

## A Stylistic Study of English Aphorisms of “Life and Death”

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### ***1-Introduction***

Aphorism is a concise statement designed to make a point or illustrate a commonly held belief. Aphorisms are often seen as clever tidbits of wisdom. They are more than that in the sense that they are a means to express a philosophy or a spirit. An aphorism stands or falls by itself. It does not support nor is it held up by a system ( Gross,2003:15). A good example is put by ( Stephen Vincent Benet) :

*Life is not lost by dying ; life is lost minute by minute , day by dragging day , in all the thousand small uncaring ways.*

It is worth stating that the various studies of aphorism agree in considering it as a specific mode of inquiry or a particular intellectual response to the relation between the individual, i.e.,the author or the reader and society. Such a relation is expressed through a distinct verbal structure , a literary representation which renders concrete the tension and the conflict between individual observation and abstract reflection . Thus , aphorism is often said to express the uncertainty of experience or a crisis of consciousness.

Stylistic devices make one speech and writing more interesting and lively and help to get the attention of readers/ listeners.

In this paper , some of **lexical stylistic , syntactical stylistic** devices , and one **phonetic stylistic** device are going to be illustrated in that they are useful for analyzing sentences and for creating texts .

Ten devices are drawn : **Parallelism , Hyperbole, Alliteration , Meiosis , Irony , Oxymoron , Cliché , Litotes, Metalepsis , and Loose sentences.** These devices are randomly chosen. Besides , (50) aphorisms are selected to achieve the analysis under the theme of “ Life and Death”. The data collected in this paper are mainly taken from [www.aphorism4all.com/by\\_theme](http://www.aphorism4all.com/by_theme) : “ **Aphorisms and Favorite Sayings: Aphorisms by Theme**” .

This paper aims at investigating the stylistic devices existing in the aphorisms of “life and death” and also at identifying the functions and the frequencies (rates of occurrence ) of these devices .

Certainly , these lexical , syntactical , and phonetic (sonic) stylistic devices are closely interwoven and mutually complementary to build up an intricate pattern.

### ***2-English Aphorisms: Definition and Etymology***

An aphorism can be a thought , a joke , a small 'poem' , a loose haiku , an image , a glance , a paradox , an observation –almost anything , as long as it is short and concise ( Chapko,2007:2). It is defined as " a short , pithy statement containing a truth of general import"( Gross,2003:ix) .

The Webster Dictionary (1976:99) defines aphorism as " a short ,pithy sentence ;to mark off by boundaries , set aside , cast out , and define ; a terse and often ingenious formulation of a truth or sentiment usually in a single sentence ; adage , maxim". An example of an aphorism is , 'Men's maxims reveal their characters (Gross, 2003:1).An adage is an older aphorism that has been long used because it contains a truthful observation , such as 'don't burn your bridges behind you'. The maxim presents helpful instruction . An example of a maxim is , "Aphorisms are portable wisdoms , the quintessential extracts of thought and feeling"(Kin 1955:23).

"An aphorism is the concise statement of a moral or philosophical principle . It offers a comment on some recurrent aspect of life , clothed in terms which are meant to be permanently or universally applicable"(Gross,2003:viii).Gross categorized aphorisms as (Mankind , Life , Self-Doubt , Friends and Foes , Happiness and Sorrow , Illusion and Reality , Death , and The Afterlife).

Since the beginning of human society the aphorism has been used as a vehicle to express truth , and the author's observations of life . These may be thoughts of spiritual nature , or common experience. The aphorism stays in use if it is truthful, and speaks to the reality of the human condition..Codes and conduct , the emotions of life , and human strengths and weaknesses are gathered within the insights of the aphorism. In a glance the reader will know if it is the truth and can learn something about life (Ibid.)

The etymological root of the word 'aphorism' also comes from the Greek: 'apo' means 'from' and 'boros' means 'boundary' or 'horizon'. So the original meaning of the term was 'something that marks off or set apart'- i.e., a definition. The definition is among the most durable forms of the aphorism , and the English novelist Samuel Butler supplied a wonderful example of it: A definition is the enclosing of a wilderness of idea within a wall of words ( Geary,2007:5).

The term 'aphorism' was first used in a collection of medical sayings in the 'aphorisms of Hippocrates' , which contains the saying "Art is long ; life is short"( Jones,1979:99) .The one -line aphorism can stand by itself , but is often found in two sentences in order to enhance the saying . These can be joined with other aphorisms in a cluster form to make a larger message , such as a parable. The phrasing should be resilient and of a perceptive nature , with an agreeable rhythm of interesting words.

Modern aphorisms are concerned with the same ideas and questions that have been puzzling humanity from the beginning of time. The desires and longings of the heart , our sense of identity , the nature of good and evil , time , religion , and the aftertime are common themes found in today's' aphorisms. They are used to express the need to find spiritual fulfillment and understanding of the cultural experience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century( Gross, 2003:v-vi).

### ***3-Aphorisms and Proverbs***

Meider(1985:119) defines the proverb as " a short , generally known sentence of the folk that contains wisdom , truth , morals , and traditional views in a metaphorical , fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation".

