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A CRITICAL STYLISTIC STUDY OF ORIENTALISM IN GEORGE ORWELL'S "BURMESE DAYS"

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the employment of Said's Orientalism (Second Dogma) in relation to the analytical approach that shapes Jeffries' (2010) framework of Critical Stylistic (CS) analysis in George Orwell's Burmese Days. The British novel is taken as a sample for the current study. CS has been identified as a reaction to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) because the latter lacks an adequate set of analytical instruments. Despite the fact that CDA offers comprehensive frameworks for recognizing the potential effects of texts, stylistics provides detailed methods for revealing the aesthetic influence and enjoyable strategies employed by texts. The study seeks to answer the following questions: 1. How does the utilization of Orientalism in Burmese Days match up with the linguistic techniques that form Jeffries's framework (2010)? 2. Which critical stylistic tools are frequently employed in Burmese Days? 3. How does the author use critical stylistic tools to uncover the ideology of a community headed for modernity/decay? The aim of this study is to analyze the language tactics the novelist uses to portray Orientalism and identify the most and least commonly used techniques. The supplementary aim is to identify the linguistic cues that signify the toolkits and concealed elements.

KEYWORDS: Critical Stylistics, Ideology, Orientalism, Burmese Days.

1. INTRODUCTION

Among linguists, Leech and Short (2007) studied **style** as "the manner in which language is employed in a specific environment, by a specific individual, for a specific goal, and includes the linguistic characteristics of a particular work."

While **Stylistics** is defined as "a branch of linguistics that examines different styles and how they are influenced by elements such as genre, context, authorship, and historical period". Specifically, several authors have been recognized for their personal styles that are applicable to particular genres, such as the language used in newspapers, gothic novels, or other literary styles (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010).

Nowadays, Smith and Dervin (2020) provided a comprehensive explanation of the concept of "critical theory," which has a rich historical background. Critical theory can be conceptualized as a type of social criticism. Consequently, the critical aspect of modern critical theories lies in their overarching approach to challenge the prevailing social landscape.

Ringrow and Pihlaja (2020) ensured that the reader is given a clear set of analytical tools to follow in carrying out the critical analysis of texts, with the aim of uncovering the underlying ideologies of the texts.

2. ORIENTALISM

Orientalism, as stated by Said (1978), primarily examined the portrayal of "othering" through the exercise of power. Said's discourse-historical analysis of Orientalism is grounded in Gramsci's critique of 'hegemony' and Foucault's concept of 'power', positing that 'the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is characterized by power dynamics, dominance, and various degrees of a complex hegemony. In his work "*Orientalism*" in 1978, Said occupied different variations of the term "Orient," which refers to the East, the geographical direction where the sun rises. Geopolitically, Orient refers to the regions of the Middle East, Asia, and the Far East, which were formerly under the control of various European empires. He used the term "Orient" to denote a system of portrayal shaped by political influences that introduced the East, or the Orient, into Western dominion, Western scholarship, and Western awareness. The term is used by Western societies to refer to Eastern regions. It is a reflection of the lesser, the foreign (other), to the Western world (Macfie, 2002).

Edward Said's works do not explicitly list the four dogmas of Orientalism later identified by academics.

They continue to shape and inspire academic discussions today, as does Tim Jacoby's 2023 article, "*Islam, Violence, and the Four Dogmas of Orientalism*," which examines Said's theory. However, the main themes are crucial to Said's argument throughout the book.

The main distinction between East and West lies in the first of Said's principles. Said analyzed how the Orient is constructed as the West's opposite. Crucially, his argument is that Orientalism is a system of knowledge upholding Western superiority, not merely an area of study (Said, 1978).

Moving to the second dogma, this theme shows how the West sees the East as static and pre-modern while perceiving Europe as dynamic and progressive.

"Unlike the Americans, the French, and the British, the Oriental is depicted as something you can study and apprehend, as opposed to something dynamic with a history of its own." (Said, 1978, p. 39)

In line with this idea, Said described a "timeless" East stuck in the past, but other academics have built on the "modernity versus atavism" thesis. He criticized how people in the East are seen as stuck and unwilling to adapt, whereas people in the West see themselves as modern and making progress.

