

Use of Sense Relations to Analyze Rappaccini's Daughter (A short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne)

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Abstract:

This study is a unique textual analysis. It uses sense relations as a tool to understand and analyze text. Sense relations bind the text while relating different words in a string of meanings. The attempt to drive meaning and reinforce the apparent meanings through using sense relations is interesting and useful. This technique can be used to understand other texts as well. The researcher analyzed a story 'Rappaccini's Daughter' by Nathaniel Hawthorn. The analysis shows that it is useful to use sense relations on linguistically rich texts. Such analysis will be highly recommended for analyzing Shakespeare's plays.

Key words: sense relations, antonyms, synonymy, polysemy, textual analysis.

Introduction:

'Rappaccini's Daughter' by Nathaniel Hawthorn is a fanciful story full of similes and metaphors. This text is rich with flowery language. The characters and the settings are old and fanciful. The plot is traditional and full of dramatic effect. The language itself is full of emotions and drama. So this story suits the study well which aims to discover patterns of sense relation to highlight and reinforce the meanings of texts. It is a different textual analysis that enables other researchers to make patterns of the use of synonyms and antonyms in a text to explore the relationship of characters and themes.

Objectives:

- To relate semantics with a piece of literature.
- To define and apply sense relations on the texts.
- To devise patterns of use of sense relations.
- To make extraction of meaning easy by using sense relations.

Research Questions:

- Is the text built on patterns of antonyms and synonyms?
- Do antonyms in the speech of different characters show opposition and conflict?
- Do synonyms in the speech of different characters show similarity and association?
- How much polesymy contribute in symbolism of text?
- What are the patterns of antonyms in this text?
- What are the patterns of synonyms in this text?
- How do antonyms differentiate characters?
- How do synonyms associate the characters with each other?
- Do antonyms add to the dramatic effects?

Problem Statement:

The identification of the use of sense relation in literary text can help to identify patterns in a methodical way. It can help to notice the conflicts in characters and themes and the layers and patterns of meaning in the text. This is important as it facilitates the critics and interpreters for analyzing different texts.

Limitation to the Study:

This study is limited to a particular text only. However it paves way for other researchers to interpret other texts on the set patterns by using semantic features like sense relations. Not all the sense relations have been applied on this particular text. Only antonyms, synonyms, ploysems, and metonyms have been studied.

a) Antonyms:

The story is built on conflicts and contrasts that give it a dramatic effect. There are complementary antonyms such as father/daughter, sister/brother, antonyms based on emotions like love/hatred, sympathy/disgust, being loved/feared, antonyms based on objects or symbols like medicine/poison, cure/poison, and abstractions like beautiful/ugly, heaven/earth, virtue/evil, nature/nurture, bright/dark, heaven/hell, attraction/repulsion, magic/science and enemy/friend.

Antonyms within the text ie in the speech of antagonists and protagonist and in general description of characters and events by the narrator help to trace the conflicting elements of the characters and embedded themes. The study of characters and themes becomes easy if synonyms and antonyms are identified. (Dagmar, 2010)

- Antonyms can be used to define meanings of words.

- Antonyms can be used for efficient expression of an opposite idea, etc.
- Antonyms can be used for emphatic effect.

b) Synonyms:

Synonymy refers to the relationship of similarity or identity in meaning. Synonyms are the words which have the same or very nearly the same essential meaning.

They are used to support and emphasize an idea or to associate the object(s) to character(s) or relate characters with each other. They also perform the function of strengthening symbols.

1. Characters:

Characters have same or different traits that are depicted in phrases having synonyms and antonyms specifically associated to those characters.

1.1 Beatrice and Rappaccini:

There are more antonyms than synonyms in the comparative study of the speeches of Beatrice and Rappaccini. It clearly shows that the former is extremely opposite to the later. Beatrice has a "rich voice like the sun set" whereas Rappaccini's voice is "weak". She seemed "full of life health and energy" whereas he was "sickly looking person". She was dressed in "most richness of taste as the most splendid of the flowers while he dressed in black. She was to him a "foolish girl" when he was said to be a man "fearfully wise in the secrets of poisonous flowers". Moreover she was physically poisonous while he was physically healthy, she was spiritually pure and innocent when she was referred as "pure daughter of Rappaccini" while he was morally poisonous and corrupt, as he was known to have "no spiritual a love of science", she was young and he was old.

