

# STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF A SHORT STORY “THE HAPPY PRINCE”

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**ABSTRACT:** *Stylistics is a combination of style and linguistics. Style deals with distinctive style of characterization, language use and setting. The author makes his choice to become different from others and foregrounds new devices to enhance his text. ‘The happy prince’ has been written in fairy tale mode through which he has exposed the exploitation, materialism and corruption of Victorian society. It has been analyzed on lexical, grammatical and stylistic levels.*

**KEY WORDS:** Stylistics, Short Story. Satire, Imagery, Irony, Allegory, Symbolism.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Stylistics is a literary discourse from a linguistic alignment. It involves both literary criticism and linguistics, as its morphological characteristics suggest, the style component relating it to the former and the ‘istics’ component to the later [15].

Stylistics is traditionally regarded the study of literary texts in which formal linguistic tools are used. This analysis is also done through sophisticated computer based application. It is a branch of applied linguistics in which literary texts are analyzed, the main aim is to explain the formal features and also describe the functional significance of the text and the relation of literary effects to the causes of linguistics where they seem important and relevant [1]. Paul Simpson [10] has given the reference of Lecerle, a renowned linguist who attacked stylistics as an ambiguous term that cannot be defined exactly. Paul has explained its methods and principles of contemporary stylistics and has given him right answer.

### 1.1 Description of Modern Stylistics

In [10] states that it is acknowledged as a dynamic discipline in the early twenty-first century. It is not only studied and taught but also researched in the departments of literature linguistics and language in all over the world. It is progressing with the passage of time and is being updated by the theories of discourse, society and culture. Contemporary stylistics has enriched itself and developed three main fields as feministic stylistics, discourse stylistics and cognitive stylistics and also acclaimed in the field of language learning. The main purpose is to interpret language in the texts. Language is regarded vital because of its patterns, forms and levels that combine a structure of language. The functional importance of text provides a way to interpret it; Linguistic features are not meaningful in isolation.

### 1.2 Myths about Contemporary Stylistics

It is taken as useless pursuits which spend too much time on counting verbs, nouns in the text. This myth has emerged by lack of understanding as what is the function of it. It is more interested in the function of a language of a text. Moreover it analyses those utterances which are produced at different occasions, places, time and culture [12].

### 1.3 Difference between Close Reading and Stylistics

Stylistics is known as rhetoric in the ancient times which teaches its students how to build and arrange an argument how to enlarge successful exercise of figures of speech, and how to Formulate a piece or speech of writing so as to generate the total effect of stylistic analysis [2]. The specific difference between close reading and stylistics analysis:

1. General language is spoken in community while stylistics is a connection between general and literary language.
2. Specialized technical terms and concepts which were acquired from science of linguistics as cohesion, collocation, under-lexicalation and transitivity.
3. Scientific objectivity is the hallmark of stylistics.

## 2. THE AUTHOR

In [14] has been discussed about Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) that he was son of a reputed doctor. He was born in Dublin. He got his early education at Portora Royale School, where he was known as a dynamic classical scholar with intellect and deep observation towards life and human psyche. He was rewarded by Berkeley Gold medal for Greek in 1874. He also won scholarship to Megdolen college, oxford, and then he went to England. He was a brilliant speaks and put his at it’s his lifestyle. His literary work is meager than flamboyant son. We can see serious emotions in his early poems and fictions. Alexander [3] states that Wilde was a provocative critic and is widely recognized due to his comedies as “A woman of No importance, an ideal husband, and the importance of being Earnest. Which was staged in 1892-5 it is considered the highly acclaimed at play the outstanding English comedy since Sheridan, Goldsmith or even Congreve, and it is most quoted play which has not been written by Shakespeare [12]. Evans [4] states in his book that wilde was ridiculed by Gilbert In patience, but as an excellent writes of wit and verbal comedy he shared the status of excellence with Gilbert which was on the verge of death after Sheridan. His imprisonment proved disastrous not for him but also for the theatre.

