

Stylistic Analysis of the Short Story “All Summer in a Day”

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze All Summer in a Day by Ray Bradbury from the perspective of stylistic analysis. The story is analysed stylistically by taking into consideration grammatical, lexical and phonological levels. This analysis follows the checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories proposed by Leech(2007). The paper focuses on adjectives, adverbs, repetition, substitution, parallelism and figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, symbolism, imagery, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. It also discusses elements such as the story’s point of view, characters and allegory for providing a better insight into the story.

Key Words: Stylistic Analysis, Ray Bradbury, All Summer in a Day, Imagery, Narrative Techniques, Science Fiction.

1.Introduction

‘All Summer in a Day’ is a science fiction short story by American writer Ray Bradbury. It was first published in March, 1954 in the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. Ray Douglas Bradbury was an American author. He worked in a variety of genres, including fantasy, science fiction, horror and mystery fiction. He received National Medal of Arts, presented by president George W. Bush. This article aims to explore a short story written by Bradbury which is set on the planet Venus and where the sun shines for only two hours once every seven years. It takes into account that day the sun is due to make its appearance once again.

2. Literature Review

2.1 What is stylistic Analysis?

Stylistic Analysis is a branch of linguistics which deals with the interpretation of written or spoken language. It takes into account various linguistic forms in actual language use. Stylistic Analysis involves aspects of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and semantics. The definition of the term stylistic analysis has been through various controversies as it depends on the approach which an analyst adopts. According to Dylan Thomas and E.E Cummings, Stylistic Analysis is the reference to the normal patterns of language which the author has manipulated in order to produce literary effect. According to Freeman (1971) stylistics is a sub discipline which started in the second half of the twentieth century. David Crystal(1980) sees stylistic analysis as a part of linguistics which studies certain aspects of language variation.

2.2 Stylistic Analysis

The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure contributed to the development of stylistic analysis through his dichotomies i.e. langue and parole. On the basis of the views of De Saussure, Charles Bally formulated an 'expressive theory' in 1909 which viewed stylistic analysis as the study of specific diction which conveys the author's thoughts and feelings. It was also of the view that stylistic study includes historical, personal and psychological contexts. This view of stylistics was taken one step further when Leo Spitzer related the language use to the psyche of the author. However he rejected the psychological purpose of stylistic analysis and represented the text as an element that can stand on its own while focusing on the poetic language. It was in the same year when Roman Jakobson emerged with a contradicting idea to the Spitzer's psychological stylistic approach. Jakobson laid emphasis on the poetic function of the language to achieve its communicative message. This gave rise to Russian Formalism. Russian Formalism confined the study of literary text on the basis of formal linguistic features such as style, structure, imagery and tone. It only focused on the text and rejected social, historical, ideological and biographical contexts. This view gave rise to a language based theory known as structuralism. Russian Formalism along with prague school and New Criticism marked its influence on "Essays on style and Language", a book published by Roger Fowler which marked the development of stylistic analysis in the twentieth century. Structuralism of Prague school which Jakobson worked with focused on foregrounding. Foregrounding refers to the making use of linguistic devices against the norms of an ordinary language. Foregrounding can occur on all levels of language such as phonology, graphology, morphology, lexis, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. The idea of foregrounding was developed by a Czech scholar, Jan Markarorsky. Alongside, prague school also considered context in the formulation of a "textual meaning". Hence prague school focused on both text and context. New Criticism also focused on writings as opposed to nineteenth century literary criticism which focused on writers though neglecting the effect which text created on readers. However it was Practical Criticism introduced by Richards and his student William Empson which took the influence of text on readers into consideration. Thus modern stylistics is concerned with text, context and readers.

3. About the story

3.1 Point of view

The story is narrated by third person narrator who seems to be omniscient. This narrator provides insight into the psychology of all the child characters. He especially emphasizes the thoughts and feelings of Margot, a nine year old child who was born on earth. She remembers the earth and feels depressed. She is disliked by the children born on Venus. The narrator is anonymous who has complete knowledge about the psyche of Margot. The narrator provides liveliness through dialogues framed in a manner which are short yet filled with emotions and feelings. The dialogues move events forward. Given below is an instance from text which serves best to illustrate this point.