Unlike her father she had humility when he was extremely proud of his experiments.

However they were daughter and father so they had some common things that are revealed through the use of synonyms. The garden where he grew poisonous flowers was common for both of them but in a different way. Her life was "contained in the limits of the garden" whereas "he spent a life time in his study and this garden is his world" here we can see that one is involuntary and the other act is voluntary which gives way to fate Vs choice tragedies.. When she was called "maiden worthy to be worshipped" he was known as "worshipful professor".

1.2 Beatrice and Giovanni:

Both these characters are common yet different and this is traced by the use of synonyms and antonyms in character sketching and description. Beatrice and Giovanni are young and they love each other and the garden is the place where they meet and fall in love. Both are referred to as the object of the experiment of Rappaccini. Both at the end of the story are poisonous.

Beatrice's love remains constant and unchanged whereas Giovanni's love and attraction toward Beatrice change into hatred and repulsion. The maiden who was worthy to be worshiped became the hateful, ugly accursed creature for him. The place where he could seek the warmth of life became for him a region of unspeakable terror. As his love was deep and emotional so was his hatred.

1.3 Giovanni and Rappaccini:

Giovanni was young and Rappaccini was old. One was the subject of experiment the other was experimenter. One his highly emotional both in terms of love and hatred but the other seems to be devoid of emotions. Both use Beatrice for their

worldly needs. Hence she hope to get comfort in Heaven after her death.

Though there are so many antonyms differentiating the two but there was one thing in common there selfishness and disregard for the emotions of Beatrice. They both were cruel to her yet she was loyal to both. At the end of the story she wants to drink the cure first to let Giovanni see the results, which show how selfless she was. Likewise she is seen as an extremely obedient child who cares and nurses the poisonous garden of her father.

2. Characters and Objects:

Objects are associated with characters through the use of synonyms to create symbolism. They represent, throw light, emphasize likeliness and highlight the characters.

2.1 Beatrice and Flowers:

“Flowers and maiden were different yet the same both containing some strange danger”. Beatrice and flowers share many qualities. Both are poisonous and must be “touched only with a glove and not to be approached without a covered face”. Beatrice’s beauty and the beauty of the flowers are compared to the richness of a jewel. As the flowers were “strange” so was the maiden. Just as the flowers had “deadly smell” Beatrice’s breath was “poisonous” too. Just as she was called “poisonous thing” the flowers were constantly referred to as “vegetable poison”. She was called a “maiden of a lonely island” and her “vegetable sister” the plant bearing purple flowers was “set in a stone jar” both were lonely, isolated, richly beautiful and deadly.

Beatrice was Rappaccini’s “earthly daughter” whereas the deadliest plant was the “child of his science, his brain”. Just as the plants were “no longer God’s making, Beatrice was no longer a normal being. Beatrice was born at the same moment

when the deadliest plant was created. Just as the plant was the result of Rappaccini's experiment Beatrice's tragic end was the result of the experiment of Rappaccini who introduced poison in his child and poisoned her life and the experiment of Giovanni who brought the cure in a little silver bottle that proved fatal for her.

However Beatrice being poisonous was different from those poisonous flowers. There is the point of departure when Giovanni feels that she was very pure and her "face showed simplicity". Moreover she was not spiritually poisonous.

2.2 Giovanni and Flowers:

Giovanni when realizes the danger says, "I am no flower to die in her grasp". In fact at the end he becomes poisonous just like the flowers of that garden.

3. Theme:

Antonyms highlight and contribute to the dramatic effect of the story and throw light on the themes.

In the following expressions from the text the use of antonyms highlight the dramatic theme of contrast and paradox.

- "Whatever looked **ugly** was now **beautiful**".
- "As **poison** had been **life** so the powerful **medicine** was **death**".
- "Though my **body** be fed with poison, my **spirit** is God's creature..."
- "I would rather be **loved** not **feared**..."
- Pass on, then through the world, most **dear** to **one another** and **fearful** to **all besides**".

3.1 Appearance and Reality:

Whatever appeared to Giovanni at first sight was not the same at the end. This dramatic irony is built up on several antonyms and contrasts in the text.

