

An Ongoing Commitment to Ecology - An Ecostylistic Investigation of Jessica Powers' Poetry

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The language and sounds of poetry work together to create the poetic experience of a poem. It also enlightens the readers with various insights from the ideas discussed in it. The present paper attempts to explore the style of Jessica Powers' through analyzing one of her poems 'For a Lover of Nature'. The study makes use of the aims, scope, theoretical frameworks and the methodological underpinnings of eco-stylistics against the background of eco-criticism, eco-linguistics and stylistics. Eco-stylistics is particularly concerned with the stylistic examination of environmental themes in various text-types through diverse linguistic frameworks and methodologies. The analysis, especially a close eco-stylistic reading is done in the paper to unveil the special characteristics of this modern American religious poet who uses plenty of natural images too in her poems. The use of Anthropomorphism in the language of poetry is also investigated. The readers of the poem can personally feel the magnificent or freshness of the nature. The study is a qualitative one following descriptive methodology. Doing stylistics enriches our ways of thinking about language and thus eco-stylistics gives light over the major issues of environment discussed in literature and also helps in creating environmental awareness.

The study of literary language has indirectly provoked better understanding of language and language use as a whole. Language used in literature is in many ways central to understanding language and language use in more general terms. The poem isolates itself, so to speak, from its context in ordinary experience to take on a separate, unique and indestructible existence of its own-independent not only of our ordinary experience, but also of its own separate constituents of sense and sound. (Reeves 1956, quoted in Birch 1989: 76)

Jessica Powers (1905-1988) known as a modern American religious poet was born in Wisconsin, America to a pioneer family with Scottish and Irish ancestry. Wisconsin was the foundation of her entire life, formative in several ways. Growing up on the farms of Cat Tail Valley was good. Nature has her own liturgical moments: the passing of seasons, the glad reception of sun and rain, even the snows of winter. Nature not only chastises, she encourages;

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she encouraged and sustained Jessica. She draws many of her observations and much of her imagery from nature, no doubt influenced by her upbringing in rural Wisconsin.

Eco-stylistics is a very recent investigational approach to the textual and linguistic representation of environmental topics in texts. It ranges from academic environmental activism to the stylistic investigation of environmental themes in literary texts or the representation of space and landscape in non-literary texts by applying the diverse linguistic frameworks and methodologies typically applied by stylistics. The wide-ranging theoretical and methodological paradigm provided by stylistics enables eco-stylistics to pursue the linguistic investigation of the environmental/ecological aspects of both literary and non-literary texts and discourse. In this respect, therefore, eco-stylistics shares the same interest as eco-linguistics in the linguistic construction of environment-and ecology-related texts and discursive practices but, unlike eco-linguistics, is equipped to also analyze those patterns in literary texts, which are generally excluded from eco-linguistic consideration.

Anthropomorphism has been an original means of linguistic cognition, based, perhaps, on a natural tendency of the human mind. The psyche associates certain linguistic structures and words particularly with human beings; when an attempt is made to bring a non-human object within the ken of human attribution, predication or identification, we have a case of anthropomorphism. For example; read, brainy, wisely etc. all have a human feature; when we predicate them of a non-human object, we are employing anthropomorphism. Phenomenologically, language symbolically represents, or refers to entities of human consciousness, rather than noumena or objective reality. In this broad sense, every language-act is anthropomorphic; language expresses human awareness of objects and not objects themselves, whatever their true nature.

Environmental Awareness is to understand the need and importance of protection of environment. It is the responsibility of humans to respect, protect, and preserve the natural world from its anthropogenic afflictions. Environment includes all living and non-living objects. We live in the environment and make use of environmental resources for fulfilling our needs. While meeting our growing needs, extra pressure will be put on the environment. And when that pressure exceeds the carrying capacity of the environment to repair itself, it may lead to serious problems of environmental degradation. There is a need to create awareness about environmental protection.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Eco-criticism and eco-linguistics are two disciplines with which eco-stylistics shares a number of theoretical aims and methodological approaches. The two main theoretical objectives of eco-stylistics are: one 'environmental', hence focused on the investigation of the portrayal of physical or metaphorical landscapes and environments in texts; and one 'ecological', hence focused on analyzing the representation of the relation between human and non-human beings and the environment. The whole range of methodological and analytical approaches utilized in mainstream stylistics and in neighboring disciplines is employed to critically investigate the stylistic choices made in literary and non-literary texts centred on the representation of landscapes and environments or of the balance between living organisms and their habitat. The close linguistic reading of the text and the investigation of mind style- with SFG, in order to analyze three excerpts from the poem.....The aim is to perform an 'ecological' investigation and demonstrate that a major concern in the poem is to offer a multifaceted representation of the relation between human and non-human beings and their environment. Eco-stylistics is fully equipped to explore and critically evaluate the linguistic encoding of environmental and ecological themes in both 'canonical' and contemporary literary and non-literary texts.

