



THE ART OF NARRATIVE IN 'THE SNAIL': UNVEILING THE AUTHOR'S LITERARY TECHNIQUES THROUGH A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Stylistic analysis examines the style and literary methods employed in a work to convey the author's implicit meaning. The selected text for stylistic study is the short story 'The Snail' by the notable Pakistani author Tariq Rahman, renowned for his distinctive writing style. The objective of the study is to examine the literary strategies employed by the author in this narrative and assess the efficacy of these choices in delivering the intended meanings. The employed method for this aim is Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic and grammatical checklist, due to its latest version. The narrative is examined stylistically by focusing exclusively on figures of speech while considering the grammatical, lexical, and phonological frameworks outlined in the checklist by Leech and Short (2007). The author employs numerous figures of speech to enhance the attraction, significance, and uniqueness of the narrative. The figures of speech include symbolism, allegory, simile, metaphor, anaphora, and alliteration, among others. Further stylistic analyses of this narrative can be conducted by examining additional dimensions such as syntax, context, and cohesiveness or by employing alternative methodologies.

Keywords: *Narrative, Short Story, Style, Stylistic Analysis, Tariq Rahman, 'The Snail'.*

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1. Introduction

Style refers to the manner in which something is created or presented. Style distinguishes one object from another based on certain features such as color, size, and technique. Style is utilized in a variety of areas, such as clothes, footwear, and architecture.

Language, which comprises both spoken and written forms, has various styles that set one text apart from another. These styles are based on lexical choices, literary approaches, the author's tone, grammatical and lexical characteristics, and other elements. Each writer has a distinct writing style that distinguishes them from others, even within the same age group and genre. Style relates to how people use language in a certain setting to achieve a specific goal (Leech, 1969). Even while discussing the same topic, a piece is distinguished by its writing style. This linguistic style is examined in Stylistics.

Stylistics is a subdivision of Applied Linguistics that examines and analyses various forms of text or spoken language, including their linguistic and tonal style, referring to the distinctive use of language by diverse authors in varying contexts. Stylistics serves as a conduit between Linguistics and Literature, as it examines the literariness of a text or spoken language. In writing, each word and device employed by the author significantly contributes to delivering the intended meanings. The significance and roles of these selections and devices are examined through stylistic analysis, which is conducted on a text to identify the literary devices employed by the author and to assess their effectiveness in conveying the author's implicit meanings. Stylistic analysis holds considerable significance in both Languages and Literature.

Numerous studies examine the literariness of a work through stylistic analysis, as demonstrated in various poems, short stories, and novels. While the stylistic analyses of various Pakistani poems and short stories, such as Tanzeela K. Hassan's "The Variant" by Tanzeela K. Hassan and Hamid Khan "Call it a Sunshine?" have been done, limited research has been conducted on short stories by Tariq Rahman. This study intends to perform a stylistic analysis of the short story "The Snail" by Pakistani author Tariq Rahman. Tariq Rahman is recognized as an academic, critic, and short story writer. He has been honored with numerous international and national accolades, including the Sitara-e-Imtiaz and the Pride of Performance, in recognition of his intellectual and literary contributions. His renowned short stories include "The Work," "Bingo," "Moustache," "Transfiguration," "Mai Baap," "Game," and "The Snail."

“The Snail” is selected for stylistic analysis because of its distinctive nature; its title is emblematic, replete with symbols and other literary devices that the author has adeptly employed to communicate underlying meanings. “The Snail” is centered on postcolonialism. It is a singular short story in its theme, linguistic choices, and characterizations.

The snail in the selected story represents an individual who possesses unconventional thoughts and aspires to embrace new lifestyles. He desires to abandon the foundations of his society by becoming a mimic. He asserts to other snails that their shells, which they use for protection in the face of danger, are emblematic of cowardice, rendering them cowardly rather than providing genuine protection. He requests the removal of the shell to reveal a different and more lovely appearance. He asserts that the shell conceals its glossy and smooth outside. However, no one pays attention to him and begins to revile him. After the snail removes his shell with considerable effort, his companions abandon him and express their revulsion. He becomes isolated, fragile, and debilitated, ultimately succumbing to death. This highlights that one should not leave his roots and traditions to pursue modernization. An analysis of literary devices and meaning in this story is important to undertake to determine if these techniques effectively transmit the inferred meaning. Therefore, this study utilizes the linguistic and stylistic categories proposed by Leech and Short (2007) to evaluate the literary techniques employed in the selected narrative and how these elements convey the author’s concealed and intended meanings.

