

“UNVEILING LAYERS OF INJUSTICE: A STYLISTIC EXAMINATION OF ‘TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD’” BY HARPER LEE

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Abstract:

This research undertakes a comprehensive stylistic analysis of Harper Lee’s “To Kill a Mockingbird,” aiming to uncover layers of racial injustice embedded in the narrative. The study is contextualized within the broader field of stylistics, emphasizing its relevance in understanding literature and the choices made by authors to convey specific meanings. A qualitative research design was used in this research. This study has utilized Leech and Short’s framework for extensive stylistic analysis of chapters 23 and 24. The study delves into three linguistic levels: phonological, semantic, and graphological. The aim is to identify and analyze prominent stylistic features, literary devices, and narrative techniques employed by Harper Lee to portray instances of racial injustice in the novel. The research shed light on how language choices reveal underlying meanings, contributing to a deeper understanding of societal injustices depicted in the novel.

Introduction:

The development of stylistics began as early as classical times. Since then, researchers and writers have continued to be interested in the relationship between the language patterns of the text and the way the text is communicated. Thus, stylistic analysis can be helpful in the field of literature. The purpose of the research is, therefore, to find out and examine how certain choices made by the author affect the creation of certain meanings. The novel chosen for stylistic analysis is “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee. Stylistic analysis will be done to highlight the element of racial injustice and societal inequalities in the novel. Analyzing the stylistic elements of works can reveal underlying attitudes, stereotypes, or power dynamics that contribute to or challenge racial injustice. The study delves into the profound exploration of societal injustice within Lee’s timeless masterpiece. This literary analysis navigates the layers of discrimination, moral complexities, and narrative styles embedded in the novel, unraveling the nuances that make ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ a poignant commentary on prejudice and the quest for justice in a racially divided society. Join us on a journey that scrutinizes the stylistic choices employed by Lee to convey the deep-seated issues of injustice and inequality, offering readers a fresh perspective on this literary classic.

What is stylistics?

Allan defines stylistics. El al (1988) as:

“A branch of linguistics which studies the characteristics of situationally distinctive use of language with particular reference to literary language and tries to establish the principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language.”

Widdowson (1975) gives one more definition of stylistics. He says that “Stylistics is an area of mediation between two disciplines... that Stylistics can mediate between two subjects: English Language and literature”.

Literature Review:

This section presents a review of the existing literature on stylistic analysis of literary works. A stylistic analysis of two poems was conducted by Jaafar (2014). The first poem was “Maggie and Milly and Molly and May” by E. E. Cummings, and the second poem was “A Kite for Aibhín” by Seamus Heaney. This research tried to examine many stylistic features in

these poems. Mainly, this research thoroughly analyzes these poems' phonological, morphological, graphological, syntactic, and figurative characteristics. Additionally, the author uses aesthetic language in these poems, which includes alliteration, assonance, repetition, and simile. This study investigates that the poem's stylistic features increase the literary work's understanding. Styles allow the reader to have a better understanding of the poem.

Yeibo (2011) A discourse stylistic analysis was done by Yeibo (2011) of mood structures in the poems of the poet named J.P. Clark-Bekederemo. The investigator claims the works of Clark-Bekederemo were not being studied much from the perspective of linguistics. This research investigates the mood structures of Bekederemo's poems (declarative, interrogative, and imperative moods) to understand how interlocutors speak and evaluate the roles and attitudes in the conversation. Analyzing the dialogue's mood, the investigator uses systematic functional grammar by Halliday. This method helped the researcher to study dialogue's linguistic aspects. Basically, it highlights how language communicates and what it is communicating. The research claims, the mood structures employed by poets are highly dependent. Javaid et al. (2024) studied cognitive and motivational impact on ESL learning and assessed stress caused factors and language learning related challenges among first year students. Ramzan et al. (2023) studied cultural paradigms and found shifts in style. Ramzan et al. (2023) studied social media usage for academic motivation and linked social media usage with academic motivation. Ramzan, & Alahmadi, (2024) viewed the effects of syntax instruction in complex sentence development.

