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A Critical Stylistic Study of Rhetorical Devices in Selected American Confessional Poems

ABSTRACT

This study is devoted to analysing rhetorical devices in selected American confessional poems. The study focuses on the forms of rhetorical devices that have been used in four selected confessional poems written by Anne Sexton. The study aims to identify the types of rhetorical devices and the stylistic features of such types of rhetorical devices. This study is based on a qualitative method of analysis. Leech (1981) and Leech and Short's (2007) theories for analysing the selected data that contain four poems by Anne Sexton. After analysing these poems, the findings revealed that the selected poems contain different forms of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, irony, personification and simile on which the poetess depends to confess her emotions and desires. These rhetorical devices that are used in the selected poems are noticed to have specific stylistic features. These features include; the use of different lexical categories such as the use of nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns and different forms of syntactic structures including; simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences. These rhetorical devices also include the use of coherence relations and cohesive devices. The cohesive devices include the use of pronouns, conjunctions, repetition, pronouns and ellipses.

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دراسة أسلوبية نقدية للادوات البلاغية في قصائد اعترافية أمريكية مختارة

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الملخص

خصصت هذه الدراسة لتحليل الأساليب البلاغية في مختارات من قصائد اعترافية أمريكية. تركز الدراسة على انواع الأدوات البلاغية التي استخدمت في أربع قصائد اعترافية مختارة للشاعرة أنا سيكستون. تهدف الدراسة إلى التعرف على أنواع الادوات البلاغية والسمات الأسلوبية لمثل هذه الأنواع من الادوات البلاغية. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على المنهج النوعي للتحليل وقد استخدمت نظريات ليج (1981) و ليج و شورت (2007) لتحليل البيانات المختارة التي تحتوي على أربع قصائد لأنا سيكستون. وبعد تحليل هذه القصائد أظهرت النتائج أن القصائد المختارة تحتوي على أشكال مختلفة من الادوات البلاغية مثل الاستعارة والسخرية والتشخيص والتشبيه التي تعتمد عليها الشاعرة في الاعتراف بعواطفها ورغباتها. ويلاحظ أن هذه الأدوات البلاغية المستخدمة في القصائد المختارة لها سمات أسلوبية محددة. وتشمل هذه السمات؛ استخدام فئات معجمية مختلفة مثل استخدام الأسماء والأفعال والصفات والضمائر وأشكال مختلفة من التراكيب النحوية بما في ذلك؛ الجمل البسيطة والمركبة والمعقدة. تتضمن هذه الأدوات البلاغية أيضاً استخدام ادوات التماسك النصي والترابط. وتشمل ادوات التماسك النصي استخدام الضمائر، وأدوات العطف، والتكرار، والضمائر والحذف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسلوبية، الأدوات البلاغية، الشعر الاعترافي، أنا سيكستون.

1. The Statement of the Problem

It is challenging to draw easy conclusions about rhetorical devices, their origins, and how people utilize such devices in realistic circumstances since they are complex phenomena. Rhetorical devices are unique, in literary works, because of their explanations, stylistic use and compositionality of their components. In such works, as poetry, poets employ rhetorical devices as a strategy to persuade readers of their viewpoints or ideologies. Poets contain their thoughts in "containers" and convey them to readers along "conduits," and then readers attempt to figure out the hidden meanings contained within these containers. As a result, this leads to a difficulty for the readers to take into account all the nonliteral meanings of rhetorical devices and

the characteristics of style that are employed in American confessional poetry (Gad, 2016).

Rhetorical devices cannot be understood directly through language expressions because they include abstract notions that require contextual knowledge. Instead, such devices must be filtered through prior experience, knowledge and related context in to be understood. For instance, when someone tries to show that his friends are good people, he says “My friends are so kind”. This is an example of ordinary language which is used in daily life, but it will be different when rhetorical devices are used as in “My friends are angels for me”, the word “angel” is not interpreted as an angel but rather refers to kindness (Gad, 2016). Therefore, the current study intends to investigate the forms of rhetorical devices in Anne Sexton’s selected confessional poems and the characteristics of style that are used in the selected American confessional poems. The current study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the types of rhetorical devices found in the selected American Confessional Poems?
2. What are the characteristics of style that are found in selected American Confessional Poems?

