



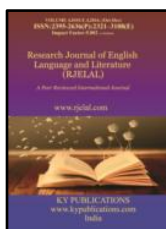
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## STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF TED HUGHES' POEM: "THE CASUALTY"

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to analyze stylistically Ted Hughes' poem "THE CASUALTY". This analysis covers different aspects of stylistic levels such as graphological level, phonological level, morphological level and lexico-syntactic level. All these aspects are helpful to understand the literal and figurative meanings that were employed by the poet. Ted Hughes in this poem through the accident of an aircraft depicted a man helpless in face of an adversity, and also showed the people who saw this happening, unable to help out the man in trouble.

**Keywords:** Stylistic analysis, casualty, graphological, phonological, morphological and lexico-syntactic level.

### 1. Introduction

Style is a primary aspect of any literary piece of writing. It gives unique recognition to the writer. The idea or thing discussed by many other writers, by using stylistic devices and dignified style a writer presents the same idea or thing with new meanings and dimensions. Therefore style is the basic thing which gives uniqueness to every writer. The word stylistics is derived from style. Stylistics is a branch of Linguistics which deals with different styles. It refers to the study of appropriate use of words or language in a sentence or writing. Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics as "the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation". He (1975) says that the link between literary criticism and linguistics is stylistics. Style has different meanings for different people. According to Carter (1989) style generally depends on linguistic levels. Due to these levels every text and writing is different from the others, hence every genre is different. Haynes (1989) is of the view that the study of style is the study of distinctions; looking at what was said against what might have been said. Style can also be called as variety. In various contexts, style refers as the manner of expression. Due to multipurpose field of style, it is used according to

one's field of study. Lawal (1997) however, describes style as an aspect of language that deals with choices of diction, phrases, sentences and linguistic materials that are consistent and harmonious with the subject matter. He added that it involves the narrative technique of a writer in terms of choice and distribution of words and character.

#### 1.1 Style

The general meaning of style is 'manner or mode' but the literary meaning of style refers how a writer's thoughts take the shape of words. The style has variety of meanings throughout the history in and outside the literary text. It is observed by many critics that the term style is generally used without knowing its meaning. According to Leech (1969) style is the way in which something is spoken, written or performed. It refers to use of words, sentences, structures and speaking style. Personality of the writer is connected with his particular style. It reveals that how a person effectively and beautifully depicts his ideas. It describes the way of person's speaking and writing. It is derived from the Latin word "elocutio" which means "style" and means "lexis" in Greek. Leech and Short (1981) are of the view that the word style has an uncontroversial meaning. Style depends on the context for a given

purpose for which the language is being used. Birch (1989) believes that both language and style cannot move beyond a limit on the supremacy of words. He strongly believes that these words contain specific meanings which differs it from the ordinary language. Leech and Short (1981) also said that it is the selection of the words from a grand linguistic vocabulary. Style is involved in both, spoken and written, literary and nonliterary types of language but it is particularly associated with written form of the literary texts. Style or stylistic variations may also be analyzed in linguistic terms for example sentence types, phonological devices, lexical varieties, morphological varieties, rhetorical terms, semantic terms, and even semiotic terms and utterance.

### 1.2 Stylistics

Literally stylistics means the study of style and the methods used in written language. Every critic and scholar defines stylistics in his own way. According to Freeman (1971) stylistics is a sub-discipline which started in the second half of the 20th century. Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation which differs stylistics from the literary criticism and considers linguistics as its linking technique. Carter (1988) has of same view that stylistics is a bridge (link) discipline between linguistics and literature. Stylistics is the study of those devices used in language such as rhetorical terms and syntactical devices that are used to create expressive or literary style. Therefore, Stylistics is that study which touches both literary criticism as well as linguistics as its morphological structure suggests.

### 2. Levels of Stylistic Analysis

Following are the five levels of stylistics analysis. By using these levels, we can analyze any given piece of text.

**2.1 Phonetic Level:** It is an analysis of sounds; we study the features and possible function of sounds in phonetic level.

**2.2 Phonological Level:** Basically this level deals with the study of sound patterns of a given language, rules of pronunciation, the rhyming scheme and utterance of the word in the sentence. Lodge (2009) is of the view that phonology is the study of

linguistic systems, specifically the way in which sound represents differences of meaning in a language. Phonological devices are rhyme, alliteration, consonance and assonance.

