

## Stylistic Analysis of Anna Swell's "BLACK BEAUTY": A Poetic Prose

Sohail Qamar Khan, Rashid Behram Khan

Department of English, University of Sargodha, sub-campus Bhakkar, Pakistan

[rashidbehram@gmail.com](mailto:rashidbehram@gmail.com), [Sublimethought\\_linguist@hotmail.com](mailto:Sublimethought_linguist@hotmail.com)

**Abstract:** This article aims to find out aesthetic preference of the author of this novel by analyzing exploitation of different literary devices and style in the text. Style refers to the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose and so on (Leech & Short, 1981, p 10). Style pertains to parole: it is selection from a total linguistic repertoire that constitutes a style (ibid, p 11). Style refers to linguistic characteristics of a particular text (ibid, p 12). It may refer to some or all language habits of one person as when we talk of Shakespeare's style (or styles) or style of James Joyce (David Crystal & Derek Davy, 1969, p 9). It also focuses on aesthetic appeal which this novel has for the readers. A literary text simultaneously contains two faculties we respond to it as literary work and also as language (Spitzer, 1948). Phono Graphological features of the text will be analyzed to sort out these qualities. This novel is forerunner of pony book genre of children literature. Basically, it is autobiography of a horse called "Black Beauty". It is in first person narration. Anthropomorphism is present in this novel which adds color to the beauty of text and increases its aesthetic appeal. Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human form to God, to abstraction or even to animals and inanimate objects (Martin Gray, 200, p 26).

**Keywords:** Style, Pony book genre, Anthropomorphism, Phono-graphological features.

### INTRODUCTION

"Black Beauty" is a novel by an English author Anna Swell. It was composed in last years of her life. It is one of the bestselling books of all the times. The story is narrated in first person and is an autobiographical memoir told by handsome horse named "Black Beauty" beginning with his care free days as a colt on an English farm with his mother to his difficult life pulling cabs and recounts many tales of cruelty and kindness. Each short episode recounts an incident in "Black Beauty's" life containing a lesson or moral typically related to kindness, sympathy and understanding treatment of horses with Swell's detailed observation and extensive distinction of horse behavior landing the novel a good deal of verisimilitude.

".....there is no religion without love, and people may talk as much as they like about their religion but if it does not teach them to be

good and kind to man, it is all a shame....." (Chapter 13, last paragraph).

## **THEORETICAL FRAME**

Most critical discussions of literature revolve around, at some stages, to appeal linguistic evidence- that is, the evidence of words and sentences which actually occur on the printed page, in literary text the type of critical activity known as "Practical Criticism" or 'explanation de texte' relies more heavily on linguistic evidence than others. In addition, much of the basic vocabulary of literary criticism (metaphors, irony etc) cannot be explained without recourse to linguistic notions (Leech, 1969, pp. 1-2).

The ordered approach which seems more satisfactory in realizing the general aims of stylistic analysis involves taking the object of study-a particular piece of language, or text-and discussing it in terms of a number of interrelated levels of description. At each level, we are studying one aspect of the way in which language is organized: we shall be distinguishing phonetic/graphetic, phonological/graphological, grammatical, lexical and semantic level (David Crystal & Derek Davy, 1969, p 15)

Literary text is analyzed in linguistic oriented way with the help of Halliday's Systemic Function Linguistic(SFL)(Halliday,1985).Particular method is used to analyze the text by systematically analyzing different inter-connected levels which separately analyses different features of text.

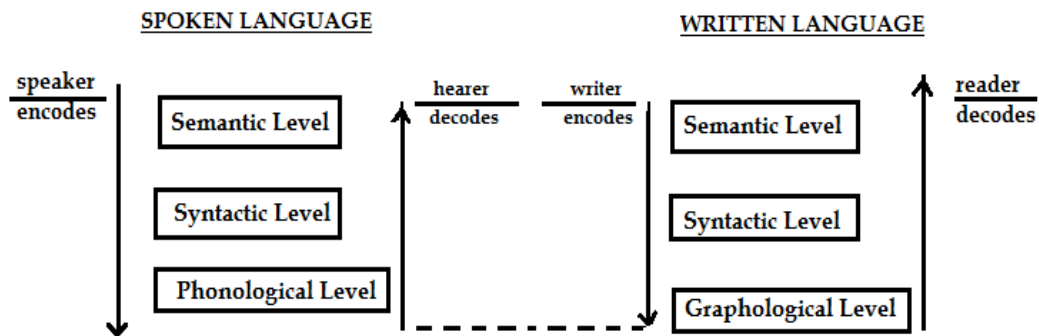
Focus is on phono-graphological features of text as subject matter is made up of phonic and graphic material of language realized by both phonology and graphology. Form is related to grammar and lexis. Subject matter relates language form to non-linguistic features (Tomori, 1997).