1.2. Aims of the Study

The present study aims at:

1. Identifying the types of rhetorical devices that are found in the selected American Confessional Poems.
2. Determining the characteristics of style that are implemented in the selected American Confessional Poems.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Style

Style represents one of the most contentious and enigmatic words in literary and linguistic studies, although it is widely employed in both fields by linguists and critics equally. It is worth noting that even the most stringent of its definitions exhibit some intellectual looseness or enable some degree of flexibility in its application. In literary studies, the technical meaning of style sometimes incorporates the idea of 'tone' or dissolves into the concept of 'rhetoric'. In a similar vein in linguistics, its relevance is alternatively subsumed within the notions of 'variation' and 'variability' or is limited to those elements of the discourse that symbolise the interactions between its participants (Leech, 1981, p.57).

Lucas (1962, p.13), on the other hand, described style as how an individual interacts with others; it is a character dressed in language and personality represented in speech. For him (1962), the style of literature is a mechanism through which a character drives other people towards the issues of style, which are thus essentially interpersonal issues related to actual psychology. Fowler (1975, 29) adds to this viewpoint by stating that "style is 'a representation of personality'". He (1975) indicates that style is the man himself and emphasises the importance of being acquainted with the characters of the writers. A current understanding of style as a choice suggests that style solely refers to the selection and organisation of words. However, when someone speaks about style as a choice, they must distinguish between three sorts of selections: grammatical, non-stylistic, and stylistic. The stylistic options are available on several levels. Phonetic characteristics, phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and bigger units are all involved. At first glance, the stylistic choice appears to be a choice between objects that have almost identical meanings, but a non-stylistic choice entails a decision between various meanings (Hussein, 2020). Hockett (1970, p.23) shifts the decision from the writer's perspective to the audience by stating that two expressions in a single

language conveying roughly the same information but differing in terms of their structure of language may vary in style.

2.2. Definition of Stylistics

Although stylistics is a relatively new field of study in style analysis, style, like human shadow, appears to have existed for centuries in human society. This suggests that humans have always been aware of how they dress and utilize various situations. While stylistics emerged in the twentieth century, its study dates back to the eighteenth century, when classical works served as the models. It followed the study of ancient rhetoric's elocution (Ducrot & Todorov, 1979).

In the 1960s, stylistics rose to prominence and solidified in both America and Britain (Mc Arthur, 1996). Charles Bally produced a seminal work on French stylistics in 1909 that expanded awareness throughout the continent about stylistics' viability as a field of study in linguistics, where literary texts can be viewed through linguistic "eyes." Conversely, Leo Spitzer's approach to style, known as Expressive Stylistics, was developed ten years after Bally's and focused on the positive correlation between a text's stylistic elements and the psychological state of the author (Mc Arthur, 1996). Spitzer began to focus more on an author's stylistic elements in his latter works than on the author himself.

With the help of these justifications, one is able to understand Bally and Spitzer, two of the pioneers in the field of stylistics. While the latter is on the side of literary stylistics, the former is on the side of language stylistics (Murry, 1976). According to Tom Mc Arthur (1996, p. 914) stylistics is the study of styles. This suggests that a key component of the study of stylistics is style. Mc Arthur (1996, p.914) defines stylistics as "the branch of linguistics that studies style, especially in works of literature." In a similar spirit, stylistics is defined by Lawal (1997, p.21) as the linguistic study of various styles. Widdowson (1975, p.79) expresses a similar opinion, stating that stylistics is the branch of linguistics that focuses on linguistic

variance in language use, frequently but not solely with particular attention to the most deliberate and intricate use of language in literature. He goes on to say that stylistics is a subfield of linguistics that focuses specifically on the handling of variables in the whole text.

2.3. Critical Stylistics

This category is a phrase used to refer to stylistic work studying how social meanings are manifested through language, as described by Norgaard et al. (2010). It draws inspiration and information from critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis. The goals of critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis are to understand how language expresses social meanings like power and ideology and how this may affect how we see the world. In critical discourse analysis, in addition to acknowledging the critical significance of contextual elements like register, genre, and ideology in language study, it argues that some discourses and the ideologies they represent have become so embedded (and thus normalized) in society that language users typically fail to recognize them as ideologies at all. This is referred to as "naturalization" by Fairclough. To analyse the real linguistic manifestation of social meanings, stylistics and critical discourse analysis are combined to form critical stylistics (Norgaard et al., 2010, p.39).