As for Norrick ( 1985:32 ) , the proverb is "a traditional , conversational , didactic genre with general meaning , a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meanings".

A proverb is different from the aphorism in that it is not as instructive , but contains amusing observation , and does not have a known author. Simple to remember , they have been used both orally and in writing throughout time. The proverb reflects the context of its origin , and will stay in use if it remains pertinent to the times , as with the old Greek saying "a rolling stone gathers no moss"( Gross, 2003:viii). If its language and the subject have become obsolete , people can not relate , and it is forgotten , becoming a

part of folk knowledge and history. New sayings are being created all the time such as "the camera doesn't lie" , and "Been there , done that". Through repetition , they may officially be listed as proverbs ( Meider, 1985:119).

"While aphorisms offer insights and wisdom , they differ from proverbs in that they are not apocryphal. And while they are universal , they also generally bear the personal mark of the author" ( Gross, 2003:ix).

When compared to proverbs , aphorisms are more informative and can be prosaic or poetic. Aphorisms may also come with repeated words and phrases or two parts with similar syntactic structure. It can be seen that proverbs are used more in our daily life than aphorisms (Wikipedia:2010).

#### ***4-The Style of Aphorism***

In the history of literature , the style of aphorism went through numerous stages and historic events . Numerous references are used not only to give evidence to author's education ,but they are also a rhetoric figure. By means of allusions , references and popular quotes , aphorists convey wide range of meanings , ideas and thoughts in a simple and concise manner ( Szczesniak, 2008:60).

The complex perception and comprehension of aphorism is complicated by the fact that the genre appears as an individual structure without any wider context. Since aphorism functions in two semantic planes , it is ambiguous ( Ibid.).These semantic planes are literary and metaphoric . The former constitutes the body of aphorism , whereas the latter is a carrier of 'deep thoughts' :the wisdom of aphorism , which contributes to the highly artistic literary form of this genre.

Aphorism often uses impersonal forms , phrases referring to general public or group nouns (people, some.):

*"We are all in the gutter , but some of us are looking at the stars" ; and "It is absurd to divide people into good and bad .People are either charming or tedious" (Oscar Wilde)*

The aphoristic style is characterized by irony and a sense of humour , as well as the presence of several rhetorical devices , such as ; paradoxes , antitheses ,wordplay , ellipsis – which help aphorisms have a compact language form ( Ibid:68).

The aphorism uses rhetorical verbal structures like antithesis , parallelism, proportion, oxymoron , chiasmus , metaphor , and paradox, in a concise , emphatic manner to address this matrix of oppositions . The aphorism mediated an insight or perception through language . The meaning of aphorism is not immediately clear; indeed often at first glance it is impenetrable . It typically works dialectically through paradox , pun, mixed metaphor , or similarly unexpected verbal and semantic juxtaposition , forcing the reader to rethink , to complete the dialectical process of an active search for unexpected meaning ( Gross, 2003:v)

#### ***5- Data Analysis***

##### ***o 5.1 Parallelism***

Trask (1993:198) defines parallelism as “the use of the same construction in consecutive sentences for rhetorical effect”.

Parallelism is the use of the same pattern of phrases , clauses , sentences to express two or more ideas of the same level of importance . Thus , similarity of form points up similarity of content ( Kane ,1988:145)

According to Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:49) , parallelism is “the repetition of a structure but filling it with new elements” . To explain this , they provide the following example:

*He has plundered our seas , ravaged our coasts , burnt our towns.*

Here , a series of similar actions are expressed by repeating the same structure: verb – possessive pronoun- direct object.

“ Parallelism is recurrent syntactical similarity. Several parts of a sentence or several sentences are expressed similarly to show that the ideas in the parts or sentences are equal in importance .” Parallelism also adds rhythm and balance to the context and , most importantly , clarity to the sentence (Harris, 2010)

According to Galperin ( 1981: 189) , “ the necessary condition in parallel construction is identical , or similar , syntactical structure in two or more sentences or parts of a sentence in close succession”.

In this respect ,Hodges and Whitten ( 1982: 223) believe that “ a sentence is balanced when grammatically equal structures are used ... to express contrasted or similar ideas” and this equates parallelism with balance.

This device is shown in the following aphorisms :

- 1- A single death is a tragedy , a million deaths is statistic.

Josef Stalin

There are parallel phrases here as ( a single death / a million deaths). The aim of such parallelism is to effect the two distinct positions: a single death is parallel to a million death.

- 2- life is a tragedy for those who feel , and a comedy for those who think.

Dr. Squid

In this aphorism , there is a parallel construction on the clausal level as (a tragedy for... and a comedy for...) which emphasizes two contrastive ideas in order to equate the significance of the part.

- 3- It is a far , far better thing that I do , than I have ever done;  
it is a far , far better rest that I go to , than I have ever known.

Charles Dickens

The necessary condition in this parallel construction is identical syntactical structure in two sentences in close succession. In this aphorism , parallelism backs up repetition making the whole sentence epigrammatic.

