

A Linguistic Study of Epitaphs in Selected English Texts

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Abstract: This research aims at analysing epitaphs written by Thomas Moore for the memory of Rupert Southey, the epitaph is analysed linguistically and stylistically on four levels graphology, phonology, morphology, and lexico-syntax level to explore the elements that the writer uses the most at each level. Bearing in mind Nowotny approach (1962) (to text analysis) who believes that the linguistic analysis of a literary text is not just a marginal but a necessity” (Bakuuro et al., 2018:34). The researcher has selected and analysed a written epitaph of famous individual associated with English, literature. The study involves both literary and linguistic analysis, with much more concentration through the analysis on the aspect of linguistics. In fact, in order for stylistic analysis of literary texts to be good it needs to involve linguistic analysis and this for the purpose of making the analysis standard and is targeted to unveil the author’s ‘full style’. Based on the results of data analysis, certain remarkable points have arisen. The most important result that has been achieved is that on the level of Graphology, the poet mostly used the punctuation Marks, while the most used device on the phonological level was the rhyme. Furthermore, the findings show that on the morphological level the writer mainly used suffixes. While on the levels of lexicosyntax and parts of the speech, anastrophe and prepositions were mainly used.

Keywords: Epitaphs, Graphology, Phonology, Morphology, Lexicosyntax.

1. Introduction

Aims of the study

The current study aims at analysing epitaph written by Thomas Moore for the memory of Rupert Southey linguistically and stylistically on four levels to identify the most used linguistic and stylistic devices.

Procedures of the Study

1. Analysing the epitaph on the graphology level to identify the graphological elements that are used.
2. Analysing the epitaph on the phonological level to point out the phonological elements that are used.
3. Identifying the most used morph of the logical device by the writer.
4. Exploring the lexicosyntax and parts of speech types that are employed in the poem.

Limits of the Study

The current study is limited to the linguistic and stylistic analysis of Thomas Moore epitaph poem that he wrote on the memory of English poet Robert Southey.

2. Epitaphs: Introduction

An epitaph as it can be predicted from the meaning of the word itself, “is an inscription on a tomb, and, in its most extensive import, may admit, indiscriminately, satire or praise”. As malice has seldom made monuments of defamation, also the tombs, tile now lifted, are the work of relationship and benevolence, the custom has shrunk the first latitude of the word, so that it signifies, within the general acceptance, associate inscription engrave on a grave in honour of the person deceased (Devlin, 1980:130).

2.1. Importance of Studying Epitaphs

Epitaph, as a type of memorial article used for praising deceased people, has a style that is characterized by smooth writing, and smarting illusions along with the complimentary remarks all these produced for the generation in the future a cultural wealth. It mainly tells the story of family’s ancestors and family tradition, as well as their official history. Additionally, it also reveals their great achievements, the characters’ styles, the Masters death and birth. The inscription on the tablets provide the evidence for the host’s integrity and honesty to show his intelligence, praising his knowledge and filial piousness, and point out his spirits by giving examples, citing allusions or choosing the main events of the master’s along with his performance that is related to the events. Accordingly, noticing traditional memorial literature whereas, gathering and researching epitaph for historical

studies, archaeology, philology, cultural history, language and literature and disciplines or of major significance. Culture is symbolic and language is the vital token system. Lexicon, because of the culture holder, that has been printed along with each social life's aspects ,reflecting certain cultural development. As the construction of language, it also helps to transports the cultural data. The meaning of words culture isthe shape and form content of words (Jiang, 2015:1).

2.2.Types of Epitaphs

Epitaphs will be classified into three main kinds: the first one is epitaphs that make use of the first , second and third person. When the epitaph uses first-person formula, the deceased normally tells his sins, and declares his regrets truthfully, and shows his hope that God might forgive him for his sins. Within the aspect of the second person, the epitaph is sometimes a mourning that expresses the feelings of sorrowfulness of the experience of next-of-kin. In cases where the epitaph employs the third person, it sometimes commemorates the perfect qualities of the dead person. Within the following, the three forms of epitaph will be explained, starting with the form that say:

“I”
(Davis,2013:2015).