2.4. Definition of Rhetoric

The origins of rhetoric as a system of persuasion strategies can be found in the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. The capacity to perceive, in any given situation, the available techniques of persuasion" is the definition of rhetoric. The effective use of language is rhetoric. With the publication of Aristotle's Rhetoric in the fourth century BC, this field of study developed thanks to the efforts of renowned Roman rhetoricians like Cicero and Quintilian (Argyle, 1988). Rhetoric is currently evolving once more. According to Leech (1983, p. 15), rhetoric is significant

because it "places emphasis on a goal-oriented situation, in which speaker (s) employs the language to achieve a specific impact on the mind of the listener."

Rhetoric employs language to persuade and/or influence people's judgments using both argumentative arguments and rhetorical figures of speech (Dave, 2008).

Rhetoric, according to Kennedy (2007, p. 13), is "the force inherent in thoughts and feelings communicated via a system of indications, especially language to others in order to impact their decisions or behaviours." Rhetoric occurs when we communicate our feelings and ideas to others to influence (persuading) them.

Persuasion, according to Lakoff (1980), is the non-reciprocal attempt or goal of one person to alter the intentions, behaviour, feelings, or worldview of another person through the use of communication. The goal of the speaker in persuasion is to commit the listener to taking some course of action, which is known as "a directive speech act." As a result, persuasion is an attempt to make the world reflect the words

(Al-Manaseer & Lafta, 2024). Thus, if people do not put themselves in the same "register level," i.e. in the level of intentionality, Larrazabal and Korta (2002, p. 1) asserted that "it is quite difficult to "marry" such an ancient discipline as rhetoric with such a new discipline as pragmatics."

2.5. Types of Rhetorical Devices

1. Hyperbole: According to Leech (1981,p.11), hyperbole frequently concerns personal values and feelings; that is, by making subjective assertions that, no matter how exaggerated, we are unable to check unless we try to get inside the brains of the persons about whom the claims were made.

2. Irony: Leech (1981, p.11) defines irony as a method of speech that assumes a dual audience, one of which is aware of the speaker's goal and the other is naive enough to accept the statement at face value.

3. Litotes: Leech (1981, p.12) says that the term litotes is occasionally reserved for a specific type of understatement in which the speaker utilises a negative language when a positive one would have been more strong and direct.
4. Metaphor: Leech (1981, p.12) postulates that metaphor implies that the tenor and the vehicle are the same. However, as numerous writers have noted, the pretend frequently appears more serious and genuine than the real world of literal comprehension. However, from a linguistic standpoint, literal meaning is always the foundation from which figurative meaning emerges.
5. Metonymy: Leech (1981, p.13) opines that metonymy is a figure of speech that involves substituting the name of one item for the name of something else with which it is related.
6. Personification: Leech (1981, p.13) argues that personification occurs when humans blend the three kinds of concrete, animistic, and humanising representations.
7. Simile: Leech (1981, p.14) A metaphor is anything open, a metaphor with a parallel, such as a simile. Metaphorical parable is in by writing tenor and vehicle side by side and showing the resemblance between them (by like or some other formal indication).

2.7. Leech and Short's (2007) Theory of Stylistic Analysis.

Leech and Short (2007) define stylistics as an "understanding of how language is employed and its artistic significance" (p. 11). Furthermore, they claim that any style study is an attempt to identify the "artistic principles" (p. 60) that influence a writer's choice. Stylistics is more concerned with specific stylistic categories than with generic language categories, yet it is nonetheless intimately related to linguistic characteristics. Leech and Short (2007) outline four main categories of study in stylistics.

1. Lexical Categories: This is concerned with the forms of vocabulary as being general, nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs (Leech and Short, 2007, p.61).

2. Grammatical Categories: these examine the sentence structure, including considerations such as tense usage, sentence complexity, active or passive voice, and word choice (Leech and Short, 2007, p.64).