Khan et al. (2014) perform a stylistic analysis of the poem "The Onset" by Robert Frost, published in 1923. This poem deals with two opposite ideas: the commitment of life and peace after death so that one faces the problem of fulfilling the dreams or staying in the forest, which opens doubt. These authors examine the poem's linguistic use of linguistic devices such as description, symbolism, hyperbole, and metaphor. This research concludes that the poem has profound ideas, which the poet conveys through poetic means, such as winter and spring, to symbolize life and death.

A view of two concepts: style and style was provided by Mugair and Mahadi (2014). This study has basically three personas. The first persona highlights that stylistics has some linguistic rules. The part introduces stylistic and linguistic aspects associated to style, like choice of word, structure of sentence, speech patterns. The second part deals with the works of some stylistic writers, such as Brooks and Warren's *Fundamentals of Good Writing, A Short Way to Better English*, written by Chapman. The third part is basically concluding it. The researchers selected Martin Luther King's speech, "I Have a Dream," to do stylistic analysis to identify its linguistic features. Scholars conclude that style has strong connection with the spirit of freedom.

Methodology:

It's a qualitative research. The novel "To Kill a Mockingbird," written by Harper Lee, will be used as secondary data. This research used the framework of Leech and Short (2007) by Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short. An extensive stylistic analysis of chapters 23 and 24 will be done to highlight racial injustice in this novel. The study aims to do a stylistic investigation of phonological level, semantic level, and graphological level. Furthermore, it analyzes some speech features found in the story, like hyperbole, simile, and personification.

Objectives:

- To identify and analyze prominent stylistic features and techniques employed by the author in the novel.
- To examine the use of literary devices such as imagery, metaphors, and symbolism in the text.

- To investigate the impact of narrative techniques on the reader's perception of injustice.
- To identify and analyze instances of injustice depicted in the novel.

Research Questions:

- What does the author want to convey in the novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee concerning stylistic perspective?
- What is the extensive stylistic analysis to highlight the element of racial injustice in the novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee?

Data collection and Data analysis:

The novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee was taken for data collection. This study identified stylistic features like imagery, metaphor, and simile in the text. In this research analysis of three linguistics levels namely phonological, semantic and graphological was done. This is qualitative research and this study will identify that what the author wants to convey in this novel with respect to stylistic perspective.

Research Gap:

There are many works have been done on the themes and characters of this novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee and not a single work has been done on its stylistic perspective. Other than this study will highlight racial injustice through stylistic analysis. As it is specific to the novel so the stylistic findings are also according to the novel which is different in every novel.

Significance of Research:

This research sheds light on the stylistic perspective of the novel and how the writer uses language to convey his message. By dissecting elements such as diction, syntax, tone, and imagery, stylistic analysis unveils the underlying layers of meaning and helps interpret the author's intentions about racial injustice. This research will contribute to a deeper understanding of how literature, specifically "To Kill a Mockingbird," can illuminate and critique societal injustices. The findings may have implications for literature education and discussions on social justice.

Stylistic Analysis:

The stylistic Analysis of "To Kill a Mockingbird" covers the major linguistic levels: phonological, graphological, and semantic. This stylistic analysis highlights how the writer's style unveils the layers of racial injustice throughout the novel.

Phonological level:

The phonological level can be categorized into alliterations, assonance and consonance.

