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**Foregrounding Spiritual Desolation through Deviation and Parallelism: A Stylistic Analysis of T.S. Eliot's The Hollow Men**



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**Abstract**

The Hollow Men (1925) is a key Modernist poem by T.S. Eliot, disheartened and depressed by the lack of spirit, the moral emptiness and existential uncertainty of the post-World War 1 era. While it has already been studied from theological, philosophical and intertextual points of view, its linguistic techniques which shape these themes have not been studied to the same extent. This study examines how linguistic deviation and parallelism in the poem foreground spiritual desolation in its stylistic creation. The analysis is derived from Foregrounding Theory by Geoffrey Leech, who has built on the Russian Formalist notion of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*). From the semantic, lexical, grammatical, graphological, phonological and syntactic aspects of meaning, the poem is analyzed qualitatively and stylistically. The findings show that the meaning of traditional words is disturbed by semantic deviation, particularly in the form of paradox and oxymoron, which, in the end, will create ontological emptiness. Meanwhile, the syntactic and structural parallelism creates repetitive patterns that signal stagnation, incompleteness and immobility. Other indicators of phonological weakening, graphological irregularities and grammatical fragmentation also help to point to the ideas of spiritual exhaustion and communicative failure. The study concludes that the interaction between deviation and parallelism is the most significant stylistic technique in the poem, as it conveys abstract despair and offers a concrete linguistic experience, and that foregrounding theory is a valuable tool for Modernist stylistic analysis.

**Keywords:** T.S. Eliot; *The Hollow Men*; Stylistics; Foregrounding Theory; Linguistic Deviation; Parallelism; Defamiliarization; Modernism; Spiritual Desolation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Modernist poetry radically transformed the way in which language and human experience were linked; its emphasis was on the fragmentation of traditional syntax, which reflected a world in a state of crisis. T.S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men* (1925) is a statement poem which represents the disillusionment of post-war Europe. The poem has long been recognized as an exploration of spiritual bankruptcy, ontological emptiness and existential paralysis. But the actual linguistic structure for such themes is not specifically examined in detail and systematically enough. This inquiry is provided by the stylistics, which gives the required empirical tools. Stylistics is based on the Russian Formalist approach which sees literary language as different from common, functional language. The basic idea of *ostranenie* (defamiliarization) is that the art of art is to restore the feeling of life. It makes the familiar seem strange and the reader has to slow down and take conscious note of the medium itself. When it comes to poetry, this defamiliarisation is achieved by a conscious and artful violation of normal linguistic conventions. These Formalist notions were later developed into a larger theory of Geoffrey Leech's foregrounding. Foregrounding is a conscious departure from normal linguistic usages or the use of very regularised and repeated parallel constructions in a text. These language irregularities draw the reader's attention from the message to the language itself, and create new layers of meaning.

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For Eliot, language doesn't just evoke desolation, it is an enactment of desolation.

## 1.2 Research Problem

The *Hollow Men* has been the object of critical reception that has focused on thematic, theological and intertextual studies. It has been the subject of extensive scholarly research for its wealth of referenced allusions to Dante's *Inferno*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. They carefully attend to the poem's expression of theological despair, cultural fatigue and the utter impossibility of human communication. Although these macro-level interpretations are certainly useful, they are oftentimes oblivious to the micro-level linguistic mechanisms that actively produce these macro-level interpretations. Purely thematic interpretations run the risk of seeing language as a transparent medium, in which it does not play an active or resistant role in the production of meaning. A traditional literary analysis can identify the stifling effect of the poem's "paralysis," but it often fails to have the analytical vocabulary to describe how the actual syntax, lexicon, and phonology of the poem achieves the sense of "paralysis. This methodological gap is a basic research question. Such a systematic study of the exact stylistic techniques that Eliot uses to express such spiritual desolation is desperately needed. In particular, the interaction of linguistic deviation (violation of the rules of grammar or lexicon) and parallelism (over-application of the structure rules) is dynamic and often paradoxical and needs to be rigorously investigated. How are empty syntactic patterns, semantic incongruities and obsessive repetitions expressions of the inability of the hollow men to act, to feel or to pray? This study aims to fill this lacuna by foregrounding the poem using foregrounding theory of Leech in order to decode the internal linguistic mechanics of the poem.

## 1.3 Research Objectives

To address the identified research problem, this study establishes the following objectives:

RO1: To identify instances of deviation and parallelism in T.S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men* using Leech's Foregrounding Theory.

RO2: To examine how foregrounded patterns of deviation and parallelism contribute to the representation of spiritual desolation in the poem.

## 1.4 Research Questions

Guided by the research objectives, this study seeks to answer the following core questions:

RQ1: What types of deviation and parallelism are foregrounded in T.S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men*?

RQ2: How do deviation and parallelism contribute to the construction of spiritual desolation in the poem?