3. Context and Cohesion: Cohesion is concerned with how one section of a text is related to another, such as how phrases are interlinked. This is the text's internal structure (Hemeed & Alhusseini, 2023). The external relations of a text or a portion of a text are addressed in context by viewing it as a discourse presupposing a social relationship between its players (author and reader; character and character, etc.) and the exchange of information and assumptions by participants. Cohesion is concerned with issues such as; whether is there any logical or other relationship between sentences in the text (for example, coordinating conjunctions or connecting adverbials)? Or does it rely on implicit meaning connections? What is the significance of pronoun cross-reference (she, it, they, etc.)? Via ellipsis or replacement forms (do, thus, etc.)? Is there any use of elegant variation - the avoidance of repetition by the replacement of a descriptive word (as 'the elderly lawyer' or 'her uncle' may substitute for the repeat of an earlier 'Mr Jones')? (Leech and Short, 2007, p.66).

Context is concerned with issues like; is the writer speaking directly to the reader or via the words or ideas of a fictitious character. What language cues (for example, first-person pronouns I, me, my, mine) exist to indicate the addresser-addressee relationship? What is the author's attitude towards his or her subject? Is it done by direct quote (direct speech) or some other manner (e.g. indirect speech, free indirect speech) when a character's words or ideas are portrayed (xiv)? Is there a substantial difference in style depending on who is intended to be saying or thinking the words on the page? (Leech and Short, 2007, p.66).

2.8. Confessional Poetry

The genre of poetry known as confessional poetry often known as feminist poetry or the women's movement, first appeared in the United States in the 1950s when Robert Lowell moved away from New Criticism school and toward a simpler, self-verse form (Nelson, 2013, p. 31). It is a response to the de-personal poetry of the 1920s and 1930s, when writers felt that their poems were apart from their lives and had nothing to do with their issues or specifics. It also denotes a subjective poetic style. The term "confessional" was originally coined by M. L. Rosenthal in his review of Robert Lowell's 1959 book *Life Studies* in *The Nation*, "Poetry as Confession". According to Rosenthal, Lowell has taken off the mask that concealed his true identity, and as a result, the public is drawn to his *Life Studies*.

Confessional schools are described as "a record of a poet's states of mind and feelings and his vision of life" by Cuddon (1999, p. 636). And according to M.L. Rosenthal, it was clear in "the way Lowell brought his private humiliations, sufferings, and psychological problems into the poems of *Life Studies*" that it was therapeutic, autobiographical, and unwaveringly true. Furthermore, Crosbie (1996, p.48) categorizes confessional poetry as "extremist" poetry; according to him, confessional poetry is non-modernist, radical, and has a political as well as personal focus (Crosbie 1996, pp. 49, 53). Some of the key characteristics of confessional poetry are presented by these definitions and will be covered in greater detail in the section that follows.

3. Methodology

The type of analysis used in this study is a qualitative research approach. Brymann (2012) defined qualitative procedures as those that allow the researcher to view the situation from the perspective of the persons involved. The analytical approach can produce useful qualitative results to close the gap in social research (Mohammed, 2019). To put it simply, qualitative research is more likely to focus on smaller samples where the researcher serves as an integral part of the instrument to collect

data in a natural setting in order to uncover its significance by using a range of qualitative methods (Suter, 2011).

Shank's (2002) defined qualitative research as "a sort of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (p. 5). According to this definition, the term "systematic" denotes organization and adherence to predetermined guidelines approved by the community of qualitative researchers. On the other hand, the term "empirical" denotes that this type of research methodology is supported by specific knowledge and experience, in a way that allows the researchers to make sense of their own experience (Abdulsada, 2017). Qualitative researchers, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), "examine objects in their natural environments, trying to make sense of, or to explain events in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3).

Together with a qualitative research analysis, the current study integrates a number of pragmatic theories, including Leech's (1981) classification of rhetorical devices and Leech and Short's (2007) theory of stylistic analysis. This qualitative study aims to determine the kinds of rhetorical devices and the characteristics of style that are used in the selected American confessional poems. The data of the current study includes four confessional poems by the American poet Anna Sexton. The selected poems include; All My Pretty Ones, The Starry Night, Sylvia's Death and Wanting to Die.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Analysis of the Poem "All My Pretty Ones (1962)"

Extract (1)

"But the eyes, as thick as wood in this album"

In this extract, the poetess uses simile to describe the extent of her sadness and depression. In the expression "the eyes, as thick as wood" she compares the thickness of her eyes to the thickness of the wood in the photograph's album. This means she has cried for the death of her parents till her eyes become as thick as that

wood or her eyes dry. This means that the poetess has lost her eyes sight and her tears as a result of her crying for the loss of her parents.