Mullik [5] writes about aesthetic movement and says that the pre Raphaelite movement in English poetry was practiced by decadent on Aesthetic movement. Wilde was also an upholder of this thinking that art is just for art’s sake not to propagate morality, wiled was the beginner who influenced by the ideas of Walter Dates. Wilde writes on the themes of religious and spiritual experience, as in the in New Helen he called himself as the Votary of Beauty [11].

The happy prince has been written in fairy tale mode of expression. It shows a world which is ideal and non-imitative, Wilde has also declared it an imaginary work which was created to amuse his little son but he transformed it into a great satiric piece. He is known because of his fable short Stories. This short story is not an ordinary story of a prince who is trying to remove the miseries of his people with the help of a little swallow but it also shows a pathetic picture of Victorian age in which poor were living a land to month life

and rich people were exploiting all the privileges. It is a static document on the realities of Victorian age; he unveiled the hypocrisy of ruling class, poverty and exploitation. Wilde himself says that these stories are like mirror which mirror the modern life in a form of remote from reality.

“The happy prince” is a story about the spiritual beauty of prince and the sacrifice of a little swallow which alters its life for the love of the prince. In each case love and sacrifice are the saving and ruling forces.

Cuddon [6] says in the Penguin Dictionary of Literary terms that Fairy tale is known as kind of traditional literature and also of verbal tradition. In written form the fairy tale is a narrative and in prose it is about the dooms and destinies of a hero or heroine in which he has to go through unbelievable circumstances and supernatural adventures, but in the end enjoys a life of festivity forever. Enchanted places, disguise situations and supernatural machinery are the pivotal elements of fairy tale there is a nice study of human psychology. The character is imaginative and unreal.

Onda [8] has talked about the background of Oscar Wilde that he got literary talent and educational interests from his parents. His mother Jane was passionate to have a baby girl as her second child but on the birth of Oscar she was very dejected and in most of the pictures we can see him in girlish outlook with curly and long hair and lace frilled skirt. When Oscar was in jail he said that on two occasions when he was forced in his life as his father sent him to Oxford University, and when civil society sent him to jail. In the biographies Elleman [7] says that Oxford University was a very prestigious institution as well as a very notorious place to nourish hidden false feelings as Wilde got attraction in homosexuality at Oxford. He says that Greek and Latin classics were the cause of homosexuality and vices; another important point is that when Wilde joined Oxford University he had claimed as the professor of Aesthetics and became the descendant of that movement.

Sampson writes about Wilde that indeed he is known as the outstanding playwright of mid-twentieth century and that age is also called ‘The Age of T.S. Eliot’. Drama flourished in the hands of Wilde, Yeats, Synge, Shaw and O’Neill.

Furthermore Daiches [11] says that Wilde in spite of being a famous dramatist he could not generate a true sense of satirical tone. He belonged to the ‘fin de siècle’ famous as aesthetic movement and he ardently followed Ezra Pound and suffered a tragic life like his other contemporaries who committed suicide and destroyed their literary career. Though his plays were not direct reflection yet he added these elements in his fairy tales and in the symbolic story ‘The Picture of Dorian Gray’. He treated dialogues with polished wit and unveiled the society by foregrounding it in distinctive style.

Mitsuru [8] further says that Wilde first published the series of juvenile literatures, titled *The Happy Prince* and other tales in 1888 and *A House of Pomegranates*, in 1889. He was clearly happy at that time with his family and reader can relate the happiness with his work but according to Onda the relationship between Swallow and Prince make him realize the homosexual element but as an artist his glory cannot be ignored due to that element. Many poetical expressions are found in this story as he had been writing stories since university life. Wilde has not used commonplace sentences

and expressions as “Once upon a time” there was a happy prince, but he placed adverbial phrase. Besides this, he has used couplets such as: “So I lived, so I died, these are couplets and rhyme as well and these expressions sound pleasing to the ear.