Text is analyzed on two levels in SFL.

- 1. Formal level**
- 2. Situational context level**

Meaningful patterning of text is seen as sublevels of phonology, grammar and lexico- semantics. In situational level, concentration is on contextual element SFL model is both structural and functional in nature(Martin Mathiessen,1997).In the same way, Leech and Short(1981) identified four levels for analyzing text; syntax, phonology, semantics and graphology. Syntax and phonology make the frame work of expression and work together to sort out meanings which is main interest of semantics. Graphology is a substitute of phonology according to them. Phonological features may be considered remote but they are not irrelevant. Spellings can be exploited or sounds can be elongated to make text prominent, it will be more prominent when text is read aloud.

Level of organization in speech and writing is described in leech and Short.

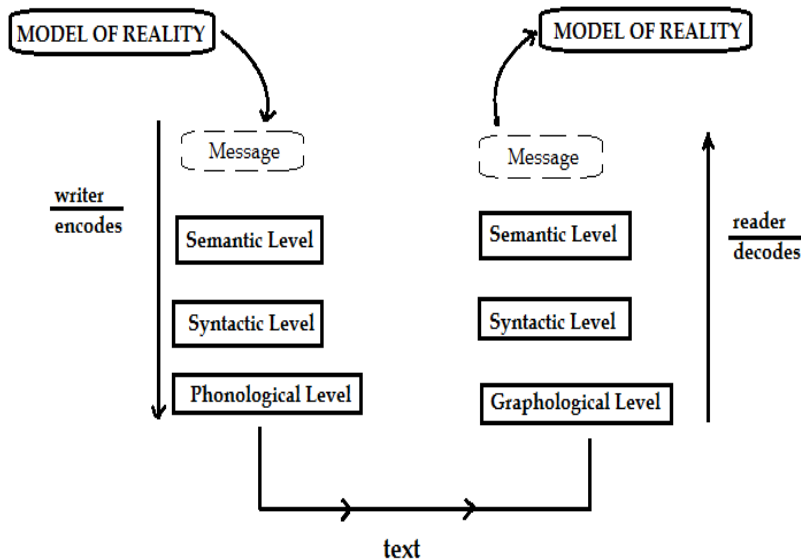


(Leech and Short, 1981, p 121)

Encoding is a top down process in speech and writing. Speaker and writer has to convey meaning for this purpose, he puts them in a particular and specific frame work which can be identified by sounds or letters.

Decoding is a down top approach because it starts from sounds and letters arranged in a typical format to the level of meaning.

Leech and Short (1981, p 126) defined the level of language organization in fiction with regards to its analysis:



With the help of Leech and Short's "Model of reality" we have tried to interpret it keeping in mind the context of situation and culture.

For encoding the text with the help of "model of reality", writer thinks that message is expressible in shape of meanings realizable by syntax and graphology. The process is turned round in case of text decoding.

Systemic grammar is a model for analyzing linguistic STRUCTURES as interrelated system of choices of formal categories (classes) for the expression of meanings in social context, developed by a British Linguist MAK Halliday and his associates JFG is descended from systemic grammar (Johnson & Johnson, 1998, p 313)

The systemic functional grammar (SLG) due to its stress on meanings is relevant. Language is a system of meaning according to Halliday and when people use language then it is manifestation of meanings (Bloor & Bloor 1995, p 1). Halliday for finding out meanings charts a triadic boundary between subject matter (Phono or Graphic), text (Grammatical and lexical organization) and context (linking the text to the textual environment culture and situation of the event itself (Philip, 2007)). Pluralist's approach which is favored by SLF is necessary to find out meaning. Pluralist says that language performs different functions, and any piece of language is likely to be the result of choices made on different functional level. A pluralist is not satisfied with the dualist's division between "expression" and "context", he wants to distinguish various strands of meanings according to various functions (Leech & Short 1981, p 30).

