

# Linguistic Techniques in Dylan Thomas's 'After the Funeral': A Stylistic Study

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## Abstract

The present paper examines Dylan Thomas's 'After the Funeral' based on linguistic and expressive choices; and how he manipulates a heightened rhetorical and poetic style as well as his ability to select individual expressions to expose a strong individual response in recording his personal grief for the death of his aunt his contempt for the hypocritical mourners. Poetic sentences require a special composing system that embraces tone, style and structure to organize their elements distinctively, and ultimately will have direct influence upon readers. The poetic composition is attributed to the poet's cultural and knowledge mastering that enables him to display a strong personality at the level of words, phrases and sentences.

الأساليب اللغوية في قصيدة ديLAN توماس "بعد الجنازة":

دراسة أسلوبية

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## الخلاصة

يتناول البحث قصيدة "بعد الجنازة" للشاعر ديLAN توماس راصدا آفاقه ووسائله التعبيرية، وأنماط لغته الشعرية، من خلال الكشف عن آليات توظيفه اللغوي والبلاغي، وطرائق انتخابه الألفاظ وقدرته على تركيبها لتحقيق هدفه في المتلقي وهو التأثير فيه. فالجملة الشعرية تقتضي نظاما خاصا، يفرض نفسه موسيقيا، وتركيبيا، وأسلوبيا، لتنظيم عناصرها بشكل مميز يمنحها الفريدة والتأثير، وهذا بحسب ثقافة الشاعر ومراجعياته المعرفية. ولقد تمكن شاعرنا من لغته الشعرية وأدواتها، تمكنا وافرا جعله يتصرف باستعمال المفردات ودلالاتها للتعبير - في هذه القصيدة - عن شخصية قوية تعرضت لفقدان عمته، واستطاع تصوير استجابته لهذا الحدث الحزين، و ردة فعله المحترقة والمستخفة بالمعزين المنافقين، وهذا كله ستجليه هذه الدراسة التحليلية.

## **1. Introduction**

The language of poetry can be generally observed to be a deviation and also a violation from ordinary language rules in several aspects, (Leech, 1991: 5). The poet, thus, seeks freedom from the constraints of language to attain creativity counting on many linguistic resources such as borrowing from the language of the past ages and "other, non-literary uses of language", (Leech, 1991:5). Insights from language structures can be applied to analyze literary texts so as to explicate implied meaning and arrive at interpretative effects. The words chosen by literary figures, Thorne (2006: 48) states, convey mood, situation and character. They also develop images and are inclined to certain grammatical structures and rhetorical devices making these an integral part of their literary craft, (Thorne, 2006: 48). Dylan Thomas's usage of linguistic techniques is distinctive, heightening various rhetorical devices to communicate a record of his personal response to a variety of experiences. His poems are highly marked by complex language structures at the level of syntax resulting in a lot of obscurities. This is clearly seen in his poem "After the funeral" which is not only syntactically, but also lexically complex, particularly when developing two prospects of diction, such as those groups of lexical sets bound to musicality and those which are oriented basically to tone. Below is thus a representation of his personal grief through his manipulation of various linguistic techniques and levels.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Diction and Tone**

Garret (1986: 18) defines diction as "the words or phrases that the poet chooses to use. It is the style in which he expresses himself". Thus, the poet's distinctive style can be formed by his recognized choice of words, (Stanford, 1999: 46). Abrams and Harpham (2005: 237), further, rate the sentence structure and figurative language as types of the poetic diction that establish a literary work. They can be abstract or concrete, "colloquial or formal, technical or common", (Abrams and Harpham, 2005, 237). Generally, poets are inclined to use frequent parts of speech that distinguish each one. Nouns and adjectives are continuously and customarily used by poets more than verbs, (Gill, 2006: 206).