Said's third idea is that the East cannot truly understand itself. Rather than being part of a shared knowledge system, it is treated as a neutral object for the West to observe, organize, and display. As a result, Said argued, the Orient is seen as passive, not an active agent in history.

The fourth idea concerns how Westerners should respond to Eastern cultures. As Said (1978, 247) explained, "To believe that the Orient needed to be known was, I have said, based on the Orient's apparent difference from (and inferiority to) the West. The Orient was seen through, seen as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics."

Said criticized portraying the Orient as oppressive, irrational, and unable to govern itself, which serves to justify colonial intervention.

3. TEXTUAL-CONCEPTUAL TOOLS

Burke (2014) stated that textual-conceptual functions, which describe how texts construct and convey meaning in context, are the primary analytical tools in CS. These functions form a core part of the stylistic approach to critical language studies and are used to show how a text conceptually represents the world.

Jeffries (2010) noted that linguistic meanings of items (words or expressions) and structures (grammatical arrangements) maintain a constant

form-function relationship, allowing speakers to understand grammatical meanings even out of context.

1: Naming And Describing

Jeffries (2010) found that writers use diverse techniques to denote the universe. When naming, the text producer can choose one name and ignore others for the same entity. She identified three main strategies by which names evoke ideological meanings in texts. The next paragraphs explain these methods:

(I) Selection Of Nouns

Jeffries (2010, pp. 20-1) mentioned that there are three categories of choices for naming entities. The first is representative and regional selection. Here, speakers face various dialects, which can lead to prejudice or discrimination. Secondly, the selection of a name with either ameliorative or derogatory overtones indicates the speaker's attitude. Thirdly, the selection is a metaphorical statement, necessitating greater cognitive processing by the listener or reader for elucidation.

(Ii) Modification of Nouns

Jeffries (2010) held that noun modifications allow nominal elements in sentences and clauses to use morphological and syntactic means to designate referents. These modifications can assert ideology and provide more detail, thereby reinforcing it.

(Iii) Nominalization

It is the expression of a process as a noun, treating it as an entity. This form omits essential parts of the procedure (Fairclough, 1989).

According to Jeffries (2010), nominalization encapsulates ideological meanings within the head noun through morphological changes. This includes adding suffixes like (ing, -ment, etc).

2: Illustrating Actions, States, Events

Jeffries (2010) identified that a speaker can convey a problem as a continuous event using the present progressive tense, as a completed action using the present perfect tense, or as a general state of affairs using the present simple tense. Jeffries (2010) chose Simpson's (1993) model of transitivity over Halliday's, asserting that the former is clearer and more pragmatic than the latter.

3: Contrasting And Equating

Jeffries (2010) demonstrated this tool by using equating and comparing methods, which involve

employing synonyms and opposites; texts can communicate or clarify similar thoughts. The comprehension of these two analogous notions is attained by forming semantic connections between two words, phrases, and even complete paragraphs.

4: Negating

Jeffries (2010, pp. 106-8) characterized negation as "a textual practice that may possess ideological and/or narrative significance." A narrative can be enhanced by incorporating its deficiencies, persuading others philosophically, or envisioning a desired reality. Negation prompts the recipient to conceive a scenario fundamentally distinct from the one articulated in the provided language.

5: Hypothesizing

(Jeffries, 2010) examined how modality contributes to the ideology of texts by exploring the hypothetical situations that it presents. Moreover, modality openly conveys the author's perspective on the world, potentially influencing the reader's or listener's perception, depending on the reader's or listener's views of the author.

6: Exemplifying And Enumerating

Jeffries (2010) introduced two formal strategies for employing text: exemplifying and enumerating. Rather than listing every item, exemplifying emphasizes key instances by presenting select examples. In contrast, enumerating involves presenting a comprehensive list. By offering memorable examples and thorough lists, writers enhance the credibility of their arguments and provide substantial evidence of a problem. Consequently, politicians, prominent figures, and poets frequently employ this approach to shape their audiences' perspectives.