In the San Giorgio in Vela bro, a gorgeous church in Rome, we can observe two marble slabs that once belonged to the equivalent grave sepulchre. The two slabs are inscribed with an associate degree of epitaph; the first one even carries aheading that shows what the inscription is about: “birth and lifetime of John the Arch presbyter in acrostic”. John truly continues to talk about his, “birth and life” (Herat, 2014:254). His birth was in times of the papacy of John VIII (872–882).

3. Data Analysis

3.1.Robert Southey Epitaphs By Thomas Moore -Analysis

Robert Southey is an English poet from the Romantic school, and Poet Laureate from 1813 until his death. The stylistic aspect involves four levels of analysis: The graphology, morphology ,phonology and lexicosyntax. The elements that lie under each level will be described below.

Epitaph on Robert Southey

Beneath these poppies buried deep,
The bones of Bob the bard lie hid;
Peace to his manes; and may he sleep
As soundly as his readers did!
Through every sort of verse meandering,
Bob went without a hitch or fall,
Through epic, Sapphic, Alexandrine,
To verse that was no verse at all;

Till fiction having done enough,
To make a bard at least absurd,
And give his readers quantum suff.,
He took to praising George the Third,

And now, in virtue of his crown,
Dooms us, poor whigs, at once to slaughter;
Like Donellan of bad renown,
Poisoning us all with laurel water.

And yet at times some awful qualms heFelt
about leaving honour's track;
And though he's got a butt of Malmsey,
It may not save him from a sack.

Death, weary of so dull a writer,
Put to his books a finis thus
Oh! may the earth on him lie lighter
did his quartos upon us!

3.2.The Data Analysis

The epitaph has been analyzed by the following levels of analysis.

3.2.1.Graphological Devices

A. Spacing

We can see that the poem is written in 6 sections and each section was divided into rhymed stanzas.

B.Bold Print

The title of the epitaph was written in bold which drags the readers' attention to notice the impressiveness of the title in the epitaph.

C. Repetition

The word “verse” is repeated 3 times, “Bob” 2 times, “readers” 2 times, “bard” 2 times, in the poem. It is well known that the repetition is used in the poems for the purpose of allowing the writer or the speaker to create an emphasis on things they chose as significant. Repetition implies to the audience or reader that the words used are important and vital therefore it was repeated, so here the writer tries to attract the readers’ attention to the significance of these words.

D. Punctuation Marks

Comma (,)

The comma is used fifteen times in the poem.

Semi-colon

The semi-colon is used five times in the poem.

Full-stop (.)

The full stop is used four times in the epitaph.

Colon (:)

The Poet did not use any colons in the poem.

Exclamation marks (!)

The exclamation mark is employed twice; one in the end of the first part “did!” and the other one is at the last part of the poem “Oh!”.

Apostrophe (’)

The apostrophe has been used 2 times: ‘he’s’, ‘honour’s track’.

Table 1. Geographical devices used Robert Southey epitaph.

Phonological Devices	Frequency	Percentage
Rhyme	12	41.37%
Alliteration	8	27.85%
Assonance	10	31.03%

3.2.2. Phonological Devices

A. Rhyme

It can be observed that the poem of epitaphs contain certain patterns of rhyme among the words at the end of the lines:

“deep-sleep”, “hid-did”, “meandering-Alexandrine”, “fall-all”, “enough-stuff”, “absurd-third”, “crown-renown”, “slaughter-water”, “qualms he-Malmsey”, “track-sack”, “writer-lighter”, “thus-us”.

B. Alliteration

The alliterated sounds include: /b/, /h/, /m/, /v/, /s/, /d/, /w/, /l/.

C.

