



Aesthetic Approach towards Similarities and Dissimilarities between Stylistics and Literary Criticism in Robert Frosts Ice and Fire

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Abstract

Through a content analysis of poetry, Stylistic Studies and Literary Criticism, demonstrate the relation that exists between different aspects of these two fields. There is also a close connection between stylistics and literary criticism which is inevitable in analyzing a text or a work. Many works of criticism are constructed on data analyses of stylistic studies, and analyzing status of the two fields literary criticism and stylistics could pave the way for better classification of them. This study can be considered for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative analysis conceals theoretical and practical fields. While on the other hand Qualitative analysis can be chosen according to a limited element or the styles in the poem. In comparison, literary criticism can transform from descriptive nature into analytic part based on the analysis of data but stylistics can consider works as representations of individuality and the personality of the author. Although the studies on stylistics and criticism, which in some situations follow the same theoretical or social discourse, seems to have parallel connection, at the same time there are also some differences between these two fields. In fact, there are more widespread impartial and independent theories and approaches that are predominant in literary criticism when compared to the works of stylistics. Apparently, stylistic studies, on the other hand, are not independent, it depends on the language, style and form of the poetry. A wide range of texts, genres and registers is studied stylistically with increasing numbers mixing qualitative and qualitative methodologies together.

Keywords: stylistics, quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, theoretical discourse, literary criticism

CRITICAL APPROACH

Frost's poem Fire and Ice indeed encapsulates the idea of destruction with absolute unstable irony, making an authenticated choice between the fire and the ice and between the language. Frost was inspired by a passage in Canto 32 of Dante's Inferno which led to this apocalyptic vision of Fire and ice that are the complex

complementarities of this vision that endlessly toil between the regenerative cycle of desire (lust) and (self) hatred and his self-referential irony. It also represents a much more profound distinction between the two extremes of love and hate. Frost's wisdom of achieving a rational space with the fallen world, while inciting at another, and indescribable, level a thoughtful disquiet.

"Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice,"

The opening of the poem the first two lines merely suggests the biblical and scientific predictions about the end of the world. However, as figurative representations of desire and hatred, fire and ice symbolize the actual structure of Aristotelian beliefs that Dante employed in arranging the Inferno. Frost associates fire with the senses.

"From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire."

The speaker ponders over the antique question of whether the world will come to an end in fire or in ice that reflects on the idea to freeze to death or burn to death. The speaker determines that either choice would accomplish its determination adequately well. It is a nine-line poem of irregular rhymes. An extremely compact little lyric, "Fire and Ice" combines wit, rage, objectivity and frankness not a syllable is wasted. Frost, as usual retained the truth remains ambiguous and the question goes unrequited.

The best attribute of the poem's effect is its contrast between the simple, clipped accuracy of its vocabulary and the imprecise gravity of its theme. The real triumph of Fire and Ice however, is in its form and the language remains simple. The poem embarks its identity remark about the end of days as illustrated biblically and the personification thus, Frost masterfully accomplishes both in a single configuration.

Fire and Ice is all about human nature and comparison of people to their nature itself. The speaker judges' people and society as a whole. The poet uses a lot of metaphors in this poem. Frost affects the tone through word choice because he uses the strong vocabulary "perish" to give emphasis of the disappearing world. He also uses the word "destruction" to give the poem a penetrating sensation. By using these words, he makes the poem more profound and stronger. This poem matters because it talks about how humans (human nature) are ruining the world. The fire reflection of human desire will overtake because humans are attracted and are possessed with greediness and selfishness, fulfilling their own lusts even at the cost of the whole world. The ice or hate that would take over the minds of the people.

The poem itself is in the middle of an argument between people who think the world will come to a fiery (fire) end and people who think the world will freeze (ice). Thus, the speaker not only is talking about the literal end of the world, but he's also talking about the power that human beings to destroy one another. The speaker's experience with idealistic desire has taught him that passionate or "hot" emotions like love and lust would probably have the power to turn the earth into a vast bolide. On the other hand,

the poet has experienced the other part and is very obvious that colder emotions like hate have boundless destructive supremacy.