Many functional classification of language have been proposed but only three had the same impact in literary studies. The oldest of three is that of I.A Richards, who in practical criticism (1929) distinguishes four types of functions and four kinds of meanings sense, feelings, tones and intention. Jacobson's (1961) scheme is based on more systemic theory of language and distinguishes six functions (referential, emotive, conative, phatic, poetic, meta-linguistic) each corresponding to one basic dimension of the discourse situation.

Halliday's (1967) model of language tells us about three major functions which he calls "ideational", "interpersonal" and "textual" (Leech & Short, 1981, p 30). Fairclough (1995, p 4) observes the written texts are "increasingly becoming multi semiotic", exploiting photographs, diagrams, sound effects and other forms of graphic design.

### **Analysis of Phono-Graphological Features**

#### **Analysis of Phonological Features:**

Anna Swell has exploited different literary devices to create a particular aesthetic appeal in her anthropomorphic and autobiographical memoir of horse "Black Beauty".

##### **➤ Sound Repetition:**

It is one of the outstanding features of "Black Beauty". Almost on every page, there is more than one example of sound repetition. This is in-form of alliteration and assonance. At least one example from every page will be put forward.

- The repetition of sounds in different names in the novel creates a very unique impact on the mind of the readers. On the other hand, sound repetition creates a musical effect in this text and makes text of the novel just like poetic prose.
- "Rob Roy" (p9)
- "Black Beauty"(p16)

- "Gray Grant or Governor Grant"

These are different names in the novel.

Examples:

- "grow up gentle and good"(p5)
- "bad boy"! He said bad boy"(p6)
- "no noise now"(p9)
- "my master would not sell me"(p10)
- "stiff strap"(p11)
- "stood snorting"(p12)
- "sight or sound of steam engine"(p9)
- "common stall good stall"(p13)
- "man brought me put me here"(p14)
- "three times together"(p17)
- "tender places, ticklish places"(p17)
- "see such big stick"(p220)
- "Beauty do your best"(p21)
- "Stood by me and stroke my neck"(P22)
- "my legs ached, my lion ached"(p23)
- "silent and sad"(p24)
- "another and another and another"(p25)
- "tolling tolling"(p25)
- "ho, ho"(p16)
- "yo! yo,o,o! yo,o,o,o!"(p7)

Expression such as on page 25, 16 and 7 serve as an effective onomatopoeia which adds color to the beauty of text and Swell's style.

- "snappish and suspicious" (p26)
- "will do very well with"(p27)

- "day by day, whole by whole"(p28)
- "still strained on the saddle"(p29)
- "lord w-was much put out when he learned what had happened"(p30)
- "mouth more or less"(p31)
- "my masters were friends"(p31)
- "no more pleasure no more hope"(p32)
- "great grey coat with great gray caps and great white cotton gray hat"(p32)

Such expression makes Swell's style just like poetic prose.

- "sad sights"(p33)
- "comfortable, clean smelling"(p34)
- "dark hairs, dark eyes"(p35)
- "when I was well"(p35)
- "Quite well by the way in which"(p37)
- "streets were slippery with frost or snow"(P38)
- "no, no"(p39)
- "what do you want with"(p40)
- "knees knuckled"(p41)
- "saw a white streak"(p42)
- "oh! if man were more merciful"

*It is an innocent prayer of the horse and shows the cruelty of human nature.*

- "some lame, some broken winded, some old and some that I am sure"(p43)

Such expression also heightens the pathos.

- "bless the boy"(p45)
- "handsome is that handsome does"(p46)
- "well, well"(p46)

With such an artistic usage of alliteration and assonance, Swell attains effective and bright description along with aesthetic pleasure which such repetition often bestows.

➤ **Sound Elision:**

In this process writer often omits a unit of sound or even syllable to create certain literary effect which satisfies aesthetic sense of readers. Swell has exploited this sound device to achieve her aesthetic goals.

- "I don't know" (p35,7)
- "I don't believe" (p21,26)
- "but 'twas all for me"
- "I don't think"(p14)
- "that's well"(P16)
- "here's money"(p21)
- "I can't bear"(p2,28)
- "there's monstrous"(P37)
- "Tis a speculation"(p44)

Such expressions make text of novel poetic in nature. Their main purpose is to appeal to aesthetic sense of readers.

➤ **Elongation of sounds:**

This device has also been used for emphasis such as at page 7;

- "yo!yo,o,o!yo,o,o!"

**Graphological Features**

Multiple punctuation marks in a sentence, capitalization, hyphenation, dashes, use of brackets, unusual spellings and quotation marks are unique graphological features of the text.