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

This is a study of many-layered significance, not only for literary criticism but also for stylistics. In the first place, it successfully overcomes the gulf between empirical analysis of language and disembodied literary interpretation. The structure of the book provides a strong foundation for the broad thematic investigations of Eliot's metaphysical concerns, focusing them in specific, observable textual evidence. This helps to avoid the subjective impressionism of interpretation. Second, it

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forcefully argues for the continued relevance of Geoffrey Leech's foregrounding theory to the study of complex and fragmented Modernist poetry. Aggression in the deformation of language is an intrinsic feature of modernism. Leech's two intertwined interests, deviation and parallelism, offer just the proper sensitive focus with which to deconstruct this kind of literary experimentation. In addition, the results will provide a much richer and more recent interpretation of *The Hollow Men* for current researchers. The analysis doesn't just note the despair in the text; it exposes the real blueprint of despair in the architecture. It is the most explicit example of how the stanzas are empty of spirit in the way they are composed. Finally, this study offers a methodological model which is very easy to replicate for future stylistic analysis of early 20th-century poetry.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction**

T.S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men* has been the subject of much research in literary criticism, Modernist studies, theology, philosophy, and stylistics. Ever since its initial publication in 1925, it has been considered as one of the most influential pieces of twentieth century literature that captured the spirit of emptiness, moral paralysis, and existential uncertainty (Bush, 1984, Moody, 1994, Childs, 2000, and North, 1991). Although a lot of the earlier criticism was oriented toward Eliot's religious interests, symbolism, and intertextual reference, more recent work has begun to highlight the significance of the linguistic and stylistic analysis in the understanding of how the poem generates meaning (Leech & Short, 2007; Simpson, 2004; Toolan, 2014; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010).

The increasing interaction between formal linguistics and literary criticism, especially in the study of Modernist literature that exhibits fragmentation, ambiguity, and complex psychological representations (Carter & Stockwell, 2008; Simpson, 2004; Semino & Culpeper, 2002), is an important trend in contemporary literary scholarship. In this intellectual framework, stylistics offers a method which is systematic and repeatable to explore the role of linguistic choices in developing themes and how that influences the reader's interpretation (Leech, 1969; Short, 1996). Therefore, the present study deals with *The Hollow Men* from the stylistic point of view with particular emphasis on deviation and parallelism as devices for foregrounding.

### **2.2 Modernism and T.S. Eliot's Poetic Vision**

Modernism emerges in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a response to the radical social, political and cultural changes which occurred during this time, such as industrialisation, urbanisation, the advent of technology and the devastation caused by the First World War (Bradbury & McFarlane, 1976; Childs, 2000; Lewis, 2007). Modernist writers were breaking away from the old traditional ways of writing and were looking for new forms that could convey the fragmentation and uncertainty of modern life (Perkins, 1976; Ellmann & Feidelson, 1965).

T.S. Eliot can be considered one of the leading literary modernists due to his new poetry and his cultural criticism of decline as well as his blending of various literary traditions (Kenner 1971, Bush 1984, Moody 1994). Eliot's work in poetry was always one that dealt with disassociation, spiritual doubts, cultural decline, and a quest for meaning in a disassociative world (Brooker, 1994; North, 1991). His works

both interrogate conventional images and employ a complex imagery, disjointed narrative, and many intertextual allusions.

The *Hollow Men* is often viewed as a turning point in Eliot's poetry, standing as it does between *The Waste Land* (1922) and *Ash Wednesday* (1930) (Bush, 1984; Moody, 1994; Childs, 2000). In general, critics agree that the poem is an expression of the profound spiritual disillusionment and moral uncertainty of the post-war Europe (Perkins, 1976; North, 1991). Eliot uses disjointed voices, contradictory images and repetitions to depict the characters in conflicting states of redemption and damnation, action and inaction, faith and despair.

The "mythic method" is a concept that governs Eliot's poetic method, as he termed it a way of bringing order into the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy" that he saw in modern history (Eliot 1923; Kenner 1971; Childs 2000). This approach allows the poet to relate to the modern experience and historical, religious, and mythological contexts. Likewise, Eliot's notion of the "objective correlative" suggests that emotions are best expressed through the composition of objects, circumstances, and events rather than by the expression of emotion itself (Eliot, 1919; Bush, 1984). The *Hollow Men* are a significant work through the application of these principles, using symbolic landscapes, and fragmented images to create a strong sense of spiritual desolation.

### **2.3 Stylistics as an Approach to Literary Analysis**

Stylistics can be defined in a general way as the systematic study of language in literary and non-literary texts (Leech & Short, 2007; Simpson, 2004; Verdonk, 2013). Unlike the traditional literary criticism that is based on subjective interpretation, stylistics involves a more objective examination of the meaning of texts, by combining a literary analysis with a linguistic methodology (Short, 1996; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010).

Leech and Short (2007) define stylistics as the study of how the language choices help to produce literary effects and thematic meaning. Likewise, Simpson (2004) states that stylistic analysis is the connecting link between language and literature because it shows the effect that formal features of a text have on interpretation. This method allows for the study of literary works at various linguistic levels (graphology, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and discourse) (Toolan, 2014; Carter & Stockwell, 2008).

Recent research has highlighted the importance of linguistic analysis not only as a complement to the interpretation of literary texts, but as a key element of scholarly inquiry (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010; Verdonk, 2013). This is because if language is not given systematic consideration, critical readings of literary works are at risk of missing the mechanisms by which meaning is produced within literary texts. Hence, stylistics offers a suitable methodology to analyse Eliot's poetic language and the linguistic patterns which help to represent the spiritual emptiness and existential paralysis of the poem.

### **2.4 Russian Formalism and the Concept of Literariness**

Modern stylistics can be traced back to the Russian Formalists, a critical movement that came on the scene in the early twentieth century which aimed at distinguishing the features of literary language from ordinary means of communication (Erlich, 1981; Eagleton, 2008). Formalist scholars suggested that literature be studied as an independent verbal structure, without considering the social

or biographical facts (Shklovsky, 1917/1965; Jakobson, 1960).