**2.3 Graphological Level:** Crystal and Davy (1969) said that graphology is the analogous study of a languages writing system or orthography as seen in the various kinds of hand writing or topography. These are the formalized rules of writing. In short it deals with the systematic formation, structure and punctuation in the sentence.

**2.4 Morphology:** Morphology refers to the mental system involved in word formation or to the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed" ( Mark and Kirsten 1). Morphological level deals with the construction of the word by adding prefixes and suffixes to the root words and compounding.

**2.5 Lexico-Syntax Level:** It is the group of two dissimilar words, lexis and syntax. The term lexis means the vocabulary used in a language or in any writing for any purpose. Syntax means sentence construction, how words combine together to make phrases and sentences. So, it is used in the construction of the sentence as stylistics is used in literary style. Lexico-Syntactic patterns may be obtained through various means which include unusual or inverted word order, omission of words and repetition. According to Tallerman (1998) Lexico-Syntactic choices are obtained through devices such as piling of usual collocates, unusual collocates, archaic words, particular parts of speech, metaphor, simile, oxymoron etcetera.

The lexical elements are:

- Noun
- Pronoun
- Verb
- Adjective
- Adverb

### 3. Poet and the poem:

**3.1 Poet's biography:** One of the giants of 20th century British poetry, Ted Hughes was born in Mytholmroyd, Yorkshire in 1930. After serving as in the Royal Air Force, Hughes attended Cambridge, where he studied archeology and anthropology, taking a special interest in myths and legends. In 1956 he met and married the American poet Sylvia

Plath, who encouraged him to submit his manuscript to a first book contest run by The Poetry Center. Awarded first prize by judges Marianne Moore, W.H. Auden, and Stephen Spender, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) secured Hughes's reputation as a poet of international stature. The stereotypical poem of the time was determined not to risk too much: politely domestic in its subject matter, understated and mildly ironic in style. By contrast, Hughes marshaled a language of nearly Shakespearean resonance to explore themes which were mythic and elemental." Hughes's long career included unprecedented best-selling volumes such as *Lupercal* (1960), *Crow* (1970), *Selected Poems 1957-1981* (1982), and *The Birthday Letters* (1998), as well as many beloved children's books, including *The Iron Man* (1968). Hughes also translated works from Classical authors, including Ovid and Aeschylus. An incredibly prolific poet, translator, editor, and children's book author, Hughes was appointed Poet Laureate in 1984, a post he held until his death. Among his many awards, he was appointed to the Order of Merit, one of Britain's highest honors.

The rural landscape of Hughes's youth in Yorkshire exerted a lasting influence on his work. Hughes's love of animals was one of the catalysts in his decision to become a poet. However, Hughes's interest in animals was generally less naturalistic than symbolic. Using figures such as "Crow" to approximate a mythic everyman.

Hughes's posthumous publications include *Selected Poems 1957-1994* (2002), an updated and expanded version of the original 1982 edition, and *Letters of Ted Hughes* (2008).

Though marked by a period of pain and controversy in the 1960s, Hughes's later life was spent writing and farming. He married Carol Orchard in 1970, and the couple lived on a small farm in Devon until his death. His forays into translations, essays, and criticism were noted for their intelligence and range. Hughes continued writing and publishing poems until his death, from cancer, on October 28, 1998. A memorial to Hughes in the famed Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey was unveiled in 2011.

**3.2 Title of the poem:** The title of Ted Hughes poem is THE CASUALTY. The poet has used all the capitalized words to place emphasis and also to grab the attention of the readers. The capitalization signifies that a calamity would be the prime focus of this poem. And also any casualty can cross an individual's path of life. By giving this title to the poem THE CASUALTY poet points toward the idea that this casualty is not of minor degree. The tragedy befell on a man who was an important part of the society. Ted Hughes witnessed both World Wars. And the World War I and II left a grave impact on him. Thus this can be deduced that may be the pilot of the aircraft referred to in the poem was part of the RAF (royal air force). According to Merriam Webster's dictionary casualty means 'a person who is hurt or killed during accident, war etc. Casualty also refers to serious or fatal accident'. Thus the title of the poem gives idea to the readers that there might be some sort of accident and an unpleasant event highlighted in the poem.

