

The Representation of Mystical Ideology in Christina Rossetti's "Sweet Death"

تمثيل الأيدولوجية الصوفية في قصيدة "الموت الحلو" لكريستينا روسيتي

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Abstract

Taking the critical premise that no type of discourse is ideology-free, the current research paper aims at exploring the way mystical ideology is being represented in Christina Rossetti's "Sweet Death". The research adopts an eclectic model of analysis that is based, for the most part, on Jefferies' model of Critical Stylistics (2010) and its ten textual-conceptual functions. It also uses, to a lesser extent, Jefferies' model of Textual Stylistics (2022), whereby the textual-conceptual function of evoking is employed to show how the poetic aspects of the text can contribute to the overall ideological representation. After laying out the theoretical background of the research and analyzing the data first qualitatively and then quantitatively, the research came to the conclusion that there is a noticeable amount of discrepancy in the use of the different functions, with naming and describing, representing processes, representing time, space and society and alluding as the most highly used functions compared to the others. The research also

shows that the representation of mystical ideology seems to be a choice governed entirely by the poetess theological belief as she reiterates her faith and personal belief using a variety of religion-related themes. Finally, the analysis reveals that the model of analysis covers all the linguistic aspects of the text, which, on its turn, can insure that the ideological stance of the text's producer can be unveiled in an objective manner.

Key words: Mysticism, Mystical Poetry, Critical Stylistics, Textual-Conceptual Functions, Ideology.

المستخلص:

إنطلاقاً من الفرضية النقدية القائلة بأنه لا يوجد نوع من الخطاب خالٍ من الأيديولوجية، تهدف الورقة البحثية الحالية إلى استكشاف الطريقة التي يتم بها تمثيل الأيديولوجية الصوفية في قصيدة "الموت الحلو" لكريستينا روسيتي. يتبنى البحث إنموذجاً انتقائياً للتحليل يعتمد في معظمه على إنموذج جيفريز للأسلوبية النقدية (٢٠١٠) ووظائفه النصية المفاهيمية العشر. كما أنه يستخدم، إلى حد أقل، إنموذج جيفريز للأسلوبية النصية (٢٠٢٢) حيث يتم استخدام الوظيفة النصية المفاهيمية للاثارة الشاعرية Evoking لإظهار كيف يمكن للجوانب الجمالية للنص أن تسهم في التمثيل الأيديولوجي الكلي. بعد وضع الخلفية النظرية للبحث وتحليل البيانات أولاً نوعياً ثم كمياً، توصل البحث إلى إستنتاج مفاده أن هناك قدرًا ملحوظاً من الاختلاف في استخدام الوظائف المختلفة، حيث مثلت وظائف التسمية والوصف، وتمثيل العمليات، وتمثيل الزمان والمكان والمجتمع والتلميح الوظائف الأكثر استخداماً مقارنة بالوظائف الأخرى. يُبين البحث أيضاً أن تمثيل الأيديولوجية الصوفية هو خيار يحكمه بالكامل المعتقد الديني للشاعرة حيث انها تعمل على تأكيد إيمانها ومعتقداتها الشخصي باستخدام مجموعة متنوعة من الموضوعات المتعلقة بالدين. وأخيراً، يظهر التحليل أن إنموذج التحليل يغطي كافة الجوانب اللغوية للنص، وهذا بدوره يضمن امكانية الكشف عن الموقف الأيديولوجي للكاتب بطريقة موضوعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصوفية، الشعر الصوفي، الاسلوبية النقدية، الوظائف النصية المفاهيمية، الأيدولوجيا

1. Introduction

The question of ideology has occupied a central position within the framework of critical linguistic studies, in recent decades. The main critical approaches that are designed to tackle the question of ideology are Critical Linguistics (CL), the different approaches of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and most recently Critical Stylistics (CS). These critical frameworks and approaches have become the theoretical apparatus for the study of ideology. They all maintain the belief that all texts and discourses are ideologically loaded, whether covertly or overtly, and that it is the job of the critical analyst to unmask these ideologies using a variety of linguistic tools.

Being a discourse in its own right, mystical poetry, in line with other types of discourse, can be seen to be ideologically packed. That is, mystical poetry can be used to communicate mystical ideology in the same way other types of texts and discourses can communicate a particular ideology using a variety of linguistic devices. Despite the abundance of the work on mystical poetry, no study, as of yet, has attempted to explore the ideological representation of this type of poetry using a critically-based framework, to the best knowledge of the researcher. Based on the previous statement, the research problem arises. The current study represents a critical leap into the uncharted waters of this special type of poetry. A leap that is meant to bridge the gap in the available literature and research, and to examine this type of poetry critically.

The study aims at answering the following research questions:

- a. How does Christina Rossetti exploit the available linguistic resources in her language to communicate her mystical ideology in a way that influence her readerships?
- b. What are the different themes that can be extracted from the text to communicate the speaker's mystical ideology?

- c. How comprehensive the model's toolkits are?
- d. What are the different textual-conceptual functions that Rossetti employs in the poem to communicate her mystical ideology?

2. Mysticism: An Overview

Mysticism is a phenomenon known to all religions and religious systems of both the East and West. It has been present in all the world's major religions for thousands of years, to the extent that this worldly phenomenon has created a connection between these religions in that they all practice one form or another of mysticism. Having established that this worldly phenomenon is present in most, if not all, the world's major religions, mysticism is not itself a religion. That is, one can speak of Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist mysticism, in the sense that mysticism constitutes itself within these religions as set of beliefs and practices devotedly practiced by members of these religions. However, what might be described as common phenomenon known to all the major religions has been the source for a great deal of controversy and debate. A simple review of the literature on the topic of mysticism shows that the term, for one, has been used differently even within the same religion; that some religions have used it differently than others; while others do not use the term at all and have a rather different terminology for the practice of mysticism. Needless to say however, mystical traditions have been the source for a great deal of scholarly research and that philosopher and scholars of different orientations and persuasions continue to dive into the uncharted waters of this worldly phenomenon (Parson, 2011, pp. 3-4).