The notion of literariness (*literaturnost*) is at the heart of Formalist theory, indicating those properties which are specific to a literary text (Jakobson, 1960; Erlich, 1981). Formalists stated that literary text is about art effect, which means that the reader has to be made aware of the medium: the reader should know not only the message, but also the medium (Shklovsky, 1917/1965, Eagleton, 2008).

This concern with the form of the language was a precursor to later developments in the field of stylistics and foregrounding theory. The Formalists have had a lasting effect on the present day methods of literary analysis (Leech, 1969; Simpson, 2004).

## **2.5 Defamiliarization and Foregrounding**

The most impactful idea of Russian Formalism is that of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) (Shklovsky, 1917/1965). Shklovsky says that over time the perception of everyday life becomes routine and automatic. Art is a counter to this process: it's a way of viewing familiar objects and experiences in ways that are different from what people are used to or accustomed to, so that it resensitizes human perception and extends the aesthetic experience.

This idea was extended by the Prague Linguistic Circle in the elaboration of the theory of foregrounding (Mukařovský, 1964; Havránek, 1964). Foregrounding is the "prominence" a text gives itself by deviating from the normal language patterns or producing "unusual regularities" (Leech, 1969; Short, 1996). These foregrounded elements catch readers' interest and make them pay more attention to the text.

Foregrounding is one of the most powerful and influential concepts in modern stylistics as it has been able to explain how literary text is able to have an aesthetic impact through the linguistic manipulation (Simpson, 2004; Verdonk, 2013). The theory has special application to Modernist poetry, where the play and uncertainty of language frequently mirror the fragmentation, alienation and cultural instability of the larger culture (Childs, 2000; Perkins, 1976).

## **2.6 Geoffrey Leech's Foregrounding Theory**

One of the most complete and important formulations of foregrounding theory was given by Geoffrey Leech (1969). Based on Russian Formalism and Prague School linguistics, Leech suggested that foregrounding is manifested by two fundamental means: deviation and parallelism.

Literary language, as Leech (1969) says, either calls attention to itself by violating the normal linguistic rules or it produces an unanticipated regularity of language. It is through these two processes that writers can play with the readers' expectations and create multiple layers of meaning. The framework is still very helpful in analysing poetry as it provides a systematic way of identifying and interpreting the stylistic elements over a number of linguistic levels (Leech & Short, 2007; Simpson, 2004).

The present study chooses Leech's model since it offer a complete theoretical model for the analysis of the language construction of meaning in *The Hollow Men*. In particular, the notions of deviation and parallelism are useful in interpreting the way Eliot's language manifests spiritual fissures and existential stasis.

## **2.7 Deviation as a Foregrounding Device**

Deviation is the intentional violation of language norms, conventions and

expectations (Leech, 1969; Short, 1996). When writers ignore the patterns, at phonological, graphological, lexical, grammatical, semantic or discourse levels.

Leech (1969) suggests that deviation attracts the attention of the text in terms of its violation of readers' expectations. These interruptions invite the reader to be more active in the reading process and to look for the deeper meanings. Deviation in Modernist literature may serve as a symbol of fragmentation, alienation, uncertainty and psychological disintegration (Perkins, 1976; Childs, 2000).

Many critics have noted that the language deviation is often used by Modernist writers to contest traditional ways of representing and to show the disjointedness of modern life (Bradbury & McFarlane, 1976; Lewis, 2007). Thus, deviation is an important analytical category in regard to Eliot's poetic language.

## **2.8 Parallelism as a Foregrounding Device**

The second part of Leech's foregrounding model (Leech, 1969) is parallelism. Whereas deviation focuses on language by using irregularity, parallelism is made prominent by repetition and regular structure. Often in modernist poetry, repetition and fragmentation coexist and a tension is created between formal coherence and thematic disorder. This tension is echoed in the *Hollow Men* by repeated structure, which helps to reinforce the poem's portrayal of spiritual emptiness, paralysis and stagnation.

Parallelism, as defined by Jakobson (1960), is the "projection of equivalence across linguistic structures. It can happen on the phonological, lexical, grammatical, syntactic or semantic level. Repetition makes the sentences in the passage rhythm, coherent, emphatic and memorable (Leech, 1969; Leech & Short, 2007).

It has been observed that parallelism can provide structure to a text in which thematic instability or emotional turbulence occur (Short, 1996; Simpson, 2004). The repetition of forms in Modernist poetry often occurs alongside images of fragmentation, with this tension between form and the thematic disorder being productive. The tension is especially noticeable in *The Hollow Men*, where the repetition plays a key role in the poem's depiction of spiritual stasis.

## **2.9 Previous Studies on *The Hollow Men***

*The Hollow Men* have been the subject of much scholarly study with emphasis on their themes of spiritual barrenness, religious uncertainty, cultural decay and existential despair (Bush, 1984; Moody, 1994; North, 1991; Brooker, 1994). A number of critics have interpreted the poem as an expression of the disillusionment of the post-war era, and the downfall of the traditional systems of belief (Childs, 2000; Perkins, 1976).

The poem has been analysed at different levels of language by stylistic scholars. On the graphological level, critics point to the fact that the poem is divided into five parts of irregular stanzas and its unusual punctuation patterns which help to create an atmosphere of incompleteness and suspension (Leech, 1969; Simpson, 2004). Morphological analysis illuminates Eliot's compounding and affixation to form pictures of decay and spiritual void. (Leech & Short, 2007).

