

The Representation of Masculinity in A Thousand Splendid Suns Play Script: A Critical Stylistic Study

Durgham Hussein Abbas

The General Directorate of Education in
Najaf

durghamalrammahy@student.uokufa.edu

Asst. Prof. Dr. Ra'ed Dakhil Kareem

University of Al-Qadisiyah, College of Education
Dep. of English

rdakhilkareem@gmail.com

Abstract:

The current study aims to fill the gap of exploring the linguistic elements and stylistics that influence gender identities and power dynamics by applying Critical Stylistics to analyze how stylistic and linguistic choices shape the representation of masculinity in the 'A Thousand Splendid Suns' play script. The study also aims to investigate how language shapes social concepts of gender and how stylistic choices may either reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles. It also examines how language and style interact to influence the overall formation of the main character's identity. Two of Jeffries' (2022) core Textual Conceptual Functions (TCFs), specifically "Naming and Describing" and "Representing Space, Time, and Society," are employed in the theoretical framework of analysis. In order to achieve the aims of the study, three hypotheses are proposed: Hypothesis one states: "In the play script, the 'Verb Tense' category is the most prevalent kind of process and hence the most important in conveying the idea of representing masculinity." Hypothesis two states: "In Sarma's adaptation of A Thousand Splendid Suns, the selection and deployment of particular discourse features, like grammatical structures, lexical choices, and pragmatic strategies, contribute to the construction and representation of the gender identities of the characters, as well as the expression of their underlying ideologies regarding masculinity in Afghan society." Hypothesis three states: "The interpretation of verbal choices within a clause is affected and may change the meaning according to the linguistic context in which they occur." The study uses qualitative analysis to study the main character (Rasheed) drawn from the play script. The character selection is based on concepts like independence, strength, confidence, behavior, and being affected by others. The analysis conducted across the analysis revealed that 'naming and describing' processes are less frequently occurring compared with 'representing space, time, and society.'

Keywords: ideology, critical stylistics, naming and describing, and representing space, time, and society.

تمثيل الذكورة في مخطوطة مسرحية ألف شمس ساطعة: دراسة اسلوبية نقدية

أ.م.د. راند داخل كريم الخزاعي
قسم اللغة الانجليزية - كلية التربية - جامعة القادسية

ضرغام حسين عباس
المديرية العامة للتربية في محافظة النجف

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الملخص:

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى سد الفجوة في استكشاف العناصر اللغوية والأسلوبية التي تؤثر على هويات النوع الاجتماعي وديناميكيات القوة من خلال تطبيق الأسلوبية النقدية لتحليل كيفية تشكيل الاختيارات الأسلوبية واللغوية لتمثيل الذكورة في نص مسرحية "ألف شمس ساطعة". تهدف الدراسة أيضاً إلى التحقيق في كيفية تشكيل اللغة للمفاهيم الاجتماعية للجنس وكيف يمكن للاختيارات الأسلوبية إما أن تعزز أو تتحدى الأدوار الجنسانية التقليدية. كما تدرس كيف تتفاعل اللغة والأسلوب للتأثير على التكوين العام لهوية الشخصية الرئيسية. استخدمت اثنتان من وظائف المفاهيم النصية الأساسية لـ (Jeffries 2022)، وتحديداً "التسمية والوصف" و "تمثيل المكان والزمان والمجتمع"، في الإطار النظري للتحليل. ومن أجل تحقيق أهداف الدراسة، تم طرح ثلاث فرضيات: تنص الفرضية الأولى على أن "فئة زمن الفعل في نص المسرحية هي النوع الأكثر انتشاراً من العمليات وبالتالي فهي الأكثر أهمية في نقل فكرة تمثيل الذكورة". تنص الفرضية الثانية على أن "في تكييف سارما لنص مسرحية ألف شمس ساطعة، يساهم اختيار ونشر سمات خطاب معينة، مثل الهياكل النحوية، والاختيارات المعجمية، والاستراتيجيات البراجماتية، في بناء وتمثيل الهويات الجنسية للشخصيات، فضلاً عن التعبير عن أيديولوجياتهم الأساسية فيما يتعلق بالذكورة في المجتمع الأفغاني". تنص الفرضية الثالثة على أن "تفسير الاختيارات اللفظية داخل الجملة يتأثر وقد يتغير المعنى وفقاً للسياق اللغوي الذي تحدث فيه". تستخدم الدراسة التحليل النوعي لدراسة الشخصية الرئيسية (رشيد) المستمدة من نص المسرحية. تم اختيار الشخصية بناءً على مفاهيم مثل الاستقلال والقوة والثقة والسلوك والتأثر بالآخرين. كشف التحليل الذي أجري عبر التحليل أن عمليات "التسمية والوصف" تحدث بشكل أقل مقارنة بـ "تمثيل المكان والزمان والمجتمع".