The expression “the eyes, as thick as wood” is written in a style with certain stylistic features. This is a nominal clause that starts with a noun and appears in a compound-complex sentence which the poetess talks about her eyes that have become as dry as wood. This clause is related to the rest of the poem through the use of coherence and cohesion relations. Coherence appears when the clause is part of the main theme of the poem which presents the poetess’s hard feelings and sadness after the loss of her parents. Concerning cohesion relation, the clause is cohesively linked to the rest of the poem through the use of the conjunction “but”.

Extract (2)

“This is the yellow scrapbook that you began”

“the year I was born; as crackling now and wrinkly”

“as tobacco leaves”

The above extract contains a meaning that is ironically expressed. The poetess talks about her father’s scrapbook that he began in the year she was born. This scrapbook is yellow and now it is crackling and wrinkly just like the leaves of tobacco. This scrapbook can be understood to refer to the poetess's life and the leaves stand for the years of her life. When the poetess says “as tobacco leaves” this means that her life is yellow and the years of her life are like the leaves of tobacco because, after the death of her parents, she lost hope and pleasure.

The ironically presented expressions “This is the yellow scrapbook that you began”, “the year I was born; as crackling now and wrinkly” and “as tobacco leaves” have some stylistic features. The first clause is a simple sentence that starts with nominal clause and forms a compound sentence together with the second one which take the form of a compound-complex sentence. The third one is considered the third part of the compound-complex sentence. These nominal clauses are linked together

coherently and cohesively. In terms of their coherence, they are used to present the poetess's feelings of loneliness, hopelessness and despair. Their cohesion is represented by the use of reference expressions such as "this" and "that", the use of pronouns such as "you" and "I" and the use of conjunctions such as "as".

Extract (3)

"Now I fold you down, my drunkard, my navigator"

"my first lost keeper, to love or look at later"

The poetess continues to depend on metaphorical language in expressing her feelings and attitudes towards the loss of her parents, particularly her father. In the above extract, she talks of her feelings and emotions by describing them as the drunkard and navigator that she folds down and throws away. She also uses the metaphorical expression "lost keeper" about her dead father.

The metaphorical expressions "my drunkard, my navigator" and "lost keeper" have obvious stylistic features. These are nominal clauses that start with nouns and appear in compound- complex sentences. By using such form of sentence, the poet clearly describes her emotion and feelings for her lost father. These clauses are coherently and cohesively related. Their coherence appears in the fact that they refer to the poetess's father and the way she explores his loss and her love for him. Their cohesion, in the same vein, is represented by the use of the possessive pronoun "my" which links the parts of the sentence together.

4.2. Analysis of the Poem "The Starry Night (1962)"

Extract (1)

"except where one black-haired tree slips"

"up like a drowned woman into the hot sky"

In this extract, the poetess uses simile to describe a tree as a drowned woman with a black hair. The poetess depends on this form of rhetorical device to present her suicidal thoughts and how she wishes to die. She is seen to present herself as

hopeless, helpless and wishes to die and leave this world. The figurative expression “black-haired tree slips up like a drowned woman” describes the poetess's depression and sadness. She means that the tree which used to stand with its beautiful leaves and branches has lost that beauty and it has drowned. This means that the poetess has lost every beauty and has started thinking of committing suicide and killing herself, she wants to die just like that tree.

This extract, moreover, includes a personification device where a tree is used by the poet to personify a woman. The poetess describes the tree in the painting as a drowning woman because of the black leaves and branches it has which appear like the black hair of a woman.

The expression “black-haired tree slips up like a drowned woman” has certain stylistic features. This expression appears in a form of nominal clause that starts with a noun modified adjectives and it is used in a simple sentence via which the poetess explores her inner thoughts of losing hope and desires in this life and she wishes to die even if committing suicide. This clause is linked to the rest of the poem via coherence and cohesion relations. In terms of the coherence relation, the clause is seen to describe the similarity between a tree that has black hair and a woman who usually has black hair. Regarding the cohesion relation, the clause is related to the rest of the poem by the use of the linking word “like”.

Extract (2)

“The town is silent. The night boils with eleven stars”

This extract encompasses metonymy as one of the figures of speech that are used by the poetess. The expression ““The town is silent” is used figuratively by the poetess who describes the town as silent. The word town does not refer literally to the buildings, streets or anything there in the town because such things are normally silent and cannot speak. The poetess, here, refers to the people in that town and how they are silent to the extent that the poetess feels lonely in the town.

