



**LINGUISTIC FOREGROUNDING IN BUFFALO BILL BY E.
E. CUMMINGS: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS**
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Abstract:

To begin with, stylistics in the one hand is a discipline of applied linguistics that utilizes linguistic theories, perspectives and methods in analyzing all the literary narratives. More tellingly, stylistics in the one side is a field of study that stands between literary criticism and linguistics, i.e. it involves both literature and linguistics. Foregrounding in the other side refers to the use of literary devices (poetic language, parallelism and deviation for instance) for the sake of challenging the common and/or traditional literary norms and achieving deautomatization or literary –aesthetic functions. In addition, e. e. Cummings American poet; is considered as one of the most celebrated poets in the modern period. He is worldly known for his Avant-grade typography, nonconformist construction and eccentric capitalization. Therefore, the main contention of this paper is to analyze literarily and stylistically Cummings' poem Buffalo Bill in all the stylistic levels (graphological, phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels). Accordingly, this paper presents e. e. Cummings as a unique modernist poet. It explains extensively what do the concepts foregrounding and stylistics mean. Besides, this paper argues how Cummings resolved to accomplish 'literariness' in his poem through using eccentric typography, rebellious structures and uncommon capitalization.

Key Words: Foregrounding, Deviation, Defamiliarization, Stylistics & Parallelism

1. Introduction:

In fact, foregrounding is a pivotal branch of stylistics and in the one hand it is defined as a method for making textual composition of literary works unfamiliar through the use of deviations and parallelism. On the other hand, stylistics as a comprehensive field of study is defined as a discipline of study which concerns in analyzing particular expressions and norms in literary narratives and the depiction of their impact and purpose. Thereby, the word stylistics can be divided into two parts 'style' and 'stics'. Thereby, style refers to the way of textual composition of literary works and 'stics' is defined as the scientific study of the style itself. Thereupon, this paper will examine the way and style of composition of Cummings in his poem *Buffalo Bill*. Accordingly, e. e. Cummings is a modern American poet who is well-known for his unrestricted freedom and permissiveness in composing his poetry. He is writing in free verse in which the reader cannot find stable meter, stanza and rhyme though the rhythmic patterns can be deduced from the repetition of some structures, phrases and words. Besides, Cummings' poetry is widely known for its eccentric typography, notorious structures, uncommon spellings and temperamental capitalization. Despite, this paper will analyze the poem literarily and examine stylistically all the deviations, parallelisms and repetitions included through all the levels of stylistics (graphological, phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels). Besides, this paper will explicate how these deviations, variances and parallelisms contributed in achieving aesthetic purposes 'literariness' through what Shklovsky assumed 'defamiliarization'.

Edward Estlin Cummings as a Modernist Poet:

In fact, some writers used to disclaim Cummings as a modernist poet because he was perceived as frivolous in many academic circles. However, others consider him as one of the "leading innovators of modern poetry and "modernism is his own literary world" (Rosenblitt, 2016; Firmageand Kennedy, 2001). As an American poet, Cummings is celebrated for his nonconformist, experimental, incomparable and lyrical modernist style of poetry writing. Like his contemporaries he was influenced by the modernist paintings, art, literature and music and once in a while he is considered as the most radical American modernist poet. His poetry resembles the modernist paintings as it is characterized by Avant-grade, discontinuous, disjointed and disharmonious. He radically altered the conventional typography, grammatical structures, capitalization, poetic forms, grammatical functions, punctuations and spelling. Consequently, this radicalism substantiates Cummings not only as a modernist but also as the most rebellious of his time. But being a modernist provokes the doubts that Cummings' thinking was influenced by Freud, Darwin and Nietzsche. Despite, his influence by Pound became obvious as he began utilizing imagism and futurism in his poetry. Besides, his influence in Romantics, and the Pre-Raphaelites are apparent especially in his poetry.

Literary Analysis of the Poem: Buffalo Bill's defunct who used toride a watersmooth-silverstallionand break onetwothreefourfivepigeonsjustlikethatJesushe was a handsome manand what i want to know ishow do you like your blueeyed boyMister DeathBuffalo Bill (1920)

The poem begins abruptly by lamenting the death of the 'Buffalo Bill' (an American scout showman and buffalo hunter by the name of 'William Frederick Cody'. He was born in 'Le Claire' Iowa and lived in Toronto, Canada, Ontario before he returned and settled in Kansas territory. His legend as a performer began to be disseminated at the age of twenty three as he started enacting performances that discuss the themes of war, cowboy and bison hunting). He was more than a national figure, though he was a performer whose Wild West performances were admired and enjoyed in all over Europe as he connected the old world with the new. He was received as an instance of the "American spirit" that dominated the continent. Cummings wrote the poem three years after his demise in January 1917. The poem ends with a furious questioning that why the death is cruel as he used to steal the talented and beautiful people from the world?