When it comes to the history and etymology of the term, the word "mysticism" is traceable back to the Greek word *mue*, a verb that means "to hide or close". This verb along with the derived adjective *mystikos* "hidden" were used in relation to Classic Greek mystery religions. The main characterization of these religions is their secrecy. These religions were not open, and participation was limited only to initiates (*mystai*),

who have to undergo a series or secret rituals in order to be admitted (Ogren, 2016, p. 315).

Early first century B.C. Jewish and Christian traditions continued to use above sense of the term in association with the “mysterious” interpretations of scriptures. However, the association of secrecy of the term was later disavowed and the term come to denote a spiritual experience involving an elevated state of consciousness that transcends every day mundane experience, in addition to those who practice a doctrinally permissible form of religious ecstasy (McColman, 2021, p. 38). Ever since then, the term has undergone a variety of changes and grown to include different meanings.

By the late medieval and the early modern periods, the use of the term began to shift and started to be used in connection with the ‘spiritual’ experiences of those who claimed to have had ‘private’ encounters with the divine. It was at the period of time, namely the seventeenth century, that the noun ‘mysticism’ was created, indicating a shift “away from the liturgical and scriptural context of patristic and medieval Christianity to a situation in which private illumination and unusual psychosomatic experiences became the criteria” (McGinn, Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to The Fifth Century, 1991, p. 312).

In spite of the fact that mysticism forms an integral part of most, if not all, the major religions, it is often difficult to provide a satisfactory definition of this universal phenomenon. Mysticism seems to defy a definition, and no single definition can cover all the aspects of mysticism. Moreover, definitions of mysticism can encompass a bewildering variety that ranges between theology, philosophy, science and psychology. The difficulty of finding an agreed upon definition of mysticism partly stems from the fact that a definition of this sort should, first and foremost, take into account several factors, including the historical context in which the term is used, the researcher’s own

perspective, as well as factors such as knowledge, power and politics (Jantzen, 1995, cited in (Holder, 2011, p. 422). Nevertheless, mysticism can be broadly defined in the following ways:

1. A religious experience that is meant to address the claimed state of union with the Divine or the Absolute (i.e. God) experienced by some (McGinn, 2006).
2. Any kind of spiritual ecstasy that is characterized by an elevated state of consciousness which transcends every day mundane experiences, coupled with whatever beliefs, ideologies, rites and myths that may be associated with them (Merkur, 2023).
3. An emotional or visionary experience that involves an intuitive insight and enlightenment into the meaning of existence, the hidden truth of the universe and the possibility to resolve all the problems of life (Horne, 1996, p. 3).
4. A soul-evolving experience that involves personal transformation whereby the finite (i.e. human) is said to reach the infinite (McGinn, 2005, p. xiii).

All of the above mentioned definitions involve some sort of spiritual/ transcendental experience; hence, one can safely conclude that mysticism is now envisaged as a cover term for all sorts of religiously-based non-rational experiences. Put differently in the words of William Harmless, mysticism has now evolved into “a catch-all term for religious weirdness” (2008, p. 3) and it remains a complex and misunderstood concept that can have different connotations depending on one’s conception of the term, time and place.

2.1. Mysticism and Language

Having a great body of literature that attests itself in various literary traditions which include hymns, contemplations, prose, songs and most importantly poetry; mysticism has an intricate relationship with language. This being said, one should aim to explore

the type of relationship that hold between the two and the status of language in the study of mysticism.

The relationship that holds between mystical experience and language has often been typified as variegated and complex. This stems from the fact that many mystical scholars and mystics hold the view that mystical experience defies the normal and transcends everyday experience, to the extent that language falls short or cannot apply to the description of such experience. That is, mystical experience can be said to be ineffable and exists beyond the capacity of language. As a result, many positivists have gone as far as downplaying the importance of mysticism, and many mystics tended to reject the importance of language in the practice of mysticism. Such a negative attitude towards the relationship between mysticism and language can easily be shown to be wrong by admitting that not only is language important to mysticism, but it also shapes mystical experience just as much as it shapes everyday experience (Hatab, 1982, p. 53).

Morris (1951, p. 3) claims that mystical experience, in line with other human experiences, is shaped by one's own cultural experience. This being said, one must be tempted to ask what does ineffable mean in the case of mysticism; whether ineffability and mysticism are inseparable and how that can, in effect, shape one's conception of mysticism. After all, mysticism is not some sort of voiceless detached experience autonomous of the use of language. Even in their most ecstatic state, religious experiences, including mysticism, are not detached from language. Within a particular linguistic and cultural perspective, language shapes such experiences and gives them their true identity.

In an attempt to explore the ineffable nature of mysticism and whether language can adequately describe such experience, Matilal (1994, pp. 144-146) raises the following questions about language and its use: What is language? Is it only a tool for

communication? Can one use language to express his/ hers most intimate and deeply felt emotions and experiences? Can language, on the other hand, not be used to communicate that which is shared in the world of its users? Perhaps even, the shared experiences of its users. Can language be used to capture unique and extraordinary experiences? A principle of *expressibility* has been established by contemporary linguists to answer these questions, according to which any idea a speaker wishes to convey can be expressed using words in the speaker's native tongue. Simply put, this principle states that anything that can be spoken can also be meant. The principle of expressibility stipulates that anything a speaker wishes to communicate; there are linguistic signs in his/her linguistic reservoir that could be used in its expression. This principle can be seen as a solution for the dilemma of the ineffability of mystical experience. Nevertheless, one must be careful not to take this principle to extremes and claim that ordinary language use can be used for such a description, and accept that language must be innovatively employed in the description of mysticism.