الكلمات المفتاحية: الايديولوجي، التنبئ، الأسلوبية النقدية، التسمية والوصف، تمثيل المكان والزمان والمجتمع.

Introduction

Sarma's (2018) adaptation succeeded in bringing Khalid Hosseini's richly layered novel "A Thousand Splendid Suns" to the stage, conveying the complexities and emotional depth of the original work. She aims to provide spectators and readers with a unique and immersive experience. As a result, some subplots and characters may be omitted or condensed to accommodate the theater's time limits and dramatic necessities. Furthermore, the play script prioritizes visual and auditory elements such as stage directions, set design, sound effects, and actor performances. "A Thousand Splendid Suns" play script remained faithful to the original work while also acknowledging its unique possibilities and the constraints of theatrical production. This study will focus on moral lessons embedded in the narrative, providing insight into social norms and the transforming power of individual activity. Rasheed: As a significant representation of conventional Afghan masculinity, Rasheed's character will be analyzed using Jeffries' tools of "Naming and Describing" and "Representing Space, Time, and Society" to discover how his dominance, control, and adherence to patriarchal standards are

linguistically created. The research will examine how he is named and described, how the play script places him in various places and times, and which parts of his character and actions are prioritized in the dialog. By examining the stylistic features of Sarma's adaptation, this study will contribute to a better understanding of gender roles and power dynamics, the interaction between language and gender, and the role of CS in literary text analysis. This introduction sets the groundwork for an extensive investigation that will explore not just linguistic problems but also the larger thematic theme of masculinity as represented in the play script.

Stylistics

Different scholars define stylistics differently, but the notions are somewhat similar: Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics "the study of literary dialogue in a linguistic context." He believes that stylistics differs from both literary criticism and linguistics and that there is a middle ground between linguistics and literary criticism. This intermediate ground serves as a bridge between the two. It connects the two fields and hence serves an interdisciplinary purpose. He goes on to say that "stylistics is an area of mediation between two disciplines." It is an attempt to demonstrate that stylistics is a hybrid of the two schools of literary criticism, which involve the reader's subjective, intuitive judgment, and linguistics, which provides methods of description that help the reader understand (P. 3-4).

According to Simpson (2004), "stylistics is a method of textual explanation that prioritizes language. Language is essential to stylisticians because the numerous forms, patterns, and levels that comprise linguistic structure are a key index of the text's purpose. The text's functional meaning as discourse works as a gateway to its interpretation. Linguistic traits may not always enhance textual meaning, although they can sometimes help identify unique sorts of meaning. Although literature is a refined form of art distinguished by a variety of

literary styles, innovation and creativity in language use are often referred to as "non-canonical." This categorization reflects the idea that language competency is only based on canonical literature. In reality, good language usage can be seen in a wide range of literary works, demonstrating the various methods in which authors communicate their ideas and interact with their audiences. This view broadens our appreciation for literature by acknowledging that both canonical and non-canonical texts stimulate the richness of language and creative expression. Stylistic analysis tools may help to understand both language structure and function (p. 2).