4. METHODOLOGY

A: Model Of Analysis

The notion of orientalism (according to Said 1978) is examined from a CS viewpoint in the British novel *Burmese Days*. It is based on a refined model of Jeffries' framework (2010), which relies entirely on a collection of textual conceptual instruments. They are characterized as micro speech acts recognized using formal attributes derived from established language theories, notably Fowler's (1991, 1996) Critical Linguistics and Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics, specifically concerning modality and transitivity.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

A: Qualitative Analysis of *Burmese Days*

Extract 1 Chapter 2 P 8

Kyauktada was a fairly typical Upper Burma town, that had not changed greatly between the days of Marco Polo and 1910, and might have slept in the Middle Ages for a century more if it had not proved a convenient spot for a railway terminus.¹

In 1910 the Government made it the headquarters of a district and a seat of Progress – interpretable as a block of law courts, with their army of fat but ravenous pleaders, a hospital, a school and one of those huge, durable jails which the English have built everywhere between Gibraltar and Hong Kong.²

The population was about four thousand, including a couple of hundred Indians, a few score Chinese and seven Europeans.³

Analysis

Kyauktada is a town in static Burma, as described in this extract. This town has remained undeveloped since the Middle Ages, underscoring the East's timelessness in the eyes of the West. The arrival of the English colonial government will bring progress.

In sentence 1, Orwell starts this extract with a naming tool by mentioning the town Kyauktada, then he uses a negative description of Kyauktada by using the adverb "fairly" before the post-modifiers "typical Upper Burma town". Orwell tries to soften his description of the town, and he uses the negator "had not" twice in sentence 1. Through passivity, this town is described as lacking modernity; it "had not changed." Explicitly, the verb "change" indicates the town's primitiveness. The phrase "have slept in the Middle Ages" emphasizes the town's old appearance, as if it were still in the Middle Ages, and this metaphor exaggerates Burma's timelessness.

Sentence 2 shows the opposite by highlighting modernity in 1910. The arrival of the English colonial government is marked by active verbs like "made" and "built jails everywhere," indicating their power and control. The English colonial government becomes the active subject of progress. Ironically, their version of progress and modernity is tied to the construction of jails.

Modernity is called "a seat of progress." The adjectives "huge" and "durable" pre-modify "jails," suggesting the West's power, superiority, and modernity.

Orwell describes lawyers as "pleaders" who are pre-modified by "fat but ravenous," highlighting their greed and presenting a negative image because they are native to Burma. He also enumerates the modern institutions built in primitive Burma: courts,

hospitals, schools, and jails.

There is a clear contrast: sentence 1 presents Burma as static, as if in the Middle Ages, while sentence 2 highlights colonial progress through making and building. The East represents timelessness; the West brings development to the East.

In sentence 3, Orwell uses enumeration by citing population statistics: "four thousand," "a couple of hundred," "a few," and "seven." The small number of Europeans—seven—emphasizes the subtle dominance of Europe and its institutions despite their limited presence. It also suggests that Europeans cannot withstand the effects of the place's age.

This extract suggests that, in Burma, native people are not the agents in their town; instead, institutions occupy the central role and represent civilization.

Extract 2 Chapter 7 P50

Elizabeth's life in Paris had not been quite like that.¹

Her mother had taken a studio in the Montparnasse quarter, and relapsed at once into a state of squalid, muddling idleness.²

She was so foolish with money that her income would not come near covering expenses, and for several months Elizabeth did not even have enough to eat.³

Then she found a job as visiting teacher of English to the family of a French bank manager. They called her 'notre mees Anglaise'.⁴

Analysis

The passage describes Elizabeth's life through Orwell's third-person narrator, focusing on her personal life and psychological state. This portrayal reflects Said's second dogma—arguing that, to ensure decay post-colonialism, a clear contrast exists between Elizabeth's life in Paris (West) and her later experiences in Burma (East).