The poem begins with a kind of civil variance of opinion between two groups. Nevertheless, these two groups are detached by a break in the line to exemplify their divergence on the agreement. They even can't stand to be on the same line or simply cannot agree with each other's perception on the destruction of the world opening up the reality to the readers. The two groups are anonymous, unsolidified groups of people. Human emotions are represented by fire and ice. Philosophers have divided the human soul into "rational" and "animal" components, accordingly the "rational" symbolizes cool, while the "animal" symbolizes hot. Thus, the whole "fire and ice" disagreement is based on assumption, because nobody has any idea how the world will end.

"From what I've tasted of desire

I hold with those who favor fire."

The speaker has sampled "desire," a "hot" emotion. The word "tasted" implies that he hasn't felt the full brunt of fire's energy he has only gotten a small portion of it. The speaker proposes that the same thing is done with emotions like "desire." "Desire" is considered "hot" because it always relates to the body in some way. The most obvious example is romantic or carnal desire. Apparently, love is warm but jealousy, and desire is uncontrollable. The speaker is aware of this "hot" emotions and also, he is not a naïve person but a voice of experience. It's been inferred that the speaker has experienced hate, a cold emotion and he identifies that it can destroy the world. At this point, it becomes even clearer that "desire" is associated with "love," because its contradictory to "hate.". The speaker seems a lot more hesitant about his relationship with hate. He was absolutely confident that he has tasted desire, but he only "thinks" he knows "enough" about hate. Even probably the speaker has experienced several varieties of hate, the anger that lingers beneath the surface, that turn over and over in mind. The phrase "also great" gives the picture or the status of ice. For destruction of the world ice is in the same league as fire.

"And would suffice."

Finally, the last line choices up on the idea that whether fire or ice is stronger. The end of the poem recommends that it doesn't matter which is stronger both will do the trick. Interestingly, the word "suffice" is a very rational. At the end fire or ice would bring about destruction.

STYLISTIC APPROACH

At first glance of this poem, one of Robert Frost's early poems (1920), identifies the theme of mortal fear of death, the horror of destruction as the focal point woven in the fabrics of the poem *Ice and Fire* so delicately. The central theme of this poem is vision of the Day of the Judgement, the destruction of the world. It is a horrible pen-picture of the "doom's day". It is about how the world will end ultimately in fire or in ice. As a great realist, Robert Frost envisions the inevitable truth of this earthly life, following the joy of re-birth with devastating gloom and fire of death.

The title of the poem is short and simple. It recapitulates the essential meaning of the whole poem. As far as the title is concerned, it represents a contrast between Fire and Ice. It asks a rhetorical question of how the world will end, on fire or ice. Besides, the title is symbolic as Fire is the symbol of desire and ice is the symbol of hate. The world's fate is adhered with this ice and fire and in this way, title seems to be ironic as well.

In this poem, Fire and Ice, Frost has used simple yet convincing words to describe the end of the planet. He was not sure of what may cause the end of the Earth. He was skeptical of the people's intentions. Apparently, the poem has two lengths of lines and three rhymes in it. Each line has four or eight syllables. It is good to mention that Robert Frost's style is characterized of being pretty and close to conversation (Winters, 1957). Although the poem has an imperfect rhyme scheme that brings out the effect and tone of Robert Frost is describing about this controversial subject, the last word in every other line has the repetition of an accented vowel sound. The first rhyme scheme is the long "I" sound in "fire", "desire" and "fire". Another rhyme scheme is harsher longer "i" sound used in "ice", twice, "ice" and "suffice".

Finally, the long "a" sound is repeated in "hate" and "great". The last, understated word in Frost's poem, "suffice" enhances the meaning by rhyming with the two lines that end in "ice" (Meyers,15). Moreover, using the long sound "i" in "fire" and "ice" helps to slow down and simplify the poem. The use of this rhyme scheme is important because it emphasizes the words that are rhymed. The use of the alternating end rhyme is similar to the nursery rhymes highlighting the simplicity of the poem structure and conveying a very controversial subject matter that is the end of the world.

This ironic styled, short poem (consisting only of 9 lines) has a great brevity and conciseness in its expression of scheme. We find a great deal of word's economy throughout in this poem. This poem has been expressed in 9 lines stanzas which have extreme brevity in its last couple of lines. The poet has casted his great creativity through experimenting the mixing of "Iambic tetrameter" and "Diameter" in this poem. The rhyme scheme is following the layout of, "Terza Rima" which is "ABA, ABC, BCB".