Alliteration:

Alliteration is a stylistic device in which the first consonant sound is repeated in a series of words. In the novel, the author uses many alliterations for example:

"Passing by from the Jitney Jungle" , "probably prompted him to inquire", Miss Stephanie said , "under the ground good would be to fire", fear from Bob Ewell, a death penalty on purely, how hard that'd be, you saw something come, that makes men lose their heads, a complete case tried, Miss Maudie , boiling nights never clear to me, the distant disastrous occasion, Son's school starts , I never knew why, I want to play with Walter , out for football next year, aggravate Aunti , kicked off his shoes and swung his feet to the bed, You know something, Scout , Calpurnia wore her stiffest starched apron, grace with which she handled heavy loads of dainty things, tomorrow; today he was off with jem at Barker's Eddy, wishing to be of some service , don't drop it, but the ladies laughed , Crawford called from across the room, And you know then and there , Thing that church ought to do is help her , I always say forgive and forget, forgive and forget , over the clink of coffee cups , She



has been sitting silently beside me, It was the size of a football field, domestic disaster of losing Calpurnia.

In the novel phrases like “Passing by from the Jitney Jungle,” “fear from Bob Ewell,” and “a death penalty on purely” hint at the racial tensions and legal injustices prevalent in the novel. Additionally, the mention of Calpurnia wearing her “stiffest starched apron” highlights the racial dynamics and societal expectations present in the story.

Assonance:

Assonance is a stylistic feature in which vowel sounds in neighboring syllables or words are same. In this novel the author used many assonance for example:

“give him, glanced at, rather hard, carrying their, eyes widened, frail ladies, who took, those folks, hooked woolen, Lord knows, arm around, shut up, pressed gently, with which, saw such, these days, don’t drop, wore rose, you know, even Jem, stay away, lose hope, father’s face, murmured fumbling, last straw, various whalebone, her head.”

In “To Kill a Mockingbird,” phrases such as “frail ladies,” “those folks,” and “even Jem” suggest a racial context, alluding to the racial divide and societal expectations. The mention of “father’s face” and “last straw” may point to the challenges and injustices faced by individuals like Atticus Finch who confront racial prejudices. The phrase “stay away” reflects the segregation and discrimination prevalent in the narrative.

Consonance:

Consonance is a stylistic device where consonant sound in neighboring words are similar or identical. There are many consonance in the novel. For example:

“Atticus discovered how deeply frightened we were, that night in front of the jail, there’s nothing more sickening to me, he looked pleased with Jem, In the second place, they’re afraid, made up it’s mind, he had a feeling nothing more than a suspicion, stretched and yawned, I would hold her, matter whether, She backed up to the swinging door and pressed gently, heavy silver pitcher on a tray, I sat quietly having conquered my hands by tightly gripping, preacher to encourage her, sulky danky, brother other, gambled and chewed, stay away from us, black dark.”

The novel “Atticus Discovered How Deeply Frightened We Were” emphasizes the fear caused by racial tensions. Phrases like “in front of the jail,” “they’re afraid,” and “stay away from us” reflect the racial segregation and prejudice prevalent in the story. The mention of a “sulky danky” and “black dark” underscores the racial stereotypes and discrimination faced by African American characters in the narrative.

Graphological level:

The graphological level has further subcategories such as comma, semi-colon, and inverted comma.

Comma:

In the novel, the writer overuses commas to unconnect short clauses in complex sentences. For example:

“I wish Bob Ewell wouldn’t chew tobacco,” was all Atticus said about it.

According to Miss Stephanie Crawford, however, Atticus was leaving the post office when Mr. Ewell “approached him, cursed him, spat on him, and threatened to kill him”.

Immediately thereafter, the ladies adjourned for refreshment.

Miss Maudie’s hand closed tightly on mine, and I said nothing.

These sentences also reveal instances of racial injustice. Atticus’ comment on Bob Ewell’s tobacco-chewing may subtly reflect the racial bias present in the town. Miss Stephanie Crawford’s account of Mr. Ewell cursing, spitting on, and threatening to kill Atticus highlights the racial hostility and injustice Atticus faces. The reaction of the ladies adjourning for refreshment might indicate a lack of concern or awareness regarding the racial



tensions. Miss Maudie's tight grip on the narrator's hand implies a shared discomfort or acknowledgment of the racial injustice in the situation.