**3.3 About poem:** The poem begins with rural imagery that farmers in the fields and housewives inside the houses witness a burning aircraft in the sky. The aircraft seemed so tiny and unclear as if two insects were involved in a tussle. And people wait with curiosity for the evening news to get the complete information that what this incident was about. In the second stanza the poet created the atmosphere that something was about to happen, the birds (pheasant, wren) and the hare are shown in a restless state which indicates that a calamity might occur. In third stanza poet refers to the calamity that was a man fell out of air, he was flying that aircraft which caught fire and as a consequence he was fatally injured. In fourth and fifth stanzas the poet refers to the helplessness of the onlookers that they were unable to help that wounded man. This also showed that at times in the face of adversity one is unable to help a person in need. Similarly the crash of the aircraft was uncontrollable for the pilot and this resulted in injuring him very badly. Hence at times hazardous conditions overpower man, and it is not humanly possible to avoid such circumstances and the fellow beings are also incapable of any assistance. The last two stanzas's depicted that the spectators were sympathetic towards the man who

succumbed to death and they shed tears, as nobody can break free from the shackles of death, if one is fated to meet his death.

#### 4. Stylistic analysis of the poem

**4.1 Graphological level:** Ted Hughes poem consists of seven quintets. Capitalization and few other punctuation marks have been used by the poet.

##### 4.1.1 Punctuation marks

**4.1.1.1 Full stop (.):** In this poem throughout the stanzas, the poet employed full stop thirteen times. Full stop is usually employed at the end of a sentence or when an idea or thought has been completed.

**4.1.1.2 Comma (,):** These are used to indicate a brief pause or to give further information. In certain cases commas are used to separate words and word groups in a simple series of three or more items. Hughes used commas twenty six times throughout his poem.

**4.1.1.3 Semicolon (;):** Semicolon has been used only once throughout the poem. In fourth stanza Hughes used semicolon in second line. The main task of a semicolon is to mark a break that is stronger than a comma but not as final as a full stop.

**4.1.1.4 Colon (:):** In the last stanza poet used colon only once. A colon is used to precede a list of items, a quotation, or an expansion or explanation.

**4.1.1.5 Dash (--):** Dash has been employed by the poet only once in the third stanza of the poem. A dash is used to convey a long pause. A dash also shows poets contemplation on a certain thought or idea, which has not been fully conveyed through words.

**4.1.1.6 Apostrophe:** In the sixth stanza the poet has employed apostrophe twice "here's" and "heart's".

**4.1.2 Capitalization:** Ted Hughes has used capitalization in all the stanzas, also in the title of poem all the letters are in capitalized form. All the lines begin with a capitalized word regardless of the fact that previous line did not end in a full stop. Every capitalized word attracts reader's attention and shows that there is some idea of significance or some point which is to be emphasized.

#### 4.2 Phonological level:

**4.2.1 Rhyme scheme:** The poem is composed of seven quintets; each stanza has five lines. The meter used by the poet is iambic pentameter. The rhyme

scheme in first, third and fourth stanzas is ABBBA, where as second stanza has rhyme scheme ABBBC and the last three (5, 6,7th) stanzas have ABCCA. Internal rhyme has been used by the poet. Like the word in line 4 'trees' and 'between', in line 6 'brambled' and 'smashed', in line 10 'ears' and 'tears', line 13 'rare' and 'flower' all rhyme internally.

**4.2.2 Sound devices:** The sound devices used in the poem are alliteration, assonance, consonance, repetition and onomatopoeia

**i) Repetition:** Following are the lines where word have been repeated

1. /Some, who saw fall, smoke beckons. **They** jostle above, (line 11)  
**They** peer down a sunbeam as if **they** expected there/ (line 12)
2. /Hear now **his** groans and groping. **They** rip...(line16)  
Arrange **his** limbs in order, open **his** eyes (line 21)/

This repetition of 'they' and 'him' refers to the idea that both these entities have an important place in the poem. The repetitive word again and again persuades the reader to keep in mind that these two hold grave importance.

**ii) Alliteration:** Following are the examples of alliteration in the poem THE CASUALTY

- /They **wait with** interest for the evening news/ (line 5)  
/But already, in a brambled ditch, suddenly **smashed**/ (line 6)  
/Flattens ears and tears madly away and the **wren warns**/ (line 10)  
/It was a man fell out of the **air alive**/ (line 15)  
/Branding their hands on his bones. Now that **he has**/ (line 19)  
/bulks closer greater flesh and blood **than their own**/ (line 24)  
/Grimace, **gasp, gesture** of death. Till they look down/ (line 34)

**iii) Onomatopoeia:** Onomatopoeia is defined as a word, which imitates the natural sounds of a thing. It creates a sound effect that mimics the thing described, making the description more expressive and interesting. In this poem there are two examples of onomatopoeia, one is used in stanza

fourth that is "groans" line 16, and other is "gasp" in line 34.