There are similes and metaphors which are not conventional but unique and different as he described happy prince as he is as beautiful as a weather lock. The story is an allegory; it is about the usefulness of doing well. Love and sacrifice lead us towards God. The prince is not enjoying life but the statue of a dead prince is coated with diamonds, rubies and sapphires. The prince is considered happy because of smile on face. But he lost his smile cannot stop his tears. Swallow comes as a Mersin gel and he gives his all wealth to poor people through swallow. When swallow die with cold the heart of prince breaks, their love and sacrifice makes them immortal.

#### 4. SHORT STORY (SS)

Short story is a brief focused fictitious piece and the term short story has relationship in form with the French **conte** and **nouvelle** the Italian **novella** and the German **Novelle** [6] that covers at minimum the following key elements:

##### 3.1 Length of the Short Story

- They can be read in a single sitting
- Shorter than a novel and the changes between.
- At least 5000 words SS and Novel are as...
  - It deals with one big occasion or issue
  - Have one or two main characters
  - It creates single specific effect
  - It does not have sub plots.

##### 3.2 Kinds of SS:

- Short stories are innovative like novel and related to distinct genres as fears imaginary, romance, erotica venture and science of fiction.
- Statistical, clinical, bleak or optimistic. These are philosophical, introspective and action packed so far as the literary short stories are concerned they focus on character and tone than plot and mostly avoid other genres.

“The Happy Prince” is also an allegory as far as the definition of allegory is concerned Cuddon [6] has defined it in the dictionary of literary theory as:

“The term derives from Greek allegories, besides it is a story in poetry or prose with a twofold meaning a primary or surface meaning. It is story that can be read, interpreted and understood at two levels, some cases it is dealt at three or four levels. It is closely related with fable and parable. It has not determined length. He further explains it by saying that did Arab fable can help to understand it in which these are the characters one is from and other is scorpion. Both met on the river Nile, Frog and Scorpion wanted the Cross at the Frog offered scorpion that he came help scorpion in crossing the river but he will have that’s make a promise that he would not sting him. Frog fulfills his promise but scorpion stings him after crossing the river.

Why did you do that croaked the Frog, as it lay dying? Why replied the Scorpion. We are both frogs are not we? The happy is studied moral and social allegory. It is fantastic allegory by Oscar Wilde typical example of 19<sup>th</sup> century fiction

social injustice, the redemptive power of love, and the loss of indentured are those themes which were addressed by Wilde and Dickens.

An allegory has double meaning and he has dealt with it skillfully. The surface meaning is explicit and under surface meaning there is deep and allegorical meaning. The allegorical significance and universal theme make it a masterpiece; it has social religious and political allegory at many levels. The use of words like reward and paradise are of Christian significances, that God will reward those who will do good with people swallow follows the commands of prince and prince is allegorical representation of "Christ" Oscar has used words like "command" instead of "order" and the word command has been used several times in Bible further he writes as:

"A region of surpassing beauty and delight on of supreme bliss and a peaceful point place the judge? Christian revere, abode of God and his angles and the final abode of the redeemed"

Wilde has used the word "Egypt" which is symbol of surpassing and speechless beauty and swallow appreciates that place as in Egypt the sun is warm the green palm trees and the crocodiles lie in the mud and look lazily about them it seems that swallow is in reach of paradise in the whole story. Wilde also shows his love for beauty and esthetic sense.

The happy prince is also interpreted as a fable and according to Cuddon it is short and found in prose and verse and deals with a moral. Inanimate creatures are main characters. The exhibition of persons as animals is basic distinguishing fable. Characterization of the happy prince and swallow show the feminist virtues of adjustment, acceptance, compromise and self-sacrifice are demonstrated

The happy prince is social satire prudence says that "the true purpose of satire is the modification of vices by correction" Dryden adds by saying that the satirist is no more an enemy to the offender than the physician to the patient when he prescribes harsh remedies to an inveterate disease".

Satire is defined in Columbia encyclopedia that this term applied to any work of literature or all whose objective is to create laughter. From ancient time uncover thoughtlessness in all its apparent pride, duplicity, pedantry, worship, sloppiness, and to take initiative for improvement by explosive.

