

The Deviated Use of Punctuation Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

Lec. Saleema Abdul-Zahra

University of Al-Qadissiya

Abstract

Language is a powerful tool in the hands of a poet. Punctuation marks (symbols or signs used to make the writer's meaning clear) are the tool one can use to talk to the reader and draw his/her attention to specific points. Punctuation marks are important syntactically and semantically; since each one has its own uses and meanings. Their oddness and unconventional use by some poets such as Cummings, Blake, and Pound helps them to color their poems with special aspects and serves them to convey various meanings. Naturally, stylistics is the science through which the use of language in literature can be dealt with.

1. Punctuation Marks : An ntroduction

Actually, when one speaks, one can use different linguistic devices to make his/her meaning clear such as: stress, intonation, rhythm, pauses sometimes by using facial expressions or by using gestures, even if all else fails , by repeating what one has said. However, when one writes, one cannot use any of these devices and if the words are strung all together without ever indicating where the pauses should be, no one would understand the thoughts and ideas we are trying to express. The work that these devices do in speech is entirely handled by "punctuation". To grasp what punctuation is, it is important to pass through its historical development briefly.

Truss (2004:77) reveals that the first writing systems were mostly logographic and /or syllabic and they do not necessarily require punctuation because the entire morpheme or word is typically clustered within a single glyph. The Greeks began using punctuation marks, consisting of vertically arranged dots, in around the 5th century B.C. The Romans also adopted symbols to indicate pauses. Punctuation developed dramatically when large numbers of copies of the Christian Bible started to be produced and read aloud and the copyists began to introduce a range of marks to help the readers including indentation, various punctuation marks and initial capitals. With the invention of moveable type in Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries began an increase of

Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

printed material. The rise of printing meant that a standard system of punctuation was urgently required. The full stop, colon, and the comma were the only ones used until the close of the 15th century. In process of time, the semicolon was added and the marks of interrogation and admiration were introduced later.

Shaw (1986:137) makes it clear that punctuation is a method by which the meaning of written communication is made clear through the use of certain marks.

Similarly, Trask (1997:2) explains that punctuation is not an inconsequential bit of decoration and it is not regarded as a deeply personal matter; it is one aspect of written English. Punctuation is placed in text "to make meaning clear and to make reading easier." (MacCaskill, 2012:44).

Moreover, punctuation usually serves certain general purposes through certain symbols or signs called punctuation marks. Shaw (1986:138) summarizes these purposes as follows:

1. To end or terminate a statement (by using a period, a question mark, or an exclamation mark); these marks are called "terminal marks".
2. To introduce (by using a comma, a colon, or a dash).
3. To separate parts of a sentence or word (by using a comma, a semicolon, a dash, a hyphen, or an apostrophe).
4. To enclose parts of a sentence or a whole section (by using parentheses, or brackets).

Thus, the purpose of punctuation is practical, not ornamental, and the

reason for punctuating is to make the meaning clear and every punctuation mark has particular job to do, so there should be a conventional system of punctuation which is consistent and sensible. If the case is not like this, a reader has to wade through the writer's strange punctuation, having trouble following his /her meaning; at worst, the reader may be genuinely unable to understand what the writer has written.

Depending on many references, Razzak and Helen (2000:43-59) classify punctuation marks into four types:

1. *End punctuation marks: The full stop, the question mark, and the exclamation mark.*
2. *Non- end punctuation marks: The comma, the semicolon, the colon, and the dash.*
3. *Enclosing punctuation marks: Brackets (square and round), invented commas or quotation marks.*
4. *Punctuation marks used within the word: The apostrophe, the hyphen, and the abbreviation dot.*

It is worth noting that some writers such as Trask(1997:53)and MacCaskill(2012:75) add the asterisk and the slash as punctuation marks used in writing.

Each of these marks is a sort of short hand device, or road sign that assists the reader. Every mark is effective and it has its own meaning as it will be shown at section 2. The presence or absence of every mark is harmful if it impedes the flow of the idea the writer intends to convey to the reader. MacCaskill (2012:44) assures that the function of a punctuation mark is the basis for the rules governing its use and

Lec. Saleema Abdul-Zahra The Deviated Use of Punctuation Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

should be the basis for determining whether or not it is needed.

Chafe (1987:21-25) argues that punctuation marks should be considered in strict connection with the particular organization structure, and the written text at the discourse level, not merely the sentence.

Punctuation is considered by Ferreiro and Pontecorvo (1999:544) as one of the main streams of writing mechanism; it is of psychological and educational importance because punctuation is a part of writing that needs to be dealt with in text construction. The appropriate use of punctuation shows that a person has good knowledge of grammar and it helps to bring the right kind of expression into writing for which voice, intonation, volume, tone, pauses are used while speaking.