Since mystical experience, like all sorts of intuitive experiences, needs disclosure; one must be forced to conclude that language is neither deficient nor merely incidental to mystical experience. Language shapes the world and the world is shaped by language. With this coextensive relationship between language and the world in mind; and since mystical experience is a world, in its own right, one must forcibly admit that language is still in effect. A word of caution though is that what is meant by language here is perhaps some extraordinary use of language. Nevertheless, this extraordinary use of language is still counts as language, and if this extraordinary language use is in some way essential for the disclosure of mystical experience, then the ineffability of mysticism must be resisted and mysticism can be seen as an intelligible experience. To present extraordinary experience, the correlation between language and mysticism must admit

unusual forms of language. Mysticism deepens not only experience but also the use of language, resulting in the production of extraordinary experience (Hatab, 1982, p. 63).

The way mysticism and its relationship with language is approached must show a greater appreciation to the way in which language is used as a decisive factor to portray the mystics' alternate state of consciousness and irrationality. It must also recognize that the mystics are indulged in the description of an extraordinary state of affairs that transcends the limits of everyday experience and often rely on highly constructed metaphor and elegant language to achieve such description. Sensitivity to such important issues would eventually makes all the difference in the way the relationship between mysticism and language is being tackled (Holder, 2011, p. 455).

What is left to be said at this point is that language and mysticism are not mutually exclusive nor distinct. Neither they are contraries nor separable. Like other uses of language, mystical language attests itself, and its meaning is understood in the context of its use. If one can realize this fundamental truth, one could avoid the often misconceived belief of the ineffability of this worldly phenomenon.

2.2. Mystical Poetry

It has been established that mysticism has a great body of literature ranging from prose, contemplation, hymns, songs and most importantly poetry. According to Spurgeon (2011, pp. 113-115) poetry is one of the most effective ways to communicate the inner experience of the mystics. Mystics are endowed with the ability to reach an elevated state of consciousness that transcends every day experience. Through poetry they can give a glimpse of such an experience. She, then, goes on to say that mystical poetry is about communicating experiences, feelings, thoughts and ideas in such a manner that it weaves together the spiritual and mysterious, on the one hand, with everyday aspects of our lives into a perfectly paradoxical whole. Yet before indulging in the nature and

characteristics of mystical poetry, some light needs to be shed on poetry in general and how it varies from mystical poetry.

Historically speaking, poetry seems to be the oldest manifestation of literature in the world. This stems from the fact that the most archaic representations of literary traditions have been produced in verse, first orally and later orthographically. A question that lurks in the background, however, is that “what is meant by poetry?”. Poetry, conceived generally, is a form of literature that employs certain qualities of language (i.e. aesthetic and rhythmic qualities) in an attempt evoke deeper meaning. It utilizes extraordinary linguistic forms and conventions to offer alternative meanings of words or to elicit emotional reactions. Some styles of poetry are specific to certain cultures and genres, and they respond to aspects of the language which reflect on the poet’s state of mind (Strachan & Terry, 2000, p. 119).

People who write poetry can be put into different categories: firstly, there are poets who write poetry by thinking. They also utilize words’ meaning, form and sound for their purpose. Those are normally referred to as “rhymesters”. Secondly, there are those, inspired by some intuition, stream of consciousness and feelings, who do all the required verbal, metrical, rhythmical, linguistic and creative efforts to express such feelings and intuitions. These are known to produce genuine poetic experience reflective of their inner state of consciousness. Thirdly, we have those that are often referred to as devotees and imaginative poets. Their poetry stems from faith and devotion and they are known to compose poetry based on their beliefs. The fourth type of poets are known as “inspired poets” who just get an inspiration and simply lets it flow in a poetic form without mental interference. Finally, there is the type of poets who gets some sort of spiritual vision or experience and intentionally utilize all the linguistic and literary means to express such vision or experience in the most beautiful and appropriate way. These are known as “mystical visionaries”. All these poets want to communicate their experience with their

readers and to touch the mental, emotional and sensational part of their soul (Patel & Dodiya , 2002, p. 13).

With this being established, a distinction can be drawn between mystical poetry and other forms of poetry. Mystical poetry is mainly dedicated to the description of an extraordinary experience of the union with the Divine which essentially must transcend all forms of signification, linguistic or otherwise. It is also concerned with the description of ultimate reality and immutable absolute behind creation. Mystical poetry, furthermore, is concerned with something that may be said to have an ineffable nature; posing, as such, a challenge on mystical poets whereby they have to overcome the worldly-bounds of human language. Language, as such, acquires a highly symbolic value. “It becomes proximate and playful, capable of conferring presence to absence, materiality on the immaterial, and lexicon on the non-lexical.” In their bath to achieve this, mystical poets, aside from their intuitive insights, must be endowed with higher poetic capacity and better command on the available linguistic assets (Hampton, 2020, p. 248).

The reference to mystical poetry here is not meant to introduce the formal characteristics of this type of poetry such as rhyme, rhythm, meter, etc., but rather to shed some light on the defining characteristics of this type of poetry that distinguishes it from other poetic forms. It is also meant to put under scrutiny the very creative process that underlies this type of poetry which seems to transcend the boundaries of other forms of poetry.

