

A Preliminary Study on Stylistic Features of *The Rainbow*

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Abstract: Every writer has their individual qualities and writing styles. *The Rainbow*, one masterpiece of D.H. Lawrence, can really reflect his writing styles. In this paper, the analysis will be made respectively in terms of four categories: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and cohesion and context. A conclusion can be drawn that Lawrence's style is simplicity and directness and he dislikes complicating the superficial account, and turns to the natural and the essential tools to reveal the most original and animalized nature of the human being which, in his mind, is the most important and the essence of the nature rules.

Key Words: stylistic features; lexical categories; grammatical categories; figures of speech; cohesion; context

[Excerpt]

They worked together, coming and going, in a rhythm, which carried their feet and their bodies in tune (1). She stooped, she lifted the burden of sheaves, she turned her face to the dimness where he was, and went with her burden over the stubble (2). She hesitated, set down her sheaves, there was a swish and hiss of mingling oats, he was drawing near, and he must turn again (3). And there was the flaring moon laying bare her bosom again, making her drift and ebb like a wave (4).

He worked steadily, engrossed, threading backwards and forwards like a shuttle across the strip of cleared stubble, weaving the long line of riding shocks, nearer and nearer to the shadowy trees, threading his sheaves with hers (5).

And always, she was gone before he came (6). As he came, she drew away, as he drew away, she came (7). Were they never to meet (8)? Gradually a low, deep-sounding will in him vibrated to her, tried to set her in accord, tried to bring her gradually to him, to a meeting, till they should be together, till they should meet as the sheaves that swished together (9).

And the work went on (10). The moon grew brighter, clearer, the corm glistened (11). He bent over the prostrate bundles; there was a hiss as the sheaves left the ground, a trailing of heavy bodies against him, a dazzle of moonlight on his eyes (12). And he was setting the corm together at the stook (13). And she was coming near (14).

He waited for her, he fumbled at the stook (15). She came (16). But she stood back till he drew away (17). He saw her in shadow, a dark column, and spoke to her, and she answered (18). She saw the moonlight flash question on his face (19). But there was a space between them, and he went away, the work carried them, rhythmic (20).

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Why was there always a space between them, why were they apart (21)? Why, as she came up from under the moon, would she halt and stand off from him (22)? Why was he held away from her (23)? His will drummed persistently, darkly, it drowned everything else.

D. H. Lawrence is always known as skillful in depicting the relationships, especially the sexual relationships between man and woman. In this text, it is very easy to sense the emotions of the two people that they want to approach to each other but deliberately they give up every chance when they are nearly close enough to a meeting. Although the tone of the narration is calm and peaceful, the passions in the minds are so sweet, delicate, moving and attractive.

In this paper, the analysis will be made respectively in terms of the four categories listed as follows: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and cohesion and context, which are recommended by Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short in *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (Leech & Short, 2001: p158).

1. LEXICAL FEATURES

1.1 Nouns

Concrete nouns are used more frequently than the abstract nouns in this extract (Refer to Chapter 4 *Girlhood of Anna Brangwen in The Rainbow*), in which 37 concrete nouns are used while the use of abstract ones is less than a half of the concrete ones. Most of the concrete ones are pure concrete nouns, such as feet, bodies, face, eyes, heaves, bundles, stook, etc. The description and narration are direct and concrete rather than being abstracted and intellectualized. Abstract nouns, when they occur, often refer to one's perception, such as will, tune, rhythmic, etc, which indicates the rolling and unceasing thoughts and feelings of the protagonists in the peaceful-looking environment. In addition, two important words (hiss and swish) are used in this passage, of which the [s] sound in the syllables serves a good purpose to foil the quietness of the night. It's easier for people to hear than see in the dim light at night, so such auditory words are more rationally used than visual words.

1.2 Verbs

Verbs are the most frequently used categories by comparison with the words of other kinds of speech. Most of the verbs are dynamic, and indicate movements: came, go, lift, turn, draw, thread, etc, which can be seen as another tool as well to strengthen the contradiction between silence and moving. The static ones are used to refer to physical position or posture, such as stooped, stand, hold, etc. The only auditory verb swish also serves as a foil to the silence of the night. The most striking characteristic in the text is the intense usage of intransitive verbs, the ratio between Vi and Vt is about 39:17. Since intransitive verbs do not specify a cause-effect relationship, the impression we get from the reading would be unconsciously regarded as self-generating and uncontrolled. Another character worth pointing out is the use of copula, which occurs 15 times. It can also give us such an impression as the description and the narration are just as true as they should be, but not being designed and fabricated.