In addition, Truss (2004:71) makes it clear that "on the page, punctuation performs its grammatical function, but in the mind of the reader it does more than that. It tells the reader how to turn the tune." For instance, "Don't stop" means carry on. You are not required to stop. Rewriting the same words as "Don't. stop" immediately. Definitely both sentences would be spoken in a different manner to show the difference in meaning.

Nunberg(1990)and Dale(1991) explain the syntax and semantics of punctuation and its use in interpretation. Nunberg (1990:18) argues that punctuation system is firstly systematic and linguistic in the sense that it obeys principles and constraints, and secondly it is a separate linguistic subsystem not reducible to principles of

phonology or syntax. In his text grammar, Nunberg treats all words uniformly and groups them iteratively into certain textual units according to the surrounding punctuation. Dale (1991:13-14) proposes that the semantics of punctuation can be treated in terms of rhetorical or discourse relations such as narrative, continuation, explanation, elaboration, parallel, contrast and so forth. He emphasizes the important role of punctuation in cueing the correct interpretation for many text sentences.

To shed more light on the importance of the punctuation marks, it is interesting to summarize what Buchholz (1979:227-234) explains. He clarifies that everybody wants power to exert control over others; one way to seize this control, at least in writing, is through punctuation dynamics: the subtle power to awe the reader into submission through adept placement of punctuation. Certain punctuation marks, if used well, signed whether the writer is power figure or not. For instance, parentheses enhance the devastation because they graphically represent the inconspicuous relay, as they look much like hands cupped around a whisper being mouthed with subtle finesse. Subconsciously, they represent two sidewise smiles, the superior cunning. He states that the dash dramatically holds us at bay for a moment and then speeds the statement. The power of semicolon is derived largely from its psychological impact. He thinks that the semicolon is misunderstood; it is mysterious: it is therefore held in esteem and is even feared. He considers the semicolon as(a

Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

conspicuous punctuation) that gives strength, so sentences with semicolon spring from a good consciousness. Buchholz regards colon the mark of presidents and full professors, the ultimate mark of punctuation, for it commands obedience. The colon, because it reflects the heights erudition, is therefore used in any endeavor that needs style to bolster flattering substance.

From the previous discussion, it is clear that punctuation marks are not only important to clarify specific meanings in a text but they also convey certain messages about their users to the reader.

2. Uses of Punctuation Marks

The researcher adopts the classification of the punctuation marks in the English language made by Larry Trask(1997:1-62) and Mary K. McCaskill(1998:44-75) because their books in "punctuation" are direct and comprehensive. These marks can be listed as follows:

1.Full Stop (.) also called period

It is chiefly used to mark the end of declarative and imperative sentences. `A period` should be used only after a complete sentence with subject and predicate.

It may follow abbreviations except those for units of measure; or it may be used after a person's initials and in this case it is called abbreviation dot by some writers such as Razzak and Helen (2000:52) . `A period` may be used only with quotation marks, parentheses and brackets, and points of ellipsis; it is never repeated after an abbreviation. It is important to state that the period is

included before the end of quotation mark. Points of ellipsis (three evenly spaced periods) are used in formal writing to indicate an omission from quoted material. The terminal period (full stop) is always retained after ellipsis to enhance meaning.

2.Question Mark (?)

It is placed to terminate a direct question, whether the question is an independent sentence or a direct quotation. It may be inserted into the middle of something, inside parentheses to show uncertainty.

3.Exclamation Mark (!)

It is known informally as a bang or a shriek. It is used to express surprise, command, emphasis, or strong emotion. It is used after interjection such as Oh! , Wow! , and That hurts! .

4.Comma (,)

It is frequently used but it is often used wrongly. It has four distinct uses:

a.The listing comma: It is used as a kind of substitute for the word "and", or sometimes for "or". It is also used before "and" or "or" only if this is necessary to make meaning clear.

- You can fly to Bombay via Moscow, via Athens or via Cairo.

-My favourite opera composers are Verdi, Puccini, Mozart, and Gilbert and Sullivan.

Here the comma before and shows clearly that Gilbert and Sullivan worked together

b. The joining comma: it is used to join complete sentences and it must be

Lec. Saleema Abdul-Zahra The Deviated Use of Punctuation Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

followed by one of these connecting words: and, but, yet, or, and while.

-You must hand in your essay by Friday, or you will receive a mark of zero.

c. The gapping comma: It is easy, it is used to show that one or more words have been left out when the missing words would simply repeat the words already used earlier in the same sentence.

-Some Norwegians wanted to base their national language on the speech of the capital city; others, on the speech of the rural countryside.

d. The bracketing commas (isolating commas): A pair of bracketing commas is used to set off a weak interruption which could be removed from the sentence without destroying it.

-These findings, we would suggest, cast doubt upon his hypothesis.

