

A sequence of phonemes that lie between phonemic and morphemic status are known as phonaesthemes. For example, words that beginning with gl- such as *glimmer* and *gleam* are typically associated with light. This common phonemic sequence is known as a phonaesthetic series. This can also be viewed with the sl- of *slime* and *slug* indicating something wet and unpleasant.

Exercise 2

The notes like little fishes vanish with a wink of tails
Man's heart expands to tinker with his car

The incidence of short vowels, particularly the short front vowel /i/ is high. The sound-symbolic effect of smallness correlates with the smallness of the fishes and the visual phenomenon of vanishing *with a wink*. *Man, heart* and *expand* all contain open vowels, suggesting largeness. But ironically, the expansion of the human heart is for the mundane purpose of tinkering with a car. *Tinkering* has an internal rhyme with *wink*, thus is sound symbolic to the smallness already seen in the first line.

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Exercise 5

He disappeared in the dead of winter:

- Wait a second here. Wasn't this poem supposed to be in "memory" of Yeats? Doesn't that mean that he's dead? So why would our speaker describe him as if he'd just disappeared?
- It's an interesting question, for sure. And we're not about to get any answers soon. But keep reading...

Lines 2-4

*The brooks were frozen, the airports almost deserted,
And snow disfigured the public statues;
The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day.*

- Sounds like a scene from the movie *Fargo*. A snowstorm and an empty downtown? Check. No way to get out? Check.
- Frankly, folks, it's got all the makings of a thriller. Especially the last line. Notice how the day has a "mouth" and is "dying"? Poets dig describing nature in human terms. Any time a poet starts talking about inanimate objects or stuff like days dying, start scanning the scene for bodies.
- Plus, winter is sort of the perfect time to talk about death. After all, it's the time of the year when everything is, well, dead.

Lines 5-6

*What instruments we have agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.*

- Wait – so the guy who "disappeared" in line 1 really is dead? But then why would the speaker say that he just "disappeared"? (Hold onto that thought. We'll get back to it in a few stanzas, we promise.) We don't want to give anything away too soon, but since this poem is entitled "In Memory of W.B. Yeats," it's a fair bet that Auden is describing Yeats's death here. In fact, we'll just go ahead and assert that that's what's going on. You heard it from us first.
- Now let's get to the actual language of these lines, shall we?
- Notice how the speaker's syntax in line 5 seems to suggest that there might be other instruments out there that could calculate the day differently? As in, "what instruments we *have* agree...but there may be lots of other fancy time-and-temperature-measuring gadgets somewhere that could tell us differently."
- Maybe it's just us, but it almost sounds like the speaker is *wishing* he could describe the day of Yeats's death differently.
- Or maybe he's just wishing there was a better way to gauge and measure the end of a life. After all, that's what this poem is about.
- Auden seems to be expressing doubts about the adequacy of human tools to measure or reflect upon the actual death of a man. And if recording the *death* of the body is hard, imagine how much more difficult it would be to commemorate the *life* of his mind and soul in, say, a poem. Like the one that we're reading right now. Get it?

Lines 7-9

*Far from his illness
The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests,
The peasant river was untempted by the fashionable quays;*

- So what is poetry, exactly? Well, according to our speaker, it's something that flows...sort of like the currents of Yeats's feelings flowed earlier in the poem.
- If life is stagnant, caged, and isolating, then poetry is what flows between the cracks of our isolated cells. It remains untouched by all of the busy activities of the rest of the world, which, after the descriptions we've had earlier, is probably a good thing.

Lines 40-41

*[...] it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.*

- In case you still didn't get it, our speaker clarifies even further. Poetry isn't a *thing*. It's a mode of doing something, "a way of happening."
- Notice how the speaker seems to insist on the mobility and vitality of poetry: amidst all the freezing and fixing of the rest of the world, poetry is an active instrument. That's something, isn't it?