Rapaccini looked sickly looking weak man he was not poisonous and hence healthy and normal. Beatrice looked healthy full of life and energy whereas she was poisonous and weak. Rapaccini was considered to be wise in the secrets of nature while he considered his daughter to be foolish. Actually he himself was foolish and the last sentence of the text “and this is the result of your experiment” proves this notion.

When Giovanni calls her accursed creature she seeks refuge in prayer and hope to be blessed with “the flowers of Heaven”.

c) Polysemy

Words and phrases having polysemic relations give them layers of meanings. They enrich the text and embellish it. Objects have different meanings in different situations having the same core meaning.

4.1 Flowers:

Flowers of Rappaccini's garden are extremely poisonous. They were no longer natural. They were referred to as vegetable poisons more poisonous than those found in nature. Healthy flowers given to Beatrice by Giovanni were pure and natural and they withered very soon just like his love. “Flowers of heaven” in the story are the reward that Beatrice hopes to get when she was dying. In both cases earthly flowers stand for gifts for her which were flawed. In heaven she hopes to get the real flowers and love which she is denied on earth.

4.2 Gift:

Every gift in the story is flawed corrupt or has negative effect or poor fate be it of love, flowers, poison or cure. The poison introduced to Beatrice by her father at the time of her birth was referred as “marvelous gifts” that made her special untouchable and feared by all. This was however the worst thing he did to her. Giovanni gives Beatrice a gift of “healthy flowers” that

wither in her lap because of her deadly poisonous breath. Beatrice on receiving this promised to give him her jewel like flower which were actually poisonous. Baglioni the friend of Giovanni's father gave a little silver bottle containing cure for them. This gift of cure proved to be deadly for Beatrice.

4.3 Garden:

Different senses associated to garden having the same core meaning of a garden at polysemic level enrich the idea and give parallels and layers of meaning.

Initially the garden seemed to Giovanni as a garden for the study of plants. The strange and extraordinary garden is termed as "a beautiful spot". Beatrice's life was contained in the limits of that garden. Her father spend his life time in his studies and "this garden was his world". The flowers lighted up the whole garden even when there had been no sunshine. The glimpses of the garden were cheerful for Giovanni as he was distracted from the sight of his own ill lit room. The garden is a place where the two lover see meet and talk to each other. He imagines the garden to be the heaven for "their whole life".

While Beatrice and Giovanni used to meet and talk in that garden Rappaccini had been "watching the scene within the shadow of the entrance". This is a parallel to the gazing of Satan on the blessed human beings in the garden of the heaven in the *Paradise Lost* by Milton. This comparison binds the concept of garden in a polysemic way.

Later the same garden turned for Giovanni as a "region of unspeakable terror".

4.4 Food:

"Though my body be fed with poison, my spirit is God's creature and needs love as its daily food". It was "Beatrice's task to nurse and serve the purple jewel like flowers that were as "deadly as poisonous animals or evil spirits".

4.5 Commonness:

For the scientist commonness is not acceptable as he is proud and calls her poisonous daughter “daughter of my pride and victory from ordinary women”. The way Rappaccini was working in the garden with immense care he seemed “no common laborer”. Beatrice was so used to poison and the smell of those poisonous flowers that she was “faint with common air”. Rappaccini actually wanted to create people who would be superior and different from all others so he says to Beatrice, “Stand apart from common people”.

4.6 Power:

“Strange power of words” exchanged with Beatrice were constant source of attraction for Giovanni. Rappaccini turns flowers into medicine that are “as powerful as magic”. The little silver bottle containing cure was “a powerful medicine” that proved to be fatal for Beatrice.

d) Metonymy

These devices are used in the text for embellishment and emphasis on a particular part of body in order to highlight the features on focus. This distinction and focus can be used in dramatization “He was standing before bright and loving eyes”

- “Save what you see from your own eyes”.
- “I save what comes from your own lips”
- “A burning feeling in his hand”.(here the entire body and mind was in agony)

Conclusion:

The texts which are rich with figures of speech can be studied and analyzed easily by using sense relations. The interpretation of a text can be done in a more methodical way by using sense relation. Thus the binding of semantic; a study of meanings with a piece of Literature can be useful and interesting.

Recommendations:

This technique can be applied to various texts rich metaphoric language. Shakespeare's plays can be well analyzed by identifying opposites and similar words in the speech of protagonists and antagonists. The texts can be analyzed in terms of complexity of images and by identifying hyponymy and polysemy.

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