5.Semicolon (:)

It is used to join two complete sentences into a single sentence. The use of the semicolon highlights the close relationship between the two sentences. Certain connecting words require a preceding semicolon such as: however, therefore, hence, thus, consequently, nevertheless and meanwhile. It denotes nearly a full stop. It precedes phrases like that is, namely, for example, in other words, and for instance. Sometimes a semicolon is used as `super commas` to avoid confusion to separate elements in series when one or more contain commas; for instance

Attending the meeting were Travis Clay pool, the mayor; Richard Hold, the city engineer; and Sandra Lee, the architect.

While the researcher was surfing the internet, she came across an article

at www.blogger.com by Julia Newman titled as " sex and the semicolon". She discusses the idea that some writers think that the semicolon bears feminine qualities; she believes that this idea comes from the fact that many writers do not like the semicolon and are looking for ways to devalue it. She adds that one way of looking at this argument is that semicolon is more feminine in that it produces lengthier sentences. Alternatively, another piece of punctuation, such as the masculine dash or blunt period, is more 'manly' because they get to the point more directly.

Clearly, such articles enforce the impressive stylistic role of the punctuation marks in addition to their syntactic and semantic effect, for their use may even refer to the sex of the writer as some writers claim.

6.Colon (:)

It is used to indicate that what follows it is an explanation or elaboration of what precedes it. A colon may be used to introduce a direct quotation, particularly if the quote is long (more than one sentence). It may be used between two clauses when the second amplifies or restates the first.

A colon is nearly always preceded by complete sentence; what follows the colon may or may not be a complete sentence, and it may be a mere list or even a single word. A colon is not normally followed by a capital letter , though sometimes it is preferred to use a capital.

7.Dash (-)

It is an informal punctuation device that denotes a sudden break in thought, an interruption, or an abrupt

Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

change to tone. Double dashes may be separated or combined; they may act as semicolons, colons or commas to separate nonessential elements which require additional emphasis or some form of exclamation or interruption. The double dashes give much more emphasis than a comma to a nonessential element. Triple dashes are also used but infrequently to introduce quoted text, working similarly to an ellipsis mark (...).

8. Parentheses ()

A pair of parentheses is used to set off a strong or weak interruption, rather like a pair of dashes or a pair of bracketing commas. Parentheses are preferable rather than dashes or bracketing commas, when the interruption is best regarded as a kind of "aside" from the writer to the reader. Parentheses are also used to set off additional information or a brief explanation of an unfamiliar term. However, some poets like Cummings have used them to indicate several functions in their poems as it is amplified lately in this research.

9. Quotation Marks (" ") or Inverted Commas

The chief use of quotation marks is to enclose a direct quotation (a repetition of someone's exact words). Sometimes quotation marks are used to distance the writer from a word or phrase or to show that he/she is using it ironically. They may enclose words that need to be differentiated from the text in order to make meaning clear. Italics are used for much the same purpose. Sometimes the quotation marks are used to enclose technical terms used in a

nonstandard way. When one needs to quote a quotation within a quotation, one would use single quotation to set off the inside quotation. It is important to explain that the period is included before the end of quotation mark but if the quotation is a sentence within a question, the quotation marks will appear after the end of quotation mark. Similarly, if the exclamation is part of a quotation that ends the sentence, then the exclamation mark is placed before the end of quotation. However, if the exclamation belongs to the writer, and not the original source, then it is included after the quotation mark.

10. Apostrophe (')

It is considered the most troublesome punctuation mark in English, for the confusion about apostrophes is great, yet it is a blunt fact that the incorrect use of apostrophes will make one's writing look illiterate more quickly than almost any other kind of mistake. It is used to indicate possession; to form the plurals of abbreviations, characters, and signs. It is used in writing contractions- that is, shortened forms of words from which one or more letters have been omitted.

11. Hyphen (-)

It is used to connect words or parts of words: it connects the syllables of words broken at the ends of lines, it connects prefixes and suffixes to words, and it connects compound words. The modern trend is away from hyphenation. The hyphen has several related uses; yet in every case, it is used to show that what it is attached to does not make up a complete word by itself.

Lec. Saleema Abdul-Zahra The Deviated Use of Punctuation Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

12. Italics, Capital letters, Asterisks, and Slashes

The purpose of using italics, capital letters, or asterisks very closely resembles the purpose of punctuation, to make meaning clear and reading easier.

Italics are used to distinguish letters, words, or phrases to be emphasized, special terminology, symbols, and words or letters to be differentiated from text. Most commonly, italics are used to draw attention to some particular part of a text. The conventional substitute is to use underlining or write the elements in bold.

Capital letters are used at the beginning of a sentence, for names of people, places, and rivers; for nations and adjectives of nationality, for names of days, months, festivals and historical eras, for titles of people and names of things and for titles of books, plays, works, of art. Quirk et al (1985: 1079) remark that capitals are used to "indicate spoken prominence for the words so specified."