The main argument is that Orwell introduces Elizabeth's life in Paris through irony: although Paris is usually seen as a place of art, fashion, nourishment, and ideal living, for Elizabeth, it signifies hunger and decay. This is established syntactically by beginning with negation through 'hadn't' in the past perfect tense. The descriptive phrase 'Elizabeth's life,' modified by 'quiet,' further emphasizes the contrast.

Sentence 2 describes the irresponsibility and laziness of Elizabeth's mother. It is the cause behind Elizabeth's hunger. She lacks the qualities necessary to be a good mother, which is illustrated by her use of the verb "relapsed" to describe her irresponsible

behavior.

The mother's 'idleness' is shown by the negative pre-modifiers 'squalid' and 'muddling', suggesting that her laziness results in her suffering from poverty and lack of income.

Orwell emphasizes her mother's bad behavior in Sentences 3 and 4 by describing her as "so foolish." Syntactically, "so" is used to give negative descriptions or impressions. Also, the Negation tool is repeated twice in this sentence: "would not" and "did not," which indicate weakening and struggle. She doesn't find any food to eat for several months. Another tool is Hypothesizing with the modal verb "would," which indicates that Elizabeth is deprived because of her mom's carelessness. The use of material verbs in this sentence, such as "come," "have," "eat," and "found," conveys a sense of deprivation, decay, and decline. At the end of sentence 4, there is code-switching: the use of French to indicate that she is foreign and that her origin and identity are French. Paris is described as careless. The late onset of life in Burma (East) is linked to poverty. Ideologically, Orwell implies that poverty, inferiority, and carelessness are linked to Elizabeth and her mother.

Extract 3 Chapter 9 P63

The weather was growing hotter and hotter. Elizabeth had had her first attack of prickly heat.¹

Tennis at the Club had practically ceased; people would play one languid set and then fall into chairs and swallow pints of tepid lime-juice—tepid, because the ice came only twice weekly from Mandalay and melted within twenty-four hours of arriving.²

The Flame of the Forest was in full bloom.³

The Burmese women, to protect their children from the sun, streaked their faces with yellow cosmetic until they looked like little African witch-doctors.⁴

Analysis

This extract is another piece of evidence for Burma as the worst place. That suits the second dogma of Said: The East is exotic, full of heat, and primitive; the weather and juice are so hot that there is little ice each week. The author represents this extract by using the representing thought tool; it is not a direct speech between the characters. It is part of the narration.

The first sentence describes Burma's weather, which is part of its nature and location. The modified "weather" is described by the post-modified negative adjective "hotter," which is repeated twice to indicate the overwarming heat. In the same sentence, there is

a description of "Elizabeth" as she is suffering for the first time from "prickly heat." This indicates that she cannot tolerate the hotter weather, resulting in a red rash.

Sentence 2: This is a description of the club; the description is negative because tennis is affected by hot weather and hot juice. "Tennis" ceased. There is another description in which the modified "lime juice" is described by negative adjectives; one is pre-modified and post-modified "tepid". The use of repetition and imagery in this sentence indicates the miserable atmosphere. Orwell represents actions by using some verbs that describe the event, like "play," "fall," "swallow," and "melted"; all the verbs describe the suffering of Europeans in Burma.

Sentence 3 depicts beauty in nature. The narrator uses symbolism to present two contrasts: "flame," representing heat, and "bloom," suggesting rest, hope, and beauty.

The last sentence describes the Burmese women's behavior, indicating primitiveness. Orwell uses the plural to generalize about all Burmese women, equating them with "little African witch doctors" through a metaphorical simile, thereby reinforcing the idea of 'otherness' applied to both Burmese and African women. The Burmese women mock the Africans, and "their faces" are described negatively, altered by the "yellow cosmetic," which symbolizes sickness and fear. Orwell hypothesizes about their appearance through the phrase "until they looked" and represents the women's actions with verbs such as "protect" and "streaked."

This extract implies a contrast between the modernity of European thought, despite their suffering in Burma, and the primitiveness of what are considered "exotic" Burmese traditions. This represents the colonial gaze of the "West" toward the "East."