2. Literature Review

In Literature, “Style” holds considerable importance and describes how an author composes or narrates a story. The writing style encompasses a writer’s tone, diction, expressive approaches, and various literary devices, distinguishing one writer from another. The examination of style is termed “Stylistics,” which G. N. Leech (1969) characterized as a linguistic perspective on Literature, elucidating the connection between language and creative function through probing enquiries like “why” and “how,” rather than “what”. Stylistics is seen as a conduit between Linguistics and Literature, as it delineates the function of Linguistics in literary interpretation. Stylistics, as a branch of study, integrates linguistics and literary studies, establishing profound linkages between the two domains. It seeks to emphasize the linguistic attributes of literary analysis through meticulous studies of language features. Stylistics is an interdisciplinary field that bridges Linguistics and Literature (Chaitra, 2014). Leech (2014) defined stylistics as a method for exploring particular patterns and language constructions in literary works to uncover their concealed meanings. In this context, stylistics offers a systematic methodology for

interpreting literary texts as an alternative to specific perspectives (Boase-Beier, 2014). Simpson (2004) determined that stylisticians, by rejecting disciplinary boundaries, engage in indisciplinaryity. Stylistics integrates methods and theories from other disciplines to facilitate the most comprehensive interpretation of a text, as “the more complete and context-sensitive the description of language, the fuller the stylistic analysis that accrues” (p. 3). Khan et al.. (2015) contend that stylistic analysis aims to examine the particular linguistic choices made by the writer regarding word selection and sentence structure. The study presents Leech and Short’s (2007) definition of style as “the manner in which the writer conveys a message to the reader” (p. 10). The stylistic analysis of a text seeks to examine the grammatical and literary devices employed by the author and to evaluate how these elements contribute to the conveyance of inferred meaning.

Many experts have studied the stylistic analysis of various poems and short tales by Pakistani authors. Imran, M. et al. (2012) conducted one such study. The authors conducted a stylistic analysis of “The Variant” by Tanzeela K. Hassan, utilizing the checklist established by Leech and Short (2007). They examined several figures of speech, including parallelism, anaphora, apostrophe, alliteration, rhyme, similes, and metaphors. Prior research on “The Snail” has concentrated on the themes, plot, setting, and characters of the narrative as Hamza, A. (2006) analyzed “The Snail,” examining its themes, characters, storyline, and environment. He identified cohesion in the narrative and examined various themes, such as the notion that change is not linear and must confront numerous challenges to effect societal transformation.

3. Methodology

This study conducts a stylistic analysis of the short story “The Snail” by Tariq Rahman, focusing on the author’s linguistic choices. The selected short story contains numerous figures of speech, which the researchers aim to examine using Leech and Short’s (2007) linguistic and stylistic criteria checklist. In 1981, prominent text linguists Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short together released the book “Style in Fiction.” In 2007, they released a new edition and introduced a checklist for the stylistic study of a work. The checklist provides a systematic framework for gathering pertinent linguistic data from the text to conduct stylistic analysis, presenting four tiers for examining the writer’s linguistic decisions regarding style. The levels encompass lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, context, and cohesiveness. This study will concentrate on the degree of figures of speech, including grammatical, lexical, and phonological frameworks. Figures of speech encompass symbolism, allegory, simile, metaphor, and personification. The discussion will focus on grammatical and lexical structures, specifically parallelism,

anaphora, and lexical repeats. The phonological patterns of rhyme, including alliteration, consonance, assonance, and rhyming words, will be examined under the category of phonological schemes.

