

1-TOM, 11-SON
ANALYSIS OF POEMS

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ANNOTATION

This article gives information about analysis of Emily Dickinson's famous poem which is 'Because I Could Not Stop for Death'.

Key words: Stylistic, graphology, phonology, meter, rhyme, alliteration, morphology.

Zooming in Dickinson's stylistic idiosyncrasy:

Almost all Dickinson scholars subscribe to the idea that her poetry is distinct from her contemporaries in both form and content.(Huges 1971),.. She has obviously marched along an —un-trodden pathll in her poetic composition to quote her modern compatriot Robert Frost. Her poem —Because I Could Not Stop for Deathll is, indeed, a testimony.

Although the poem centers on the perennial philosophical and theological issue of death her take on it is markedly distinct. In this particular poem death is presented in a lighthearted and conspicuously solipsistic manner. Her conception of death does , however, square up with how most philosophers and theologians beliefs that death is, but a gateway to an eternal life. That is, indeed, the very theme of Dickinson's poem. Then, in what way is Dickinson different from others? The difference rests on the way in which the poetess depicts death. Dickinson's —deathll is a far cry from the proverbial biblical —grim reaperll with a sharp scythe mowing down human beings. It is, rather, a chivalrous gentleman pulling over for the female speaker whose hour has come to take her in a pleasurable journey towards eternity. Dickinson's directness and informality, likewise, in stark contrast with most philosophers treatment of death which is shrouded in eruditeness and awe. In this respect Dickinson's approach to death is unlike how other poets deal with the theme. The metaphysical poet John Donne, for example treated death as an enemy that needs to be intimidated in order to be overcome. The confrontational tone of his poem —Death don't be proudll is nothing like the feeling of appreciation and gratitude in —Because I could not stop for death he kindly stopped for me.



1-TOM, 11-SON Graphology

The graphological structure of poem, to begin with, is a clear testimony on her unconventional style. Her punctuation, especially the excessive use of the punctuation mark of dash is a 'stylistically distinctive feature' that sets her apart from other poets. (Crystal and Davies) the first stanza quoted below

shows this. Because I could not stop for Death — He kindly stopped for me — The Carriage held but just Ourselves — And Immortality. Those dashes according to one commentator make the reader pause and usher him or her on to the next line. They might thought of as connectors or strings, pulling the reader through the poem..(Shmoop Editorial Team, 2008).

Phonology

Phonology conventionally deals with matter of sound i.e. how individual sounds (phonemes) are combined and distributed in order to form larger linguistic units. Language users, including, poets are customarily; free to deploy them in a way that suits their intended organizational choices within the boundaries of the rules of the language. The collective human endeavor in this respect has resulted in conventionalized phonological stylistic features with accepted categorization and terminologies. Thus, we have terms such as rhyme, meter, alliteration, assonance and the likes. Below is an exploration of Dickinson's appropriation of these phonological stylistic features in her poem —"Because I could not Stop for Death":

Meter

The poem has a rigorous metrical pattern. It is based on the iambic foot which is commonly known to be natural rhythm of speech in English, where unstressed syllable precedes stressed ones. Be-cause | I could | not stop | for Death, The poem consists of six stanzas of four lines each. The first and the third lines in all stanzas have four feet (tetrameter), while the second lines have three feet (trimeter). This pattern is reversed in the fourth stanza where the first line consists of three feet, whereas the second has four. As for the fourth in the stanzas, their length vary from two feet (dimeter) in the first two stanzas and three feet (trimeter) in the rest of the stanzas.

Rhyme

There is no regular rhyme scheme in this poem. There is nonetheless, a random distribution of an end-rhyme. Thus, —Mel in (line 2) rhymes with "Immortality" (line 4), "Civility" (line 8) and, "Eternity." (line 24). Such recurrence of sound echoes could as well thought of as a happy coincidence, rather than a deliberate structuring. This, itself, is an ostensible sign of the poetess idiosyncrasy.



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Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the initial consonants in two or more words in the same line of verse or sentence. In the poem under investigation there are several instances of alliteration represented by the following extract. The alliterative consonants are in boldface: My labor and my leisure At Recess — in the Ring — We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain —We passed the Setting Sun —The Dews drew quivering and Chill —For only Gossamer, my Gown —My Tippet — only Tulle —

Assonance

Assonance is a sound device which could be defined as the repetition of the same vowel in two or more words in the same lines. in the extraction below examples of assonance has been underlined Because I could not stop for Death — He kindly stopped for me —The Carriage held but just Ourselves —And Immortality.

Morphology

At the level morphology i.e. the study for word their structures, the poem does not show any stark uniqueness. There are no distinctive stylistic features that violate the morphological rules of English. At this level the poem seem to be in total conformity with conventions of the language.



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