Phonological analyses focus on the highly sound patterned nature of the poem, especially the alliteration, consonance and assonance that make up for the lack of a regular rhyme scheme (Short, 1996; Toolan, 2014). It is also been studied to what extent sound-symbolism is involved in the depiction of dryness, emptiness and

collapse in the poem as a whole.

On the syntactic level, there is a large number of repetitions and parallelisms, especially in the well known "Between the..." sequences (Leech, 1969; Simpson, 2004). The structures themselves evoke a sense of interruption, incompleteness which reflects the psychological state of the hollow men. Lexical analyses also focus on the use of paradox and oxymoron in the poem, such as 'hollow men', 'stuffed men', 'Shape without form' and 'Paralysed force' (Brooker, 1994; Bush, 1984).

But intertextual studies have also emphasized the massive use of literary, religious, historical and cultural allusions in Eliot's work (North, 1991; Kenner, 1971; Moody, 1994). Constant references to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Christian theology as well as Guy Fawkes and popular nursery rhymes are all identified as central to the poem's significance.

### **2.10 Research Gap**

Although there has been a significant amount of scholarship on *The Hollow Men*, there are still a few areas to be addressed. The majority of research is based on thematic, philosophical, theological and intertextual interpretations (Bush, 1984; North, 1991; Moody, 1994). Stylistic observations are found in many places in Eliot criticism, but they are often quite disjointed and descriptive rather than systematic.

Furthermore, few studies have been done that have systematically used Geoffrey Leech's dual concepts of deviation and parallelism toward the poem. Stylistic aspects are often identified in isolation and not studied as the interaction between two or more linguistic levels to create an overall impression of spiritual desolation and existential paralysis (Leech, 1969; Simpson, 2004; Short, 1996).

Thus, there is a huge methodological gap in the literature. A detailed stylistic investigation is still needed to systematically examine the relationship between deviation and parallelism and show how these foregrounding devices account for the construction of the themes in the poem.

### **2.11 Theoretical Framework**

The present study is based on the Theory of Foregrounding propagated by Geoffrey Leech (1969) which has its foundation in Russian Formalism and the Prague School tradition. Foregrounding is the process that makes some linguistic features stand out due to their departure from the norm or their atypical repetition (Mukařovský 1964; Leech 1969; Simpson 2004). The foregrounding can be achieved by two main processes namely deviation and parallelism as pointed out by Leech (1969). Deviation is defined as the deviations in graphological, phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic levels from the conventional linguistic expectations. The analytical model adopted for this study is Leech's model which is used as the main model to analyze *The Hollow Men*. Analysis is based on the observation of graphological, phonological, morphological, lexical, semantic and syntactic deviation and of the presence of patterns of parallelism throughout the poem. The theoretical approach is based on the idea that the meaning of literary texts is not only determined by the thematic content, but also by the formal organization of the language (Leech & Short, 2007; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010; Simpson, 2004). Therefore, deviation and parallelism are the analytical keys that provide the focus for the stylistic structure of *The Hollow Men*. Systematically working with this framework, the study aims to show how Eliot's language play contributes to his

rendering of spiritual desolation as a potent aesthetic and cognitive experience. There is usually a tension between the formal coherence and the thematic disorder of modernist poetry, with repetitive patterns not infrequently co-existing with fragmentation. *The Hollow Men* is characterized by repeated structures which underscore the poem's sense of spiritual emptiness, paralysis and stagnation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study is based on the qualitative research type with descriptive-analytical approach which is located in the field of literary stylistics. The study is qualitative in nature to explore in detail the language and style of the selected literary text with emphasis on the language as a medium of constructing meaning. The study is not based on statistical measures or data, but rather on a detailed and close reading and interpretive study of the text, in order to better understand the connection between form and literary importance.

A qualitative stylistic approach, which is different from quantitative approach in that it examines the functional and contextual significance of the occurrence of linguistic features in the text. The methodology allows an in-depth examination of the ways in which patterns of deviation and parallelism function at various linguistic levels, to highlight certain thematic concerns, ideas and feelings. The study employs a descriptive-analytical approach that aims to systematically identify, categorize, and interpret the stylistic phenomena used in the poem, with an emphasis on understanding their role in the aesthetic value of the poem and the themes used in the poem. This method is especially appropriate in the analysis of the meaning of language as it relates to fragmentation, spiritual desolation, existential uncertainty and other issues in Modernist literature as they are found in *The Hollow Men*.

### **3.2 Data Source and Corpus**

T. S. Eliot's poem *The Hollow Men* (1925) is the chief source of primary data for this study. The poem is composed of 98 lines, divided into five distinct sections, providing a small, yet very complex, text structure which is well-suited for engaging in the detailed investigation of the text and its style.

The poem was chosen for its complexity, its many irregularities, linguistic deviations and repetitions which are typical of High Modernist poetry. *The Hollow Men* are especially suitable for this kind of analysis in terms of Foregrounding Theory due to these stylistic properties.

### **3.3 Analytical Procedure**

This data analysis was done by systematic stylistic close-reading of *The Hollow Men* based on the analytical principles of Foregrounding Theory by Geoffrey Leech. The analysis was done in several stages which were interrelated; these were done to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic and stylistic features of the poem. The first stage involved analysing the poem carefully line by line to find instances of foregrounding – both of those that deviated from the conventional, and those that occurred in parallel. Special focus was given to those stylistic features that captured the attention of the reader because of their unusual shape, repetition, or violation of typical language structures.