The above extract, furthermore, contains a metaphorical relation where the poetess compares the night to a liquid that boils. She speaks of the night as a boiling liquid because of the huge number of stars.

The expression “The town is silent” has specific stylistic features. The expression is a nominal clause that starts with a name and appears in a simple sentence. The poetess uses this expression to explain the reason behind her gloom and depression which is her loneliness and isolation from the people of her town. This clause is linked to the rest of the poem coherently where it is considered as one of the reasons that make the poetess think of committing suicide and killing herself. It is also related by cohesive relation in that the poetess mentions it in relation to the many things via which she emphasises her bad condition.

Extract (3)

“The old unseen serpent swallows up the stars”

The poetess, moreover in this extract, depends on some sort of metaphorical relation where she compares the swirling wave in the painting of Vincent Van Gogh to a serpent that wants to swallow the stars. She attempts to regard the wave in the picture as a beast that swallows the source of the light represented by the stars. The poet tries to describe the depression and sadness that want to overcome hope and happiness. She thinks that the serpent represents her sadness and depression and the stars stand for her happiness and hope in life. The poetess finds the serpent as the clear example of the gloom and sadness that controls her soul and mind. This serpent might refer to the suicidal thoughts in the poetess’s mind.

The expression “The old unseen serpent swallows up the stars” contains some stylistic features. It starts with a nominal clause that begins with a noun and appears in a simple sentence. The poetess uses this simple sentence structures in order to simply and convey her emotions and feelings to her audience. This expression is

coherently related to the poem where it is part of the context of the poem that describes the poetess's sadness and gloom.

4.3. Analysis of the Poem "Sylvia's Death (1963)"

Extract (1)

"with two children, two meteors"

"wandering loose in a tiny playroom"

This extract could be interpreted as having been based on the generic level metaphor "events are actions, since this metaphorical expression indicates an action performed by the body of the two children. The metaphorical expression "two meteors wandering" is the surface realization of the underlying metaphor "Meteors are children in playroom". The mapping from the 'Children' to 'Meteors' can be expressed through the proposition movement is action.

The metaphorical expression "with two children, two meteors" has some stylistic features. These are two nominal phrases that contain two names. These phrases are used in a simple sentence via which the poetess talks about two little children freely moving in a playroom and are described as falling stars. These two clauses are coherently and cohesively related to the context of the poem. In terms of their coherence, they represent a part of the poem via which she describe the death of her close friend. Regarding their cohesion, the grammatical structure of the sentence shows that there is an agreement between the subject of the sentence and the verb which means that there is a grammatical cohesion.

Extract (2)

"the death that talked of analysts and cure"

"the death that talked like brides with plots"

The poetess uses simile to refer to suicide as a "cure". These lines provide a clear perspective of death and dying. She shows the reader that they do not consider death to be a simple concept by equating it to a wedding with a plot. Instead, how someone

passes away or decides to do so can reveal a great deal about their existence. The simile that underlies these lines is “death is a talking entity”. The poetess conceptualizes the concept of death as a person who is understood in terms of physical entities. According to the poetess, death is a smooth-talking young boy.

The expressions “the death that cure” and “the death that talked like brides” contain some stylistic features. Both of these expressions are nominal clauses that start with the name of death and are used in two simple sentences. The poetess depends mostly on simple sentence structure to convey and present her message and intention to her audience. She tries to directly describe her misery and suffering since she is not in a mood to use long sentences and present too many details about her condition. Instead she tries to summarise her condition and what she wishes by saying that death is a cure. These two clauses are related to the text and context of the poem via coherence and cohesion relations. Coherently, they are used to complete the poetess’s description of what she feels in her life, particularly after the death of her friend. Cohesively, they are related to each other and to the rest of the poem by the use of repetition as a cohesive device.

Extract (3)

“I remember the sleepy drummer”

This extract encompasses a metaphorical relation where the poetess describes death as a sleepy drummer. She, however, metaphorically speaks of death as an object that is sleepy and which comes quietly without any noise. This extract comprises a form of metaphor where a tool is used to represent the concept of death. The “drummer” is a tool which conceptualizes “death”.