- 4- Everyone is born sincere and die deceiver.

Lucde de Clapiers

Parallelism here comprises contrasts of ideas to equate the significance of the part on a phrasal level as (born / die ; sincere/deceiver). The contrast here is also used to set one thing against the other.

- 5- Search for meaning , eat , sleep . Search for meaning , eat , sleep . Die , search for meaning , search for meaning, search for meaning.

Doug Horton

There is a repetition of this sentence (search for meaning , eat , sleep ) The repetition here on the clausal level is to provide parallel structures and its purpose is to create emphasis .

- 6- It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees .

Euripides

Parallelism here is to show that each item that exists in this aphorism uses the same syntactic form . This aphorism focuses upon the contrasts of the ideas on a phrasal level as :to die on your feet / to live on your knees. In this aphorism , the writer conveys some sense of complexity in an idea by

admitting opposite truth which is ( it is better for a person to die as a brave man than to live as a coward).

- 7-Born to be wild . Live to outgrow it.

Doug Horton

The parallelism here indicates that the ideas of this aphorism ( on clausal level)are equal in importance . There is a close succession in the sense that :born to be wild then live to go beyond it ( life).

- 8-After I am dead , I'd rather have people ask why I have no monument than why I have one .

Marcus Porcius Cato

This aphorism indicates parallelism on the clausal level in the form of an indirect question : why I have no/ why I have one and there is a contrastive meaning as : I have no .../ I have one .

- 9-There are two times in a man's life when he should not speculate , when he can't afford it , and when he can .

Mark Twin

Parallelism here is used to indicate contrastive ideas on clausal level ( when he can not afford /when he should not speculate / when he can).

- 10-To live a perfect life , you must ask nothing , give nothing , and expect nothing.  
Garth Brooks

Parallelism here highlights the repetition of a certain key word on clausal level to add emphasis and rhythm : nothing , nothing , nothing.

- 11-It is not the years in your life but the life in your years that counts.

Adlai E. Stevenson

The parallel construction here indicates negative meaning ( not the years in your life /the life in your years). On a clausal level, it emphasizes the contrast of the ideas and equates the significance of the part. There is a sense of complexity to state opposite truth.

12-A different language is a different vision of life.

Federico Fellini

In this aphorism , parallelism here is on phrasal level to add clarity to the sentence as a different language states a different life vision ( related ideas).

13-He who has lived a day has lived an age.

Jean de La Bruyere

This aphorism comprises parallelism as (has lived a day / has lived an age ) to clarify two similar ideas on clausal level.

14-Chaos often breeds life , when order breeds habit.

Henry Brooks Adams

Parallelism here indicates two different senses as (chaos / order ) . Parallel construction is shown here as : breeds life / breeds habit on clausal level.

15-Anyone who has never really loved has never really lived.

Agatha Christie

In this aphorism , parallelism here indicates clarity (related ideas) on clausal level as (those who has never loved , has never lived).

16-I'd rather die while I'm living than live while I'm dead.

Jimmy Buffett

Parallel construction here is indicated as contrastive ideas on clausal level: die while I'm living / live while I'm dead.

17-Life is good when we think it's good . Life is bad when we don't think .

Doug Horton

In this aphorism , parallel construction is shown here as (life is good .../ life is bad ...) to indicate two contrastive ideas on clausal level .

18- Bad men live that they may eat and drink , whereas good men eat and drink that they may live.

Socrates

Parallelism here indicates two contrasts of ideas i.e., negative meaning ( on clausal level): bad men / good men . Bad men live to eat and drink whereas good men eat and drink in order to live . This aphorism also refers to two opposite truths and sets one thing against the other in order to characterize a phenomenon from a specific viewpoint which is necessary to find points of sharp contrast : bad men live that.../good men eat and...

19-I am not afraid of tomorrow , for I have seen yesterday and I love today.

William White

Parallelism in this aphorism is on clausal level as: I am / I have / I love . Each clause has a subject and a verb. In this aphorism , parallelism indicates a series of ideas and thoughts which appear in one sentence ( repetition).

20-The instability of our tastes is the occasion of the irregularity of our lives.

Stanislaus Leszczynski

This aphorism is an example of parallelism on phrasal level. Parallel construction is shown here in : the instability of our tastes / the irregularity of our lives to express the use of two related ideas to equate the significance of the parts. Here the cause of the instability would affect the irregularity of our lives.

21-Kill me tomorrow ; let me live tonight.

William Shakespeare

There is parallelism on clausal level in this aphorism : kill me tomorrow / let me live tonight. Parallelism here indicates contrasted ideas in two parts of a sentence in close succession . The contrasted ideas equate parallelism here with balance : tomorrow/ tonight.

22-Everybody wants to go to heaven , but nobody wants to die.

Doug Larson

Parallelism here is on clausal level : everybody wants to go.../ nobody wants to...to refer to different ideas .

23-To awake from death is to die in peace.