The sounds /i:/, /æ/, /a:/, /au/, /u:/, “the use of throughout creates the despair”

Geographical Devices	Frequency	Percentage
Bold Print	1	2.2%
Spacing	6	11.36%
Repetition	9	20.45%
Punctuation Marks	28	65.90%

Assonance
assonant consist of: /i/, /eI/, /a/, /ie/, /ə/ etc.
assonance the poem sound of

All of the above mentioned phonological devices are used in the poem for the purpose of increasing the musicality of the poem.

Table 2. The phonological devices used in Robert Southey epitaph

3.2.3. Morphological Devices

A. Antonomasia

Moore in this poem employed two words that are results from the word formation process, “Antonomasia” which can be defined as “the formation of a common noun, a verb, or an adjective from the name of a person or place. For instance, the word, “Sapphic” which refers to the Sapphic stanza, is originated from the name of Sappho, is an Aeolic verse form spanning four lines (originally three: in the poetry of Sappho and Alcaeus, there is no line-end before the final Adonean). The second antonomasia’s word that is used in the poem is the word “Alexandrine”. Alexandrine is a name used for various verse line types with shared metrical structures, the majority of which are derived eventually from the classical French Alexandrine.

B. Affixation

Suffix

There is the use of suffix in words such as:

“Puppies”– Puppy+es “Buried”– bury+ed “bones”– bone+s “Manes”– mane+s “Readers”– reader+s “did”– do+ed “soundly”– sound+ly “Meandering”– meander+ing “went”– go+ed “having”– have+ing “took”– take+ed “praising”– Praise+ing “Dooms”– dooms “poisoning”– poison+ing “qualms”– qualm+s “Felt”– feel+ed “writer”– write+er “books”– book+s “lighter”– light+er “

Table 3. The Morphological devices used in Robert Southey epitaph

Morphological Devices	Frequency	Percentage
Antonomasia	2	9.52%
Suffixes	19	90.47%

3.2.4. Lexico-syntactic Devices

A. Paradox

“Through every sort of verse meandering,

Bob went without a hitch or fall”

”To verse that was no verse at all.”

B. Litotes

“Bob went without a hitch or fall”

To verse that was no verse at all.

“Till fiction having done enough”

“Poisoning us all with laurel water”.

C. Metaphor

“Beneath these poppies”,since no one can actually be buried under the poppies, the poet here refers to the grave of Robert Southey. “Sleep”here stands for death.“Likedonellan of bad renown”, these words imply how people get a bad reputation though they did nothing wrong. “A butt of Malmsey,”here the writer uses this metaphor to imply that even if the man is rich and is wealthy, he still can run away from death “may the earth on him lie lighter”. The word earth used as metaphor for the grave.

D. Hyperbole

“Dooms us”, “at once to slaughter”,

E. Simile

“Like donellan of bad renown”, “as soundly as his readers did!”

F. Periphrasis

“Poppies”–the grave, “the bones of Bob”–his dead body.

G. Parallelism

Beneath these poppies buried deep,
The bones of Bob the bard lie hid;
Through epic, Sapphic, Alexandrine,

H. Anastrophe

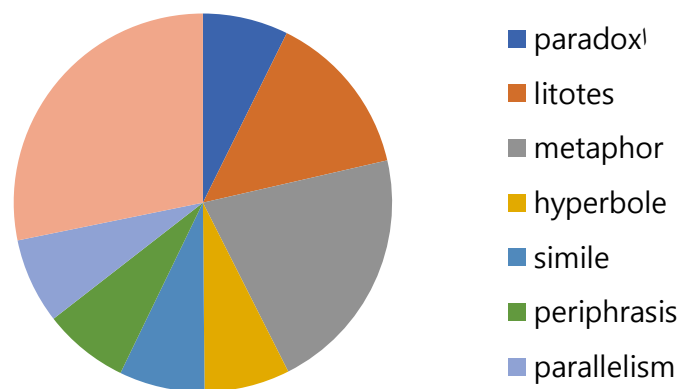
The Anastrophe that can be noticed in the poem is as follows:

“Peace to his manes”, “As soundly as his readers did”, “Through every sort of verse meandering”, “To verse that was no verse at all”, “Till fiction having done enough”, “To make a bard at least absurd”, “Dooms us, poor whigs, at once to slaughter”, “Poisoning us all with laurel water”, “Than did his quartos upon us”.