Tone refers to the writer's display of his/her attitude and mood in a literary piece. It also reflects the writer's "manner and personal outlook" that dominate the literary work, (Cuddon, 1998: 920). As a critical term and as a tool for analysis, tone is useful to identify the mood or atmosphere inside the work, (Baldick, 2001: 259). The subject matter is presented as being ironic, satiric, detached, impersonal or conventional; and through tone and diction, these aspects can be recognized (Baldick, 2001: 259).

### **2.2 Lexical Level**

#### **2.2.1 Nouns**

Things are referred to through nouns, especially concrete nouns when physical entities are identified. They are either singular or plural. Abstract nouns are used for qualities, events, feelings, etc. They can be count or non-count (Leech and Svartvik, 1994: 39-43). Thorne (2006: 51) adds that through nouns,



people and places can be marked and categorized. Concrete nouns can be used extensively in a poem if it is about a particular place, establishing "a sense of reality" and providing us with a visualized setting. Also, ideas, qualities and processes are conveyed through abstract nouns when emotions and mind states are set apart (Thorne, 2006: 51).

### **2.2.2 Verbs**

Murphy and Koskela (2010: 172) define a verb as "a grammatical class of words that typically express an action, event or state ...". Thorne (2006: 51) comments that through actions, processes and forms of the verbs, the poet can distinguish the intended meaning and the message. For example, descriptive poems have a high ratio of stative verbs. These verbs are helpful tools for poets to present vivid descriptions of people or places. Actions, on the other hand, are introduced by dynamic verbs which "convey a sense of activity and movement" (Thorne, 2006: 51).

### **2.2.3 Modifiers**

Modifiers are descriptive and specifying words that limit the nature of something or someone, (Thorne, 2006: 414). They can be adjectives, nouns or adverbs. Adjectives are used to describe the reference of nouns or pronouns, (Leech, 2006: 6). Some adjectives can be positioned before a head noun and others after a linking verb. Most of these can be preceded by intensifiers, (Leech 2006: 6). Modifiers may take the form of a verb as in the case of present and past-participle, hence, describing the action denoted by the verb, (Thorne, 2006: 414). A detailed description of people and places can also be shown by the use of modifiers. Further, they help expound the poet's attitude and evaluation as well as "arouse the reader's emotions", (Thorne, 2006: 51). Leech (2006: 65) classifies modifiers into pre- and post-modifiers. The former precedes the head word and the latter follows the head. Both types specify the range of reference of the head words (Leech, 2006: 65).

### **2.2.4 Adverbs**

Adverbs are also words of modification that describe verbs, adjectives and other adverbs, (Leech, 2006: 7). They are useful in providing the reader with details about time and place, (Thorne, 2006: 51). Adjectives can be modified by degree adverbs. Sentence adverbs are also used to convey the poet's attitude and values towards something or someone (Thorne, 2006: 51).

## **2.3 Phrasal Level**

Hebron (2004: 68) states that phrases are made of a combination of words with a main head word that determines the type of that phrase. The major part of information in the sentence is carried by the noun phrase, which comprises a head noun and other components such as determiners, modifiers and qualifiers. The modifiers and qualifiers slots can be occupied by several words, (Hebron, 2004: 68). Thorne (2006: 56) comments that noun phrases are much manipulated by poets since they "can contain lots of information in a compact form". Further, poets usually use noun phrases to present a series of images, (Thorne, 2006: 56). Crystal (2008: 334) adds that noun phrases can be simple, complex or heavy. Complex noun phrases are long in structure in which there



are consecutive post-modifications elaborating the head noun (Crystal, 2008: 226).

An adjective phrase is a phrase where the head word slot is occupied by an adjective, (Leech, 2006: 7). The adjective phrase may be composed of only an adjective or an adjective and other modifiers preceding and/or following it making the head adjective more complicated. Adjective phrases can subject complements or object complements, (Leech, 2006:7). Thorne (2006: 56) elaborates on the function of adjective phrases as a useful tool for providing "descriptive detail" included in the attributive position in the structure of the noun phrase functioning as pre-modifiers. Predicative adjectives can be used by poets to emphasize the thing which is descriptively detailed because such position carries "more weight" (Thorne, 2006: 56).