Doug Horton

Parallelism here is on phrasal level to refer to contrastive ideas : to awake from death/ to die in peace. There are two ideas here to equate the significance of the parts

24-The fact that he died does not prove that he lived.

Stainslaw Jerzylec

There is a parallel structure on clausal level in this aphorism as that he died/ that he lives. This indicates opposite truth and gives clarity to the aphorism.

25-We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Parallelism in this aphorism is on clausal level to refer to contrastive ideas as: to live together as.../ perish together as... In order to characterize a thing from a specific viewpoint , it may be necessary to find points of sharp contrast: to live together as brothers or we must learn to die or to be destroyed as fools .

26-We were all going direct to Heaven , we were all going direct to the other way.  
Charles Dickens

Parallel structure here is on clausal level to express contrastive ideas as : we were all going to heaven / we were all going to the other way. In both cases , this aphorism indicates the idea of death but of two different directions and different meanings. There is a situational confrontation of two notions here in this aphorism expressed by non- antonymous words.

## 5.2 Hyperbole

The counterpart of understatement , deliberately exaggerates conditions for emphasis or effect . In formal writing the hyperbole must be clearly intended as exaggeration , and should be carefully restricted ( Harris , 2010) Hyperbole can make a single point very enthusiastically explained as:

*I said 'rare' , not 'raw' . I've seen cows hurt worse than this get up and get well.*

Or you can exaggerate one thing to show how really different it is from something supposedly similar to which it is being compared ( Ibid.):

*This stuff is used motor oil compared to the coffee you make , my love.*

According to Norrick ( 1985:131) “ Hyperbole has traditionally been considered a rhetorical figure along with , if not quite of the same importance of synecdoche , metaphor and metonymy” . He ( Ibid.) adds that hyperbole counts as amplification . Amplification says more than necessary as in the following example :

*Faint heart never won fair lady . In this example the concept of hyperbole is due to the existence of 'never' .*

Hyperbole can be expressed by all notional parts of speech . The most typical cases of expression are : by pronouns ( every , all , everybody) ; by numerical nouns ( a thousand ) ; by adverbs of time ( never , ever).

Baldick (2001:119) states that hyperbole is an exaggeration for the sake of emphasis in a figure of speech not meant literally as in the following example :

*I have been waiting here for ages.*

This device is shown in the following aphorisms:

- 1- A single death is a tragedy , a million deaths is statistic.

Josef Stalin

The hyperbolic device in this aphorism is : ( a single / a million ) which is a deliberate exaggeration of a numerical nouns to indicate emphasis .

- 2-No one knows whether death , which people fear to be the greatest evil , may not be the greatest good.

Plato

Hyperbole in this aphorism is indicated by : greatest good. Here the writer exaggerates one thing to show how really different it is from something supposedly similar to which it is being compared .



- 3- The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved ; loved for ourselves , or rather in spite of ourselves.

Victor Hugo

- 4- I am old enough to know better but I'm still too young to care.

Ogden Nash

- 5- All animals except man know that the ultimate of life is to enjoy it.  
Samuel Butler

- 6- Too much credit is given to the end result. The true lesson in the struggle that takes place between the dream and reality. The struggle is a thing called life.

Garth Brooks

- 7- We are all serving a life sentence , and good behavior is our only hope for a pardon.

Doug Horton

In the aphorisms stated above no. (3, 4 ,5 , 6 , 7 ), hyperbolic devices express effect and emphasis as in : ‘supreme happiness’ , ‘too young’ , ‘all animals’ , ‘too much’ , ‘all serving’ and ‘only hope’.

- 8- Life is just one damned thing after another.

Elbert Hubbard

There is hyperbole in this aphorism ( one ) which is used as a deliberate exaggeration of a certain quality of an object.

### **5.3 Alliteration**

Alliteration is the repetition of the initial sound of two or more words as in ( big bat in the belfry). In alliterative verse, sound –unity is provided in every line by alliteration ( Traugott and Pratt, 1980:400)

Trask (1996: 15- 16) states that alliteration is the “ repeated use of the same initial consonant sound in a string of words in a connected text: *The burghers of Brighton briskly bundled the belligerent boatmen back to Brest.*

Alliteration is used in proverbs , football chants , set expressions ,

and aphorisms to make memorizing easier.

Cuddon ( 1999:23) says that the repetition of initial consonants sounds of words that are found close together in a line is alliteration. A good example is :

*Five miles meandering with a mazy motion .*

The aim of alliteration is to achieve specific kinds of effect or rhythm in sentences.

This device is illustrated in the following aphorisms:

- 1- Don't die until you are dead.

Elbert Hubbard

There is alliteration in this aphorism ( consonance). The re-repeated sound is often met at the beginning of words: don't / die / dead. This device is employed in this aphorism to indicate rhythm.

- 2- All I desire for my own burial is not to be buried alive.

The Earl of Chesterfield

Alliteration here is shown in : burial / be/ buried to provide rhythm.