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After identification, the extracted examples were systematically categorized based on six main linguistic levels: graphological, phonological, morphological, lexical, semantic and syntactic. Through this classification, a systematic study of foregrounding in all its aspects of language and the interaction of different aspects of language could be conducted to establish literary significance. Every occurrence was analyzed in terms of its context in the text and the part it played in the stylistic structure of the poem.

Finally, the categorised linguistic features were analysed contextually and interpretively in terms of their theme and aesthetic aspects. Instead of viewing stylistic devices as individual units, the study examined the ways in which stylistic devices in the poem work together to build meaning. Particular attention was paid to the exploration of themes of spiritual desolation, existential anxiety and moral paralysis, fragmentation and collapse of certainty and patterns of deviation and parallelism. The research aimed to show the complex relationship between form and theme; it was a systematic analytical process which aimed to prove the form and style in *The Hollow Men* being effective means in communicating the theme.

### **3.4 Justification of Leech's Framework**

In this study, the main theoretical approach taken is the Foregrounding Theory developed by Geoffrey Leech (1969) which has a high analytical potential for explaining how meaning is created in literary text through the prominence of language. The theory's key ideas of deviation and parallelism are very appropriate to the analysis of the poem *The Hollow Men* by T. S. Eliot, which is representative of the experimental and the disruptive trends of Modernist literature. Both deviation and parallelism make their presence in the linguistic elements of the composition through their violation of the norms and expectations, but parallelism is achieved through deliberate repetition and reinforcement of the structures. This dual approach mirrors exactly Eliot's poetic practice: to break down traditional modes of expression and to use repetition of certain linguistic constructions to signify fragmentation, spiritual emptiness, and existential uncertainty. The framework therefore offers a very powerful analytical tool that will show how Eliot's stylistics translate abstract philosophical issues into linguistic experiences. In this regard Foregrounding Theory as a method of stylistic analysis can also be used as a way of revealing the complex relationship between language, form and meaning in Eliot's Modernist investigation into the human condition.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter is an in-depth stylistic analysis of T.S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men* based on Foregrounding Theory by Geoffrey Leech (1969) as the main theory. Two main foregrounding devices are dealt with, namely deviation and parallelism. The chapter looks at how, in the spirit of the Russian Formalists and especially in the light of Shklovsky's notion of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*), Eliot works at the graphological, phonological, lexical, semantic, morphological and syntactic level to create the themes of spiritual emptiness, moral paralysis, fragmentation and existential despair.

According to foregrounding theory, the literary language catches the attention because it is different from the language norms or it includes unexpected regularities

by repetition and structuring (Leech, 1969; Simpson, 2004). These two mechanisms are in present in *The Hollow Men*. A deviation, on the other hand, violates readers' expectations and creates estrangement, while parallelism restricts any free structural patterns and creates stagnation and paralysis. In the interplay of these stylistic elements, Eliot is able to make abstract theological and philosophical issues a palpable language experience.

The chapter has three large sections. The first section aims to discuss the different kinds of linguistic deviation. The second explores parallelism and a repetitive patterning. The last section considers the foregrounded structures and how these relate to the representation of spiritual desolation and existential collapse throughout the poem.

## **4.2 Foregrounding through Linguistic Deviation**

Leech (1969) defines deviation as intentional deviation from the expectations of conventional linguistic usage. These absences draws the reader to the text and makes them more active readers. Deviation in Modernist poetry can be a stylistic expression of fragmentation, uncertainty, and alienation (Childs, 2000; Simpson, 2004). In *The Hollow Men* Eliot uses deviation widely to produce a poetic conversation that reflects the disjointed consciousness of modern humanity.

### **4.2.1 Lexical Deviation**

Lexical deviation: Unusual choice, construction or use of a word in its context. Eliot's use of language is recurrent in terms of his subversive affects on what are generally considered theological and existential categories.

One of the most important instances is his changes to kingdom, which he modified several times:

"Death's dream kingdom"

"Death's other Kingdom"

"The twilight kingdom"

Traditionally, Christian theology thinks of the afterlife in terms of definite and distinct categories: Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory. Eliot's to disrupt this certainty is by adding modifiers to the word kingdom that are not clearly defined, such as dream, other and twilight. These lexical combinations make liminal spaces which are not easy to categorize.

The uncertainty and theological ambiguity arises from the successive changes of kingdom foregrounds. The hollow men are not fixed in a spiritual place, but move around in unspecified liminal zones. This lexical instability mirrors the Modernist crisis of faith, and the demise of absolute metaphysical certainties.

Likewise, compound nouns (like):

"Headpiece"

"Crowskin"

"Rat's coat"

suggest a less typical lexicon and connotations of inauthenticity and decay. The idea that these compounds imply that the hollow men are made up of parts, rather than whole human beings. The words in the poem themselves embody the poem's image of disintegration and spiritual impoverishment.

### **4.2.2 Semantic Deviation**

One of the most powerful foregrounding devices in the poem is the semantic

deviation. It happens when one of the language expressions are contradictory to the conventional ideas of logic or meaning (Leech, 1969).

The first few sentences offer the most obvious instance:

“Empty are we the hollow men”

Stoffmen sind wir.

The words hollow and stuffed are antonyms. Logically speaking, when it's empty, it can't be full and vice versa. This means that the juxtaposition brings a semantic contradiction, which is right away calling for being interpreted.

All of this paradox compels the reader to see that hollow men are very real but empty of spirit. They may seem whole and complete, but they are empty on the inside and don't have a true identity. The contradiction brings to the fore the main theme of spiritual emptiness that permeates the whole of the poem.