Asterisks are commonly used to show something interesting or important that is later explained in a footnote.

The slash (/), also called a 'virgule' or 'solidus', is a diagonal line that separates or joins words in special circumstances. It is used to separate quoted lines of poetry, i.e. to divide one line from the next.

After surveying the conventional uses of the punctuation marks, let us deal with their deviated use which may convey various meanings or interpretations.

3. Use of Punctuation Marks in Poetry

Linguists are, naturally enough, interested in poetry for their own sectarian reasons. They may seek linguistic uses of poetic facts like the syllable, the syntactic phrase, prosodic structures, and the like; they hope "to mine poetry for its evidential nuggets". But there are also poetic uses of linguistic facts and it is in this realm linguists can contribute to the study of poetry (Zwicky, 1986: 64). What the researcher has in mind here is to illuminate the deviated use of the punctuation marks by some poets which helps them to add special flavour to their poems and to achieve specific poetic purposes. Stylistics concerns with such field of study.

Leech (1989:1) defines stylistics as "the study of literary style or the study of the use of language in literature, the language of a particular writer, a particular period, a particular genre, even a particular poem". One can conclude from the above definition that literature cannot be examined apart from language, that is to say, a literary work cannot be properly understood without a thorough knowledge of language, which is its medium of expression. Roberts(1990:3) asserts this idea by saying that "poetry is primarily an exploration of possibilities of language".

Verdonk (2002:5) shows that stylistics is the study of language in literature and it seeks to account for interpretation effects of a text through close study of its linguistic detail, such as syntactic structuring, semantic deviation, deixis, modality, etc. the term stylistics is also sometimes used to

Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

describe critically reflexive development of linguistic tools through literary application(usually called linguistic stylistics),or the use of linguistic tools to analyse literary or poetic features within naturally occurring language.

Carter and Stekwell(2008:10) explain that the aim of stylistics is to provide a less subjective, and retrievable account of interpretation and to show the effective effect of literary texts through a more textually sensitive, syntactic and socio-linguistically informed analysis of their linguistic feature.

It is important to add that the linguistic analysis of the literary text can help the reader to discover the poetic meaning and effect of linguistic structure. Sharma (2009:130) states that "a linguistically oriented analytic approach can ensure the kind of motivation".

A good starting point for the analysis of any literary text specifically a poem is to examine the foregrounded parts, written in poetic language, and provide an interpretation which links them together. The language of poetry is different from the language of other literary genres. Levin (1969:59) clarifies that the language of poetry differs drastically from ordinary discourse. In poetry, a writer addresses himself to writing a poem. This fact entails a considerable number of variety of linguistic particularities.

Before the twentieth century, there were rules and conventions about writing poems. Usually, the poems were quite neat and evenly shaped. However,

many modern poets break many of these rules. Saleem (2012:408) reveals that the twentieth century literature under the effect of various powerful influences grows mature and turns experimental, self- defining in character. The expansion of knowledge caused the intellectual minds of the literary writers like Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot make the sphere of literature elastic, open and flexible both in formal structure and themes. Under the influence of the new artistic material, some poets make new experiments in their poetic discourse that is enviable and a source of inspiration for others.

One of these artistic experiments is the graphological deviation which stands for the violation of the system of writing: "discarding of capital letter and punctuation where conventions call for them, jumping of words, eccentric use of parentheses,.... etc." (Leech, 1989:47).

Helms (1980:177) believes that punctuation, far from operating as a peripheral part of a poet's work, is central to our understanding of poetic meaning because of its ability to influence prosody. Punctuation is considered as a significant poetic device.

Moreover, Parkes(1992:4) and Levenston (1992:63-65) heighten the connection between punctuation and the creation of meaning embodied in the text and how punctuation is used to communicate particular interpretations to the readers and provide additional information not directly available from the flow of speech.

Breaking the rules of language or deviating from the norm is looked down

Lec. Saleema Abdul-Zahra The Deviated Use of Punctuation Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

upon and proscribed except for the deviations in poetry. Javanovic (1991:84) argues that understanding deviations is like understanding figurative meaning; first you have to know the literal meaning and only then can you hope to understand the figurative (metaphorical) one. What this means is that one has first to understand the rule, and only then the meaning of breaking it.

Previously, the researcher explains uses of punctuation marks and their importance in writing, so it would be easier to understand their deviated meaning in some poems.

Using unconventional or original language, the poet can give his readers unexpected surprise and make a strong impression on their minds. This kind of the creative use of language is called "linguistic deviation". Leech (1989:37) claims that there are kinds of linguistic deviations in poetry: lexical, semantic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, graphological, historical, the use of dialect, and the use of register. He connects linguistic deviation with a concept of foregrounded:

.....anyone who wishes to investigate the significance and value of a work of must concentrate on the element of interest and surprise, rather than on the automatic pattern, such deviations from linguistic or other socially accepted norms have been given the special name of fore-grounding. The foregrounding figure is the linguistic deviation, and the background is the language.