#### **5.4 Meiosis**

This figure of quantity is opposite in meaning to hyperbole . Meiosis is a deliberate diminution of a certain quality of an object or phenomenon. Meiosis makes speech expressive (Harris , 2010) Good examples are:

*It was a cat- size pony.*

*There was a drop of water left in the bucket.*

This device is shown in the following selected aphorisms:

- 1-I don't think anyone should write their autobiography until after they are dead.

Samuel Goldwyn

In this aphorism , there is meiosis which is a statement in significance to make utterance expressive as people are unable to write their autobiography and this could be done after the death of anyone.

- 2-In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life . It goes on.

Robert Frost

The device of meiosis in this aphorism implies that there is something less in significance than it really is : in three words . The idea here is that in three words he/ she is able to summarize everything he has learned about life (how can he/ she achieve this in three words only!) This is only an expressive meaning in this aphorism.

#### **5.5 Irony**

Abrams( 1999:135) states that irony is a statement in which the meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed.

Irony is a lexical stylistic device based on the simultaneous realization of two logical meanings – dictionary and contextual , but the two meanings stand in opposition to each other ( Galperin, 1981:133).

This device is shown in the following aphorisms:

- 1- All animals except man know that the ultimate of life is to enjoy it.

Samuel Butler

There is irony in this aphorism . Mockery is concealed to convey a negative feeling ( pity ). Here there is an attitude opposite to that which is actually stated.

- 2- Attention to health is life's greatest hindrance.

Plato

The irony is used here to convey a negative meaning as irritation . Attention to health is the greatest impediment of life.

- 3- My time is probably short in the larger scheme of things , but the day is long .

Rev. Webster

In this aphorism , there is an ironical indication which is used to convey a negative emotion : dissatisfaction as ( my life is probably short but the day is long).

- 4- Death is life's way of telling you you have been fired.

R. Geis

This aphorism comprises irony to indicate displeasure .

- 5- Everyone is born sincere and die deceiver.

Lucde Clapiers

Irony here is concealed in the contradicted words used to express pity or regret.

- 6- To awake from death is to die in peace.

Doug Horton

In this aphorism , irony indicates irritation and displeasure.

- 7- You live only once , but if you do it right , once is enough.

Mae West

Irony here indicates that the real meaning is concealed in contradiction and emotional intensity.

- 8- Most men employ the first part of life to make the other part miserable.

Jean de La Bruyere

Here , the ironical indication is that the real meaning is concealed in effect of misery in man's life.

- 9- Poverty , labor and calamity are not without their luxuries , which the rich , the indolent and the fortunate in vain seek for.

William Hazlitt

In this aphorism , the ironical expression indicates negative emotions: disappointment and irritation in the sense that poverty , labor and calamity would provide comfort and luxury in life which rich people always seek but in vain.

### ***5.6 Oxymoron***

Oxymoron is a paradox reduced to two words , usually in an adjective – noun ( eloquent silence) or adverb –adjective (inertly strong) relationship , and is used for effect , complexity , emphasis or wit ( Harris ,2010 )

Oxymoron is a combination of two words in which their meaning clash , being opposite in sense : ‘sweet sorrow’ , ‘pleasantly ugly face’ , ‘deafening silence’ ( Galperin, 1981:149) .

Harris ( 2010 ) adds that oxymoron can be useful when things have gone contrary to expectation , belief , assertion , or when the person's position is opposite to another's which he/ she is discussing . The figure then produces an ironic contrast which shows how something has been misunderstood or mislabeled as in the following example :

*The cost –saving program became an expensive economy.*

This device is shown in the following aphorisms:

- 1- All I ask of life is a constant and exaggerated sense of my own importance .

Samuel Butler

Here oxymoron indicates a combination of words ( constant and exaggerated ) semantically incompatible .Oxymoron is used here to point out complicated nature of the object ( sense of importance) under discussion.

- 2- All I desire for my own burial is not to be buried alive.

The Earl of Chesterfield

Oxymoron in this aphorism is a combination of two words in which their meanings clash , being opposite in sense as ( buried alive). As a result , the object under description obtains characteristics contrary to its nature.

- 3- No one knows whether death , which people fear to be the greatest evil , may not be the greatest good.

Plato

Oxymoron here is a combination of two words (greatest evil) in which their meanings clash , being opposite in sense.

- 4- As a well spent day brings happy sleep , so life well used brings happy death .

Leonardo da Vinci

In this aphorism , oxymoron indicates a combination of two words (happy death) and their meaning is being opposite in sense. Oxymoron here indicates that two words meet in conflict.

- 5- Our nature consists in motion ; complete rest is death.

Marcel Achard

Oxymoron in this aphorism expresses that there exist two things which have gone contrary to expectation as : complete rest / death.

### ***5.7 Cliché***

A cliché is generally defined as an expression that has become hackneyed and trite. A cliché strives after originality , whereas it has lost the aesthetic generating power it once had. There is always a contradiction between what is aimed at and what is actually attained : (Galperin , 1981:162)

*Rosy dreams of youth .*

Cliché is used for an action or idea which is expected or predictable , based on a prior event ( Harris , 2010).