1.3 Adjectives

Since the event takes place at night in the pale moonlight, no adjectives of color are used in this passage. Only such words as brighter, flaring, dark, shadowy occur in the text, which give us a deep impression of the contradiction between darkness and brightness.

Another exemplification of poking the quietness out by using the words of a little sound is in the use of the adjectives low, and deep-sounding, with which we cannot hear anything but some low and deep noises which can be neglected by people in the day.

Generally speaking, adjectives are rarely used in the excerpt, which account for about 6.0% of all the vocabulary. Of them, 10 words are physical ones, 3 are evaluative or emotive ones. This makes the

description more objective than subjective. The 3 emotive adjectives reveal that this passage is quite relative with the feelings and emotions of the man and the woman.

1.4 Adverbs

The largest group of adverbs is that of location, especially direction (18): down, near, backward, forward, back, away, off, etc. They are mostly related with the distance between the two people. Combined with such verbs as came, went, drew, etc, they imply that the relationship between the man and the woman is still a little far and not intimate, though the adverb together, which directly shows that they are so close that they can be touched easily enough, is four times repeated in the text. That their eagerness to get close to each other conflicts with their shyness and timidity can be well exemplified by the adverbs of backward and forward, near and away.

In general, D. H. Lawrence uses relatively simple, homely, common-core Anglo-Saxon vocabulary. More concrete words are used than abstract ones and no personal evaluative words or less emotive and evocative words are used, which impresses the readers by entrusting the narration is objective and natural and true. In the dim moonlight at night, it's hard to notice the slight movements, so Lawrence uses more verbs indicating obvious moving: came, went, turn, thread and so forth. As well, some words in terms of sound and noise are used to obtain such effect.

2. GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

2.1 Sentence types

Not only does the author use statements (declarative sentences), but also he uses four Why questions and one yes-or-no question. All the questions are the wondering, from the angle of the author or readers, about whether they would meet or why they are so apart from each other. By them, the author builds a good suspension before us, inviting the readers to read on. Moreover, it serves well the purpose to emphasize the deliberate avoidance of meeting.

2.2 Sentence complexity

The average length for this text is 14.7; the ratio of independent clauses to dependent clauses is 1:2.7. Of all the dependent clauses, 17 are coordinative clauses, which are linked by such conjunctions of *and* and *but*. This point can be proved by the 20 occurrences of the coordinative conjunction. Of the rest of the dependent clauses, 8 are adverbial clauses, and only 3 are relative ones. Participles, including present and past ones, appear 6 times. All the features justify the idea that Lawrence tends to use conciseness, brevity and simplicity. It is safe to say that Lawrence uses simpler sentences to unveil the initial and innate human nature.

We can find out some other proofs of Lawrence's tendency to be simple. As is known to all, the adjectives are usually used to modify the nouns and the adverbs the verbs. In this passage, the author used 53 nouns, but only 21 adjectives; he uses 73 verbs (including participles and infinitives), but only 39 adverbs. The ratio of the modified to the modifiers is about 2:1, which just shows the directness and simplicity of the author in writing. He perhaps likes to call a spade a spade and never be willing to use many modifiers to make the narration and description complicated.

Another noteworthy point is that four of the five questions appearing in the excerpt come out collectively at the end of the text. It implies the ardent rolling feelings and thoughts of the man and the woman and at the same time it attracts the readers greatly to go on with the reading as well.

2.3 Word classes

The major word classes (“content words”) account for the equal percentage of the total number of words with the minor word classes (“function words”) in here. For example, Lawrence makes a lot use of pronouns (62) and conjunctions (totally 30, including coordinating and subordinating ones). However, if we make a close study on the minor classes, we may find that all the pronouns are no more than they (them, their), he (him, his), she (her, hers), it, and everything. They consist of he and she, and he and she always refers to the same two persons in the passage. So is it with the use of conjunctions. All the conjunctions are only the following and, but, before, till, as, that, and which. As for other aspects, the modal auxiliaries (4) are used less than other classes. So the complicated appearance of the text cannot be overemphasized as a main characteristic feature of Lawrence’s writing. It is possible that he just wants to make an analogy between the complex appearance and the complicated feelings of the two people, between the simple content of the text and the simple innate human nature.