" Will it be seven more years"

" Yes seven"

Then one of them gave a little cry

“Margot!”

“What?”

“She’s still in the closet where we locked her”

3.2 Characters

The characters in the story comprise of school children. All these characters are nameless apart from Margot, the protagonist who is an easy target of bullying especially by a child whom the author named as William. William emerged as an antagonist by encouraging other children to mistreat Margot. Apart from these characters there is an inaccessible character, ‘The Teacher’. The teacher performs her duty but only in limited capacity as she is seen reprimanding William for being cruel to Margot but she is completely unaware of what is happening with the children. The teacher functions as an external authority. She is completely devoid of the insights into the children’s psychology. Hence the children are seen governing themselves.

3.3 Allegory

The story is allegorical as it contains two levels of meaning. At the surface level Margot is unable to get along with other children. The children bully her and do not understand her. They are also longing for the sun and they are envious of her for experiencing the sun. Also when the sun came out, the children locked Margot in a closet. They enjoyed in the sun and only remembered to take her out of the closet only when the sun disappeared. Thus it is clear that it was the appearance of the sun which filled the hearts of the children with empathy which they were devoid of earlier. The story revolves around the significance of the sun which symbolizes the promise of tomorrow in human’s life. At a deeper level it conveys the difficulties experienced by immigrants.

4. Analysis

4.1 Grammatical and lexical schemes

4.1.1 Adjectives

Adjectives have been used in the story to a large extent since the tone of the story is descriptive in nature. Given below are the instances of adjectives in the story which provides reader a complete picture of the events.

“ They were dreaming and remembering gold or a **yellow** crayon or a coin **large** enough to buy the world with”.

“About how like a lemon it was and how **hot**”

“The children were crushed in the **great thick** windows”

“She was very **frail** girl”

"Staring at the rain and the **loud wet** world beyond the **huge** glass."

"They hated her **pale snow** face"

"And the sky around it was a **blazing blue tile** colour"

"In the center of it **cupped and huge**, was a single rain drop."

"Their faces were **solemn** and **pale**."

4.1.2 Adverbs

Adverbs have been used in the story in order to describe the situation more clearly. Given below are few examples of adverbs.

The students glanced **quietly** at the sky.

Nearby, another boy fell to the ground.

They ran **quickly** outside and laughed **too** much.

He **slowly** opened the door and let Margot out.

4.1.3 Parallelism

The story contains various parallel structures. Parallelism refers to the use of phrases which is grammatically similar or identical in structure, sound, meaning or meter. Following are the instances of parallel syntactic structures found in the story:

"**So many** roses, **so many** weeds".

"**With** the rain, **with** the drum and gush of water, **with** sweet crystal fall of showers and the concussions of storms so heavy

"**And the** rain had washed out the blue from her eyes **and the** red from her mouth **and the** yellow from her hair".

"They hated **her** pale snow face, **her** waiting silence, **her** thinness, and **her** possible future."

"**And the** sky around it was blazing blue tile colour. **And the** jungle burned with sunlight."

"**They** ran among the trees, **they** slipped and fell, **they** pushed each other, **they** played hide-and-seek

4.1.4 Substitution

Substitution is a grammatical cohesion which replaces word or phrase with filler words such as 'one', 'so' or 'do'. Following are the instances of substitution from the story

" There was a talk that her father and mother were taking her back to Earth next year; it seemed vital to her that they **do so**."

" She remembers the sun but her classmates **do not**".

4.1.5 Repetition

The repetition continues throughout the story. Following are various instances of repetition.

“Ready?”

“Ready?”

“Look, look”

“ It’s stopping, it’s stopping”

“Yes, yes!”

“Margot stood apart from them, from these children who could ever remember a time when there wasn’t **rain** and **rain** and **rain**.”

“They **ran** and **ran** in shouting circles. They **ran** for an hour and did not stop running.”

“They breathed of the **fresh, fresh** air and **listened** and **listened** to the silence”

“Lightening struck ten **miles away**, five **miles away**, a mile a half a mile.”

“They glanced out at the world that was **raining** now and **raining** and **raining** steadily.”