Primarily, looking at the poem we find lines move from right to left and some return back. The play begins and ends with the same line "Buffalo Bill". Cummings used unusual typography in the first line Bill s' separating the apostrophe 's' from 'Buffalo Bill' and this implies Cummings' intention to refer to other men who consider themselves like Buffalo Bill as it indicated polarization. Then Cummings expressed that the celebrated Cody has passed away but using the word "defunct" instead of dead signifies disapproval of his death. He is still remembered for riding 'watersmooth sliver stallion' uncast rated male horse and shootonetwothreefourfive" clay pigeon out of the air in front of the people with amazing speed (Tompkins, 1993). Differently, some find this successive numbering refers to his achievements while he was a live. The horse is very smooth in riding and with admirable silver hair. Here the poem seems to be like the daily conversation as a person infixes pauses when he is hesitant and combines many words when he speeds up. In addition some writers assert that running one word into the other reflects his preoccupation with experimentation. Therefore, Cummings used free verse to portrait the legend of the cowboy 'Cody'. Thereafter, using the word "Jesus" in the seventh line signifies "the admiration of the Buffalo Bill's good aim at clay pigeon not a reference to Christ" (Turner, 1992). Another feature which Cummings likes in the cowboy 'Cody' is not his wisdom but rather his prettiness as a "handsome man". Contrarily, Jane Tompkins (1993) points out in a farfetched simile the Buffalo Bill was incredibly a handsome man like Jesus "the Buffalo Bill in the flesh was akin to the apparition of a saint or Virgin Mary for believers. He was the incarnation of an ideal". Thereafter, Cummings used the combined words 'blue eyed' as a synonym of the word handsome to enhance the prettiness of the Buffalo Bill. The last two lines what I want to know is, how do you like your blue eyed boy" shows Cummings intention to enquire about the desire of the angle of death for selecting the handsome boys with blue eyes notwithstanding he did not put any question mark at the end. Consequentially, this created a run-out line "Mister Death" with two capitalized words in order to emphasize the fact that death will come to everybody even those who are skillful and celebrated (Mazor, 2008). Ultimately, Cummings asserts that Cody is now dead and death has erased all his good accomplishments though he will be immortalized him in these few lines. The poem is modernist sample in which the tone of sadness is the most dominant. It is a self-portrait of admiration of Cody through using the form of daily life conversation. Besides, Cummings as a modernist insists of his originality and uniqueness and belittles the mass culture.

Linguistic Foregrounding: An Analysis of the Poem:

Linguistic foregrounding is usually analyzed at the different levels of language, graphology, phonology, morphology, lexical, syntax, semantics etc. Linguistic foregrounding focuses more on important issues such as parallelism, deviations and repetitions. It refers to the group and the range of stylistic devices and effects that occur in a text, whether at the graphological level (e.g., punctuation marks, dash, ellipses, periods hyphens, decapitalization, etc.), the phonological level (e.g. alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, etc.), the lexical and morphological levels (e.g., repetition of synonyms, compound words, coinage, etc.) the syntactic level (e.g., inversion, parallelism, chiasmus, etc.), or the semantic level (e.g., metaphor, irony, personification etc.). All these stylistic techniques play important roles as foregrounded elements under the important concepts of foregrounding such as parallelism, deviations and repetitions. The poem *Buffalo Bill* will be analyzed below at the different levels of language respectively as to depict the types of linguistic foregrounding

Graphological Foregrounding:

This type of foregrounding is concerned with the writing system of the poem. It deals with the spelling, capitalization, decapitalization, punctuations, dash, contracted forms etc. According to Leech (1969), "Graphological Level refers to the whole writing system: punctuation and paragraphing as well as spacing". Alabi (2007) stated that "a graphological discussion of style among other features entails the foregrounding of quotations marks, ellipses, periods hyphens, contracted, forms, special structures, the full stop, the colon, the comma, the semi colon, small print, spacing, italics etc."

The poem "Buffalo Bill's consists of eleven lines. The typography of the poem is unfamiliar. It is like gun shooting with foregrounded word arrangement and jargon. The lines 1, 2, 6, 8, 10 and 11 starts from the beginning as usual lines while lines 3 and 4 are shown little moved from the beginning and the lines 5 and 7 are shown at the end of the lines with single word each. We can say that the length of every line is not same but it is completely unusually.

