with multi-layered meanings can be evaluated in a better way within the matter of formal functional dimension of language representation. The researchers came to the conclusion that through stylistic and the use of its right tools, one can come to a right interpretation of a poem, even if there is no prior knowledge of the literary work in question.

Dickinson expresses ideas in her own way in a unique style of writing. Her eccentric style and unusual subject matter are not only instantly recognizable, but genuinely unforgettable. In her poetry all the resources of language are compressed in a compelling, fresh and astonishing manner, she has created a new and rich world of ides in the most artistic way.

Emily Dickinson has her own style that differentiates her from other genres free style that it cannot be resembles the American spirit

6. Appendix

'It Sifts from Leaden Sieves' .. Emily Dickinson

It sifts from Leaden Sieves-

It powders all the Woods.

It fills with Alabaster Wool

The Wrinkles of the Road-

It makes an even Face

Of Mountain and of Plain-

Unbroken Forehead from the East

Unto the East again-

It reaches to the Fence-

It wraps it Rail by Rail

Till it is lost in Fleeces-

It deals Celestial Vail

To Stump and Stack- and Stem-

A Summer's empty Room-

Acres of joints where Harvests were,

Recordless, but for them-

It Ruffles Wrists of Posts

As Ankles of a Queen-

Then stills its Artisans – like Ghosts-

Denying they have been-

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