3. Critical Stylistics

Critical stylistics is a critically oriented approach to the study of language associated with the researcher Lesley Jeffries. As a model of analysis, Critical Stylistics combines the strengths and merits of both stylistics (textual choices) and Critical Discourse Analysis (how these textual choices fit into the historical and social context (Coffey,

2013, p. 30). Critical Stylistics owes its development to Jefferies (2007), as she sought to explore feminist ideologies and hegemonic discourses in the depiction of women's images in women's magazine where some of her later to be known as textual conceptual-functions were first introduced. The term Critical Stylistics, however, was first introduced in her 2010 book, whereby the framework of this approach was introduced systematically. Critical Stylistics framework and methodology has, since then, undergone various developments and extensions (2010a, 2014a, 2015a, b, c and most recently 2022) (Tabbert, 2016, p. 37).

Holding the critical premise that no text or discourse is free from ideology, the aim of Critical Stylistics, according to Jefferies (2010, p. 6), is to expose the hidden ideologies of the various text types by using a set of analytical tools that can be used objectively in a rigorous, retrievable and replicable manner. This is particularly important in the critical study of texts in that it provides a systematic and text-based approach rather than being exhausted in the vagueness of CDA approaches and the limitedness of Critical Linguistics tools of analysis (Tabbert, 2016, p. 36).

As a model of analysis, Jefferies (2010, pp. 12-15) states that Critical Stylistics consists of a number of linguistically based tools of analysis known as "textual-conceptual-functions", TCFs for short. She adds that these different functions were originally created by different scholars such as Fairclough (1989), Fowler (1991), Simpson (1993) and Halliday (1994). They can work individually or collectively to uncover the different ways in which ideology is being represented in text, whether implicitly or explicitly.

4. Ideology

The term ideology was first introduced by the French aristocrat philosopher A. L. C. Destutt de Tracy at the time of French Revolution. The term was devised as a short name for the so called "science of ideas", a scientific framework developed by de Tracy to

address the rational system of ideas as opposed to irrational impulses (Vincent, 2009, p. 1). Being applied to a variety of different theories and policies in politics, theology, economics and linguistics, the concept of ideology, like other socially based concepts has a polysemic nature and often defies an agreed upon definition (Al-Timimi, 2018, p. 32). However, ideology has acquired a rather special sense within critical linguistic circles and is often defined as a set of values, norms, beliefs and practices shared by a socially demarcated group and are enacted, communicated, (re)produced and negotiated by a variety of linguistic means (Jeffries, 2010, p. 5). In a similar vein, Simpson (2004, p. 78) defines ideology as “the matrix of beliefs we use to comprehend the world and to the value systems through and by which we interact in society”. T. A. van Dijk (1998, p. 6) seems to take a step further and defines ideology using a multidisciplinary approach that relates language, society and cognition. That is to say, ideology is communicated through discourse as a system of ideas, beliefs or practices that are cognitively processed and socially enacted.

From a critical perspective, there is no ideology-free texts. In fact, ideology, as put by Jefferies (2010, p. 8), is an “unavoidable fact” of all texts and discourses. All texts are ideologically packed, that is, language can carry ideologies and these ideologies can either be explicitly or implicitly communicated. Fowler & Kress (1979, p. 191), moreover, state that language and ideology are inextricably linked, and that any study of ideology invariably leads to a discussion of language and the way in which it manifests itself. And it is the job of critical analysts to unmask the different ways in which ideology is being represented in texts. Hence, the concept of ideology appears to be particularly important in the different critical approaches to language (Critical linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Stylistics), and that the fundamental aim of text analysis should be the exposition of how the different ideologies are being represented in the various text types.

5. Methodology

The section at hand is intended to explicate the method, data and adopted model of analysis employed in this research.

5.1. Method of analysis

The current paper adopts a mixed method of analysis, whereby the data is first analyzed qualitatively and later supplemented by quantitative analysis. The qualitative part is intended to show the ways in which mystical ideology is being communicated and to shed some light on the different linguistics assets employed to accomplish this task. The quantitative part, on the other hand, is meant to show the percentages and frequencies of the adopted model's functions, consequently supplementing the qualitative analysis.

5.2. Data of Analysis

The study at hand is intended to tackle the representation of mystical ideology in Christina Rossetti's "Sweet Death". The poem consists of three stanzas of eight lines each. Each stanza is going to be analyzed individually line by line to unmask the way mystical ideology is being represented. The significance of this poem is that it was written during the Industrial Revolution, a time of conflict between the longstanding theological beliefs and the newly established social and economic order. Many people, in these rapidly changing times, began to question their religious beliefs and were struggling with what their religion meant to them. Hence, the poem aside from being a representation of the poetess's mystical thought, can be seen as a call to restore faith and to challenge the materialistic world. The poem also represents a sample of late modern English, which characterizes most of today's English language usage.

5.3. Adopted Model

The study employs an eclectic model of analysis that is based to a large extent on Jefferies model of Critical Stylistics (2010) and its ten textual-conceptual functions. The model also makes use of the textual-conceptual function of Evoking, which is used in Jefferies model of Textual Stylistics (2022). Accordingly, table (1) below shows the different textual-conceptual functions deployed, their functions and linguistic realizations.