#### 4. Summary of the Happy Prince

The story of "The Happy Prince" has three major themes, firstly it shows that apparent beauty is nothing and the real beauty is to bestow love and sacrifice. Secondly, it discusses that love and sacrifice are two saving forces. Thirdly, it shows that there is a large gap between rich and poor people the rulers and the masses. When the happy prince is alive he lives a happy life without sorrows, he is living a care free life but after his death he sees through a tall Colum that life has another view except happiness and that is helplessness poverty, hypocrisy and corruption of elite and ruling class. When a bird swallow comes and stays under the feet of prince he begs for his helps match girl, poor writer. He is apparently happy but is weeping bitterly after seeing all the down trodden people. At the end, the swallow dies frost once; the mayor passes through that way and sees prince in ugly

plight. They are perplexed to see that the prince has not all the precious stuff on his body now they pulled it down and decide to mark another statue. The statue does not soften in the furnace and workers threw it on the dust heap, the dead body of swallow was also there. An angle comes towards God and takes both precious things which are now of no use for the worldly people but has great importance in eternal life in paradise [9].

## 5. MAJOR CHARACTERS

### 5.1 The Happy Prince

Golden statue that can see what is going on around him but cannot move he was happy prince, but he weeps for all the hardship that are faced by the people of this city. He asks the swallow to take pieces of him (the gold leaf of the statue the sapphires that are his eyes, and the ruby that is the hilt of his sword) and give to them to the poor of the city. In the end, he is melted and the statue is not beautiful without its decorations.

### 5.2 The Swallow

A bird stayed behind when the rest of his block migrated to Egypt in order to court river plant that he had fallen in love with. His friends disapproved and thought that this was a foolish decision. The reed eventually decides that she will not accompany him. The swallow is infuriated and he decides to migrate to Egypt by himself at all. However before he leaves, he tries to sleep one night under the statue of the happy prince the statue begins crying because he is saddened by everything that he sees going on in the city, the swallow is the agent of the happy prince's generosity, bringing the germs and gold to the poor as instructed, and the two become fast friends. Eventually, the swallow dies because he chooses to remain with blind prince rather than abandon fly to Egypt, and the winter gets too cold. He dies at the feet of statue.

## 6. MINOR CHARACTER

The Reed she decides not to accompany the swallow, who has been courting her, breaking his heart. She is too close to her home and cannot bear the thought of leaving thus the swallows courtship was in vain.

### 6.1 The Town Councilors

They are greedy and obsessed with their public images they cannot understand the humanity of dead prince and of a little bird but they are too busy in their daily pursuits to increase their money, rank and power.

### 6.2 The Poor Woman

Her son is ill. She struggles as a seamstress to make enough money to take care of him. She receives that ruby from the hit of the prince sword.

### 6.3 The Young Playwright

He is starving and struggling to complete a play but he is unable to concentrate because his he is so hungry. He receives the frost sapphire eye.

### 6.4 Little Match Girl

She drops the matches that she is supposed to sell, and is crying because she knows that she will be beaten by her father when she will return to home without the matches or any money. She receives sapphire eye.

### 6.5 They Mayor

He orders that the statue must be turned down. He wants the metal to be made into the statue of himself.

The story ends with God asking his angels to take the two most valuable things from the city, and carry the leaden heart of prince which was thrown out when the statue was melted down and the body of dead swallow was also there.

“You have rightly chosen, said God for in my garden of paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the happy prince shall praise me”.

## 7. LITERARY DEVICES

### 7.1 Personification

Burns and McNamara [13] define it as a kind of metaphor in which the non-human qualities are attributed to a person, its use makes a fiction more expressive and real and the theme becomes more explicit.

Personification is also used in those stories, the writer personified the statue of happy prince and swallow, as living human beings. Major and Councilor symbolize the hypocrisy of Victorian age.

They talk with each other like human because they feed the misery of living creature which human being is ignoring.