The verb phrase is the most fundamental component of the sentence. It may comprise the verb element only or may be preceded by auxiliaries, (Leech, 2006: 121). Thorne (2006: 58) states that verb phrases help identify "references to tense, time scale, and modality". She adds:

The use of the present tense, past tense, or references to future can affect the way we relate to a poem. The spontaneity of present tense creates a sense of immediacy, while past tense verbs suggest something complete, something final. The progressive (be+ present participle) implies that an activity is ongoing and is probably not complete.

Functionally, the voice of the verb choice is principal in identifying the relation between the type of action and the person mentioned in the poem. The choice of the active voice is a reference to the direct linkage between the person the doing process and the resulting situation. The passive voice, on the other hand, "can create a suspense by delaying the subject". It may emphasize or neglect the doer of the action (Thorne, 2006: 58).

The adverb phrase is a phrase with an adverb as the head lexical item. It may be composed of a single adverb or may be preceded by another adverb and followed by prepositional phrase or post-modifying clause. Functionally, the adverb phrase is used to add information concerning the verb or to provide a description of the way of how the action is done (Thorne, 2006: 58).

#### **2.4 Sentential Level**

Sentences are of four types depending on the number of clauses they contain. If a sentence is made up of a single clause, it is called a simple sentence. If more than one clause is included in the sentence, it is then referred to as complex sentence. The clauses can be joined together through subordination or coordination. If two or more clauses are linked by a coordinating conjunction, that sentence is called compound, (Leech and Svartvik, 1994: 268). Including sub-clauses into a main clause results in forming a complex structure, and may be signaled by the use of subordinators, (Leech and Svartvik, 1994: 275). A compound complex structure is formed by subordinators and coordinators in a one main clause (Thorne, 2006: 62).

#### **2.5 Repetition**

Thematic importance and intensity can be conveyed by the technique of





repetition which is done either at the lexical or syntactic level, (Allott, 2010: 167).

## **2.6 Syndetic and Asyndetic Listing**

Baldick (2001:21) defines asyndeton as "a form of verbal compression which consists of the omission of connecting words between clauses". These are joined by the use of commas. On the other hand, Syndetic listing, Thorne (2006:84) states, is a term used to refer to the use of coordinators to link phrases and clauses.

## **3. Literary Background**

Dylan Thomas's early poetry demonstrates a strong inclination for having surrealistic qualities. These poems are abundant with Celtic ritual imagery addressing the topic of rebirth and sacrifice. Later poems show "greater control of style and metaphor". Generally, his verse has sufficient aspects of vagueness resulted from a condensed use of syntactic means and metaphorical expressions, (Anderson and Buckler, 1967: 1273). Sanders (1999: 574) states that Thomas's poetic style can be seen as embracing "emotionalism, the lyric intensity, and the metaphysical speculation". He was, Nagaraju and Sessaiah (2012: 6) comment, deeply affected by the romantic period of poetry composition reflecting this impact in a number of poems such as the contemplation about the themes of death and childhood following the diverse symbols and images of nature. These poems mirror his feelings of all-consuming devotion and passion towards life manifested by these natural images. But the manipulation of such images and symbols slipped such types of poems into obscurity. But when turning to religious topics, Thomas creates lucid connection with God especially when discussing things pertained to body and earth insisting that God is present in every element of nature (Nagaraju and Sessaiah, 2012: 6).

Thorne (2006: 321-13) summarizes Thomas's linguistic style at various levels of language choice. At the level of lexical choice, Thomas develop the selection of metaphorical expressions and topics via two types of diction: one is pertained to musicality and the other is devoted to tone. The lexical sets chosen are considered the catalyst for his creative process. His poems are also abundant with modifiers. Central themes are developed by the choice of long noun phrases and modification. These modifiers create a powerful sequence of images. His syntax is characterized by word order inversion, separation of sentence elements, a confusing relationship between clauses, and a distortion of grammar. He is inclined to long complex sentences and a delaying subject, main verb or object.