CS aims to "collect the major general functions that a text has to represent reality" (Jeffries, 2010a, p.14) and can be seen as a theoretical and methodological development of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Jeffries, 2007, 2010a). One of the fundamental criticisms of CDA is that it has not yet produced a comprehensive set of tools for the analyst to use; this is an unavoidable result of its interdisciplinary theoretical foundations. CS seeks to counteract this by offering a systematic model of analysis that combines tools from critical linguistics and stylistics in order to identify text producers' language choices and their potential ideological consequences (Jeffries, 2007, 2010).

Representation

Representation is the process of using language to convey meaningful information to others or to represent the world meaningfully. Therefore, representation connects our impressions of abstract concepts to language. This relationship enables humans to distinguish between the real world of objects, people, and actions and the imagined world of illusory issues, people, and actions (Hall, 1997, pp. 15–17).

According to Fowler (1991), representation includes all types of mediums or discourses that include constructive practice. The thoughts or events represented are not communicated in a neutral way; rather, they are transferred through a medium that has its own structural properties.

These mediums involve social norms, economic circumstances, and certain traditions that reconstruct any representation. (p. 25).

Through CS, Jeffries (2010) suggests that the concept of representation is vital for understanding how language generates meaning and reflects systemic power relations. She also illustrates that representation enables the examination of both ambiguous and explicit systemic relationships of dominance, control, power, and inequality. By investigating how language portrays social identities and relationships, scholars can gain insight into the complexity of social interactions and contribute to societal discussions concerning inequality and control. The representation of masculinity, especially through Rasheed's character, is central to Sarma's adaptation of "A Thousand Splendid Suns." The play script uncovers issues of devastation and the exploitation that Afghan women suffered as a result of their society's harsh patriarchal norms. The play offers a profound look into the hard reality encountered by female characters like Mariam and Laila and delves deeply into the ways that masculinity appears in the form of domination, control, and the oppression of women. Through Rasheed's portrayal, the play explores power relationships, cultural norms, and the effects of toxic masculinity on Afghan women's lives, shedding light on the obstacles they face as well as the opportunities for empowerment and change in their restricted cultural and social expectations (U. R. Sarma, personal communication, July 9, 2024).

Ideology

According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), language is a social practice that serves to situate individuals, represent objects, and, as a result, order social existence. Therefore, it has become a focal point for competing discourses, with impacts on ideology (p. 84). Destutt de Tracy was the first to use the term *idéologie* (English: 'ideology') to explain his own 'ideas' in 1796. *Idéologie* emphasized the importance of human sensations in the production of knowledge (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia, 2021).



Researchers and academics interested in the idea as it relates to speech have experimented with several definitions. For instance, van Dijk (1998) situates ideology at the nexus of socio-cognitive and discourse sciences. In other words, ideology is a set of views that are mentally processed and socially carried out by a group of people or a particular class and communicated through language use (p. 48). Fairclough (2003) asserts that ideologies are representations of features of the world that contribute to the development and maintenance of power, domination, and exploitative relationships. They can be acted upon in encounters and ingrained in identities or ways of being (p. 9). On the other hand, Ideology, according to Simpson (2004), is a set of beliefs we employ to interpret the environment and the value systems with which we engage in social interaction (p. 78).

The fact that all discourse analysts and linguists (stylisticians) consider all discourse to be ideologically packed (Jeffries, 2010, p. 8) is not an exaggeration to say that this latter statement is regarded as an inevitable truth of all discourse. This, of course, does not imply that the term 'ideology' is inevitably related to politically motivated objectives and self-centered aims, as it is perceived in political circles and the media. Though not all ideologies are created equal, it is important to keep in mind that some have the potential to be harmful, while others may be moral or virtuous, and yet others may just be a question of cultural constraints.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemony is frequently associated with aggressive behavior towards women and other men who also violate the traditional gender norms (Kilmartin, 2006), increased risk-taking behaviors e.g., drugs, alcohol, multiple sexual partners, (Burk, 2004), as well as low academic achievement (Czopp, 1998). According to Kilmartin (2006), the image that arises is of a man who is not truly masculine but rather a caricature of masculinity. The man who puffs up his chest and beats up women (p. 40) a man's way of hiding his emotions or insecurities. These behaviors

of hypermasculinity, like those of an insecure child, are a man's way of hiding his emotions or insecurities (Kilmartin, 2006). Hypermasculinity is thought to arise in a culture of fear for anything feminine, and one reason for such fear may be a lack of personal and emotional relationships between young men and their fathers (Murnen, 2007).