### 7.2 Use of Simile:

In simile one object is likened to the other to enrich an image, the comparison is explicit as:

- ‘His hands are like withered leaves’.
- ‘Lips are red as pomegranate’.
- ‘As blue as the great sea’.
- Who is as black as ebony’.
- They have eyes like green beryl’

Wilde has set different visions or visual imagery as: ‘the streets looked as if they were made of silver, they were so bright, and glistening long icicles like crystal daggers.....’,

### 7.3 Symbolic Character

In this story the writer used symbolic tones and all the character of this story has symbolic significance. Statue of happy prince is a charity figure like Christ crucified himself for humanity like that happy prince sacrificed his beauty for the humanity. Swallow also sacrificed his life for the humanity. Woman, match girl, writer and poor boys symbolize the poverty of Victorian age.

### 7.4 Fairy Tale or Fiction

A fairy tale is an imaginary story that may feature imaginary characters such as gnomes, spirits, pixies, fairies, monsters and talking animals and usually charm often including incredible order of actions. The happy prince is a narrative story this is not a real story while using the literary term fairy tale tend to be a narrative in prose about the lucks and calamities of a hero and heroine, who having experienced numerous exploits of a bizarre kind then stay happy. Enchanted camouflage and spell are the main ingredients of such stories while they are delicate in their interpretation about environment and thinking of men.

### 7.5 Language Description

Oscar Wilde has used very simple language in this story and reader can easily interpret the hidden meaning of the story. The writer has never used long descriptions in his short stories. He used very precise and short descriptions that every reader can understand the real meaning of the story.

## 7.6 Symbolic Title

This story also has a symbolic title, the title of the story is “The Happy Prince” but inwardly he is not happy. He feels sorrow, pity for the common people so, he is not happy as the title is symbolic.

## 8. INFERENCE

The author exhibits the importance of charity, humanity, love, good will and sacrifice. The main characters have been endowed with all these marvelous characteristics and have been presented as mark, symbol and upholder of these angelic qualities. In the end good deeds are rewarded by the GOD.

## 9. SOME STYLISTIC FEATURES

### 9.1 Characterization

- The main characters are flat and simple because we do not see any sudden, drastic change or reversal in their characteristic features.
- The characterization is direct and the writer talks about them directly.
- There is third-person narration, the author gives thorough and detailed information about characters and their feelings.

### 9.2 Irony

Oscar Wilde has used the term irony in this story. He has shown the contrast between rich and poor people

*“Swallow flew over the city, and saw the rich taking merry in their beautiful houses while the beggars were sitting at the gates”.*

These lines show that rich people do not care about the poor people. They were enjoying their site. They living in their palace and do not know about the conditions of poor people “what is the use of a state if it cannot keep the rain off?”

### 9.3 Satire

Oscar Wilde used the literary term satire in this story. Satire on educational system and satire on social injustices in “the happy prince” Wilde mentions a professor who was surprised by seeing a swallow in the writer and he wrote a long letter about it to the local newspaper. Everyone quoted it that it was full of so many words that they could not understand”. Though this fairy tale was written on the demand of his son yet it is full of satirical characters, situations and issues.

In this Wilde satirized the writers who produce literature for the sake of production without any kind of necessity and compulsion always exaggerating the things without any particular aims just hankering after earning name and fame. Even absurdity is there long insufficiently written articles that nobody is also to understand. In fact the writers liked these do not know, themselves what they are imparting in their writings.

### 9.4 Social Injustice

Oscar Wilde shows the double standard of society the rich people of society are in the enjoyment of all luxuries but people are devoid of basic necessities. This social injustice is best satirized in the happy prince the first victim of this injustice is poor seamstress who is in poor conditions and is not able to do something for her child. She is helpless waiting for the time to take its turn. With her hands she can stitch the gown of queen yet with these hands she cannot cure her child.

The writer's state of depression makes our hearts rebel against this unfair distinction and the pleasures of the rich are more valuable than the life of individuals. The second victim we see is the young man in the garret, who had large and dreamy eyes'.