'*After the Funeral*', selected to be analyzed on the basis of linguistic choices and patterns in this research, is considered a personal elegy. Tilak (2010:165) explains that the poet wrote this poem to go into a period and state of mourning for the death of his aunt, Ann Jones, for he, during boyhood, spent frequent delighted moments during summer on *Fern Hill*, which was her farm. His aunt was so kind to him (Tilak, 2010:165).

#### **4. Linguistic Techniques in Thomas's "After the Funeral"**

##### **4.1 Diction and Tone in the poem:**

The kind of words the poet uses in the first part of the poem is directly linked to the overall effect, which is to show his contempt for the present mourners who exhibit their grief in a hypocritical manner. The poet's negative attitude towards them is identified by his use of modifiers such as 'mule' (line, 1), 'sailshaped', (line 2), and 'muffle-toed', (line line 2). These negative pre-modifications have a head noun referring to the funeral attendants for whom the poet's derision is addressed. His description of the conventional mourners extends to lines 3, 4, and 5. The noun phrase 'spittled eyes' (line 5) and verb phrase 'tap happily' (line 3) help expose their faked feelings at the funeral procession, and thus, reinforce the poet's realization of their conventional grief. They are being presented as glad though dressed in black. Further, the emotive image of his aunt's funeral is epitomized by his use of euphemisms such as 'thick grave's food', (lines 3,4), 'blinds down the lids', (line 4), 'peg', (line 3) and 'morning smack', (line 6). They emphasize the emotional tone in these lines. The first is a reference to the coffin, the second to the lid of the coffin; the pegs are used instead of nails and morning smack is the sound of digging the grave. These expressions connote the poet's polite relationship with his dead aunt. The poet closes the first part with two extra and consecutive images using noun phrases that provide the negative detail of the mourners' participation. They are hence portrayed as showing 'spittled eyes' (line 5), which is an image conveying the poet's contempt, and 'the salt pond', (line 5), is a reference to the mourners hypocritically brushing their eyes with their sleeves, and they got saltish.

The next four lines describe the poet's intense grief. The exposition of this personal sadness is reinforced by the use of dynamic verbs such as 'wakes' (line6), 'slits' (line7), 'sheds' (line 8), and 'breaks' (line 9). These help draw attention to the poet's sequential activity of participating in his aunt's funeral conveying his deep sorrow and epitomizing his emotional state presented as a head noun phrase 'a desolate boy' (line 7), expressed by the range meaning of these verbs. These verbs also make clear the gap between the mourners' faked grief and his. The poet's use of present tense gives these lines a feeling of immediacy which results in making the poet shake in his loneliness. Also the use of concrete nouns in this part such as 'spade' (line 6), 'throat' (line 7), 'coffin' (line 8), 'dry leaves' (line8), 'bone' (line9), and 'thistles' (line 10) conveys his physical experience of sorrow and pain. A violent image of the poet's torture is accordingly presented and enhanced by the use of the dynamic verbs.

The second part of this poem is devoted to the description of his aunt's room, which is decorated in the manner of the Victorian style. The poet is left alone. The tone becomes personal when he uses 'I'. He is forlorn. This decoration is made visual with the use of concrete nouns such as 'fox' and 'fern' (line 11) creating a vivid setting. This part is abundant with emotive modifiers such as 'dead' and 'humped' (line13), 'hooded' and 'fountain' (line 14), 'magnified' (line 17), 'broken' (line 20), 'raised' (line 21), 'wood-tongued' (line 22), 'hymning' (line 23), 'scrubbed' and 'sour humble' (line 31), 'threadbare' (line



32), 'sculptured' (line 35), 'cloud-sopped' and 'marble' (line 36), 'hewn' (line 37). These help characterize aunt Ann's goodness and the poet's changing tone. These also intensify the atmosphere in which the poet is now alone. The visual detail is directly linked to the poet's feeling of intense grief. The tone changes from being critical of the others to being personal in his use of 'I' and also intimate when using such modifiers. Such modifiers, further, sum up his aunt's qualities and mark the poet's recognition of her goodness, and hence, providing powerful images of his longing for her. She is described, for example, as having "fountain heart" from which love flowed out and 'fell in puddles', full of water. This intimate tone becomes prominent by the poet's attempt to unite 'sculptures Ann' with actual Ann attributing her 'the hewn voice'.