The graphological partial parallelism appears in the lines 1, 2, 6, 8, 10 and 11. These lines start from the same point of beginning. Another parallelism appears in the two lines 3 and 4 according to their place and location in the poem. The two lines 5 and 7 look like parallel as they contain one word at the end. Just line number 9 seems to be graphologically deviant in its place inside the poem compared with the place of another lines shown in the poem.

The graphological deviation spreads throughout the whole poem from the beginning to the end, whereas the lines begin with words with lower case letters in the beginning. The poet neglects the capitalization for the first letters in the beginning words of lines, i.e. he violates the capitalization rule in English grammar. He also ignores full stops, commas, question marks, etc. In other words, he also violates the punctuation marks totally and employed these foregrounded elements. Just the first and the last lines begin with upper case letters for the words Buffalo and Mister. In comparing with the other lines, these two lines seem to be deviant and foregrounded; the two words Mister and Death are shown with capital letters in their initial letter. Another graphological deviation appears on the lines 6 and 10. In these lines, the poet omits the spaces among words and he makes these words as one body or piece. These words are (one two three four five pigeons just like that) in line 6, and (blue eyed) in line 10. The pronoun (I) in line 9 appears deviant written in lower case letter as (i). The poet deviates and violates the writing system, spelling, punctuations and capitalization. Generally, spelling of the poem seems very unfamiliar at first sight and shows a very unique poetic style of e. e. Cummings. He violates the English rules such as punctuations, capitalization, spacing, etc.

2. Phonological Foregrounding:

Phonological foregrounding is analyzed at the level of phonology focusing more on phonological parallelism, deviations and repetitions. The phonological stylistic devices represent patterns of sound occur in the poems such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, internal rhyme, onomatopoeia, meter, etc. These phonological patterns based on linguistic findings tend to contribute to the overall tone and meaning of the poem. The phonological foregrounding of the poem Buffalo Bill's is going to be analyzed through the phonological patterns given below:

Alliteration: Alliteration is a sound pattern where initial consonants of two or more words get alliterated in a poetic line. According to Cuddon 1998 in Latin, "Alliteration had the meaning of repeating and playing upon the same letter." It is recognized by the repetition of the same sounds, particularly consonant sounds in close succession at the beginning of successive words. Here Cummings employs the alliteration in some places throughout the whole poem as in:

Buffalo Bill's	Line No. 1
Ridewater smooth – silver	Line No. 4
Stallion	Line No. 5
Four five pigeons just like that	Line No. 6
He was a handsome man	Line No. 8
And what I want to know is	Line No. 9
Blue eyedboy	Line No. 10

In the above lines, in line 1, the voiced bilabial plosive /b/ alliterates in the successive two words Buffalo Bill's. Lines 4 and 5 have the repetition of the consonant sound /s/ at the beginning of the words smooth, silver and stallion. The feature of this alliterative sound is voiceless alveolar fricative. In line 6, the alliterative sound /f/ which is voiceless labiodental fricative alliterates in the words four five, Line 8 the voiced glottal fricative consonant /h/ comes twice in the beginning of the two words he and handsome. The consonant sound /w/ which is voiced bilabial approximant takes place in the beginning of the words what and want in line 9. The last alliteration appears in line 10 which is /b/ with the feature of voiced bilabial plosive in the beginning of the words blueeyed andboy. At the end, we can say that the alliterative consonant sounds are plosive, fricative and approximant, /b/, /s/, /f/, /h/ and /w/ respectively.

Assonance: Assonance is a sound patten related to the repetition of vowel sounds in words occurring nearby one another. According to Abrams (2008), "Assonance is the occurrence of homogenous vowels in adjacent words in a poetic line". It happens when a poet forms a connection between words by assonance and other sound patterns (Leech 1969). The assonance is an important stylistic device that plays good roles as a phonological parallelism. Through the whole poem Buffalo Bill's, Cummings employs the phonological parallelism in three lines as assonance. Lines 3, 6 and 8 contain different words that create phonological parallelism with their vowel sounds /u/, /ai/ and /a/ respectively.

Whoused to	Line 3 /u:/
Five Like	line 6 /ai/
Handsome man	line 8 /a/
Like blueeyed	Line 10 /ai/

From the above lines, the vowel sound /u:/ which is long high back rounded monophthong occurs as a phonological parallelism in the words who and used. In line 6, the vowel sound /ai/ that is diphthong moving from low central unrounded to high front unrounded occurs as a phonological parallelism in the middle of the

words five and like. Another phonological parallelism as assonance appears and repeats in the two words handsome and man. This vowel sound/a/ is described as short low front unrounded monophthong. The last phonological parallelism as assonance appears in the two words like and blueeyed in line 10 with the diphthong low central unrounded to high front unrounded /ai/.