The Semantic Deviation is even more noticeable in the following sequence:

Formless form and colourless colour,

She was unable to move, she made gestures without moving.

Each phrase degrades an object, taking away a one of its defining properties.

Without form there can be no shape.

Shade is an indication of colour.

Movement is required to have a gesture.

Force implies action.

Eliot takes out the important qualities of these ideas and makes them semantically impossible, upsetting conventional ways of thinking.

An important thematic role is played by these paradoxes. They verbally embody a world that is devoid of meaning and where there is no purpose for living. The hollow men exist in an ontological limbo: They are men but they have no properties.

#### **4.2.3 Morphological Deviation**

Morphological deviation entails strange processes of word formation, which strongly help the poem portray fragmentation. The Hollow Men is a collection in which the usual way words are formed brings out the morphological deviation and the speakers are not described as discrete human subjects. The compound term "headpiece" likens the human intellect to an inanimate object or a hole in the ground, while the compound term "crowskin" alludes to a scarecrow, an artificial life form. An active dehumanization of the speakers is effected by this morphological fusion of the human, animal and artificial worlds. In addition, many negative and recursive prefixes (such as paralysed, unformed) are repeated, highlighting absence, inability, and incompleteness. All the morphological decisions create identities that are structurally fractured on the word level.

#### **4.2.4 Grammatical Deviation**

The grammatical deviation is especially noteworthy since it mirrors the disintegration of the communication and spiritual unity.

Eliot uses many broken sentences and incomplete constructions throughout the poem. S. clauses are frequently used without introducing words:

Let me be no closer"

In the land of dreams when death is king

Let me also wear

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Such deliberate disguises"

There's a lack of conjunctions and links for explanation, creating a disjointed syntactic flow. Ideas are disjointed and not well connected.

Most obvious of the grammatical deviations is towards the end:

"For Thine is

Life is

For Thine is the"

The sentence has a serious syntactic failure.

By opening with the Lord's Prayer, thus setting up readers' expectations of completing this, the structure of the book becomes clear. But, the expected structure in the sentence doesn't come in.

Rather syntax is reduced to incompleteness.

The interruption represents the hollow men's failure to communicate with the divine. The weakness of their language is the lack of completion due to their spiritual condition. Its form of grammar thus represents theological failure.

## 4.2.5 Graphological Deviation

Graphological deviation deals with visual aspects of text such as punctuation, capitalization, spacing, typographic layout.

In *The Hollow Men* there is a striking lack of terminal punctuation. Although it's ninety-eight lines long, the poem has few full stops. This lack produces a flow that is unable to be closed.

There is no punctuation that reflects the spiritual state of the speakers. Like the hollow men, the text is a place of arrest, a place between salvation and damnation, completion and continuation.

This is also a sort of foregrounding device with the presence of the italicization:

"Here we go round the prickly pear"

This passage is set off visually from the rest of the text. This causes the nursery rhyme to be twisted, ritualistic and disturbing.

By the same token, the double use of capitalization for:

"Shadow"

expands the term to a higher level of meaning. The graphological prominence gives the Shadow a symbolic dimension which is able to actively impede human action and spiritual fulfillment.

## 4.2.6 Phonological Deviation

Phonological deviation is done by using unusual sound patterns and the refusal of the traditional poetic harmony. *The Hollow Men* is not a traditional poem, as it has no rhyme scheme. This lack in itself is a phonological deviation as readers tend to expect regular sound patterning in lyric poetry. Eliot builds an aural text, but without the rhyming; he gives the predominance of hard consonant clusters:

"rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves"

The line is abrasive in its sound texture, with a lot of voiceless alveolar plosives (/t/), voiceless velar plosives (/k/), and voiceless alveolar fricatives (/s/) repeated. Such heavy consonant clustering is not a smooth flow but rather physically blocks the reader's flow, creating a "stopping point" for the reader's articulation. The friction of the sound is a direct reflection of the men's paralysed condition and their inability to form meaningful speech. There is repetition of fricative and sibilant

sounds throughout the poem, which evoke the action of whispering, a phonological texture that is linked to dryness, exhaustion and decay. The sound patterns echo the spiritual emptiness portrayed throughout the poem. This is most clearly manifested in its closing line: "Not with a bang but a whimper." Apocalyptic endings have always been connected with explosive sounds and dramatic intensity, as the plosive sounds of bang would suggest. But Eliot immediately frustrates the reader's expectations by substituting it with the word whimper, which has less forceful and weaker phonetic qualities. The juxtaposition of the two words creates an effective anti-climatic effect, highlighting weakness, impotence and spiritual exhaustion. The poem, therefore, proposes that the end of the world does not come with a spectacular and devastating bang but rather slowly through depletion, decay and loss of vitality.

*Table 4.1: Major Types of Deviation in The Hollow Men*

<b>Level of Deviation</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Stylistic Function</b>
Lexical	"Death's dream kingdom"		Creates theological ambiguity
Semantic	"We are the hollow men / We are the stuffed men"		Represents spiritual emptiness
Morphological	"Headpiece," "crowskin"		Suggests fragmentation and artificiality
Grammatical	"For Thine is the"		Represents communicative and spiritual
Graphological	Limited punctuation		Denies closure and resolution
Phonological	"Not with a bang but a whimper"		Creates anti-climax and existential collapse

### **4.3 Foregrounding through Parallelism**

Deviation disturbs expectations, parallelism gives significance by repetition and regularity of structure (Leech, 1969). Lexical parallelism, syntactic parallelism, structural parallelism, and rhetorical parallelism all work to emphasize the idea of paralysis and stagnation, a theme which Eliot notes several times.