This device is shown in the following aphorisms :

- 1- Children are unpredictable . You never know what inconsistency they're going to catch you in next.

Franklin P. Jones

Cliché here indicates a very predictable thing which concerns children and it is that inconsistency of what they ( children ) are going to do in future.

- 2- Death meant little to me . It was the last joke in a series of bad jokes.

Charles Bukowski

Cliché here in this aphorism indicates an idea which is predictable and based upon a prior event : last joke / a series of bad jokes .

- 3- He who learns and runs away , lives to learn another day.

Edward Lee Thorndike

Cliché here implies a deeper understanding of an idea ( obvious remark ) to an incident that may happen to a person.

### 5.8 Litotes

Litotes is a particular form of understatement generated by denying the opposite or contrary of the word which otherwise would be used . Depending upon the tone and context of the usage , litotes either retains the effect of understatement , or becomes an intensifying expression ( Harris, 2010). Compare these two examples:

*Heat waves are common in the summer.*

*Heat waves are not rare in the summer.*

Usually , litotes intensifies the statement intended by the writer , and creates the effect of strong feelings moderately conveyed as :

*Hitting that telephone pole certainly didn't do your car good.*

Litotes is not a pure negation , but a negation that includes affirmation as :

*She was not without taste.*

*He is not a coward .( He is a brave man)*

This device is shown in the following aphorism:

- 1- The grave's a fine a private place ,

But none , I think , do there embrace

Andrew Marvell

In this aphorism , litotes here indicates understatement in which an affirmative concept ( the concept of grave as a fine place ) is expressed by negating its opposite ( but it does not embrace ).

- 2-Poverty , labor and calamity are not without their luxuries , which the rich , the indolent and the fortunate in vain seek for.

William Hazlitt

In this aphorism , litotes here indicates a pure negation to include affirmation : not without .

### 5.9 *Metalepsis*

Genette( 1988:88) defines metalepsis as “Deliberate transgression of the threshold of embedding” resulting in “intrusions [that] disturb, to say the least, the distinction between levels.” It produces an effect of “humor” or of “the fantastic” or “some mixture of the two [...], unless it functions as a figure of the creative imagination .

Metalepsis is a rhetorical device in which a word that is used figuratively is taken through a succession of its different meanings or two or more tropes are united in the use of a single word(Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2011).

It designates a form of metonymy , by which one explains what follows in order to denote what precedes ; or what precedes in order to denote what follows .

This device is only shown in the following aphorism :

Any idiot can face a crisis ; it is this day –to –day living that wears you out.

Anton Chekhov

The mtalepsis device in this aphorism indicates the reference to something ( the idea of being idiot) remotely associated with the main theme of the aphorism ( crisis)

### 5.10 *The Loose Sentence*

Leech and Short ( 1981 : 228) point out that the most common type of sentence is traditionally called ‘ a loose structure’: that is , a structure in which trailing constituents predominate over anticipatory constituents. A loose structure is ‘natural’ in that it makes things easy for the addressee, and incidentally for the addresser , by reducing the amount of syntactic information that has to be stored in decoding.

A loose sentence is a long sentence that has the main point at the beginning followed by subordinate phrases and clauses that are used to develop or modify the main point in the main clause . This technique is often employed to indicate either emphasis or easiness of understanding ( Kane, 1988: 134). In the following example:

*We must be wary of conclusions drawn from the ways of the social insects, since their evolutionary track lies so far from ours.( Robert, Ardrey)*

the main point lies in the first part ( main clause) of this complex sentence ; the subordinate clause beginning with (since...) modifies and develops the main idea.

This device is commonly used in most aphorisms of life and death:

- 1- A single death is a tragedy , a million deaths is statistic.

In this aphorism the main point of a single death is emphasized and is therefore placed at the beginning of this coordinate sentence.

Similarly , the device of loose sentence is exploited in the following coordinate sentences\* which the second sentence either develops the first one or modifies it:

- 2- life is a tragedy for those who feel , and a comedy for those who think.

- 3- Everyone is born sincere and die deceiver.
- 4- Born to be wild . Live to outgrow it.
- 5- It is not the years in your life but the life in your years that counts.
- 6- I am old enough to know better but I' m still too young to care.
- 7- We are all serving a life sentence , and good behavior is our only hope for a pardon.
- 8- My time is probably short in the larger scheme of things , but the day is long.
- 9- Death is life's way of telling you you have been fired.
- 10-You live only once , but if you do it right , once is enough.
- 11-As a well spent day brings happy sleep , so life well used brings  
happy death.
- 12-Our nature consists in motion ; complete rest is death.
- 13-Death meant little to me . It was the last joke in a series of bad jokes.
- 14-The grave's a fine a private place,  
But none , I think , do there embrace
- 15-We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.
- 16-Any idiot can face a crisis ; it is this day – to – day living that wears  
you out.