Semi colon:

Semi-colon is used to separate two independent clauses without using conjunction. For example:

"He tempted Jem with a new football magazine one night when he saw Jem flip the pages."
"Dill would be leaving for Meridian tomorrow; today, he was off with Jem at Barker's Eddy."
"They put the women out in huts when their time came, whatever that was; they had no sense of family."

Mrs. Merriweather played her voice like an organ; every word she said received its full measure.

The temptation of Jem with a football magazine suggests a distraction from deeper issues, possibly reflecting a desire to divert attention from racial tensions. Dill leaving for Meridian might signify a temporary escape from the racial challenges present in Maycomb. Mrs. Merriweather's voice being played "like an organ" may symbolize the performative nature of societal attitudes, including racial prejudices.

Inverted comma:

The use of Inverted commas are to show the start and the end of text. For example:
"I wish Bob Ewell wouldn't chew tobacco," was all Atticus said about it.

"What on earth could Ewell do to me, sister?"

"You know rape's a capital offense in Alabama," said Atticus.

Atticus's statement about rape being a capital offense in Alabama might hint at the racial dynamics, highlighting the severity of the consequences in a society where racial prejudice and injustice are prevalent.

Semantic level:

Semantic level comprises of further sub categories such as metaphor, simile, personification.

Metaphor:

Metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. Some examples from the text are given below:

"Summer was melting away."

"He was going into one of his declines."

"Calpurnia wore her stiffest starched apron."

The mention of summer "melting away" may symbolize the fading innocence and the harsh reality of racial tensions in Maycomb. "He was going into one of his declines" could suggest the toll of racial injustice on individuals, potentially referring to emotional or psychological distress. The description of Calpurnia wearing her "stiffest starched apron" implies the societal expectations and racial dynamics that African American characters like Calpurnia navigate in the story.

Simile:

A simile is a direct comparison of two like or unlike things.

Examples from the text are:

"They're like the Cunninghams, and the Cunninghams don't like the Ewell's, and the Ewell's hate and despite the colored folks."

"Jem's face was cloudy."

Describing the ladies as "cool in fragile pastel prints."

The statement about the Cunninghams and Ewells reflects the deep-seated racial divisions within the community, emphasizing the animosity and prejudice between different groups. Jem's cloudy face suggests the emotional impact of understanding or witnessing racial tensions, indicating the somber atmosphere surrounding these issues. Describing the

ladies as “cool in fragile pastel prints” may subtly hint at the façade of gentility and elegance concealing underlying racial biases, illustrating the contrast between appearances and reality in the community.

Personification:

The attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something non-human is called personification. Examples from the text are given below:

“Mrs. Grace Merriweather shook her head, her black curls juggled.”

“The gentle hum of ladies’ voices grew louder as she opened the door.”

“His face was vehement.”

Mrs. Grace Merriweather’s shaking head and her black curls juggling may symbolize a dismissive or indifferent attitude, potentially reflecting a lack of empathy towards racial issues. The description of the growing volume of ladies’ voices upon opening the door suggests a collective participation or complicity in societal norms, including those related to racial injustice. The vehement expression on a character’s face indicates strong emotions, possibly tied to racial tensions and injustices within the narrative.

Conclusion:

The main purpose of this study is to conduct a broad stylistic analysis of the novel “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee. Narrative analysis includes four Linguistic levels: phonological level, syntactic level, semantic level and graphological level. The story is full of linguistic features that can be analyzed the element of racial injustice stylistically, because the author’s style is characterized by deviations from linguistic norms. This study aims chiefly at implementing a detailed stylistic analysis of the novel “To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee. The analysis of the novel covers main linguistic levels: phonological level comprises of alliterations, assonance and consonance. Second is graphological aspect that was characterized because misuse of punctuation marks like semi colon, inverted comma and comma. Third is semantic level which includes metaphor, simile, personification. This study examines how the writer’s style unveils the element of racial injustice in the novel.

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