Grice (1975:41) explains that language deviation is a linguistic device of purposeful violation of grammatical rules and pragmatic regulations in language communication. He sums up functions of applying language

deviation in literature as follows: strengthening mood, accentuating a particular part of writing, attracting readers' attention, and pursuing aesthetic value. Moreover, Saleem (2012:410) reveals that the graphological deviations used to be analysed not only because they foreground the various parts of the discourse but also they are devised to shed light on the various important tensions and situations of life and personality of the persona (narrator) of the poem. Consequently, it can be noticed that some poets write sentences without full stop or successive clause as lines in a poem without a semicolon and sometimes they intentionally omit punctuation marks. Williamson (1988:21) points out that sometimes there is no punctuation mark at the end of any of the lines; even the last line is without a full stop. Eliot, for example, on purpose avoids sometimes the use of punctuation mark, but it does not mean that the meaning of his poetry becomes confused because the succession of words is not random, but connected or related often in an obvious way. He goes on explaining that his punctuation is functional not conventional, for instance the visible absence of the comma and the question mark in T.S. Eliot's poem "Ash-Wednesday," symbolizes the denial of the faith of the Christians in their private life, and the care of the reader that there should have been the comma and the question mark which symbolize the affirmation of faith in public. Gish (1981:68) reveals that the absence of the full stop at two places in Eliot's poem represents the absence of common place practices of

Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

the life of senses and the presence of intuition which has its own colors and orders.

Thus, it is clear that not only the presence of punctuation marks affect the coherence of a text to a certain extent but also their absence.

These graphological novelists are not a common practice in everyday language. The poet may introduce these abnormalities to foreground the relevant textual portion and stir the intended impressions. As examples of the poets whose poems are decorated by irregular punctuation, the researcher chooses E .E .Cummings, William Blake, and Ezra Pound because their deviated use of some punctuation marks is clear and because it plays an essential role in introducing their poems as unique and effective.

E.E.Cummings

Cummings' poetic reliance on punctuation is unique in quality and quantity, but it is also prototypical of the role punctuation can play in poetry.

Mehata (2012:266-268) assures that Cummings' name is associated with unconventional punctuation, capitalization, and word displacement. Punctuation marks intrude irregularly. Thus, typographical disarrangement is the characteristic of his writing to convey his message more effectively.

Among wide circles, Cummings is best known as the poet who does not use capital letters even his name is often spelled in lower case letters. Marks (1964:94) states that "*Cummings broke off lines in the middle of words; placed the first syllable of a word at the beginning of a poem and at the last at the*

end... used verbs, adverbs, and adjectives as nouns."

Moreover, among the various punctuation marks none has been more explored, used, and abused by Cummings than parentheses. Cummings is the unparalleled poet of parentheses and they are for him an extraordinarily prized poetic device. Lennard (1991) in a research traces the history of using the parentheses; he shows that no poet, from Shakespeare to Modernism, has used it more thoroughly or more innovatively than Cummings.

Cummings' linguistic innovation and typography serve poetic means within his philosophy. Spencer (1946:120) is accurate when he writes that through his typography, Cummings "wants to control the reading of the poem as much as he can so that to the reader as to the poet, there will be the smallest gap between the experience and its expression."

Tratakovsby (2009:219) makes the crucial point that the parentheses used in Cummings' poems can be divided into seven categories according to their functions within a poem:

1.Iconicity: Cummings has gotten benefit of the parentheses graphic shape. He used it not only to suggest the moon but as a substitution for the word moon itself. Webster (1995:124) finds two or more iconic uses of the parentheses in Cummings poems: the edges of a pond and swooping shapes of birds. He also has used them (when they are empty) to express an image of nothingness.

2.Protection and intimacy: He attempts in some of his poems to convey a sense of

Lec. Saleema Abdul-Zahra The Deviated Use of Punctuation Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

a need for protection. The parenthesized material is so intimate, secretive, and delicate that it is hard to imagine it said outside the protection afforded by the parentheses.

3. Direct address: *The privileged space between parentheses is a textual that Cummings often uses for purposes of creating intimacy between his speaker and another, by way of direct address.*

4. Plural layers and Framed poems
Parentheses provide a dual status to the material in them: It is part of the whole text (it is on the same page and part of the same poem) but also separate. The separation is not complete. They are used to interlink two different sections of the text, causing them to exist simultaneously in isolation and in interaction.

5. Hetero-glossia and Interpolation
Parentheses are often used by Cummings to echo epistemological uncertainty. Perkins (1987:45) distinguishes these cases: "parentheses may indicate an interpolated thought or an utterance in different tone of voice or by a different speaker."