Table 1

Overall, All Summary of the TCFs, Their Functions and Linguistic Realizations

Textual-conceptual function	Function	Linguistic realization
Naming and describing	Labeling/ conjuring up the various entities in the world of the text, be it concrete or abstract, allowing texts' receptors to see familiar things in the texts anew or giving them the thrill of recognition	The choices of Nouns/pronouns Pre and/or post modification Nominalization
Representing Processes (Actions/ States/ Events)	Presenting actions, states and events and examining how these processes relates to the entities to be named and described in the world of the text	Transitivity modal for different verb types

Prioritizing	(De)Emphasizing information in the world of text	Subordination Information structure Transformation
Representing time, space and society	Depicting the world of the text in relation to aspects of person, time, place and social structure	The linguistic system of deixis
Equating and contrasting	Presenting the different aspects of the world of the texts in terms of relationships of similarity and/ or opposition	Synonymy and opposition Intensive relational structures Syntactic equivalence Lexical and syntactic opposition triggers
Listing	Representing a specific category either by listing all the items in it(enumerating), or some of the items in it (exemplifying)	A variety of linguistic markers that indicate an instance of listing such as words, phrases and clauses, all of which can be seen to perform the same function at a higher level of structure
Alluding	brings non-propositional meaning to the reader's or listener's attention.	presuppositions and implicatures
Negating	The construction of <i>what is not</i> in the world of the text	The core negating particles no, not.

	by denying, refusing or otherwise negating certain aspects of it	Negating pronouns such as none, nobody, nothing Negating morphemes (affixes and prefixes) Negating lexical items such as lack, deny, absent Implicit negation via modal and conditional structure
Hypothesizing	The construction of potential and hypothetical scenarios	Modal verbs Verbs of opinions such as think Modal adjectives such as possible Modal adverbs such as possibly Conditional structure <i>if...then</i>
Presenting others' speech and thought	Communicating the speech and thoughts of other participants in the world of the text	(Free) direct speech/ thought (Free) indirect speech/ thought Narrator's Representation of Speech (or thought) Acts/ of voice (or thought)

Evoking	Showing how the linguistic choices and poetic aspects of the text can directly and/or indirectly evoke meaning in the world of the text	Sound-symbolism (phonaestheme, onomatopoeia) Run-on lines and line breaks Minor sentences Fronting, cleft structures, delayed or overlong clause elements
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5.4. Data Analysis of Christina Rossetti's "Sweet Death"

Written in Feb. 1849, "Sweet Death" is considered to be one of Christina Rossetti's best-known mystical poems that addresses the theme of death in positive terms. Throughout her life, Rossetti had been preoccupied with the idea of death. Many of her poems, including the one at hand, clearly display her concern with death, and how death is seen as the gate to heaven, her final long waited destination from the pains and agonies of life. In this poem, Rossetti skillfully expresses her desire and yearning to be united with the Divine through a description of a natural scene she observed once in a churchyard. The poem also reflects on other themes beside death such as nature, the cycle of life, religion, spiritual renewal or rebirth and afterlife.

- 1) The sweetest blossoms die.
- 2) And so it was that, going day by day
- 3) Unto the church to praise and pray,
- 4) And crossing the green churchyard thoughtfully,
- 5) I saw how on the graves the flowers

- 6) Shed their fresh leaves in showers,
 7) And how their perfume rose up to the sky
 8) Before it passed away.
- 9) The youngest blossoms die.
- 10) They die and fall and nourish the rich earth
 11) From which they lately had their birth;
 12) Sweet life, but sweeter death that passeth by
 13) And is as though it had not been:--
 14) All colours turn to green;
 15) The bright hues vanish and the odours fly,
 16) The grass hath lasting worth.
 17) And youth and beauty die.
 18) So be it, O my God, Thou God of truth:
 19) Better than beauty and than youth
 20) Are Saints and Angels, a glad company;
 21) And Thou, O Lord, our Rest and Ease,
 22) Art better far than these.
 23) Why should we shrink from our full harvest? why
 24) Prefer to glean with Ruth? (Rossetti, 2012, p. 44).

Rossetti's "Sweet Death" is written in three regular stanzas of eight lines each. The rhyme scheme of each stanza is carefully crafted: the first line of each stanza rhymes with the seventh; the second and the third with the eighth; while the fifth and the sixth rhyme with each other. The repetitive structure of the rhyme scheme is meant to evoke the cyclic nature of life and death. The oxymoronic title is also highly suggestive. The juxtaposition of the two contradictory terms (i.e. *sweet* and *death*) clearly elicit the

speaker's ideology from the outset. It also forces the reader to pause momentarily to grasp and process the title's meaning.

The first stanza opens with naming and describing, whereby the head noun *blossoms* is being pre-modified by the definite article *the* and the attribute *sweetest*, making the whole noun phrase less liable to question and doubt. The noun phrase also constitutes an example of alluding, namely an example of existential presupposition, presupposing the existence of the entity named. The verb *die* belongs to the category of action event processes, and it shows the Actor(s) lack of control of the action specified. The use of full stop at the end of line 1 is being used paradoxically and it constitutes an instance of evoking. It is not meant to imply absolute ending. On the contrary, the use of full stop here, as Roe (2007, p. 46) notes, is "as false and impermanent a conclusion as death itself". Just like how the death of blossoms can be seen as the starting point of life and death cyclic nature, so is one's death can be seen as the starting point of one's own journey in the afterlife.

In the following three lines, lines 2-4, the speaker is reminded of the fact that change is unavoidable and that it is a natural part of the cyclic nature of life and death as he heads to the church "day by day". The use of the continuous in *going* and *crossing*, in addition to the use of phrase "day by day", echoes the cyclic nature of life and death. Two-part list is used in line 3, in which case the two verbs *praise* and *pray* stand for the entire category. These two verbal choice belong to the category of action intentional processes. Alluding via existential presupposition is used twice in these lines, whereby the definite noun phrases *the church* and *the green churchyard* both presupposes the existence of the entities named.