Lines 42-43

*Earth, receive an honoured guest:
William Yeats is laid to rest.*

- Ah, now we're in true elegy territory. Auden's delving deep into tradition with the last section of this poem (and believe us, we'll have a whole bunch to say about that in "Form and Meter").
- We can't help but notice that this is the first time Yeats is referred to by name in the poem, other than the title. Explaining just what it is that you're mourning is usually one of the first things that an elegy sets out to do – something this final, formal section makes very clear.
- But placing this version of the elegy last in the line it shakes up the way we receive it. Could it mean that Auden places less emphasis on the man than on his poetry? Could it mean that he just doesn't like all the stuffy formality of traditional elegiac forms? Could he just want the familiarity of addressing Yeats himself instead of a crowd of readers?
- Well, we don't have any good answers for you, but it's something to think about.
- Speaking of tradition, let's take a second to point out how ridiculously traditional phrases like the address to the Earth or the laying of Yeats to rest are. They roll right off the tongue as if they've been there before...probably because they have.

Lines 44-45

*Let the Irish vessel lie
Emptied of its poetry.*

- Does this sound any different to you than earlier descriptions of Yeats's death? It does to us.
- Each previous section has some reference to the poet's body ending and his work continuing on. But now Yeats is referred to as an "Irish vessel," a body meant to carry *only* poetry (and not, say, the problems the speaker brought up at the beginning of Section II).
- It's almost as if the poem itself goes through a purifying process: as Auden recycles certain ideas about Yeats's death, he figures out new ways to approach a subject that is admittedly pretty difficult.
- Notice now that even the formal reference to William Yeats seems strangely impersonal – after all, the Irish vessel is an "it."

Lines 46-49

Checksheet 4 – Metrical Structure

A. Metrical Patterns

- (a) Is there an identifiable metrical form for the poem as a whole? If so, what is it and what effects do you associate with it?
- (b) Are there any lines where interesting rhythmical effects are created by marked good fit, or marked lack of fit between the dictates of the metrical form and those of the stress assignment rules for English? If so, note down their effect
- (c) Are there any lines in the poem which depart significantly from the overall metrical set for the poem? If so, what meaning and/or effects are connected with this internal metrical deviation?
- (d) Examine the relationship between grammatical organisation and line boundaries. Is the dominant pattern end-stopping, arrest-release or extension? Can you determine any significant local meaning effects related to these occurrences? What effect do these structural matters have on the assignment of tone-group boundaries and the positioning of their nuclear syllables?
- (e) If there is a consistent pattern revealed by (d) above, are there any significant internal deviations from this overall norm and what effects are associated with them?

B. Interpretative Integration of Metrical and Phonetic Patterns

Are there any interesting ways in which phonetic and metrical organisation interrelate? How do the sound and rhythmic patterns you have identified integrate with what you have noted about the poem at linguistic levels more directly related to meaning?

People can choose to break these maxims by:

1. Lying
2. Being economical with the truth
3. Talking about something else

Sometimes we can choose to flout these maxims for creative effect. If I am asked what I thought of a film and I reply that I thought the costumes were nice, the interlocutor is likely to infer that I didn't like the movie. Although this flouts the maxim of relation, the unstated meaning is easily inferred, known as conversational implicature.

The quality maxim can also be flouted through the use of hyperbole - *I peeled millions of potatoes*. This adds emphasis.

The quantity maxim can also be broken: *What are you doing? Reading*. This implies that the interlocutor does not wish to be interrupted and wants to be left alone.

Manner can also be broken by a parent stating *I've arranged the prestidigitator* to avoid the child understanding that a magician will be coming to their party.

Exercise 4

Iago is economical with the truth by not openly stating that Desdemona is having an affair but rather, implying it through the use of *indeed*. Othello understands this conversational implicature and interprets the action anyway.

Checksheets

A. Schemas

- a. Establish the schemas that are being relied upon in the text you are examining. Do they allow you to infer things which are not stated in the text? If so, make a note of them
- b. Do these schemas interact with one another in interesting ways? If so, how?
- c. Are any of the states of affairs or happenings in the text at odds with the schemas which are invoked? If so, what are the interpretative consequences?

B. Presuppositions

- a. Do the presuppositions held by the sentences which the characters utter tell you anything interesting about the fictional world they inhabit and/or their relationships with one another?
- b. Are any of these presuppositions at odds with those of speeches uttered by other characters in the same text? If so, what does this tell you about the characters and the text?
- c. Are any of the presuppositions markedly at odds with those we would normally hold? If so, what does this tell us about the text?