#### **4.3.1 Lexical Parallelism**

The poem repeatedly recycles a limited set of lexical items:

Eyes

Death

Kingdom

Voices

Shadow

The recurrence of these words creates a closed semantic universe. The speakers appear incapable of moving beyond a restricted vocabulary.

This lexical repetition reinforces the impression of psychological confinement and spiritual stagnation.

### **4.3.3 Structural Parallelism**

The syntactic repetition is extremely rigid, and creates a strong one-two rhythm of expectation and failure. Every "Between the... And the..." conveys a grammatical and thematic passage from potential to real. But the return of "Falls the Shadow," all the time in a structurally parallel manner, aborts these transitions. In this case Eliot effectively "traps" the reader in a syntactic loop. The stilted parallelism of grammar isn't used for ordering; it's used to produce an inescapable pattern of existential stalling, as the hollow men are trapped by their inability to perform a simple act. The poem also has a structural parallelism as the same stanzaic forms are repeated throughout the poem and a ritualistic setting is established reminiscent of that of religious liturgy. However, these repetitions do not offer any sense of transcendence or redemption like traditional liturgical forms do, but instead are repetitions. Instead repetition is mechanical, dull and without meaning. The structure of this poem mirrors the emptiness of the men, highlighting their lack of freedom to escape the cycle of spiritual numbness and stagnation, and the patterns of stagnation and despair.

### **4.3.4 Anaphora and Repetition**

Anaphora is an essential part of the stylistic organization and the development of the thematic structure of *The Hollow Men*. Eliot relies on repetition of words at the beginning of lines, particularly in "We are the hollow men" and "We are the stuffed men", in order to create a collective voice that dominates the poem. The use of the pronoun "we" brings a sense of community togetherness and there is a common feeling of emptiness of the spirit and disillusionment of the existential, as experienced by those writing. But simultaneously, this repetition also eradicates the individual differences, depicting the speakers as a mass of people who have lost their moral and spiritual bearings within a common deadlock. In this anaphoric mode, Eliot highlights the loss of individual control and the disintegration of identity of the modern man.

Likewise, the use of anaphora in the last refrain in the poem, "This is the way the world ends," is repeated three times consecutively. The repetition creates a beat-like effect that is reminiscent of a chant or liturgical recitation, like a ritualistic incantation. The repeated line does not create suspense, but rather serves to nail a mood of inevitability, resignation and emotional exhaustion. Every round makes it more clear that it is inevitable, and takes the concept of its end of the world grandeur or heroism. The effect on the refrain is cumulative, and the refrain thus conveys the symbolic sense of spiritual death and cultural ruin, focusing on the passivity of the hollow men in their acceptance of their fate.

## **4.4 Synthesis: The Architecture of Spiritual Desolation**

It is the deviation and parallelism of *The Hollow Men's* themes that make for their power. These stylistic devices work in conjunction with each other, not separately. Deviation gives rise to fragmentation, uncertainty and disorientation and parallelism gives rise to rigid repetition and stasis. These two conflicting influences in language make up the exact psychological ambiance in which the hollow men live.

The semantic paradoxes create the spiritual emptiness, deny the logical coherence of language. The collapse of dialogue with the divine – and the failure of prayer – is expressed through grammatical breakdown. Graphological fragmentation

is the denial of closure: phonological deviation adds to the expectation of the apocalypse and exhausted resignation. At the same time syntactic and lexical parallelism restrain the speakers as well as the readers in repetitive structures which constantly delay fulfillment and completion.

Hence, spiritual desolation in *The Hollow Men* can not be limited to the thematic elements of the poem but it is rather interwoven in the language and structure of the poem. Through the subtle use of foregrounding techniques such as lexical and semantic, grammatical, phonological, graphological and structural deviation and parallelism in the poem, Eliot represents the experience of emptiness, fragmentation and existential paralysis in the very structure of the poem. This means that the reader is not only presented with descriptions of the spiritual decay from afar, but is forced to experience the poem's spiritual decay through its disjointed syntax, repetitive patterns, disjointed imagery and deflating sound structures. The features of the poem are stylistic, they actively recreated the psychological and spiritual state of the hollow men, making the reader of the poem feel as if he/she were reading in the same space as the hollow men themselves, with the sense of isolation, uncertainty and moral exhaustion.

The poem from a foregrounding point of view shows how form and content of language is linked in a complementary way. Eliot's careful play with language is a reminder of the problems of belief, the failure of meaningful communication and the loss of personal identity that beset the modern situation. Thus, the significance of the poem is not only in the actual words used but also in the way that they are presented. The analysis of this work thus validates Eliot's stylistic choices as something other than ornamental or decorative embellishments used to create a finished message, but rather as the principal tools for generating meaning, intensifying meaning and communicating meaning. Eliot deftly manipulate the linguistic forms of *The Hollow Men* to create an insightful Modernist statement about spiritual barrenness, cultural decay and the human quest for meaning in a fractured and insecure world.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

With the background theories and methods of Russian Formalism, this study made a systemic stylistic analysis on T. S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men* based on the theory of Foregrounding put forward by Geoffrey Leech. The main goal was to go beyond the mostly thematic and intertextual interpretations of the poem and analyse how linguistic structures affect the creation of meaning. The multi-level analysis of the poem at the semantic, grammatical, graphological, phonological, lexical and morphological levels showed that Eliot's portrayal of spiritual desolation is not only in the semantic content but also in the linguistic structure of the poem. The results indicate that the emptiness, moral-paralyzing, fragmenting and existential uncertainties that are the themes of the poem are not only articulated through content, but also actively created through specific stylistic means.