4. Analysis

4.1. Rhetorical Devices

The writer employs multiple strategies in the narrative to enhance its attractiveness and distinctiveness. These devices include symbolism, allegory, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, simile, metaphor, personification, and deviation.

4.2. Symbolism

Symbolism is a literary device that uses symbols (words, persons, marks, locations, or abstract ideas) to signify something other than their literal meaning. “The Snail” is rich in symbols, which add to the story’s attraction and uniqueness. In the story, the snail represents a man who wishes to reject his society’s customs and standards and deviate from them—one who, as a result of postcolonial influences, becomes a mimic man and eventually dies.

Shells are also used as symbols throughout the plot. They represent security, reincarnation, and protection for other snails in the story. However, for the protagonist, the snail, they represent cowardice. He believes that because of their cowardice, snails (humans) hide in their shells anytime they detect danger. The pond is also employed as a symbol throughout the novel. It represents a society where people from many backgrounds share common social and cultural norms and practices.

4.3. Allegory

The narrative is metaphorical, containing two layers of meaning: one surface and the other concealed or profound. At first glance, it depicts an animal society inhabited by various snails and other critters. All the snails cherish their shells, except one that expresses discontent and urges the others to remove theirs to reveal the exquisite bodies concealed within for so long. However, he is disregarded by others and ultimately removes his shell after considerable effort. As a result, he becomes weak and ultimately dies. On a deeper level, it conveys that we should not abandon the roots of our culture and traditions for modernity or any other influence. A man cannot endure by isolating himself from society. A mimic ultimately achieves nothing but self-destruction. Society offers the foundation for the survival of each individual.

4.4. Hyperbole

Hyperbole (exaggeration) is also used in the story in the following instances;

“It was blessed with a brain which was tucked away in the remote extremity of its tail.” “... and the pond where it lived was something of a pool of tears.”

“The pain increased beyond endurance.”

4.5. Rhetoric Question

It is a question that does not need an answer, but it is used as a literary technique in order to make the text appealing. In the story, it is used in the following instances;

“...but what in the world could you do to a fellow who ducked into a castle when he lost or won an argument?”

“And what of it, Snail? What of it? Does it do any earthly good to have a bloody shell?”

“After all, what was beauty? It was merely an ephemeral illusion.

4.6. Simile

A simile is a literary device that compares two unlike things using the words ‘as’ and ‘like. It is seen in the story in the following sentences;

“The middle of his body looked really like a mass of putrescent flesh.”

“Besides, he would grow a smooth flesh-like skin and he would outsmart them all.”
“His moral superiority was now as manifest as the day.”

“But as soon as he came they all withdrew into their shells, and he stood watching scattered stone-like objects everywhere.”

4.7. Metaphor

Metaphor is the direct comparison without the use of ‘like’ and ‘as,’ like used in the following occurrences in the story;

“After all, what was beauty? It was merely an ephemeral illusion. It was only skin-deep.”

“He didn’t exist ignominiously in that cocoon of oblivion which used to be an eyesore for him.”

“Alone and forsaken, he stood there. And all around him were dead shells.”

4.8. Personification

It is a literary device in which human attributes are given to inanimate objects as given in the following instances in the story;

“The cricket had stopped its melody and the frogs were staring out of the pond with vulgar curiosity.”

“To each of these inanimate beings he turned his thirsty eyes, but there was no response.”

“The wind wafted away his rotten smell.

4.9. Anthropomorphism

It is a literary device by which human qualities or attributes are applied to animals or deities, as given in the following utterances in the story;

“The snail felt angry and humiliated till the intruder went away...” “...and only the Snail was left lamenting.”

“...He (snail) wept when he saw this.”

“..., and insects began their weird dance on his middle.”

“The snail watched it with envy.”

“The snail remembered his shell with nostalgia.”

4.10. Deviation

Deviation is a literary technique through which writers and poets diverge from conventional norms in their compositions. It is sometimes referred to as pattern disruption. It is utilized to emphasize the text. In this narrative, the author diverges by commencing sentences with ‘and’ in the following instances;

“And to imagine that snails were such morons that they hidden their slim beautiful bodies in these repulsive shells for so long.”