The poet also uses a lexical set of the natural world that conveys a physical sense which colours our perception of his aunt's goodness. This natural world is given spirituality reflecting his aunt's purity and his longing. He considers the 'dry leaves' (line 8) as the pages for his elegy connoting entire lifelessness, that's why, the poet pleads the sea to participate with his mourning in line 22. He also calls upon the woods in line 24 which are 'ferned and foxy' (line 24) to attend her death service. The mentioning of four birds in line 26 is a reference to God's mercy and the nature blessing upon his aunt, forming a cross over her grave.

#### 4.2. Phrasal Choices in the Poem

The two parts of the poem are dominated by an extensive use of noun phrases. A sequence of images is consecutively presented to describe the hypocritical mourners, his aunt's goodness and the room with the Victorian style. The descriptive detail of those three entities are included in the structure of the noun phrases. The negative connotations of some of these phrases and the embedded modifiers are oriented towards the mourners, as the following table shows.

Chart no. (1): The mourners' description

Mourners' Description	Connotations
Mule praises and brays, (line 1)	Expressing contempt for their superficial grief. They are immediately presented as asses.
Sail-shaped ears, (line 2)	They are described as asses shaking their ears, depicted as stupid attendants in their conventional salutations.
Muffle-toed tap, (line 2)	Passive mourners, tapping quietly as the nails sound being driven in the coffin.
The teeth in black, (line 4)	Their white teeth are prominent, grinning, though they should be in sadness.
The spittled eyes, (line 5)	Faked tears, an image expressing his contempt for their passive presence.
The salt pond in sleeves, (line 5)	Their eyes are brushed with their salty sleeves. He is satirizing their crying



The compound noun phrases 'stuffed fox and stale fern' (line11) create a visual image of his aunt's room where he is left alone.

Most of the noun phrases, that describe the poet's aunt and set his tone clearly, are particularly heavy, in which more than one pre-modifier is embedded. These modifiers combine to strongly imply Ann's physical and spiritual details. Her abstract quality is granted concrete presence through a sequence of images the poet embeds in the structure of those noun phrases, hence developing positive associations. In addition, the possessive pronoun "her" occupies a central position in most of these phrases functioning as a determiner, and thus it helps limit the scope of reference and creates the poet's overwhelming feelings resulted from losing his untainted and innocent aunt. In addition, the poet conveys his mood via emotive words, in form of past participle, which function as modifiers and thus establish his aunt's distinctive nature. The table below clarifies the use of these noun phrases on behalf of Ann's goodness.

Chart no 2: Ann's Description via noun phrases

Ann's Description	Connotation
Dead humped Ann (line 13)	Real Ann was humped
Hooded, fountain heart (line 14)	A reference to her generosity and affection, but she hides these from the world.
Broken body (line 20)	His aunt would not have liked such exaggerated praises though she was weak.
Her wood-tongued virtue (line 22)	She had many virtues that the forces of nature are called to participate in the funeral. This virtue had no voice , dumb.
Her bent spirit (26)	Euphemism for her holy grave that the four birds came to bless.
Her scrubbed and sour humble hands (line 31)	Another depiction of her virtue which is humbleness and studiousness.
Her threadbare whisper (line 36)	An image of inner pain.
Sculptured Ann (line 36)	A dignified monument.
These cloud-sopped, marble hands (line 37)	A visual image of her statue.
The hewn voice (line 38)	The statue voices real Ann's virtues.