Frost's poem contains nine lines, an apparent representation of the nine circles of Dante's hell. John N. Serio (Summer,1999) stated that " At its most obvious, formal level, Fire and Ice has nine lines, mirroring Dante's nine circles of hell. Although Frost's poem is not exactly funnel shaped like Dante's hell, it does narrow considerably at the end as Frost literally cuts in half his general pattern of four stresses (iambic tetrameter) to close on two lines having only two stresses (iambic diameter). Interestingly, the one line near the opening or top of the poem that contains two stresses. "Some say in ice", evokes the frozen punishment awaiting the worst sinners at the constricted bottom of Dante's hell. In addition, and surprisingly overlooked by most readers, Frost employs a modified terza rima, the rhyme scheme Dante invented for his Divine Comedy: aba,abc,acb".

Irony is a great theme for this poem. It has total ironic impression in all its words. The poet has represented his thought of irony through two things: the fire and the ice. In this poem, the poet connoted the fire as the human greed and ice is human hatred. These

two concepts apparently are very concise but have a great depth. The situation the poet has explained is a disturbed condition where this world finally has to be finished. The irony which poet suggests is the ending of world through two human actions, the fire which is desire and hatred which is ice.

According to Faggen (2008) Frost has used figurative language in his poem "Fire and Ice". He has used imagery by employing the ideas of fire and ice. By fire he tried to represent light but with it he also represented fire for destruction.

This poem has consumed two basic senses of human feelings, the cold and the heat. The visual of fire, used in this poetry reflects heat. Fire for the heat can be destructive but in moderation it is good for human beings. In the same manner, the concept of Ice works, its consumption in limitation is useful but when it comes in larger quantity it has power to destroy same as fire. Frost connotes through these visuals of "fire and ice" the emotions of human desire and fire. Frost says the human desire is fire but only when it crosses its limitations. In the same way, the visual of ice for hatred works. The bad thing in hate is its nature which only brings destruction.

Sense	Images Described
Sight	Fire, Ice, and Desire on someone's face, Hate
Sound	Burning of fire, Crushing of ice, and desire in voice
Smell	Nothing
Taste	The mood I taste is desire
Touch	Nothing

The poet's selection for the words such as "desire" instead of using it into "lust" seems to bring positivity of his impression. He kept a balance between the desire and lust. The word "lust" comes out with severe negativity in its meanings which in a curtain of word desire provides a message to avoid it for the betterment of humanity. The Frost's diction in this poem has provided to his readers an unprejudiced space where they have huge room to conclude his poetry with their own understandings.

By looking into this poem in depth, shifts our attention to more detailed points of discussion such as the stylistic devices and its potentiality in the poem. Syntactically, in the opening line of "Fire and Ice", there is a pronoun "some" which helps to initiate the thought of poet. With this indefinite pronoun, Frost starts his poem and complete his sentence with a comma after "fire" and ends on "ice". Second line and second last line are short, which helps in maintaining rhythm and rhyme. Third line starts from a preposition "From" and then an interrogative "what" which is used for a rhetorical purpose and the Subject verb and object structure is followed. However, if we draw the tree diagram of the sentences of this poem, there can be simple noun phrases and verb phrase drawn. Agent and goals are also obvious in case of fire and ice.

Personification is basically the human characteristics which are defined through different object and non-human items. In this poem, the Ice and fire are two objects

which have been broached by the poet as non-human elements but are designed to spread the human characteristics of hatred as worldly desires.

Robert Frost uses alliteration, in repetition in two or more clear words of initial consonant sounds to use with the word “fire” on line 1 and “desire” on line 3. For example, this line “I hold with those who favor fire.” has two examples of alliteration: hold and who, favor and fire. Metaphor is basically a tactic of comparing to the one object to another. In metaphor, we see that it switches the name between the two.

Although Frost’s nature imagery is often quite complex presented here in the epigrammatic *Fire and Ice*, he engages the reader with his ironic use of nature in the metaphor rather than with the attention to descriptive detail. In a speech once given at Amherst, he stated that “education by poetry is education by metaphor.” *Fire and Ice* uses a metaphor although it is an implied metaphor where Robert Frost compares fire and ices without implying it or pointing it out. In this poem two metaphors have been used where the word ice has a metaphor to the word hatred and the fire are a metaphor of human desire but after creating two metaphors, the poet has created an intra comparison between these two metaphors also.