“And anyway, he was not a retreating sneaky monk anymore.” “And today he had resolved not to discuss his progressive elevation.” “And all around him were dead shells.”

“And then the two-legged creature came out of the pool and slowly...”

4.11. Antithesis

“Antithesis” literally denotes “opposite” and typically refers to the contrary of a statement, idea, or concept. In Literature, an antithesis refers to a juxtaposition of ideas or notions wherein one negates or contrasts with the other. It is employed in the subsequent sentence inside the narrative;

“Well, yes, it had seen some creatures die, but that was like seeing creatures being born.”

“...to console his inconsolable soul.”

5. Grammatical and Lexical Proficiency

The story features multiple parallel frameworks—the narrative exhibits parallelism at the phonemic, lexical, and syntactic levels. Parallelism is a literary strategy employed by writers to establish additional regularities. Anaphora transpires when multiple successive sentences commence with an identical word or clause. Parallelism and anaphora enhance the text’s prominence, appeal, and distinctiveness. The text analyses occurrences of anaphora and parallel syntactic structure;

“...what of it, Snail What of it?

“...like a...like a – well, like a bloody shell.” “Yes, yes, he agreed sadly and went away.”

“He was ill and weak and above all.”

“He wanted to talk about cures and food and simple things like that.”

“He cried and called and then turned slowly back and crept painfully away.”
“...being was bigger, much bigger, than the...”

“...which went away very, very fast.”

5.1. Anaphora is also used in the story in the following instances;

“He felt so bad. He felt as everything was irretrievably lost.” “It was merely an ephemeral illusion. It was only skin-deep.” “One was not.... One day...”

“He had grown.... He tolerated...”

“One could do something to them. One could intimidate them...”

Moreover, the word ‘And’ is used excessively in this short story. Similarly, the excessively used parts of speech are;

5.2. Nouns

‘creature,’ ‘middle,’ ‘shell,’ ‘body,’ ‘blessing,’ ‘envy,’ ‘fear,’ ‘pond,’ ‘skin,’ ‘pain,’ and ‘water.’

5.3. Verbs

‘felt,’ ‘tucked away,’ ‘looked,’ ‘tried,’ ‘wanted,’ ‘cry,’ ‘swam.’

5.4. Adjectives

‘sore,’ ‘two-legged,’ ‘beautiful,’ ‘ugly,’ ‘smooth,’ ‘repulsive,’ ‘proud.’

6. Phonological Level

6.1. Alliteration

Alliteration is the recurrence of the same consonant sounds at the onset of closely situated words. The narrative under examination contains numerous instances of alliteration;

“...it had seen some creatures die...”

“The crows cawed on the trees...”

“After that the society of snails was irksome for the Snail.”

“He tolerated no mention of the great names now.”

“...himself by ritual repetition of...”

“...were considered contemptible by him.” “But then he started stinking...”

“He hurt himself badly in taking it off.”

“His body felt raw and he felt as if he had been born again.” “For a moment of mad panic, he almost went wild with anxiety.” “He felt naked and helpless as he had never felt before.”

“There was no cure, and he came back to a place where the whole community was busy in a feast.”

“...he stood watching scattered stone-like objects everywhere.”

“This two-legged being was bigger, much bigger, than the one he had seen before.”

6.2. Assonance

Assonance is the repetition of the same vowel sound in closely occurring words. Instances of assonance can be found in the story under analysis;

“...his feelers telling him that an unfamiliar tactile...”

“...sensed danger and withdrew himself into the protective shell...”

“Nothing Stirred.”

“...its skin was fair and hairless.”

“Yet it potted about with tremendous self-confidence amongst the proudest...”

“When it came to blows, both parties retreated into their shells and only the Snail was left lamenting.”

“He set off in quest of the formula for attaining bliss.” “...such encumbrances.”

“Early in its infancy, the Snail reached the morbid conclusion that ‘all was vanity’ and the pond where it lived was something...”

“He felt naked and helpless as he had never felt before.”

“... to console his inconsolable soul.”

“It was merely an ephemeral illusion.”