The metaphorical expression “the sleepy drummer” encompasses certain stylistic features. It is an adjectival clause that begins with an adjective and is used in a simple sentence where the poetess prefers to depend on simple sentences in order to present her suffering and misery directly. She is seen to avoid ambiguous and complex

structures. This expression is related to the poem in terms of coherence and cohesion relations. It is coherently linked to the poem where the poetess continuous to express her emotions towards death. It is cohesively linked in that the poetess uses substitution to express her feelings about death, she uses the word drummer instead of death.

4.4. Analysis of the Poem “Wanting to Die (1964)”

Extract (1)

“I walk in my clothing, unmarked by that voyage”

“Then the almost unnameable lust returns”

In this extract, the poetess vividly expresses her desire and wish to die. She utilises a sort of metaphor via which she confesses the extent to which she wants to die. She metaphorically talks about death and compares it to a voyage. And also speaks of her death with unnameable lust. This is a form of metaphor in which the poetess uses the words “voyage” and “unnameable lust” to represent “death”.

The metaphorical expressions in the above extract have certain stylistic characteristics. The expressions “voyage” and “unnameable lust” are both nominal clauses. These clauses appear in complex sentences via which the poetess desires to express her feelings by comparing death to voyage and lust. These expressions are related to one another by coherence and cohesive devices. The coherence between these expressions is that they both refer to death and the poetess’s desire to die. These expressions are related because there is a cohesive device that links them to one another. The poetess substitutes these expressions to the concept of death and the poetess’s death wish.

Extract (2)

“But suicides have a special language”

“Like carpenters they want to know which tools”

“They never ask why build”

This extract includes a simile as a form of rhetorical device where the poet figuratively talks about death and suicide. She says that death has a special language which can be compared to the carpenters who know exactly what to do and how to do it. She compares the idea of committing suicide and killing oneself to some sort of vocation where in both of them no one is asked how and why he does what he does. In this figurative form of language, the word “carpenters” refers to “death” and “suicide”.

The expression “suicides like carpenters” is written in a style with certain stylistic features. This is a nominal clause that starts with a noun and appears in a simple sentence by which the poetess talks about her attitudes towards suicide that she describes as carpenters. This clause is related to the rest of the poem through the use of coherence and cohesion relations. Coherence appears when the clause is part of the main theme of the poem which presents the poetess’s opinion of death and committing suicide. Concerning cohesion relation, the clause is cohesively linked to the rest of the poem through the use of the substitution where the word carpenters is substituted for the concept of suicide.

Extract (3)

“have possessed the enemy, eaten the enemy”

“have taken on his craft, his magic”

The poetess keeps using metaphorical expressions to explore her intention of committing suicide. She compares suicide to an enemy that can be controlled and eaten. She says that she does not fear death, his craft or magic. This metaphorically means that she no longer fears death, instead regards it as a source of joy, happiness and lust as she controls it and eats it.

The expression “have possessed the enemy, eaten the enemy” has some stylistic features. It is a nominal clause that starts with a name and appears in a simple sentence via which the poetess states her emotions and feelings towards death. This

clause is related to the rest of the poem in terms of coherence and cohesion relations. Coherently, the poetess keep describing death and the way she thinks of the idea of dying and committing suicide. Cohesively, the poetess depends on substitution as a cohesive device where she uses the word “enemy” to refer to death. She considers death as the true passion that influences and affects her feelings and attitudes. It seems that death and suicide have become the only thing that the poetess thinks of and wants to achieve.

5. Conclusion

After analysing the selected data, it can be concluded that Anne Sexton, as a confessional poet, uses rhetorical devices excessively. Rhetorical devices play a vital role in the language of the selected poems, and in the language of poetry in general. The poetess is seen to depend on these forms of rhetorical devices to convey her intention to her audience. She uses these types of devices to describe her suffering, sadness, hopelessness, depression and gloom. The poetess is found to use various forms of rhetorical devices in the selected poems. These types of rhetorical devices include; metaphor, simile, personification and irony.

The rhetorical devices that are used in the selected poems are noticed to have specific stylistic features. These features include; the use of different lexical categories such as the use of nouns, verbs, adjectives and pronouns, the use of different forms of syntactic structures such as the use of simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences. These devices also incorporate the use of coherence relations and cohesive devices. The cohesive devices include the use of pronouns, conjunctions, repetition, pronouns and ellipsis.

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