The use of such features has particular semantic and stylistic effects on texts.

These features are also found in native and non native English literature e.g. in novels of Achebe and Qurat-Ul-Ain Haider.

➤ **Use of Multiple Punctuation Marks:**

Use of particular punctuation marks in a sentence creates certain effects in the text. Often such fragmented language makes text difficult to comprehend but here case is reverse. Sentences narrated by Black Beauty are fragmented but are not difficult to comprehend. It also helps the author to narrate the events in detail which is an evidence of her extensive and deep observation of animal life. Two or three examples are being presented here.

Example:

- "Over the hedge, on one side we looked into the plowed fields and on the other we looked over a gate at our master's house we stood by the road side."(p4)
- "My mother seemed much troubled; she said that she had known that horse for years, and his name was Rob Roy; he was a good horse, and there was no vice in him."(p 8-9)

➤ **Capitalization**

Every chapter and its title is capitalized and serves the purpose of foregrounding and attracts the readers and brings colors to aesthetic beauty of novel. The title of all chapters is in noun phrases just like news report's heading.

Examples:

- "MY EARLY HOME"(p4)
- "CHAPTER 2"
- "THE HUNT"(P7)

➤ **Unusual Spellings**

- "Hallo"(p33),"Thank Ye"(p33) and "Plowed" are the words with unusual spellings. Their purpose looks to create certain effects because in the whole novel "Ye" is not used for "you" except in this sentence. Hello and ploughed are actual words for "Hallo" and "Plowed".

➤ **Use of Brackets**

Use of bracket is also a graphological feature of this text. It has been used to provide extra information related to particular event or



being.

Example:

- Dorothy (Dolly they called her) p35
- (I was on the side next the house and could see all that went on) p25
- Unique Quotation Marks:

"Handsome is that handsome does"

It aims to foreground the statement by deviating from norm.

#### ➤ **Hyphenation**

Hyphenation has been used to create new vocabulary item in the text which adds colors to literary expressions in the novel and also has the aesthetic appeal for the readers.

Examples:

- Cart-horse cart (p5)
- Well-born (p5)
- Box-stall (p13)
- Water-mill (p15)
- Good-tempered (p18, 20)
- High-mettled (p26)
- Night-cap (p22)
- Check-rein (p27)
- Bearing-rein (p28)
- Colt-broker (p24)

Hyphenation is present at almost all pages of novel.

#### ➤ **Use of Dash**

Dash has been used to depict the urgency of situation in novel and it also heightens emotional effect of statements. This

graphological feature makes text look beautiful.

Examples:

- There-----take your money and go (p6)
- They were now riding on all directions-----to doctor's (p9)
- I hated the crupper-----to have long by tale (p11)
- Putting out of smoke-----a long black (p12)
- Intelligent eye-----what do you say-----
- Black Beauty-----why, yes
- Ride for your life-----that's
- I over-----Joe used to see as this-----that John (p23)
- He said-----never (p25)
- Where the Earl of W-----lived (p26)
- But my lady-----that's another (p27)
- Drive the duchess of B-----'s (p29)
- Another six pence-----yes (p33)
- After the old one-----shall we (p35)
- When they suffer-----they paid (p42)

#### ➤ Pictures

Pictures of horse on each page serve the purpose of attention seeking device. They don't let the readers get bored and hence maintain the interest in text and it puts the soothing effect on eyes of the readers.

#### Conclusion

The meanings are present in all levels of stylistics. This paper shows how Swell has exploited Phonic and Graphic devices of language in the text to acquire the particular effect of theme and style. By analyzing these devices in the text, we come to know that a text with multi-layered meanings can be evaluated in a better way within the matter of formal functional dimension of language representation.

The amalgam of phono-graphic features in the text appeals to readers' aesthetic sense, it also soothes the sense of seeing and hearing as Eagleton (1983, p 128) noted that:

....meaning is scattered or dispersed along the whole chain of signifiers. It cannot be easily nailed down: it is never fully present in any one sign alone.

Eminent linguistic-critic Leo Spitzer (1948) observes: "I would maintain that to formulate observation by means of words is not to cause the artistic beauty to evaporate in vain intellectualities; rather, it makes for widening and deepening of the aesthetic taste. It is only frivolous love that cannot survive intellectual definition, great love prospers with understanding" (p. 2). Spitzer (ibid) emphasizes that the minutest information of language can open the "soul" of literary work. All these features inculcate poetic quality to Swell's prose in novel.

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