Rasheed's violent acts against both of his wives demonstrate his desire for hegemonic masculinity as well as his assertion of masculine dominance over them. Sarma brilliantly illustrates Rasheed's male identity right from the beginning when Rasheed notices Mariam and Laila standing on each side of him, purposely avoiding eye contact, causing him to ask Mariam, "What is this?" Have I married a pair of statues? Go on, Mariam, say something to her," Sarma (2018, p. 68). This situation demonstrates Rasheed's desire for dominance. Similarly, Rasheed's yearning for a son symbolizes his desire to maintain patriarchal dominance across generations. His actions, motivated by a misplaced sense of honor, pride, and reputation, reveal an ignorance of ethical limits, putting his selfish interests ahead of the well-being of others.

Adaptation

Simply put, adaptations always involve changes to the original work's content. In essence, the main concept is the issues of modification and change in translation; this idea is supported by Bastin (1993, p. 477), who defines adaptation as the essential and creative process to express a general meaning in a specific inter-linguistic speech act in order to re-establish the balance of communication that would be disrupted by a simple translation process. Furthermore, adaptation in translation is directly related to a society's culture. This view is supported by Gelavizh (2012): "Translation is not only a literary rewriting of a work from one language to another, but it is also an adaptation of one's cultural values and biases into another" (p. 1).

According to Bastin (1998, p. 5), adaptation in translation may be defined as a set of translation processes that produce a text perceived as an original source text rather than a translation. As a result, it is a process that can be employed whenever the context mentioned in the original text is not found in the culture of the text being used; therefore, various sorts of recreation are required. In drama, there is usually some repetition of certain themes in adaptation, whereby the ideas of the original work can be the same, and on some occasions, there are some modifications, particularly in characters' names, drama intrigue, customs, the use of humor and flashbacks, and so on (Venuti, 2002).

Adaptation in Literature

Adaptation is a common literary phenomenon. The major literary genres, like drama, prose, and poetry, are often adapted from time to time, especially in the new trend of studies. Some adapted works in theater are based on mythology, that is, an aspect of folklore, tradition, legend, myth, etc. Definitely, the idea of adaptation is not only the change in linguistic structure of source texts and artistic works; changes can be made in some fields, such as cultural and religious attitudes. The aforementioned fact is confirmed by Vermeer's Skopos translation theory, as quoted by Wang (2020, p. 5).

This indicates that the theory is directed at a certain audience, and the translation is expected to be directed at the target culture. This is further emphasized by Vermeer's theory that "a translation action is decided by its skopos, that is, the result justifies the means." As a result, any adaptation required must be based on the original message and its effects, be friendly to the public, and be faithful to the original message (Vermeer, 2014, p 90).

CS and Ideology

The Power of English (Jeffries, 2010) marked the beginning of CS. Inspired by Fairclough's CDA model and adopting mostly Halliday's systemic functional view of language (1985), CS offers a list of ten

‘textual-conceptual functions’ based on the ideational function that is concerned with how language represents the world. It fills the gaps in the relationship between CDA and Stylistics (textual choices). CS seeks to “assemble the essential general functions that a text has in depicting reality” (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 14). The tools developed by Jeffries, such as 'Naming and Describing,' 'Representing Processes (Actions/Events/States),' 'Prioritizing,' 'Representing Time, Space, and Society,' 'Equating and Contrasting,' 'Listing (Exemplifying and Enumerating),' 'Alluding (Implying and Assuming),' 'Hypothesizing,' 'Negating,' 'Presenting Others' Speech and Thought,' and 'Evoking,' provide a framework for micro-level textual analysis. She emphasizes how these tools are different from the more traditional stylistic ones. Drawing on Saussure's conceptions of 'Langue' and 'Parole', Jeffries (2014) defined textual conceptual meaning as the process by which a speaker's or a writer's selected language generates the actions, events, context, and so forth within the text's world (p. 409). The CS tools are different from the previous CDA tools, as they are represented as a list of functions that can be expressed by multiple linguistic features. The goal of this is to address "the lacking form-function mapping" that existed in CDA and CL (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 15).