6. Subverting Formal Expectations
In parentheses, Cummings finds a rich field to generate effects by playing off the reader's expectations. He foregrounds the parentheses typography, uses them to enclose the most intimate material or no material at all, and inverts them.

7. Temporality, simultaneity, Tmesis
The parenthetical material suspends the progression of the narrative in iconic temporal correspondence to the prolonged duration of the action. With Cummings, a single word is split and is interpolated by another word, fragment,

or even an entire poem. Levenston (1992:63-65) writes "simultaneity of perception in time can best be represented by interpretation in space." Sometimes they are used to expose a word within a word as when "he" is shown to be hiding in "where".

Actually, Cummings wrote many poems in which he used the parentheses as effective poetic device but it is not necessary to find all the categories in one poem, so the researcher chooses some of his *short* poems just to illustrate samples of the various functions of parentheses in his poetry.

Cummings' use of the parentheses in his famous early poem "O Sweet Spontaneous"; for instance, shows protection and separation:

O Sweet spontaneous
earth how often have
the
doting
fingers of
prurient philosophers pinched
and
poked
thee
,has the naughty thumb
of science prodded
thy
beauty .how
often have religious taken
thee upon their scraggy knees
squeezing and
buffeting thee that thou mightiest conceive
gods
(but
true
to the incomparable
couch of death thy
rhythmic
lover
thou answerest
them only with
spring)

Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

In this poem, the parentheses combine with the conjunction but to distinguish between the first part of the poem and its last part, as if to protect the earth by way of separating it from the rest of the poem.

A simple example of *direct address* function can be found in the short poem "Of all things under our"

Of all things under our
blonder than blondest star

The most mysterious
(*eliena, my dear*) is this

-how anyone so gay

Possibly could die

Here the parentheses include only the three words: '*eliena, my dear*'. However, it is found out at the end of the poem that *eliena* is dead and this is an apostrophe rather than a naive question addressed to someone. It is as if the speaker wishes to postpone as much as he can the reality of her death until the very last word of the poem and not before.

Sometimes Cummings uses parentheses to expose a word within a word, as when '*he*' is shown to be hiding in '*where*' which is itself part of '*nowhere*'

r
olle
di
nt
o
n
o
w(he)re

Besides an iconic representation of the act of hiding, surrounding '*he*'

multiplies the possible readings and opens the door for others: in addition to *rolled into nowhere*, also *rolled into now*, *into he*, *into here*, *into where*. Here the parentheses are a prized device to achieve the controlled fragmentation in the poem.

From the previous discussion, It is clear to notice the important various functions of the parentheses used greatly by Cummings in his poems which emphasize the effective role of punctuation in poetry in that it indicates the poet's intentions and makes his poetry not only have special aspect but it also gives Cummings poems special shape through its deviated use.

William Blake

Fuller (2012:2) points out that among the unique eccentricities sometimes taken for punctuation which may be the result of careless etching or poor linking; Blake's colons are included which merge into exclamation marks, his full stops which merge into commas, his uncertain distinction between lower case and capital letters, and his irregular spacing for all punctuation marks. All these irregular forms may imply irregular meanings. The irregular punctuation as one aspect of the decorated character of Blake's script plays its part in adornment. Blake's punctuation has to be understood in the context of his script as a whole in a way that conventional typography simply cannot reproduce. Blake was often not careful about punctuation; most repeated lines are not punctuated in the same way in their different appearances. The different punctuation suggests that he was relatively indifferent about punctuation. Some of his punctuations have been carefully considered and expressive. The common absence of punctuation at line endings, for example often means that lines can be connected either

Lec. Saleema Abdul-Zahra The Deviated Use of Punctuation Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

backwards or forwards. Blake's punctuation is often not syntactic it has specific purpose ;i. e, it may be used to point the shapes that do not coincide with the lineation.

Fuller (2012:6) explains that Blake's most notable and potentially misleading idiosyncrasy is his use of the full stop, which commonly occurs in the middle of grammatical units. It may sometimes be intended to mark internal rhyme. The presence of the syntactically redundant comma in the following lines by Blake implies that "down" is a noun parallel to "crown" rather than as an adverb modifying "Flow'd"

On his head a crown

On his shoulder down

Flow'd his golden hair.

(The title is "Girl Found")

On the other hand, Blake in another poem "The Little Blake Boy" does not use a comma where it is syntactically expected between two parallel phrases "comfort in morning joy in the noon day" momentarily confuses about the function of 'morning', which can be mistaken for an adjective modifying 'joy'. The competent reader readily negotiates these oddities. "The Little Blake Boy"

Look on the rising sun; there God does live

And gives his light, and gives his heat away.

And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive

Comfort in morning joy in the noonday.

There may be all sorts of meanings in Blake's punctuation according to the reader's understanding. The bottom line of what is mentioned previously; Blake uses the punctuation marks

cleverly to present different meanings and to express his attitude towards different topics he deals with in his poems.