**iv) Assonance and consonance:**

These two sound devices create a musicality in the poem, repetition of certain sounds gives a pleasing effect to the ear of reader and makes a certain rhythm in the poem.

Assonance	Consonance
Housewives, windows	Farmers, fields
Watch, aircraft, across, float	If, firefly, fought
Interest, evening, news	Trees, between, out
In, ditch	Hare, hops, hesitant
Madly, away, warns	Heave, hear
Some, who, beckons, jostle, above	Body, breeze
Peer, sunbeam, they, expected, there	Rare, flower
Gloom, of, or, flower	Hands, his
Groans, groping	Heaped, him
Weeds, leaves, barbed, raise	Closer, greater
Body, touches, glows	Blood, like flies
Branding, hands	
Order, open	
Closer, blood, own	
Heart's, beat, shakes	

**4.3 Morphological level:**

**4.3.1 Affix:** An affix is one or more than one syllable or letter added at the beginning or at the end of a root word, to change its meaning. Simply, it is an attachment to the root word that creates a new word. An affix could be a prefix or a suffix.

Suffix	Prefix
Farmers	Already
farmer + s	Al + ready
Fields	
field + s	
Housewives	
housewife +ves	
Steamed	
steam + ed	
Burning	

burn + ing		
Washing	-	
wash +ing		
Suddenly	-	
sudden + ly		
Smashed	-	
smash + ed		
Craning	-	
crane + ing		
Madly	-	
mad + ly		
Tears	-	
tear + s		
Expected	-	
expect + ed		
Senses	-	
sense + s		
Groping	-	
grobe +ing		
Barbed	-	
barb + ed		
Coils	-	
coil + s		
Glows	-	
glow + s		
Hands	-	
hand + s		
Heaped	-	
heap + ed		
Tears	-	tear
+ s		
Helpless	-	help
+ less		
Burned	-	burn
+ ed		
Melting	-	melt
+ ing		
Greater	-	great
+ er		

**4.4 Lexico-syntactic levels**

**4.4.1 Semantic levels: i) Characters:** There are two main characters in the poem; people of the countryside referred to as 'them' and a 'man' whose

burning plane and later on his wounded body was observed by the people.

**ii) Personification:** Personification is when a humanly quality or human attributes are given to an animal, object, idea, or other beings. In this poem leaves are personified and are granted humanly quality. As in line 14 a reference is made 'See the **grave of the dead leaves** heave suddenly, hear'.

**iii) Paradox:** In this poem through the portrayal of a helpless man whose aircraft burned and was unable to help himself. The paradox of life is shown, that while soaring in the air a man considers himself to be in control of his life and ready to face all kind of situations. But at times one cannot solve or come out of hazardous situations, there are certain limitations imposed on man by Nature and he cannot transgress them. Thus timid side of a powerful man is shown that in front of adversity at times one is unable to get away safely.

**iv) Metaphor:** The fall of a man whose aircraft met an accident is metaphorically used to show man's inability to take hundred percent controls of the events surrounding him. Also the people who are watching this accident happening and a man falling out of nowhere from sky, the spectators are also a metaphor utilized by the poet, that at time one can only witness somebody's decline and are unable to help that individual in need. Thus, through these metaphors human incapacity to help others or one's own inability to help oneself is shown, especially when one is fatally wounded.

**v) Simile:** Hughes has employed two similes in his poem THE CASUALTY

In stanza 1, where the burning of a man's aircraft is compared to a fight between a firefly and a spider, thus conveying the idea that because of distance the aircraft looked small in size and its appearance looked like as if two insects were involved in a tussle.

/Watch the burning aircraft across the blue sky float, **As if a firefly and a spider** fought (line 2-3)/ And another example is in fifth stanza where people who saw the injured man, whose aircraft was perhaps hit, they were unable to help the wounded person. Their inability to help the man is compared to ghosts that they only stood there and watched and could not do anything for the wounded.

Arrange his limbs in order, pen his eyes,  
Then stand, **helpless as ghosts:** in a scene.

Another example of simile is in the last stanza, where the sympathies of onlookers towards the injured man are compared to flies on blood. Portraying that there were too many people to sympathize.

/Opens wide childishly. **Sympathies Fasten to the blood like flies.** Here's no heart's more/ (line 26- 27)

**vi) Symbols**

**Burning aircraft:** This symbolically depicted that some mishap has happened and an impending tragedy would befall.

**Hare:** This animal's rapid hopping here and there and puzzlement symbolizes that there is something odd, in the daily routine. Even this creature is affected by the gloominess in air.