3. FIGURES OF SPEECH

3.1 Schemes

Lawrence pays much attention to impressing on us the dim vision under the moonlight. He makes use of flaring, dazzle, bare, brighter, clearer, which belong to the bright category, and dimness, shadowy, dark, which belong to the dark category. With this effort, the author creates a clear contradiction between brightness and darkness. He also makes use of such words as hiss, swish, low, deep-sounding to invent another contradiction between noise and quietness. In addition, the words like stook, bundle, sheaves, stubble, etc are made good use of to contrive a peaceful and idyllic atmosphere, allowing for a space wide enough for the development of their relationship and passions.

Juxtaposed or coordinative structures are used frequently to make an emphasis on the continuous movements of the people, which are easier to be noticed in the dimness. For instance, She stooped, she lifted the burden of sheaves, she turned her face to the dimness where he was, and went with her burden over the stubble. This sentence describes four movements in their natural order, stooped, lifted, turned and went. Another example can be found in the 5th sentence. The parallelism used in the 7th sentence can be justly seen as the joint of their complicated feelings and their perplexed behaviors.

3.2 Metaphor and simile

Usually, metaphor and simile serve to animate and humanize what is inanimate. But in this text human are compared to moving objects. For example, the woman’s attracting charm and beauty in the man’s eyes is like an ebbing wave, which is slow, ripple after ripple. The man’s moving to and fro is like a shuttle going on at the loom, weaving and weaving without end. It gives the readers an impression that the man’s work is as mechanical as a machine, appearing there is on human thoughts in it, but actually it is not the case.

Some musical vocabulary is frequently used in this passage, such as tune, rhythmic, vibrated, drummed, etc. By using such words the author describes vividly the man’s mind and thoughts. We can sharply sense the sweetness, the hesitation, the excitement, the shyness, and the embarrassment in their heart. The author was very clever in this point, which makes the narration and description more easily and more effective.

3.3 Ambiguity

Ambiguity plays an important role as well as other narrating skills. He bent over the prostrate bundles, there was a hiss as the sheaves left the ground, a trailing of heavy bodies against him, a dazzle of moonlight on his eyes. In the above sentence, the author passes to us an eager of the man, to be together with the woman closely, or maybe physically and sexually. By comparing the weight of the bundles to the weight of the woman, the author just puts another mysterious and not clarified sense of the man’s

desire to have sex with the woman. But the author doesn't speak it out directly, and he leaves it up to the readers' comprehension.

4. COHESION AND CONTEXT

4.1 Lexical repetition

A notable feature of cohesion in this passage is lexical repetition of various kinds (15). With the repetition the writer makes the environment, the people's behaviors, and the emotions more eminent. The darkness of the night, the harmonious and musical patterns of the psychology and feelings, the flavor of the field, and the lunatic brightness are all put forward into the eyes of the readers, which shows clearly and vividly of the setting of the story. And also it plays a good role in making the scattered description a complete whole.

4.2 Pronouns

Pronouns are in an abundant use, especially he and she referring to the man and the woman respectively. As well as it well linked their feelings and behaviors, it reminds us everywhere in the text that this story happens between only the two persons. Any description and narration is either contributed to him or to her. It simplifies the account and at the same time it makes the plot well knitted.

4.3 Definite articles

Although the quantity of pronouns are big, indeed it's few in the sense of the content, only he, she, they, which refer to the man and the woman. The simplification occurs to the usage of the definite articles, too. As a device of cross-reference, the definite articles make the story-telling less ambiguous, because it is accompanied by a noun identifying a previous reference. Since this passage is excerpted from the fourth chapter of the novel, and most of the cross-referred things have been referred to previously, it is quite clear for us to find the constant plotting of the whole novel by reading of the definite articles.

4.4 Conjunctions

The most frequently used conjunctions are *and* and *but*, coordinative ones. As we know, co-ordinations are clearer and simpler than subordinations and relative clauses. So the author's intention to make the narration simple and direct is quite obvious. On the other side, these two simple and common words attribute the fluency and coherence to the context, which really kill two birds with a stone.

5. CONCLUSION

By now, we can draw a rational conclusion that the style of D. H. Lawrence is simplicity and directness. He seems not fond of complicating the superficial account, and turns to the natural and the essential tools to reveal the most original and animalized nature of the human being which, in his mind, is the most important and the essence of the nature rules.

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