“They walked over to the **closet** door slowly and stood by it. Behind the **closet** door was only silence. They unlocked the door even more slowly.”

4.1.6 Metaphor

Metaphor is a rhetorical device which compares two things that are not alike and replaces a word or phrase with other. In this story metaphor is used to describe the rain. It is compared to tidal waves, a ‘tattling drum’ and to clear beads from a necklace that fall on the roof and disappear. Margot is metaphorically described as an “old photograph dusted from an album”. The metaphor is also used to compare the sun with a flower and describe the landscape of Venus through the phrases like a nest of Octopi, clustering up great arms of flesh-like weed, rubber, mattresses and white cheeses. The silence of the children after the sun came out is metaphorically compared to a sea.

4.1.7 Simile

A simile directly compares two thing by using words such as “like”, “as” or “than”. Given below are the examples of Simile from the story:

“They turned on themselves, like a feverish wheel”

“It’s like a penny”

“It’s like a fire”

“A boom of thunder startled them and like leaves before a new hurricane”

“They stood as if someone had driven them, like so many stakes into the floor.”

4.1.8 Personification

It refers to attributing qualities of human beings to something that is not human. Given below are a few instances of personification which appear in the story:

“ When the **sun** came out for an hour and showed it’s **face** to the stunned world”

“ They stood looking at the **door** and saw it **tremble** from her beating and throwing herself against it”.

“ The children lay out laughing, on the **jungle mattress**, and heard it **sigh** and **squeak** under them resilient and alive.”

4.1.9 Hyperbole

Hyperbole refers to an exaggerated statement. The following instances from the story are an example of hyperbole:

“ The gigantic sound of the rain falling in tons and avalanches, everywhere and forever”.

“ And feeling the sun on their cheeks like warm iron”

“ A coin large enough to buy the world with”

4.1.10 Symbolism

‘Symbolism’ in literature refers to the use of an object to add deeper meaning to the text.

The author has used few symbols in the story to provide readers with a better insight. These are:

Closet: Closet in which Margot is locked symbolizes bullying and punishment. This takes place as a result of her unusual behavior. It also symbolizes rejection and envy

Door: The door which separates the underground house from the external environment is a symbol of separation between safety and danger.

Weeds: Children residing on Venus are compared to weeds. The inhospitable environment has fostered hostility among the children of Venus and turned them into unruly mob

Sun: The sun is the most important symbol around which the entire story revolves. The sun is responsible for restoring health and filling the hearts of children with empathy.

4.1.11 Imagery

Imagery refers to the use of visually descriptive language. Imagery in “All Summer in a Day” helps in imagining the life on Venus in a better way. Given below is one such instance of imagery:

“It had been raining for seven years; thousands upon thousands of days compounded and filled from one end to the other with rain, with the drum and gush of water, with the sweet crystal fall of showers and the concussions of storms so heavy they were tidal waves come over the islands”

Along with these an “ Oxymoron(co-occurrence of contradictory words)” is also employed by the author in the sentence “ That was Margot’s poem read in a quiet voice”

4.2 Phonological Schemes

4.2.1 Alliteration

The repetition of initial consonant sounds in closely occurring words is called alliteration. Given below are a few instances of alliteration from the story.

“ Only when they **s**ang about the **s**un and the **s**ummer did her lips move as she watched the **d**renched windows.”

“ And the way the **s**un was and the **s**ky was”.

“ She had refused to **s**hower in the school **s**hower rooms”.

“ Caught her up and bore her, **p**rotesting and then **p**leading”.

“ The door **s**lid back and the **s**mell of the **s**ilent waiting world came into them.”

“ And the sky around it was **b**lazing **b**lue tile colour”

“And **w**hat she **w**as **w**aiting for **w**as in her eyes”

4.2.2 Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is a resemblance between what a piece of language sounds like and what it refers to. Following are the examples of onomatopoeia from the story:

“With the drum and **gush** of water”.

“ But then they always woke to the “**tattling** drums”

“ A **boom** of thunder startled them.”

5. Conclusion

The language employed in the story is quite simple. The story consists of short phrases in the form of dialogues which are mostly uttered by children revealing their excitement and impatience whereas descriptive passages use sentences which create imagery through use of numerous adjectives and adverbs

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