**No spine:** This has been used to refer towards the intensity of the man's injury. That all his bones were fractured and he had no spine, major part of the body, which enables the body to move and support has been damaged, hence he's gravely wounded.

**vii) Attitude/ tone:** The poet's use of words like 'watch', 'wait with interest', 'stems twitch', 'peer down', 'astonishment', 'suddenly' instills curiosity in the reader, that people are witnessing something happening. The subject matter is not static; there is mobility in the poem. The attitude of the poet is aloof, there are no words used by the poet to show his presence, but as an omniscient entity he builds up the scene where a man befell out of the sky and upon hitting the land got severely injured. The language used is simple, straightforward and colloquial diction is used. The tone of poet is conversational as if describing to someone his observation about a scene of a catastrophe.

**viii) Imagery:** In the first stanza poet created image of a village, where people usually are farmers busy in their work in fields. And they witnessed an aircraft burning in the air

/Farmers in the field, housewives behind steamed windows, (line 1)

Watch the burning aircraft across the blue sky float/ (line 2)

Then in second stanza the imagery is created by using animals. Poet refers to the activities of birds

and a hare to point out that something out of the blue has happened, and the daily routine of countryside is disturbed. Some incident has happened

/Stems twitch. In the stubble pheasant

Is craning everyway in astonishment.

The hare that hops up, quizzical, hesitant,

Flattens ears and tears madly away and the wren warns/ (line7 to 10)

And in the last stanza imagery is created about a wounded man, through the mentioning of blood and flesh, like

/Bulks closer greater flesh and blood than their own, (line 24)

As suddenly the heart's beat shakes the body and the eye/ (line 25)

**4.4.2 Lexical level:**

Noun and pronoun	Verb	Adverb	Adjective
They, his, farmers, fields, window, aircraft, sky, firefly, spider, trees, news, evening, ditch, pheasant, hare, smoke, man, snake, flower, grave, air, weeds, body, spine, ghosts, August, flesh, Blood, diamond, tears, handkerchief	Float, hung, twitch, craning, hops, jostle, hear, fell, rip, raise, glow	Above Behind Up	Steamed, blue, smashed, alive, open, melting, tender

**5. Scope of the study:** Stylistic analysis will be conducted through the use of the following levels of

analysis: lexico-syntactic patterns, phonology, graphology and morphology. Analysis conducted using the stylistic elements in each of the above mentioned levels would be helpful to future researchers in the related field.

**6. Limitation of the study:** A poem has multiple layers of meanings and it is not possible to know exact intentions of the poet that what he wanted to convey through his poetry. Also every individual has his/her own perception and level of understanding, thus there can be many other interpretations of a single piece of poetry and there is always room for improvement.

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Appendix:

THE CASUALTY

Farmers in the fields, housewives behind steamed windows,  
Watch the burning aircraft across the blue sky float,  
As if a firefly and a spider fought,  
Far above the trees, between the washing hung out.  
They wait with interest for the evening news.

But already, in a brambled ditch, suddenly smashed  
Stems twitch. In the stubble a pheasant  
Is craning every way in astonishment.  
That hare that hops up, quizzical, hesitant,  
Flattens ears and tears madly away and the wren warns.

Some, who saw fall, smoke beckons. They jostle above,  
They peer down a sunbeam as if they expected there  
A snake in the gloom of the brambles or a rare flower,—  
See the grave of dead leaves heave suddenly, hear  
It was a man fell out of the air alive,

Hear now his groans and senses groping. They rip  
The slum of weeds, leaves, barbed coils; they raise  
A body that as the breeze touches it glows,  
Branding their hands on his bones. Now that he has  
No spine against heaped sheaves they prop him up,

Arrange his limbs in order, open his eyes,  
Then stand helpless as ghosts: in a scene  
Melting in the August noon, the burned man  
Bulks closer greater flesh and blood than their own,  
As suddenly the heart's beat shakes the body and the eye

Opens wide childishly. Sympathies  
Fasten to the blood like flies. Here's no heart's more  
Open or large than a fist clenched, and in there  
Holding close complacency its most dear  
Unscratchable diamond. The tears of their eyes

Too tender to let break, start to the lip  
Of such horror close as mourners can,  
Greedy to share all that is undergone,  
Grimace, gasp, gesture of death. Till they look down  
On the handkerchief at which his eye stares up.