“... not a retreating sneaky monk anymore.”

6.3. Consonance

There is a repetition of the ‘s,’ ‘t,’ ‘d,’ and ‘g’ sounds in the following sentences of the story under study;

“...which was tucked away in the remote extremity of its tail.”

“One day, after he had dined on whatever the snails dine upon,”

“He immediately sensed danger and withdrew himself into the protective shell around his middle.”

“The cricket had stopped its melody and...”

“The hearts of the proudest quailed before the majestic awe of this intruder.” “...he felt disgraced and mortified_”

“One day he decided to quit being a talker.”

“He went to the frogs and watched an ugly thing with a feeling of revulsion.” “At last, he decided to address a toad.”

“Does it do any earthly good to have a bloody shell?”

“But slowly he intoxicated himself by the ritual repetition of phrases, proving his greatness of his sacrifice and the state of blessedness he was in.”

“Then he started exerting his fertile mind to console his inconsolable soul.” “And all around him were dead shells.”

“He cried and called and then turned slowly back and...” “The pain increased beyond endurance.”

“This thought struck him as irrelevant, but slowly it appeared to be a blessing.” “Suddenly a creature emerged naked and swam in the pond.”

“This two-legged being was bigger, much bigger, than the one he had seen before.”
“The Snail despaired and died.”

7. Findings/Discussion

The author employs numerous figures of speech to enhance the story's attractiveness, differentiate it, and clarify his intent. The linguistic devices include anaphora, parallelism, symbolism, hyperbole, alliteration, and allegory. The author has effectively employed these strategies to communicate the intended meaning and topic of the narrative. The author intended to convey that individuals who seek to abandon their traditions and customs in favor of new ideologies ultimately face destruction and demise. Such individuals consider themselves astute and intellectual, which the author ironically amplifies in the phrase, "...blessed with a brain which was tucked away in the remote extremity of its tail" (p. 59). Such individuals ultimately face destruction, as humans are inherently social beings and cannot thrive in isolation. Detachment from societal roots leads to downfall and demise. We must not abandon our roots and social and cultural values. We must resist the influence of outside forces and remain steadfast in the principles established by our community.

Similarly, parallelism accentuates specific aspects of the text, as exemplified by the phrase, "And what of it, Snail?" What is the significance of it? . . . similar to a . . . indeed, akin to a bloody shell. It emphasizes the text while also imparting rhythm and musicality to it. Allegory and symbolism are mainly employed to convey the implicit message through symbols such as snails, shells, ponds, frogs, butterflies, and other creatures. The significance of society, unity, and cultural values has been effectively conveyed to the readers. Certain words, verbs, and adjectives are employed repetitively to underscore the intended point. Deviation is employed, a fundamental quality of Tariq Rahman's writing that distinguishes and foregrounds the text. Numerous sentences in the narrative commence with 'And.' These techniques render the narrative intricately woven, appealing, and distinctive and transmit the implied meaning with efficacy. Every technique employed enhanced the allure and significance of the narrative.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The narrative is highly symbolic and engaging. The story can be interpreted in various ways based on these linguistic choices. Grammatical and lexical structures, along with figures of speech, enhance the allure and significance of the narrative. Phonological devices, such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance, enhance the musicality of the narrative. Musicality enhances the text's prominence and memorability. Stylistics

facilitates the connection between languages and Literature, as demonstrated in the analyzed narrative. Each linguistic selection made by the author effectively contributes to the transmission of the intended message. This study enhances the stylistic analysis of the short story “The Snail” by Pakistani author Tariq Rahman and supports the examination and advancement of Pakistani literature. The study will benefit emerging researchers seeking to explore the works of regional authors. This will help regional (Pakistani) writers by emphasizing the distinctiveness and linguistic characteristics of their works and the social issues they address.

Budding researchers are advised to undertake further studies on thematic narratives. Stylistic analysis may incorporate other dimensions from Leech and Short’s (2007) grammatical and stylistic checklist, such as context and cohesiveness. Examining the topic and stylistic aspects of Pakistani literature fosters appreciation and promotes its works.

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