Ezra Pound

Most of Pound's poems are full of deviated uses of the punctuation marks. The researcher chooses one of his famous poems 'In a station of the Metro' because the entire poem is two lines long:

*The apparition of these faces in
the crowd;*

Petals on a wet, black bough

Semicolons can be crucial punctuation marks in creative writing and this is demonstrated clearly in this poem. The semicolon in this poem has been a hot topic for debate because people wonder whether the semicolon is making the last line secondary to the one before it or if the semicolon is simply connecting two equal ideas.

It is considered as the most famous of imagist's poems which yields a surprising variety of readings. Elis (1988:7) states that readings are influenced to an extent by the frequent changes Pound made to the punctuation of the poem in the early years of its existence. The differently-punctuated early versions are interchangeable. It is true that changes made by Pound to the poem are small, but they remain far from unimportant. The earliest printing of "In a station of the Metro" in April of 1913 was spaced and punctuated as this:

*The apparition of these faces in
the crowd*

Petals on a wet, black bough.

Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

The same version had been published on June 1913 as:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:

Petals on a wet, black bough.

These lines were reproduced with a comma after "petals" in 1914. The comma represents Pound's wish to retain the suggestion of the prominence of the word "petals" which the original spacing, by isolating the word, had given to it. In 1915 Pound felt that the poem's final line contains a consistent rather than contradictory image of the beauty of his Parisian experience, and that there is no need to *safeguard* 'petals' through increasing the distance between it and the following adjectives. So, by September 1916, the poem retained the semicolon instead of the colon. The colon tends to subordinate the first line to the second by indicating that the first line was incomplete, its function being primarily that of introducing the 'image' in line two which the colon informs us is necessary to complete the first line's meaning.

Barbarese (1993:11) clarifies that Pound writes to Harriet Monroe, "I was careful, I think, to indicate spaces between the rhythmic units, and I want them observed." Pound admits that he became modernist homiletic, where he recounts his creation to getting off the pairs train one day in 1912 and stepping into the steaming crowd of "beautiful" faces. The emotion, he goes on to explain, required over a year to discover its proper verbal shape.

Genders (2001:14) reveals that the imagist's poem derives its power from its resistance to languages and this is

clear in Pound's poem; he states that Pound shrinks the poem from thirty lines to a single sentence. The poem turns radically on the twist everything around and back on itself, structurally coming us to read the apparitional faces as an image or sign, a simile (faces like petals) or symbol (petals of faces). "The image is itself the speech", Pound insists. The image is the word beyond formulated language.

By the previous brief discussion of the long debate about Pound's short poem, the researcher adds another example which shows how punctuation plays an important role in expressing different meanings or various intentions of the poet by the changeable use of the punctuation marks from semicolon or comma to colon. Thus, punctuation marks should be studied within variety of theoretical and descriptive frame works because of their discursive and expressive role in writing.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is expedient to sum up the following remarks:

1. Speakers may use their voice tone, facial expressions or gestures to indicate power, exclamations,... etc. However, they use punctuation marks to do so in writing. They can be classified into different types: end punctuation marks, non-end punctuation marks, enclosing punctuation marks, and punctuation marks used within the words. Each one has its own job to do; their use affects the coherence of the text. They are important in cueing the correct interpretation for many texts. The specific use of certain punctuation marks may refer to the character and

Lec. Saleema Abdul-Zahra The Deviated Use of Punctuation Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

show many other features of the writer. In return, they may present different interpretation to the reader. Thus, punctuation marks should be shed sufficient light upon.

2. Punctuation marks are used by poets as a poetic device to express their attitudes and they have given their poems specific colour and flavour. The excessive use of the violations of some of the punctuation marks serves to do many functions as it is shown in Cummings' use of the parentheses and the special use of some punctuation marks such as the semicolon or the colon by Blake and Pound. These poets have relied greatly upon punctuation to convey deep and crucial meanings. They have used the graphological deviation to make the reader try to seek the intended interpretation to their lines.

3. The research emphasizes the importance of stylistics in appreciating the use of language in literature, for great deal of literary work may not be understood without a good knowledge of language which is its tool to explain. This is enhanced in this research, for if one does not realize the importance of punctuation and its function in writing, he will not have the capacity to grasp the meaning of their deviation in poetry.

Bibliography

Barbasese, J.T. (1993) "Ezra Pound's Imagist Aesthetics". In the *Columbian History of American Poetry*. Ed. Jay parini and Brett. Miller. Newyor: ColumbiaUP.

Buchholz, William (1979) "Punctuation: the Dynamics of obscure mark". *PhiDeltaKappan*, November 1979

(234-227).

Carter, R.A. and Stekwell, R.(ed.)(2008). *The Language and Literature Reader*. London: Routledge.