#### 4.3 Sentential Choice in the Poem

Thomas's poem is descriptive. He uses various sentence structures to explore the meaning of death. The first half of the poem is made up of a long single





sentence with a number of related clauses. The poet opens the poem with a foregrounded prepositional phrase 'after the funeral' (line 1) occupying the adverbial site of the sentence, which repeats the title and hence establishes the mood. This use immediately prepares the reader for recognizing the poet's relationship with his subject matter. The mourner's description is grammatically structured via one sentence with elaborated phrases. The selection of negative connotative and modified subject 'mule praises, brays' (line 1) and the following phrases describes the poet's observation of their attendance. The pre- and post-modifications embedded in this single sentence without explicit coordinators and subordinators convey the weight of the speaker's feeling of detestation towards those hypocritical mourners.

The unconventional but loving Thomas expresses his sadness in a complex way. The poet's agony, resulted from losing his aunt, is exposed by his use of a complex compound sentence that extends from line 6 up to line 9 reflecting the complexity of his situation, being a lone now. The richness of violent images presented in this type of sentence is centered around two main verbs 'shakes' (line 7) and 'sheds' (line 8) that intensify the poet's recognition of loneliness. The relative clause "who slits his throat" (line 7) and the prepositional phrase "in the dark of the coffin" (line 8) help frame his state of mind on experiencing his painful loss. Whereas the second relative clause that post-modifies the second part of the sentence "that breaks one bone to light with judgment clout" (line 9) highlights the poet's realization of his failure to do full justice to many noble qualities possessed by his dead aunt. The overall structure of this compound-complex sentence and the sequence of embedded complements increase the pace and heightens our sense of the poet's torture.

The poet continues the pattern of complex structure, now to expose the complex world in which dead Ann was living. The foregrounded adverbial phrase "After the feast of tear-stuffed time and thistles" (line 10) reinforces the poet's underlying tone of abhorrence for the mourners who had their food-enjoyed the feast and went without showing real grief and staying for a short time "tear stuffed time". Also, the prepositional phrase, "In a room with a stuffed fox and a stale fern" (line 11), that identifies the poet's site of loneliness, is foregrounded to attract attention to his pain of being forlorn and for the loss of his aunt. The delayed main clause "I stand, for this memorial's sake, alone" (line 12) establishes a negative atmosphere in which the poet is left alone. This feeling is emphasized by the following prepositional phrase 'In the sniveling hours' (line 13) which is a reference to the short time the mourners have spent during the service and also conveys the poet's contempt for their hypocritical attendance. The main clause which embodies the poet's loneliness is also post-modified by a prepositional phrase "with dead, humped Ann" (line 13) which directly identifies the poet's companion 'Ann', whose virtue is introduced without syntactic interruption by a relative clause "whose hooded, fountain heart once fell in puddles... magnified out of praise" (lines 14-17). This complex post-modification is devoted to the mixed presentation of her physical and spiritual description. The intensity is conveyed through the symbolic images that



the poet sets alongside the literal ones. The images go beyond the physical detail of 'humped Ann'. His Aunt's love, which is overwhelming, filled the land with puddles of love. The sun dried up this land from water. The two contrasted literal images are concluded with the poet's desperate feeling of establishing his aunt's generosity and virtue "magnified out of praise" (line 17). This conclusion is followed by a declarative mood "her death was a still drop" (line 17) that makes a clear statement of an emotive declaration of her death, which is described as being peaceful and quiet. The change of sentence structure from complex into simple and compound as in the previous one and the following two sentences attracts our attention to his clear revelation of her love and affecting that he attempts to make known, and further, he would become her bard singing her many virtues and qualities as the following lines show:

*She would not have me sinking in the holy  
Flood of her heart's fame; she would lie dump and deep  
And need no druid of her broken body. (lines 18-20)*

A more complicated sentence structure extends from line 21 to 26 employed to show the image of elements of nature that come to participate in the funeral and being called to share his grief as well as to bless her grave. The poet starts with a personal tone 'I', followed by an appositive sentence to make the reader recognize his job as a bard that would not fail his aunt's expectations. Then the poet enlists these elements and forces of nature that would come to mourn his aunt's death. Their participation is very active and this is reinforced and suggested by the alliterated dynamic verbs 'bubble' (line 23), 'Bow' (line 24) and 'Bless' (line 26) that add musical effects to the poet's personal elegy.