Table 4. The lecxio - syntactic devices used Robert Southey epitaph

Lexico-syntactic Devices	Frequency	Percentage
Paradox	2	7.41%
Litotes	4	14.28%
Metaphor	5	21.42%
Hyperbole	2	7.41%
Simile	2	7.41%
Periphrasis	2	7.41%
Parallelism	2	7.41%
Anastrophe	9	28.57%

The Lexico Syntactic devices used in Robert Southey epitaph



3.2.5. Parts of Speech

A. Nouns

-Puppies, bones, Bob, manes, readers, verse, fiction, George, Crown, water, writer, books, bars, slaughter.

B. Verbs

Buried, lie, sleep, did, meandering, went, fall, having, done, make, give, took, praising, poisoning, leaving, save, put, lie.

C. Adverbs

Beneath, soundly.

D. Adjectives

Deep, hid, epic, Sapphic, absurd, awful, lighter.

E. Prepositions

The use of preposition in the poem was as follows: the preposition “of” was used five times, “to” and “and” were used four times, “in”, “as”, “at” and “on” were used twice, “or” and “so” were used only once.

The poet has selected certain parts of speech in order to add accuracy and precision to the description of the poem. Briefly, all the choices concerning language that are made by the poet reveal sorrow and depression, regret, towards Rupert Southey. For him, the verse and literature has lost one of his greatest men, he says that although the verse at that time went down, but Robert’s poetry was not affected. What is needed to be mentioned here is that the context of writing as depended by this study means a piece of writing or discourse that helps to make the meaning clear (Al-Mosawi&Al-Obaydi, 2018:294).

Table 5. Parts of Speech used in Robert Southey epitaph.

Parts of Speech	Frequency	Percentage
Nouns	14	23.33%
Verbs	18	30%
Adverbs	2	3.33%
Adjectives	7	11.66%
Prepositions	23	31.66%

5. Results

Taking into consideration the results observed, the epitaphs did not only function as memorials, but they obviously reflected the writer’s style and language choices of the linguistic and stylistic devices. The epitaph was analysed in terms of the graphology, phonological, morphology and lexicosyntax levels. The analysis of the graphology level shows that the most used graphology device is the punctuation marks with 65.90% percentage of use among the other graphology devices. Meanwhile, on the phonological level, it was found that the writer mostly employed rhyme for the musicality of his epitaph with a percentage of 41.37%. Morphologically, the researcher has found that the poem mainly contained and employed the use of suffixes with 90.47%. Last but not least, the lexicosyntax analysis shows the most frequently used device is anastrophe with 28.57% percentage. Finally, the poem was analysed based on the most used part speech, the results clearly show that the most used parts of speech are prepositions with 31.66% percentage.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it becomes clear now that stylistic devices used in the epitaph, highlighted the mourning, sorrow and the feeling of loss, the poet wanted to deliver. The poet precisely expresses regret and loss by using figurative language. It is pointed out by the researcher that language selection made by the poet shows a sense of mourning and regret as well as reference to the immortality of life. The analysis of the epitaph poem above demonstrates plentifully that the analysis of any literary text, requires the linguistic analysis of its elements along with the literary analysis. The epitaph that has been studied here contained a large amount of linguistic details that needed to be analysed to capture the text’s meaning, as well as to be comprehensibly understood by the stylists. The analysis of the grammatical, phonological and morphological devices for such kinds of literary texts enable us to get a better understanding of the author’s styles.

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