Eco-stylistics is a very recent investigational approach to the textual and linguistic representation of ecological and environmental topics in texts. It embraces issues which range from academic environmental activism (Goatly 2010) to the thorough stylistic investigation of environmental themes in literary texts (Zurru 2012) and the representation of space and landscape in non-literary texts, by applying the diverse linguistic frameworks and methodologies typically applied by stylistics. 'Environmental' primarily means 'related to the environment', seen as the habitat of flora, fauna and organisms at large; 'ecological' primarily pertains to the study of the interrelation between human and non-human fauna and between organisms and the physical surroundings. Hence, eco-stylistics can be related to two main areas of investigation: the environmental and the ecological respectively. Eco-stylistics can focus either on the link between the linguistic representation of physical environment and the style of a certain text, text type, genre and/or author; on the investigation and evaluation of (un) ecological linguistic patterns in texts, thus contributing to raising further awareness of global ecological concerns. Eco-stylistics focuses on exploring how a text comes to convey a certain stance, for "stylistic analysis is a method of linking linguistic form, via reader inference, to interpretation in a detailed way and thereby providing as much explicit evidence as possible for and against particular interpretations of texts" (Short 1996; 27)

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ANALYZING THE POEM

At the very least Jessica's nature poetry can be an abiding inspiration for what must surely be an ongoing national commitment to ecology. The present study aims at both reinforcing and expanding the core issues and methodological practices of eco-stylistics by

- performing an eco-stylistic analysis of the poem;
- focusing on an ecological rather than on an environmental investigation, by analyzing and evaluating the relation construed between human and non-human entities in the poem studied.

Powers' celebration of the beauty of nature and her recognition of the inevitability of death are lyrical but her affirmation of her faith in the primal agency of Love, to whom she ascribes Godhead by virtue of her capital letter, is paramount, and is quietly affirmed in the closing line: *'But Love had no beginning'*. The poem is a kind of internal poetic dialogue where Jessica lays before the reader, the truths confirmed for her by her Carmelite experience. The spirituality embedded in the love of nature. As an internal dialogue, the poem starts as a talk between the poet and someone else; *'Your valley trails its beauty....'* It is said that the valley's beauty is trailed in the poems; further comes the description of the said valley. The adjective 'kind' is used for the woods and 'majestic' for the river. These human qualities are used to attribute the non-human, inanimate things. Earth is said to be god or goddess; the poet gives the feminine quality and calls it 'her', but gives freedom for others to consider it of their own; god or goddess-male or female. The book of Genesis from the Old Testament of Holy Bible is referred to in the following lines. Soon the first stanza concludes by saying that *'...But Love is older than these.'* The *'green-embroidered land'* is the immortal spirit itself and laying hand upon the permanence of it is like trusting that immortal spirit itself. The *'earth's sad inexperience and youth'* again attributing such qualities to in-animate things. The long vast years taken for the preparation of the present world is said and reminded in the following lines. The process of evolution and the vast time taken for the present nature to come into existence also is mentioned. We cannot guess the whole long process of evolution; and those unexplainable things were said to be *'godly grace'*. The whole creation has got something to say about origin and flourishing; yet it is said that Love is still older and its origin or beginning cannot be understood; it had no beginning at all. As Eco-stylistics focuses on exploring and interpreting text in a linguistic and also an ecological way, the present poem can be interpreted from the reader's view too. Human and non-human entities are closely related in the poem. It truly gives ecological awareness to the readers through the lines. The time period of evolution of nature is beyond human calculation and it should be preserved, as it will take more

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time to make the nature the old one if the present stage is being destroyed by man. The poem gives life and liveliness to nature and the various natural elements. There must be an ecological balance; between human, non-human and physical environment for the smooth sustenance of nature. The poet, as she is a religious, gives spiritual connotations too. She wants to enlighten the reader with the main theme that 'Love' is eternal and nature is closely related to this eternal value- 'Love'. Everything is said to be 'godly grace', providing altogether a divine nature to the nature-human relationship.

The technique of Anthropomorphism can be seen at many instances in the poem. The terms 'god' and 'goddess' are usually associated with the supernatural powers of divine origin. Here in the poem those are being associated with 'Earth', thus giving an anthropomorphic effect. The verb 'born' is usually connected with human child birth and in the poem it comes in association with inanimate things like water, rocks, trees etc. 'Inexperience and youth' too comes in relation with earth, giving it an animate nature. The age old reality, death, is mentioned as '*a most ancient right*', in an artistic way that, '*who will soon be winning your flesh and bones....*'; as it is a fact that after death of any animate thing, everything will be gone back to earth. What will be if earth itself dies? ; still the position of 'Love' is eternal, without beginning or ending. As in most of her poems; called as 'songs' by Jessica herself, in the present one too there are instances of techniques used like rhyming words; 'river-her', 'trees-these', 'truth-youth', 'trace-grace', 'light-right', 'winning-beginning', etc.

The present paper is an endeavor to stylistically analyze the poem 'For a Lover of Nature' in the eco-stylistic point of view. It has been done keeping the methodological practices of eco-stylistics. There are enough and more environmental references in the short poem; still focus has been given to the ecological investigation. The relation between human and non-human entities has also been evaluated. The poem thus stands as an ecological one with a lot of nature images along with spiritual and philosophical themes. The nature itself is given an immortal sense of being, which has got divine elements in it. Eco-stylistic analysis thus gives some awareness to the reader that nature, the whole universe should be protected, respected and loved. Thus it provides a balance between ecological values through the relationship between human beings and the environment.

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