The next four lines (27\_31) form another complex compound sentence that includes a series of prepositional phrases. This structure is suitable for developing a vivid image of his aunt's statue and marks a change of mood, focusing on the self-critical bard who makes a comparison between his still monstrous image and his real Aunt. The poet criticizes the crooked year since his aunt died in that year. Hence the sequence of prepositional phrases helps expose these things and the poet's pessimism resulting in presenting visual images that make the contrast between the statue and the real Ann clear.

The poet also adopted further four lines with a complicated sentence structure, helpful in delivering extra details of the real Ann. This structure is full with concrete nouns pre-modified past-participles. The tone of grief is created through his choice of such modifiers. The great depiction of the real Ann is carried out by the realistic specifics the poet is presenting about Ann in a series of embedded noun phrases that add merits to her virtue.

The last five lines continue the same grammatical complexity, composed of two elaborated noun phrases and two main verbs 'storm' (line 38) and 'lay' (line 40) that show the poet's experience when he visits his aunt's grave. The effect of this feeling results from the poet's display of a simple declaration of his exaggerated depiction that real Ann and sculptures Ann unite " And sculptures Ann is seventy years of stone" (line 35). These lines establish the mood of presence on the part of his dead aunt. They reflect Thomas's immersion in the



vision of aunt. The reiterated modifiers embedded in the structure of these noun phrases sum up his aunt's qualities as a statue which overwhelms him with a flood of memory and grief. He submits 'fox' and 'fern' as images of life that the poet realizes; and because of his aunt's death, Thomas now becomes a skilful poet that he may adorn the black sill of her room with powerful poems.

#### **4.4 Repetitive Pattern in the Poem**

The poet's highlighted theme of personal grief concerning his aunt's death, and the resulted complicated feelings and agony, is reflected by a structural patterning of repetition throughout the poem. The grammatical repetition of nouns phrases composed of past or present participle plus head noun is the dominant feature in this poem. He uses twenty four such structures. These noun phrases provide a sequence of images that counter the connotations of three things: the description of those hypocritical mourners, his aunt's virtue and the surrounding world. These parts provide richness of images that appeals to our senses and hence develops positive and negative contexts for the poet's theme of death. The obviously negative images are oriented directly towards those mourners as the following noun phrases show:

1. Sail-shaped ears (line 2)
2. muffled-toed tap (line 2)
3. The spittled eyes (line 5)
4. Tear-stuffed time (line 10)

The identical grammatical structure of the noun phrases creates an explicit link between the poet's physical world and his agony. The poet's language is crucial to the way by which an understanding of the poet's world can be clearly expressed as shown in the following quotes:

1. Stuffed fox (line 11): The poet is left alone in Ann's room filled with articles of decoration as a Victorian style.
2. Sniveling hours (line 13): The poet feels contemptible for those mourners who cried loudly but hypocritically.
3. Parched world: (line 15): The world in which the poet lives is dried up allwater, thus, a reference to lack of love and sympathy.
4. Raised hearth (line 21): a reference to the poet's position after the departure of those mourners, then calling the elements of nature to participate in this funeral.
5. Ferned and foxy woods (line 24): a description of the woods with foxes and fern trees.
6. Crossing birds (line 26): The four birds make a cross over his aunt's grave.
7. Mourning house (line 30): the place becomes a site for grief.
8. Crooked year (line 30): the poet's agony is explicit for he pronounces the time during which he got deprived of his aunt.

The rest of the noun phrases are mostly on behalf of his aunt's virtues and qualities that convey the poet's emotional state and these, therefore, explain the poet's state of mind. Most of these structures are concrete noun phrases that make the beloved Ann embodied, comparing her before and after the funeral as the following lexical set exposes, pertaining to body parts: "hooded ...heart" (line 14), 'humped Ann' (line 13), 'broken body' (line 20), "blessed ... skull"



(line 28), 'Scrubbed hands' (line 30), "These cloud-sopped hands" (line 36), and 'the stuffed lung' (line 39).