Line 5 uses the personal deixis *I*, which along with the temporal deixis achieved by the past tense of the verb *saw*, constitutes the deictic center and the focal point of this piece

of the text. Hence, the reader sees things from the perspective of the speaker. The verb *saw* is mental perception type of verb. Prioritizing is also used in the same line via information structure. The prepositional phrase *on the grave* is being fronted to the beginning of its clause. This unusual placing of the prepositional phrase causes it to be thematically marked. Fronting also causes the subject of clause (the flowers) to be delayed and the remainder of the clause to carry the focus. The two noun phrases *the graves* and *the flowers*, while being two instances of naming and describing, they also constitute two instances of alluding (i.e. existential presupposition). The verb *shed*, in line 6, is action supervision, showing the Actor lack of control on the action specified. Being used in the past form, the same verb also represents an example of temporal deixis, and it is meant to preserve the deictic center already established. The phrase *their fresh leaves* is an example of naming and describing; its head noun “leaves” is being pre-modified by the possessive adjective “their” and the attribute “fresh”, which makes it less questionable and scrutinized. It also forms a further instance of existential presupposition. The conjunction *and* in line 7 conventionally implicates continuation. The phrase *their perfume* is being used deictically to refer to “the flowers”. It also counts as a further instance of both naming and describing and alluding. The verbs *rose* belongs to the category of action supervision processes. The definite noun phrase, *the sky*, is yet a further example of the textual conceptual function of naming and describing. The pronoun *it* in line 8 is being used deictically to refer to “perfume” and the phrasal verb *passed away* is action supervision. The speaker depicts death in favorable terms as she metaphorically equates it with the fragrance dead flowers produces, which, like the prayers of the speaker, makes its way up to heaven.

The ideology of the first stanza is meant to communicate the speaker’s religious believe and her wish for death through an analogy of a natural scene she observed on her way to the church. The act of praising and praying within the church clearly expresses Rossetti’s

Christian believe and her relationship with God. Her death wish, on the other hand, is implicitly communicated as she compares the ephemeral "fresh leaves" of flowers sending their fragrance up to heaven as they die early to human death. The early death of flowers reveals a far greater and more lasting purpose. Their death, as can be seen in second stanza, nourishes the "rich earth" and offers an everlasting "worth" to "the grass". And so is human death can be seen as the beginning of a new and everlasting life in heaven.

The beginning of the second stanza is as abrupt and brief as that of the first. While the use of full stop is meant to paradoxically show, once again, that death is an impermanent conclusion, it is also meant to reflect of the ephemeral nature of all living things. For that, the speaker seems to rely on the power of naming and describing whereby the pre-modification of the head noun *blossoms* makes the whole noun phrase unquestionable and less liable to doubts, consequently forcing the reader to take the proposition for granted. The verb *die* is action supervision type of verb, showing the Actor(s) lack of control on the action specified. The definite noun phrases *the sweetest blossoms* constitutes an instance of alluding (i.e. existential presupposition), merely presupposing the existence of the entities named.

The next two lines, lines 10 and 11, make use of a number of different TCFs. The personal deixis *they* is meant to refer back to "the sweetest blossoms". Listing is used twice in line 10, whereby the two-part lists gesture toward a well-established group in which two elements stand for the whole category. The three verbal choices in the same line (i.e. *die*, *fall* and *nourish*) all belong to the category of action supervision processes. Naming and describing is used in these two lines, in which case the head noun *earth* is being both pre- and post- modified by the definite article *the* and the attribute *rich* and the subordinate clause *from which* [...] respectively. The subordinate clause also constitutes an example of prioritizing. A further example of prioritizing via information

structure can be found within the subordinate clause, whereby the adverb *lately* is being fronted ahead of its main verb, intensifying as such the ephemeral and fleeting nature of all living things. On the whole, the ideology of these two lines is meant to reflect on cycle of nature and that death is an integral and normal part of this cycle.

In the next two lines, lines 12 and 13, the speaker uses naming and describing twice. In the first instance the head noun *life* is being pre-modified by the attribute *sweet*. In the second instance the head noun *death* is being pre-modified by the comparative adjective *sweeter* and post-modified by the relative clause *that passeth by and is [...]*. The noun modification in both cases while making the noun phrases unquestionable and less liable to doubt and scrutiny, it also helps fostering the ideology that death is sweeter than life as it leads to a much higher and desired purpose (i.e. an everlasting life in heaven where the speaker is united with the Divine). Furthermore, in these two lines the usual order of the concept of life and death is being reversed. Normally, people speak of passing life, but here it is death that passes, an idea that reflects on the Christian belief that death, in itself, is not the end, but rather a prelude to an everlasting life.

The last three line of the second stanza have a relatively similar structure that consists of a subject followed by a predicate. In Line 14 naming and describing are used via noun modification in which case the head noun *colours* is being pre- modified by the determiner *all*. The verb *turn* is action supervision type of verb, showing the Actor(s) lack of control on the action specified. Naming and describing and alluding are used twice in line15 via the definite noun phrases *the bright hues* and *the odours*. The two verbal choices in the same line (i.e. *vanish* and *fly*) both belong to the category of action supervision processes. Finally, line 16 uses naming and describing twice: *the grass* and *lasting worth*, both being connected by the Middle English relational possessive verb *hath*. Using natural analogy again, Rossetti implicitly relates death to the grass by claiming that the green grass (which here symbolizes the everlasting life after death) has

much value and worth than the flowers as it lasts longer. Similarly, for man death must be much sweeter than sweet life as it will eventually lead to an everlasting glory in the skies.