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*\*The absence of the coordinator creates asyndetic coordination in a sentence ( Martin, 1983). This case appears in some of these loose sentences.*

- 17-We were all going direct to Heaven , we were all going direct to the  
other way.
- 18-Life is good when we think it's good . Life is bad when we don't  
think.
- 19-Kill me tomorrow ; let me live tonight.
- 20-Everybody wants to go to heaven , but nobody wants to die.

By the same token , loose sentences also occur in aphorisms involving complex sentences . These aphorisms utilize this device of loose sentence to make the main point at the beginning and what



follows ( subordinate clauses) them is simply extra- information , added to develop or modify the point . For example , in :

21 : It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees.

the main idea of dying on feet is compared to the idea of living on knees through the exploitation of the construction better ...than the reason behind placing ‘dying on feet’ at the beginning is that it is the point to which ‘living on knees’ is compared.

Similarly ,in the following aphorisms involving complex sentences , the device of loose sentence is utilized mainly for two reasons : emphasis or easiness of understanding by listeners/ readers.

22-After I am dead , I’ d rather have people ask why I have no monument than why I have one.

23-To live a perfect life , you must ask nothing , give nothing , and expect nothing.

24-Chaos often breeds life , when order breeds habit.

25- There are two times in a man’s life when he should not speculate ,  
when he can’t afford it , and when he can .

26-Bad men live that they may eat and drink , whereas good men eat and drink that they may live.

27-I am not afraid of tomorrow , for I have seen yesterday and I love today.

28-No one knows whether death , which people fear to be the greatest evil , may not be the greatest good.

29-The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved ; loved for ourselves , or rather in spite of ourselves.

30-All animals except man know that the ultimate of life is to enjoy it.

31-Too much credit is given to the end result . The true lesson in the struggle that takes place between the dream and reality . The struggle is a thing called life.

32-Don’t die until you are dead.

33-I don’t think anyone should write their autobiography until after they are dead.

34-In three words I can sum up everything I’ ve learned about life . It goes on .

35-Most men employ the first part of life to make the other part miserable.

36-No one knows whether death , which people fear to be the greatest evil , may not be the greatest good.

37-Children are unpredictable . You never know what inconsistency they’re going to catch you in next.

38-Poverty , labor and calamity are not without their luxuries , which the rich , the indolent and fortunate in vain seek for.

39-There are two times in a man's life when he should not speculate , when he can't afford it , and when he can.

40-I' d rather die while I'm living than live while I'm dead.

### ***6-Results Analysis and Discussions***

In this paper , the following results are drawn due to data analysis:

- 1- English aphorisms of “life and death” are analyzed in terms of ten devices. Seven are lexical stylistic devices ( hyperbole , meiosis , irony , oxymoron , cliché ,litotes , metalepsis ) , one phonetic (sonic ) stylistic device ( alliteration ) , and two are syntactical stylistic devices (parallelism and loose sentences).
- 2- Loose sentences constitute the highest rate with a total number of (40) instances out of ( 50 ) sentences. Parallelism records ( 26) instances out of ( 50) sentences , Irony records ( 9) instances , hyperbole records( 8) instances , oxymoron records ( 5) instances , cliché records ( 3) instances , whereas ( litotes , meiosis, and alliteration ) record ( 2) instances out of the total number of (50) sentences . The lowest rate records (1) instance for metalepsis device . The following table illustrates the occurrence of the devices with their percentages:

<b><i>%</i></b>	<b><i>Frequencies</i></b>	<b><i>Stylistic Devices</i></b>
80%	40	Loose sentences
52%	26	Parallelism
18%	9	Irony
16%	8	Hyperbole
10%	5	Oxymoron
6%	3	Cliche
4%	2	Litotes
4%	2	Meiosis
2%	1	Metalepsis
4%	2	Alliteration

***Table 1 :Occurrence of Stylistic Devices in English Aphorisms***

- 3- As for the function of parallelism in this analysis , this syntactical stylistic device comprises different functions which occur in the selected aphorisms of life and death : the function of contrast (contrastive meaning) records (17) aphorisms , the function of similarity (related meaning) forms ( 4) aphorisms , repetition (for emphasis ) constitutes ( 4) , and one function indicates ‘equal importance of ideas’ as in the aphorism no. (7) .(See Parallelism).

- 4- As for the structure of the sentences to indicate parallelism , (19) sentences record ‘clausal levels’ , (6) sentences record ‘phrasal levels’ and only one sentence records ‘sentence level’ .
- 5- It is clear from the data analysis that there are many aphorisms which appear to share the same lexical stylistic and syntactical stylistic devices: parallel and hyperbolic devices and ironical and parallel devices ; phonetic (sonic) stylistic and lexical stylistic devices : alliteration and oxymoron . Few devices appear to stay alone i.e., without accompany of other devices as ‘meiosis’ , ‘cliché’ , and ‘metalepsis’.
- 6- Concerning the repetition function of parallelism , it is clear that this occurrence of repetition demonstrates that the writer of the aphorism repeats some words( lexical items) either to emphasize their importance or the importance of their referents.
- 7- Mostly, hyperbolic device is employed in these aphorisms to indicate effect or emphasis , meiosis is employed to make speech expressive , ironical device is used to convey negative emotions and feelings as they read pity , irritation , dissatisfaction , displeasure and regret . Oxymoron indicates clash of meanings . Cliché is used to refer to an idea that is predictable (based upon a prior event ) . Litotes expresses a pure negation but includes affirmation , whereas metalepsis device indicates the reference to something remotely associated within the main theme of the aphorism.
- 8- As for loose sentences , it is found out that most of the selected aphorisms of “life and death” in this paper record their being loose. Consequently the device of loose sentences is exploited in (20) coordinate sentences which the second sentence either develops the first one or modifies it . Also , (20) aphorisms utilize the device of loose sentence in order to make the main point at the beginning and what follows (subordinate clauses) them is extra-information , added to modify or develop the point.