Chafe, V. (1987) "Cognitive constraints on information flow". In R.S. Tomling (Ed.), *Coherence and grounding in discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Dale, R. (1991) "The Role of Punctuation in Discourse Structure". In proceedings of the AAI Fall symposium on Discourse Structure in Natural Language Understanding and Generation

Elis, Steve (1988) "The Punctuation of 'In a Station of the Metro'" in *Paidenma* 17: 2-3.

Ferreiro, E. and Pontecorvo, C. (1999). "Meaning the Written text: the beginning of punctuation in Children's writing". *Learning and Instruction*, 9(4).

Fuller, David (2012) "Editing and Reading Blake Modernizing Blake's Text: Syntax, Rhythm, Rhetoric". Durham University.

Genders, R. (2001). *Races and Religious Cultures in Modern American Poetry*. Cambridge : Cambridge UP.

Gish, N. (1981) *Time in the poetry of T.S. Eliot: A Study in structure and theme*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.

Grice, H. (1975) "Logic and Conversation". In Cole and Morgan (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics*, vol.3. New York: Academic Press.

Helms, Allen (1980). "The Sense of Punctuation". *Yale Review* 69.2.

Lecturer Saleema Abdul-Zahra The Deviated Use of Punctuation

Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

Leech, G.(1989) *A linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. Hong Kong: Longman group UK Ltd.

Lennard, J.(1991) *But I Disgress. The Exploitation of parentheses in English printed Verse*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Levenston,E.(1992) *The Staff of Literature: physical of Texts and their Relation to Literary Meaning*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Levin, S.(1969) *Linguistic Structure in Poetry*. The Hague: Mouton.

MacCaskill, Mary (2012) *Grammar, Punctuation and Capitalization*. Virginia: Langley Research Centre.

Marks, Barry (1964) *E.E.Cummings*. New Haven: Twayne.

Mehata, A. (2012) *Stylistic Analysis of E.E.Cummings' poems*. Finland: Saurashtra University.

Newman ,Julia(2009)Sex and the semicolon.URL(<http://www.bolgger.com>)

Nunberg ,G(1990) ‘The Linguistics of Punctuation’. CSLI Lecture Notes 1. Stanford,CA.

Parkes, M. (1992) *Pause and Effect. An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*. Cambridge: Scolar Press.

Perkins, D.(1987) *A History of Modern Poetry. Modernism and After*. Cambridge : Belknap Press of Harvard UP.

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.

Razzak,F. and Helen Al Hassan (2000) *College Composition*. Baghdad:

Institute for the Development of English Language Teaching in Iraq.

Roberts, M.(1990) *The Faber Book of Modern Verse*. London: Faber and Faber.

Saleem, M. (2012)’’ *Analysing Grapological Deviations in T.S.Eliot’s poem Ash- Wednesday’’*. Language in India,Vol12:3 March 2012 ISSN 1930-2940.

Sharma , R.(2009) *Linguistic Aspects of English Poetry*. New Delhi : SARUP Book publishers Ltd.

Shaw, Harry (1986) *McGraw- Hill Handbook of English*. New York: New York University Press.

Spencer, Theodore(1946) ‘‘ Technique as Joy’’ . EETI: E.E.Cummings’ parentheses: Punctuation as Poetic Device. Tel Aviv University.

Trask, Larry(1997) *The Penguin Guide to Punctuation*. Harmonds worth: Penguin.

Truss, Lynn (2004) *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: the Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. New York: Gotham Books.

Verdonk, P. (2002) *Stylistics*. Oxford:OUP.

Webster, Michael(1995) *Reading Visual Poetry after Futurism: Marinett: Apollinaire, Schwitters, Cummings*. New York: Peter lang.

Williamson, G. (1988) *A Reader’s Guide to T.S.Eliot: A Poem by poem Analysis*. Yugoslavia: Thames and Hudson.

Zwicky, A(1986) *Linguistics and the Study of Folk- Poetry*. California : University of California Press.

Lec. Saleema Abdul-Zahra The Deviated Use of Punctuation Marks in Poetry: A Stylistic Study

الخلاصة

اللغة هي أداة قوية يستخدمها الشاعر .
علامات الترقيم التي هي رموز تستخدم لتوضيح معنى
الكاتب ، هي الأداة التي يمكن بواسطتها التكلم مع
القارئ وجذب انتباهه على نقاط معينة . علامات
الترقيم مهمة من ناحية التركيب والمعنى لأن كل واحدة
منها لها استعمالها ومعناها الخاص بها . استعمالها
الغريب او غير المتعارف عليه من قبل بعض الشعراء
امثال « كمنجز » ، « بليك » ، « باوند » ساعدهم
في إعطاء صبغة خاصة لشعرهم وخدمهم في إيصال
معانٍ مختلفة . بطبيعة الحال ، علم الأسلوب هو العلم
الذي من خلاله يمكن التعامل مع استعمال اللغة في
الأدب.