The beginning of the third stanza echoes the beginning of the first two stanzas by being abrupt and brief too. Once again, the use of full stop is meant to reflect on the ephemeral nature of all living things and to paradoxically show the impermanent nature of death. It is also meant to emphasize the difference between the earthly values (i.e. *youth* and *beauty*), which have a fleeting and ephemeral nature, and heavenly values, which last forever. The speaker uses naming and describing twice via the choice of nouns *youth* and *beauty*. Exemplifying using a two-part list in the same line is also highly suggestive. In this case, exemplifying is meant to gesture for a larger list with a larger potential membership than the couple members mentioned. The reader is invited to think of many other ephemeral earthly values to be contrasted with the everlasting heavenly values. The verb *die* belongs to the category of action supervention processes, and it shows the Actor lack of control on the action described.

Equating by appositional structure is used in line 18, whereby the phrases *my God* and *thou God of truth* both refer to the same referent (i.e. God), and all seem to perform the function of informing the reader(s) more about the referent. In the next two lines, lines 19 and 20, the speaker utilizes contrasting via comparative opposition to emphasize that the company of *Saints* and *Angels* is better the earthly values. Equating by appositional structure is also used in line 20, where the phrases “Saints and Angeles” and “a glad company” both have the same referent. Prioritizing via information structure is also employed in these two lines. Instead of using the normal SPC (Subject+ predicate+ Complement) structure, these two lines adopt an unconventional CPS structure causing the subject to carry the focus of the whole clause. A more standard version of these two

lines would normally be read like: (e.g. *Saints and Angels, a glad company are/ better than beauty and than youth*).

Line 21 uses equating by appositional structure where all of the following have the same referent (i.e. God): *Thou, lord, and our Rest and Ease*. Contrasting by comparative opposition is employed in lines 21 and 22, in which case God, referred to by the different nominal items in line 21, is being contrasted with “youth and beauty” and “Saints and Angels” which all referred to deictically by the pronoun *these*. The ideology here is meant as an assertion that an everlasting life in the company of the Divine surpasses all preoccupations, whether worldly such as beauty and youth, or spiritually such the company of Saints and Angels. This ideology is further emphasized by the stanza’s two concluding lines which rhetorically ask why anybody would prefer to “glean” the relatively rare offering of earthly crop over the ultimate and heavenly “full harvest”. In asking why would “we shrink from our full harvest” only to “glean with Ruth”, Rossetti asserts that what awaits humans after death outweighs all worldly preoccupations.¹

5.5. Discussion of results

The qualitative analysis of Rossetti’s “Sweet Death” has been intended to answer the question of what kind of TCFs are used to represent the poetess’s mystical ideology. The quantitative analysis, on the other hand, should next supplement the qualitative analysis by showing the frequencies and percentages of these functions. The percentage of occurrence of each individual Textual-Conceptual Function (and its subcategories) is being calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{The percentage of Each Function being used} = \frac{\text{Number of instances}}{\text{Total number of Functions used}} \times 100$$

Ruth is an old testament figure, who after being widowed, was compelled to “glean” the leftovers from the fields in¹ order to survive.

Table (٢) and figure (١) below are designed to show the statistical analysis as per individual TCF.

Table 2

The Statistical Results as Per Individual TCF for Christina Rossetti's "Sweet Death"

Textual-conceptual functions	Number of instances	Percentage of use
Naming and Describing	39	27.65%
Representing Processes (Actions/ States/ Events)	27	19.14%
Prioritizing	4	2.83%
Representing time, space and society	25	17.73%
Equating and contrasting	5	3.54%
Listing	7	4.96%
Alluding	21	14.89%
Negating	2	1.41%
Hypothesizing	1	0.70%
Presenting others' speech and thought	0	0.00%
Evoking	10	7.09%

Total	141	100%
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Figure 1

Framing scores for the different TCFs in Christina Rossetti’s “Sweet Death”

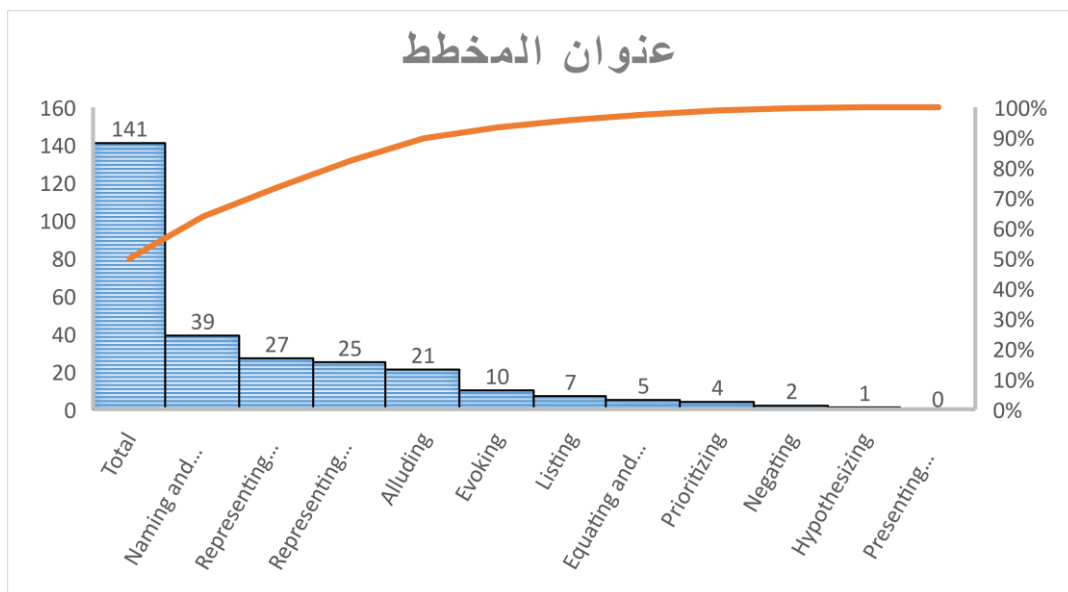


Table (٣), on the other hand, is intended to display the statistical analysis of the subcategories of each individual TCF.