Naming and Describing

Jeffries (2007) has stated that the use of naming methods to create a reference is perhaps one of the most functionally significant choices any text producer makes (p. 63). Jeffries (2010a) has argued that ‘naming and describing’ studies how language helps a text producer convey a specific view of the world. Jeffries (2014) has observed that the feature of ‘naming’ is prevalent in texts, irrespective of a writer's writing abilities or actual contents, due to its frequency of occurrence and relative simplicity of interpretation (p. 413). It is worth mentioning that not just the choice of nouns has an ideological impact. The way a text producer interprets a referent can also be influenced by the use of (pre/post-modifiers) in noun phrase construction. Jeffries (2010a) has argued that the capacity of a



noun phrase to provide more details about a referent extends beyond the choice of a head noun. Jeffries (2010a) believes that the nominal parts of English sentences and clauses package something identified by that nominal element and that such structure does not encourage the hearer or reader to investigate the relationships between various parts of that structure (p. 22).

Nominalization

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Representing Time, Space and Society

Jeffries (2014a, p. 417) has stated that deictic expressions are not just important for face-to-face conversations since they allow interlocutors to position themselves. Nonetheless, deictic terms can be employed to situate the reader/hearer of texts in reference to either the real world or the text's constructed world. 'Deictic Projection' allows us to interpret events from the characters' point of view in relation to (time/space) in literary works, even though they are imagined and not real.

Rasheed: My son will have the best. (Sarma, 2018, p. 205)

The sentence under consideration is a declarative sentence since it makes a statement or assertion. The noun phrase "my son" describes and names the speaker's son. It employs the possessive determiner "my" to denote the speaker's relationship with the son, as well as the common noun "son"

to denote the entity's category and role. The noun phrase "My son" serves grammatically as the subject of the sentence, signifying the person to whom the statement relates. Regarding the representation of time, space, and society, the verb phrase "will have" expresses the future tense and indicates possession and acquiring something. The adjectival phrase "the best" serves syntactically as the direct object of the sentence, describing the highest quality or superior position of what the son will acquire. This adjectival phrase, "the best," describes and names the entity that represents the son's preferred outcome or state. The definite article "the" is used to express that it is a specific and unique entity, while the superlative adjective "best" is used to highlight the quality and degree of the things. This promotes in the son a sense of hope and aspiration, in addition to a high standard of expectation. The practice of naming and describing indicates that they have a positive and supportive attitude toward their son. The sentence demonstrates masculinity and fatherhood by stressing the speaker's commitment to give the best for their son. It can be understood as adhering to traditional gender roles, in which fathers are expected to prioritize their sons' well-being and success.

Rasheed: I wasn't asking

(Sarma, 2018, p. 206)

In this short text, the deictic pronoun 'I' serves as the first-person singular subject pronoun. It symbolizes the speaker, Rasheed, and signifies that he is the one making the assertion. Regarding space, time, and society, 'I' is the subject of the verb 'wasn't asking.' Ideologically, Rasheed's use of the pronoun "I" establishes his autonomy and authority in the dialogue, implying a hierarchical power dynamic between him and the person he is speaking with. This demonstrates a patriarchal ideology in which Rasheed presents himself as the decision-maker, meaning that his viewpoint and decisions take precedence over others'. The verb phrase 'wasn't asking' is the main verb of the sentence. It is made up of the auxiliary verb 'wasn't' (a contraction of 'was not') with the main verb 'asking.' The overlap of "space, time, and society," "negation," and "hypothesising" establishes a hypothetical world in which Rasheed, the

'Sensor', is presented as someone who dismisses or disregards the opinion or participation of the person he is addressing, thereby positioning Rasheed as being assertive and dominant. This reveals a patriarchal ideology in which Rasheed asserts authority over the encounter and indicates that his judgments are irrevocable, despite others' opinions or concerns.

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