The poem is also abundant with the repetition of prepositional phrases with the pattern of (in+ noun phrase). These feature from line five up to line thirty four. The poet uses ten such structures. These create a balanced structure that draws us into the poet's experience of observations during and after the funeral. Most of these structures immediately establish very specific locations as in "in the dark of the coffin" (line 8), "in a room ... " (line 11), and "in a fiercely mourning house" (line 30). Other phrases are concerned primarily with identifying date such as "in the sniveling hours" (line 13) and "in a crooked year" (line 30).

The poet also repeats the use of 'I' in several lines as a personal element. The use of first person pronoun makes this poem a statement about a particular individual's experience of this funeral. Further, in fourteen lines, the poet repeats the possessive determiner "her", extending from line 16 up to line 40, which suggests that this poem is of particular resonance for the poet. This use exposes the poet's recognition of her details and familiarity. Some possessed head nouns are concrete and others are abstract which reflect a complete picture of her virtues and physique. It is, thus, a poem dominated by a woman's details helping us visualize her from different perspectives and how the poet shows his profound connectedness to her.

#### **4.5 Syndetic and Asyndetic Listing in the Poem**

Throughout the thematically divided parts of the poem, the asyndetic listing technique is the dominant structural framework the poet adopts. This adds harmony to his elegy. But this use has also extra effects. For example, in the first part of the poem, when describing those mourners, the poet enlists a series of descriptive phrases of various grammatical sorts separated by commas. These enable us to recognize the range of reference as being accumulative and expansive when these address multiple negative facets of those dissembling mourners. The poet also adopts an asyndetic listing of concrete noun phrases and prepositional phrases (lines 6-12) that suggest the poet's disorder after being left alone. The poet then presents himself as being completely at odds with those passive mourners when using the contrastive conjunctive "but" (line 21). After that, he enlists his active endeavours, as an effective elegist, in a sequence of asyndetic verb phrases post-modified by adverbial phrases. This complexity corresponds to his conflict resulted from his self-awareness and grief that spur him to summon those elements of nature to join in the service. The technique of the asyndetic listing continues also from line 32 to 35 where the poet started exposing a comparison between sculptured Ann and real Ann, enlisting his recognition and familiarity of his dead aunt via presenting vivid images in a sequence of simple sentences just to draw our attention to a clear identification.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In "After the Funeral", the language of emotionalism dominates the focus of the poet's gloomy world. His personal voice, distinctive diction and elaborated phrases reflect a strong individual response to the loss of his aunt and to those hypocrites. The following points conclude the linguistic choices and





patterns in the poem:

1. The lexical sets used in the poem help focus the poet's painful loss and develop a series of metaphors that uncover the empty sentimentality of the attendants; some other metaphors develop his aunt's virtues. The poet's lexical choice reflects a pattern of striking images about the funeral and his memory of Ann as being preserved in his memory.
2. The hypocrisy of the society as occurred in the first part of the poem, and the poet's attempts to be his aunt's bard and to exalt her memory are presented and promoted by using prolonged and detailed phrases and modifications which create a powerful sequence of images.
3. The poet also manipulates inverted word order, separate sentence elements and confusing clause relationships resulting in a distorted grammar that shapes everyday events in a new fashion. The long complex sentences and delayed subjects as well as verbs show the speaker's response to death and the creation of dark atmosphere. The complexity of the poem syntax draws attention to his power of overcoming death when presenting himself as a serious mourner.
4. The poet uses repetition in an unexpected way that reflects a strong individual response to his records of the hypocrisy being dramatized, of the power of nature and of exalted images of his aunt's virtues.
5. The pattern of syndetic and asyndetic listing in the poem supports the poet's presentation of the natural world through a series of descriptions of the physical presence of the mourners and of his exaggerated emotions and expressions of grief.

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