The connotations may be descriptions of contexts related to the culture and emotions. In this poem, the two words are greatly used as connotation. The ice and fire, these two words have different context and meanings here rather their original literal meanings. The ice connotes for the human hatred and the fire is human desire.

The antithesis, in this poem, is the juxtaposition of opposing ideas represented in the title. The poem’s meaning is also communicated by the denotations and connotations of the words. The poet uses words that mean or suggest passion/consumption, knowledge/experience and death/destruction, suggested by the word’s “fire”, “desire” and “taste”. The terms “some say” represents knowledge of a group of people; while the first person “I know” suggests personal experience. “End”, “fire”, “ice”, “perish” and “destruction” all denote death and destruction. The antithesis essentially reinforces the theme of the poem.

The entire poem hover about two great symbols. From its first and second lines even, we can’t judge we are being told about symbols of fire and ice. In fact, these two lines dictate about scientific justification of reality. In later lines when Frost modifies his concepts of fire and ice than we come to that these are symbols of hatred and human worldly desires. The interesting part of reading these two symbols utilized by Frost is that, it never stops on a narrow definition of hatred and desire but it provides a huge space to being into the definition of provided symbols of fire and Ice. The readers are allowed by the Frost to add their own experiences and imaginations with the concepts provided through the symbols of fire and ice.

CONCLUSION

Thus, in comparing the similarities and the dissimilarities of the literary criticism which can transmute from descriptive nature into analytic fragment based on the analysis of data but the aesthetics of the stylistics can consider works as representations of individuality and the personality of the author. Both literary criticism and stylistics

analyze the poem in its form and structure thus as a whole configures the main idea of the poem itself. Stylistics tend to be more objective than literary criticism in certain areas in the sense of requiring proofs and evidences all collected from the text (data) to prove or disprove a point in the text. On the other hand, literary criticism is more descriptive in analyzing the poem based on the understanding of the readers' mind. Nonetheless, it is influenced by a myriad of factors such as the stylistician's individual preferences and foci, as well as the linguistic paradigm employed for analysis or the chosen methodology. It is indeed in relation to the above study which exhibits that there is always a close link and coherence amid stylistics and literary criticism which is predictable in analyzing a text or a work especially with Frost's *Ice and Fire*. Plethora of works of criticism are erected on data analysis of stylistic studies, and analyzing status of the two fields literary criticism and stylistics could overlay the way for a unique understanding and cataloging of them. This article can be considered for both quantitative and qualitative analysis where quantitative analysis which molds theoretical and practical fields in this particular study. From the view of qualitative analysis this can be chosen according to a limited element or the styles in the poem. Although the appreciation of the studies on stylistics and criticism, which in some situations follow the same theoretical or social discourse, seems to have analogous linking, at the same time there are also some variances between these two fields which clearly determines the differences. For instance, when it comes to choosing texts, critics mostly incline to determine prose fiction while experts in stylistics crave poetry. In fact, there are more widespread impartial and independent theories and approaches that are predominant in literary criticism when compared to the works of stylistics. Apparently, stylistic studies, on the other hand, are not independent and obviously depends on the language, style and form of the poetry which is inevitable. A wide range of texts, genres and registers is studied stylistically with increasing numbers mixing qualitative and quantitative methodologies together. This is because the form is implicitly important in poetry, and stylistics has the largest arsenal of analytical tools. Poetry seems to be more interesting to stylistician's as the range of what it offers is paramount. There is more room for creative and interpretative reading of poetry in specific more than in fiction in general. Much of interest and ideas can be discovered from the gaps in texts, from ellipsis, from the unsaid, from the unexplained. In poetry, the reading experience will enrich the readers' imagination and meet the writer's vision to complete the circle of engagement. They are two sides of the same coin.

If the aim of Stylistics output is textual interpretation, then it could be assumed that there is an overlap between stylistics and criticism. Yet, it is true. The major difference between criticism and stylistics is quite clear. Since practical criticism implies an interpretive account of the text, stylistics need to be able to make others see how the interpretive account reached there.

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