Table 3

The frequencies and percentages of the subcategories of each individual TCF used in Christina Rossetti’s “Sweet Death”

TCFs	Subcategories of the TCF	Number of Instances	Percentage of Use
Naming and Describing	The choice of the Noun/Pronoun	14	35.89%

	Noun modification	25	64.10%
		Total: 39	
Representing Processes (Actions/ States/ Events)	Material action processes	19	70.37%
	Relational processes	6	22.22%
	Mental processes	2	7.40%
		Total:27	
Prioritizing	Information structure	2	50.00%
	Subordination	2	50.00%
		Total: 4	
Representing time, space and society	Personal deixis	13	52.00%%
	Spatial deixis	6	24.00%
	Temporal Deixis	6	24.00%
		Total: 25	
Equating and contrasting	Equating by Appositional Structure	3	60.00%
	Contrasting by Comparative Opposition	2	40.00%
		Total: 5	
Listing	Exemplifying (two-part list)	7	100%
		Total:7	

Alluding	Existential Presupposition	15	71.42%
	Conventional Implicature	6	28.57%
		Total: 23	
Negating	Syntactic	1	50.00%
	Semantic	1	50.00%
		Total: 2	
Hypothesizing	Modal Auxiliary	1	100%
	Total: 1		
Presenting others' speech and thought			
Evoking	Form	8	80.00%
	Sound	2	20.00%
		Total: 10	
Total		141	

When it comes to the statistical analysis of Rossetti's "Sweet Death", the poem has a number of points to offer. The poem makes an extensive use of the textual-conceptual function of naming and describing. There are 39 instances of naming and describing in the poem, which constitute 27.65% of the total TCFs used. The majority of these instances relies on nouns modification, which in addition of adding more information to the referents, makes these referents less liable to doubts and scrutiny. Representing processes (actions/ states/ events) is the second highest used textual-conceptual function in the poem, forming 19.14% of all the functions utilized. The majority of the verbal choices belong to the category of Action supervision processes, which shows the

Actor(s) lack of control on the Action specified by the verbal choices. Relational and mental processes are used less frequently. The poem makes no use of verbal and existential processes.

Prioritizing is used 4 times in the poem via subordination and information structure. Although they lack the prominence that referents have in a superordinate clause, the placement of some referents at lower level of subordination can further reinforce the poem's meaning by highlighting their relative lack of significance in the text. Information structure, on the other hand, can help highlight and promote certain clausal elements by manipulating the default structure via fronting for particular ideological effect. Compared to the other TCFs, representing time, space and society and alluding have a relatively higher frequency of use. The former scores 17.73% of the total TCFs used, and is achieved through personal, temporal and spatial deixis. The latter, on the other hand, scores 14.89%, and is primarily realized via existential presuppositions and conventional implicatures.

The remaining TCFs do not show as much frequency as the above mentioned four TCFs. There are 5 instances of equating and contrasting, which constitute 4.96% of total percentage. Equating is realized three times using appositional structure, while contrasting is realized twice using comparative opposition. Two-part list is employed 7 times throughout, either showing that a couple of elements stands for a whole category, or they gesture toward a larger more comprehensive group. Negating is used twice in the poem, and it is realized syntactically using *not* and semantically using the verb *vanish*. Hypothesizing is employed only once in the whole poem using the modal auxiliary verb *should*, expressing deontic meaning (obligation). The poem makes no use of the textual-conceptual function of Presenting others' speech and thought.

With a total of 10 instances, evoking constitutes 7.09% of all the TCFs used. On the level of sound, evoking makes use of alliteration, whereby the repetition of sibilants sounds in line 6 (Shed their fresh leaves in shows) intensify the impermanent and fleeting nature of all living things. Also, the repetition of the rhyme scheme in the three stanzas seems to evoke the cyclic nature of life and death. On the level of form, the poem makes use of unconventional capitalization conventions, whereby words such as Rest, Ease, Saints and Angels are being capitalized to intensify their spiritual connotation. The use of full stop in the first line of each stanza is also meant to intensify the ideology that death is not a permanent conclusion and that it is merely a prelude for an everlasting afterlife, as well as emphasizing the ephemeral and transient nature of all living things. Lastly, the use of run-on lines in the third stanza evoke a sense of surprise and unexpectedness which is meant to emphasize the values of heaven over “beauty and youth” and all earthly values that the reader can think of.

1. Conclusion

Using Critical Stylistic framework which consists of a number of linguistically based functions, the research was able to bring the poetess’s mystical ideology to the surface. The analysis reveals that the representation of mystical ideology seems to be a choice governed entirely by the poetess theological background as she reiterates her faith and personal belief using a variety of religiously-based themes. Themes such as death, the transitory nature of life, the ephemeral and transient nature of all living things and the belief in an everlasting life after death are all meant to intensify the poetess theological belief and to communicate her mystical ideology. Rossetti also uses a number of natural sceneries to communicate her mystical ideology, showing that death is a transitory natural part in the cycle of life and death. The analysis, moreover, shows that the model of analysis covers all the linguistic aspects of the text, which, on its turn, can insure that the ideological stance of the text’s producer can be unveiled in an objective manner.

Finally, the analysis shows that the speaker uses almost all the model's textual-conceptual functions and that there is a noticeable amount of disparity in the use of each individual function and its subcategories.

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