C. Conversational implicature

- a. Are there any examples of the covert breaking of the conversational maxims? If so, are they covert for all of the other characters or only some of them. Given that the breaks are covert for (some) other characters, but not for the reader/audience, what can you deduce about what the author is telling you about the characters and their relations?
- b. Are there any examples where the author breaks a maxim in a way which is covert for you? If so, you must presumably discover this at some later point in the text. What effect does this have on the relationships between you and the text and you and the author?

c. Are there any examples of the obvious flouting of conversational maxims by characters? If so, what implicatures are passed from character to character and what does this tell you about their relationships?

Are there any cases where the author flouts a maxim in his or her conversation with you? If so, what implicatures flow and what does this tell you about your relationship with the author?

Are there any significant patterns in the text in relation to your findings under A, B or C? How do they help you to frame a global interpretation for the text?

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Chapter 11 –Prose Style

Authorial Style 1 – Style Related to Meaning in a General Way

Every writer has their own characteristic style that can be recognised despite writing different stories or genres. Often, styles can be mimicked through copying of content as well as particular linguistic constructions.

Exercise 1

Eco looked up at me with his big brown eyes. As his excitement grew, so his eyes grew even larger. What a boy!

What can I say about Eco. He is a young boy with large brown eyes and nice hair. At least I guess you could say that.

(Pastiche of Steven Saylor and Jacqueline Wilson)

Writing style is seen as symptomatic of the mind style or world view of the writer. Linguistic choices are both evidence of authorial style and evidence of textual meaning at the same time.

Authorial Style 2 – Style Completely Unrelated to Meaning: Fingerprinting

Some individual styles can be completely independent of meaning. One would have to look aspects that are completely unrelated to meaning such as grammar, morphemes and syllables. This technique will determine the true authorship of a text.

Authorial Style 3 – Style Intrinsically Related to Meaning: Text Style

Texts can also be said to have style – these are even more centrally concerned with meaning than with the world view version of authorial style. To examine this style, we must look at linguistic choices intrinsically connected with meaning and effect on the reader.

Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics

When using statistics for stylistic analysis, we must ensure:

1. We count anything that is countable but not assume that quantitative analysis leads to automatic conclusions

Checksheet 10 – Style Features of Narrative Description

A. Lexis

General

Examine the open class words in the text

- a. Is the vocabulary simple or complex? Is it descriptive or evaluative?
General or specific?
- b. Does the writer make greatest use of referential or denotative meanings or do you have to think about connotations or other emotive associations of the words?
- c. Are there idioms in the text? If so, are they associated with a particular register or dialect?
- d. Are there any unusual words – archaic, rare or specialised vocabulary?
- e. Do the words fall into groups which form noticeable semantic fields?

Examine the closed class words. Do they play any significant role in the text? Is there frequent or striking use of the first person pronouns, negative words or the definite or indefinite article?

Specific

- a. NOUNS – Are they abstract or concrete? If abstract, do they refer to similar kinds of element? Are there proper names or collective nouns?
- b. ADJECTIVES – Do they occur frequently? What kinds of attributes do they embody? Do they occur in comparative or superlative forms? Do they occur singly or in groups?
- c. VERBS – How frequently do they occur? Are they linking, transitive or intransitive? Are they stative or dynamic? Do they refer to physical movement, psychological states or activities, perception etc? Are there more finite verbs or more participles?
- d. ADVERBS – Do they occur frequently? What kinds of meaning do they have? Do they occur in comparative or superlative forms?

Chapter 11 - Bringing it all together

To do an effective stylistic analysis:

- Begin the essay by summarising your findings or the interpretative position you wish to take. Then proceed to the more detailed analysis
- Order your analysis so that the areas which bear most directly on the interpretation come first
- Begin with discorsal and pragmatic structure (style, discourse structure, conversational maxims)
- Then move onto point of view and speech presentation/viewpoint
- Then repetition, parallelism and metaphor

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