But the cruel society had snatched the dreams from eyes and stuffed them with gloominess of poverty. He had to complete the play but his empty belly had molded his creativity towards ideas of poverty. As it is said that "The empty stomach is the grave, of great ideas".

## 10. GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES

**Sentences type:** The author uses questions, imperatives, and exclamation and declarative sentences. This short story is rich in case of syntactic features.

**Sentence complexity:** This story has been written in simple mode but the writer has written some complex lines as:

- What is the use for states if it cannot keep the rain off
- But I feel quite warm now although it is so cold,

**Clause types:** Ah but we have in our dreams answer the children and the mathematical master frowned and look very severe, for he did not approve of children

**Word clauses:** There is usage of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverb, and articles.

- "He is as beautiful as a weathercock"
- "The happy prince never dreams of crying for anything".

## 11. LEXICAL CATEGORIES

Although this short story is full of details and imagery yet the choice of vocabulary is simple and unique, it not only gives vibrancy to the text but also makes it deeper and explicit at a same time. The language and expression is colloquial and belong to everyday language and it contains a natural usage of language.

**Use of Allusions:** There is also use of allusions like, God Memnon, Sphinx, Pigmies, Pyramids and Ibises.

The words like 'sans souci' 'a place of extravagance and festivity' as beautiful as weathercock' show his command on words and their application. The words as 'happy prince' and Little swallow 'conveys the messages that swallow is greater in grandeur than any human being due to his act of sacrifice while the prince is no more happy when he sees the plight of poor people.

**Frequency of Words:** Swallow, happy, prince, has, had, the, and, he, it.

**Nouns:** Generally nouns are concrete but there are also abstract ones. The settings have been pointed out by concrete nouns and abstract nouns have been employed to show the state of mind and emotional circumstances. The use of proper names is very obvious as prince, swallow, mayor, girl boy writer beggar Egypt, Nile and councilor. These nouns express the theme in vivid manner.

**Adjectives:** The story is reflection of emotional situations of the characters and also about their physical outlooks. The usage of adjectives makes the text more attractive and writer reveals most of the themes and the Physical conditions through adjectives. The examples are like hot, warmer, shabby, white marble angels, beautiful girl, happy, writer, chill and lazily.

**Verbs:** Verbs play conspicuous role in giving sense to various events and circumstances which have been used in

this short story. Stative verbs are helpful to know the moods of main characters. Verbs are mostly about doings and physical movements. The use of auxiliaries is also apparent. Transitive verbs and helping verbs are as:

'So he flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings and making silver ripples'.

**Adverbs:** The adverbs are as really, lazily, listlessly and slowly, agility.

**Conjunction:** It means joining together, a word which is used to connect sentences as then, and, but, if as, as soon as, though –yet, neither-nor etc...

(a)

### coordinating

- 'I must look for a good chimney –pot and he determined to fly away'
- His friend had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind....'

(b) **Subordinating**

- 'their roar is louder than the roar of contracts'
- 'Ruby shall be red than a red rose'
- 'Her father will beat her if she does not...'

### Important quotations

- "And how powerful is the power of love".
- "I am going to the house of Death; death is the brother of sleep".
- "You have rightly chosen".
- "Said God for in my garden of paradise this little bird shall sing for everyone and in my city of Gold the happy prince shall praise me".
- The livings always think that gold can make them happy'.
- There is no Mystery as great as Misery'.

## 12. CONCLUSION

To sum up all the above discussion, we can say that "The Happy Prince" is a masterpiece which shows so many aspects of life Oscar Wilde has shown the fancy and imagination one side while on the other side he has unveiled the hypocrisy, Poverty, greed and temptation of people. This is a satirical document on the Victorian society; love and innocence are the living forces. Oscar Wilde has manifested so many stylistic devices and they have transformed it into a great literary work he has been deviant among all the writers as how he foregrounded fairy tale to convey his message under the subtle layers of fancy and imagination.

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