### ***7-Conclusions***

Based on the results stated earlier , the following conclusions have been drawn:

- 1- English aphorisms of ‘life and death’ are complex constructions that indicate parallel structures and balanced sentences. Parallel structures involve an arrangement of words , clauses , phrases and sentences so that elements of equal importance are equally developed and similarly phrased. Being balanced requires that clauses or phrases balance each other by virtue of their likeness or structure and meaning .This reflects the fact that without parallelism , writing can become needlessly confusing and awkward.
- 2- Repetition is involved in the selected aphorisms of life and death in a sense that words and ideas are used more than once for the purpose of creating emphasis.
- 3- It is clear from the analysis that many aphorisms accept more than one lexical stylistic , syntactical stylistic , or phonetic stylistic devices. It means that there is a variety of techniques in order to give an auxiliary idea or feeling to the written aphorisms .This reflects the flexibility of writing such a kind of aphorisms i.e., life and death.
- 4- Cliché , litotes , meiosis , alliteration and metalepsis devices are hard to be found in aphorisms of life and death ( their numbers read low rates than other numbers of aphorisms of other devices) comparing to other devices such as irony , oxymoron , and parallelism .

- 5- Contrastive meaning as a function of parallelism reads the majority of meanings in comparison to identical meaning , repetition for emphasis , and the meaning of involving balance. This also reflects the fact that English aphorisms are set to express variety of functions but of various rates.
- 6- Loose sentences read the majority of the aphorisms on both types of clauses : coordination and subordination at the beginning of the aphorisms as main points . This indicates that English aphorisms of life and death involve complex constructions of sentences .The effect of employing loose sentences in these aphorisms in order not to interrupt the flow  
  
of the main ideas . As a result , loose sentences can have a powerful effect as more and more clauses are piled onto the main idea, allowing for the writers of these aphorisms to really hammer home their points.
- 7- It is obvious that the writers of these aphorisms are concerned to employ loose sentences that have the main points at the beginning followed by subordinate or coordinate phrases and clauses in order to develop or modify the main point in the main clause . This style is often employed in writing aphorisms to indicate either emphasis or easiness of understanding .

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### **Contents**

1- *Introduction*

2- *English Aphorisms: Definition and Etymology*

3- *Aphorisms and Proverbs*

4- *The Style of Aphorism*

5- *Data Analysis*

5.1 *Parallelism*

5.2 *Hyperbole*

5.3 *Alliteration*

5.4 *Meiosis*

5.5 *Irony*

5.6 *Oxymoron*

5.7 *Cliché*

5.8 *Litotes*

5.9 *Metalepsis*

5.10 *The Loose Sentence*

6-*Results Analysis and Discussions*

7- *Conclusions*

*References*

**Abstract**

In this paper , some of *lexical stylistic* , *syntactical stylistic* devices , and one *phonetic stylistic* device are going to be illustrated in the study of the aphorisms of “life and death” . These stylistic devices are parallelism , hyperbole , alliteration , meiosis , irony , oxymoron , cliché , litotes , metalepsis , and loose sentences. This paper aims at identifying the functions and the frequencies of these devices. These stylistic devices make one speech and writing more interesting and help to get the attention of readers/ listeners

**الخلاصة**

في هذا البحث بعض من الوسائل الاسلوبية الكتابية المتعلقة بالمعنى ، الوسائل الاسلوبية الكتابية النحوية ووسيلة اسلوبية واحدة متعلقة بعلم الصوت تم توضيحها في دراسة الاقوال المتعلقة بفكره " الحياه والموت". وتتمثل هذه الوسائل الاسلوبية ب: التماثل، الغلو (المبالغة)، الجناس، التقليل البلاغي، السخرية، اجتماع لفظتين متناقضتين، فكره ملموسة معتمده على حقيقة سابقة، كلمة تدل على عكس معنى كلمة اخرى(اضداد)، استعاره عن صفة، والجملة المسترسلة المعقده.

ان هذا البحث يهدف الى تعيين وضائف وتكرار ظهور هذه الوسائل الاسلوبية. ان هذه الوسائل الاسلوبية تجعل الحديث والكتابة ممتع جدا وتساعد على ان تجلب اهتمام المستمع والقارئ.