It was concluded that foregrounding is the main stylistic tool by which Eliot tries to render the abstract philosophical and theological concepts in linguistic experiences. The results of the various deviations found showed that the most dominant and most thematic type of deviation in the text was semantic deviation. Eliot explores and manipulates the interconnections of words through paradoxes and

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oxymoronic structures such as: “We are the hollow men , We are the stuffed men” or “Shape without form, shade without colour.” The linguistic paradoxes create a world where there exists life without meaning, purpose and spiritual quality. These forces from the tension compel the viewer to examine the paradox: that these humans possess bodies and yet lack inner lives and morality.

The study also illustrated that grammatical deviation is an important means of conveying the spiritual failure and communicative failure. The poem's syntax is often broken and there is elision and unfinished constructions. This tendency is highlighted at the end of the poem, with the disintegration of the Lord's Prayer near the end of the poem, where syntactic structures are not completed. This fragmentation of grammar represents the failure of the "hollow men" to make any real connection with the divine, and is part of the overall crisis of faith that is found in modernist literature. Language itself is unable to give coherence, certainty or redemption.

The results at the phonological level suggest that Eliot is actively resisting the traditional harmonic poetics: he is abandoning systematic rhyme schemes and choosing abrasive sound patterns of predominately fricatives, sibilants and plosive consonants. The sound structures produce an aural effect of dryness, weakness and exhaustion, which accentuates the feeling of spiritual sterility that exists in the poem. The well-known ending – ‘Not with a bang but a whimper’ – sums up this stylistic approach, as it defies the expectation of an apocalyptic ending by using a sound pattern that implies depletion and collapse. Graphological features also help to create a sense of 'suspension' and 'incompletion' such as the limited use of terminal punctuation. The "open," lack of visual closure, is a reflection of the existential predicament of the hollow men suspended between action and inaction, salvation and damnation, hope and despair.

In addition to the above mentioned forms of deviation the analysis showed the foregrounding device of parallelism is equally important. While deviation subverts the expectations of language, parallelism sets up an over-structured set of expectations. The repetition of the “Between the ... / And the ...” phrases in Part V illustrate how the syntactic parallelism sets up a pattern of expected movement, only to have this movement blocked by the presence of “Falls the Shadow”, which keeps returning. The device of repetition in Eliot's system allows him to use language as a metaphor for a state of paralysis. Lexical repetition and symbolic motifs that repeat also generate a limited semantic field, where the speakers constantly repeat the same words, a psychological containment and a spiritual poverty. This is the way the world ends” is repeated throughout the poem, with the refrain itself being repeated several times, emphasising the circular and static life of the hollow men.

The most important finding of this research is that *The Hollow Men* has a thematic force due to the dynamic interaction between deviation and parallelism. Both of these foregrounding devices work together, and interact to each other throughout the poem. Deviation means fragmentation and ambiguity, parallelism means rigidity and repetition and stasis. They create, collectively, a textual context which reflects the existential situation of the poem's voices. Spiritual desolation isn't just described, but acted out through the language of the poem. These are paradoxical language, repetition of syntactic structures, and collapse of grammatical structures, respectively, that make readers feel emptiness, paralysis and communicative failure. So the poem becomes a vehicle for the existential and the form of the style becomes more important.

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The study also joins in the current debates in stylistics and Modernist literary criticism. The research using Leech's theory of foregrounding on *The Hollow Men* can prove that the stylistic analysis in the field of literary analysis is still relevant and can explain. Results show that deviation and parallelism offer a very complete approach in dealing with the language/meaning relationship in complex poetic texts. Furthermore, the study confirms the Russian Formalist idea that rather than the thematic content, literary effects come from the manipulation of the language structures. It is in his poetic work that Eliot not only explores the spiritual and cultural decline but enacts them as well, in the very structure of the language.

The present study aims to give a detailed stylistic analysis of *The Hollow Men* but, with the availability of other works in Eliot's poetic oeuvre, a similar analysis might be attempted in others. A comparative study of *The Waste Land*, *Ash Wednesday* and *Four Quartets* might show the changes that occurred in Eliot's foregrounding techniques from one stage of his literary career to another. Future studies may also include corpus stylistics to make quantitative analyses of the patterns of deviation and parallelism in Modernist texts in general. Furthermore, by applying cognitive stylistic analysis, it can be interesting to see how foregrounded linguistic structures are being processed by readers, and how these structures can create a feeling of fragmentation, uncertainty and spiritual emptiness for readers. These investigations would further expand the knowledge of the complex interconnection of language, cognition and literary meaning.

Finally, the study verifies the fact that Eliot's language in *The Hollow Men* is not incidental nor ornamental. Instead, they are the main tool by which the poem manages to create a picture of spiritual emptiness, the paralysis of existence, and cultural decay. In the interaction of deviation and parallelism, Eliot constructs a poetic discourse that makes the reader not only comprehend it, but also feel the state of being "emptily full. The results thus support the use of stylistic analysis as a sound method in the study of the intricate interplay between the form of language and the meaning of the literature in Modernist poetry.

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