At the end, we can say that the assonance through the whole poem occurs in four lines, two times repeat as monophthong vowel and two times as diphthong vowels, /u:/, /a/, and /ai/ respectively. Thus, vowel sounds are considered to be very melodious to pronounce and effective in creating musical notes in a poem.

Consonance: Consonance is the repetition of the same consonant at the end of two or more words in a poem. Abrams (2008) defines consonance as the repetition of two or more consonants with changing overlapping vowels. Also the final consonant sounds are repeated with different former consonants. According to Wales (1989) “Consonance is also known as end-alliteration or consonantal assonance.”

Through the poem *Buffalo Bill*, Cummings uses the consonance almost in two lines 6 and 9 with the consonants /k/ and /t/ respectively.

break	like	line 6
.....justthat	line 6
and what i want	line 9

From the lines given above, the consonance appears two times in line 6 with different consonants at the end of different words such as break and like, just and that. The consonant /k/ which is voiceless velar plosive repeats at the end of break and like. In the same line 6, the final consonant/t/ is repeated at the end of the words just and that. The sound /t/ is voiceless alveolar plosive. This brings about a sense of partial rhythm in the line. Also the same sound /t/ is repeated at the end of the words what and want in line 9. At the end, we can say that the consonance through the whole poem repeats and appears as voiceless plosive with the consonants /k/ and /t/.

This poem is in the form of free verse and does not belong to any common norms of poetry. It is free of rhyme schemes, internal rhymes. Cummings did not employ any Onomatopoeia in this poem. On the superficial level, the poem “Buffalo Bill” has the simplicity of a nursery rhyme. In the next foregrounding, we will discuss the stylistic devices at the morphological and lexical levels because these two levels are interrelated in formation of words based on the sounds and letters.

3. Lexical and Morphological Foregrounding:

Generally speaking, the level of lexicon includes morphology for it is basic to words formation. The important stylistic features as this level comprises repetition of the same lexical item, repetition of synonyms, repetition of the same word but with different grammatical function, neologism, word-blends, words from dead languages (archaism), words for dialects, etc. In *Buffalo Bill*'s Cummings employs some of these features such as:

Repetition of Synonyms: The repetition of synonyms generally functions not only to lay emphasis but also to enlarge the semantic domain of reference (ibid). Cummings shows this lexical stylistic technique in the repetition of synonyms of the two adjectives handsome in line 8 and blueeyed in line 10. He used the combined words blueeyed as a synonym of the word handsome to enhance the prettiness of the *Buffalo Bill*.

Repetition of the Same Word but with a Different Grammatical Function: The literary writers use this repetition in the literary works to attract the attention of the readers to the message itself. Cummings uses this feature twice in lines 6 and 10 with repetition of the item like; in line 6 it is used as an adjective and in line 10 it is used as a verb.

Hyphenated Expressions: Literary writers try to create unique word blends in order to serve expressive purposes. Here, in this poem, Cummings tries to incorporate many qualities into one expression. He uses a hyphenated expression in line 4 a watersmooth – silver. This expression plays as a compound noun replacing an adjective and pre-modifier of the head noun in line 5” Stallion”

Analogy or Merger: This feature leads to the formation of compounds or strange expressions which functions to express some literary intent. Cummings employs this feature in line 6 in the big strange merger of construction (one two three four five pigeons just like that) and another small merger occurs in line 10 in the compound adjective blueeyed. The lack of spaces in these two kinds of mergers represents and depicts unfamiliar artistic swiftness.

4. Syntactic Foregrounding:

Syntactic stylistic devices are generally many in number such as parallelism, inversion, ellipsis, repetition, enumeration, polysyndeton, rhetorical questions. Cummings in *Buffalo Bill*'s employs some of these syntactic features e.g.

Ellipsis: Richards (1992) states “ellipsis refers to the leaving out of words or phrases from sentences where they are unnecessary because they have already been referred to or mentioned”. Cummings uses verb ellipsis in Line 3 after the relative pronoun who whereas the normal rule in English the verb to be (is) should be added after the word who. This is one kind of syntactic foregrounding occurs by Cumming in this poem.

Rhetorical Question: Rhetorical question is a syntactic stylistic figure not intended to draw an answer, but used for rhetorical effect. It can be expressed by various constructions such as interrogative constructions,

interrogative –negative constructions, declarative sentences and infinitival sentences. Cummings uses this feature in line 10 without a question mark at the end: how do you like your blue eyed boy.

Syllepsis: Syllepsis is a syntactic technique in which one word is used in two senses within the same utterance; and where the effect is of putting together two co-ordinate constructions with ellipsis to produce a kind of pun. It is frequently used with comic or satiric effect. In this poem, Cummings uses syllepsis in lines 3, 4 and 5 whereas the poet employs the construction of (used to) for two co-ordinate constructions: ride a water smooth-silver stallion and break.....

Polysyndeton: Short 1996 points out that polysyndeton refers to the repetition of the connectives (mostly conjunctions and prepositions) between sentences, phrases or words. Cummings employs this feature in lines 6 and 9 with the occurrence of (and) twice as a conjunction. The repetition of “and” offers new and additional meanings through the poem.

5. Semantic Foregrounding:

This kind of foregrounding focuses more on semantic deviations, parallelism such as metaphor, metonymy, irony, oxymoron, simile, hyperbole, etc. In this poem, Cummings employs some of these semantic deviations such as:

Apostrophe: Apostrophe is a figure of speech in which the literary writer expresses and addresses to a dead person, an animal, bird, inanimate forces of nature and an abstraction. Cummings uses this figure of speech in line 10 to address the death in his rhetorical question, how do you like your blue eyed boy. In this question, the poet addresses the idea of abstraction (the death). This type of apostrophe attributes humanity to an abstraction, and so is conceptually equivalent to personification.

Personification: Personification is a semantic figure of speech in which an inanimate object, animate non-human, or abstract quality is given human attributes. It is one kind of metaphor. In this poem, Cummings employs this kind of semantic feature in the last line of the poem. He addresses the abstract idea the death as a human being Mister Death. In this figure of speech, Cummings deviates and violates the semantic rule of restriction of selection whereas the noun Mister is not compatible semantically and logically with the noun death.

Simile: Simile is one of the semantic stylistic devices used to intensify a certain feature of a phenomenon or thing. Familiar comparisons and similes mustn't be confused with. They represent two diverse processes. Leech and Short 1981 mentioned that “the connectives (as and like) are the commonest signs of simile.” The simile is a figure of speech which draws a comparison between two different things in one or more aspects. Galperin 1977 points out that “comparison means weighing two objects belonging to one class of things with the purpose of establishing the degree of their sameness or difference”. In this poem Cummings uses this semantic technique in the resemblance of Buffalo Bill with Jesus. Jane Tompkins 1993 emphasized this feature and stated that this simile is a farfetched simile the Buffalo Bill was incredibly a handsome man like Jesus “the Buffalo Bill in the flesh was akin to the apparition of a saint or Virgin Mary for believers. He was the incarnation of an ideal”.

Epithet: Epithet is a figure of speech denoting a permanent or temporary quality of a person, thing or phenomenon and characterizing it from the point of view of subjective perception. Cummings employs this stylistic device in line 8 in the noun phrase a handsome man. The poet describes Buffalo Bill that he was handsome in life but at last he was captured by death. The poet may describe ironically his friend Cody that he is handsome but the exact intention and true inner meaning remains obscure in the mind of the dead poet.

Conclusion:

To sum up, foregrounding is an important discipline in stylistics which aims to accomplish literary aesthetic functions. Foregrounding results what Paul Simpson (2004) labels “linguistic distortion” and it can be achieved throughout parallelism and linguistic deviation (constructing something different from the common phonological, graphological, lexical, morphological, syntactic and Semantic norms). Thus e. e Cummings is a modern American poet who is celebrated for his orthographical and typographical deviations. His poem Buffalo Bill is one of his early published poems in which he disregarded the punctuation marks, spelling, common norms and forms. This paper introduced Cummings as a renowned American modern poet. It provided a literary as well as stylistic analysis of the poem. The poem was discussed extensively and analyzed thoroughly in all the stylistic levels (graphological, phonological, lexical morphological, syntactic and semantic levels). This paper depicts how Cummings used to convey to his audience the purpose of ‘literariness’ throughout the use of unfamiliar structures, spelling, capitalization and innovative forms. His poetry achieves literariness through what Shklovsky termed “defamiliarization’ (is an artistic method through which the artists present their literary works in strange and/or unusual forms and ways). Therefore Cummings is one of the famous poets who used to achieve the aesthetic purposes through defamiliarizing their textual composition.

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