Extract 4 Chapter 19 P 122

The heat was growing worse and worse. 1
April was nearly over, but there was no hope of rain for another three weeks, five weeks it might be.²

Even the lovely transient dawns were spoiled by the thought of the long, blinding hours to come, when one's head would ache and the glare would penetrate through every covering and glue up one's eyelids with restless sleep. 3

No one, Oriental or European, could keep awake in the heat of the day without a struggle; at night, on the other hand, with the howling dogs and the pools of sweat that collected and tormented one's prickly heat, no one could sleep.⁴

Analysis

This extract is part of the third-person narration. It is a description of the atmosphere in Burma during summer and how this annoys both natives and non-natives. This extract reflects Said's second dogma because it shows the static of the East through nature and the environment. Time in the East is cyclical and does not change.

Orwell begins his description in sentence 1 with the modified "the heat" and its post-modification, the adjective "worse," which indicates the high degree of heat after April. In sentence 3 describing the brightness of dawn, "dawn" that is pre-modified by positive adjectives "lovely transient", this insight is spoiled by "hours" that are described by negative adjectives "long", "blinding", hour after hour, and nothing changes. There is a contrast in this sentence between day and night, dawn, which represents the beginning of a new day, "hope," and the long hours of night "despair.", this contrast is shown by the verb "spoiled," which indicates that there is a difference between the dawn and night; there is a difference in heating itself.

In sentence 2, Orwell emphasizes that the East is static and unchanging, shaped by nature. This is shown through the end of April, and there is no hope of rain. Through the use of negation, the pronoun "no," and numerical expressions, the author illustrates that despite the passage of three and five weeks, there has been no change in the temperature.

In sentence 3, Orwell uses images to show their suffering by employing the hypothesizing tool, the

model verb "would," and the mental verb "ache," which indicates the absence of sleep that causes the headache. This tool is repeated in the same sentence, "would penetrate," which shows that the environment controls their life. Also in sentence 4, "could keep" and "could sleep" show their inability to sleep.

In sentence 4, Orwell describes the suffering through implication; he implies through the negating pronoun "no" and the use of or in "Oriental or European" that he makes the suffering universal, it is not because of people themselves, whether native or not, but it is the static nature of Burma. In addition to the heat, their sleep is disturbed by "howling dogs."

Sentences 1 to 4 show repetition through negation, appearing four times with words like "worse," "restless," or the pronoun "no"—as in "no hope" or "no one." These repeated negative descriptions underscore the ongoing suffering in Burma and reinforce the main argument about the static, oppressive atmosphere in the East.

In sentence 4, Orwell uses the imagery of "restless sleep" and "the pools of sweat" that indicate the growing heat; their sleep is restless. Even though both "Oriental" and "European" individuals share in the suffering, the dominance of the West is highlighted through the description of the dawn's brightness.

B: Quantitative Analysis of Burmese Days

Table

Tool	Frequency	Percentage
Naming and describing	18	33%
Presenting action	16	29%
Negating	11	20%
Contrasting and equating	3	5%
Hypothesizing	6	11%
Numerating	1	2%
Total	55	100%

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Through these four extracts that fit Said's second dogma in *Burmese days*. Orwell delivers several themes that reflect the decay and timelessness of the East. While the West is in a dynamic process, bringing modernity to Burma. Burma is described through its town, Kyauktada, which remains stuck in the Middle Ages due to its lack of modernity. Then, in another chapter, Orwell, through irony, contrasts Burma and Paris: Elizabeth's life in Paris is quite different from that in Burma, but because of her mom's irresponsibility, she doesn't have any food. The weather in Burma is another hardship for natives

and non-natives; they suffer from the long hours of daylight, the heat, and the lack of breeze. That causes a decrease in planting, except for some old trees. Everything in Burma reflects oldness, unchanged, and the exotic East. Orwell uses the Naming and Describing tool (33%) heavily to show the breakdown of Burma under colonial rule. Orwell employs the present tense, action, and events (29%), and the author focuses on stating verbs to describe the nature and primitiveness of Burma and its weather. Orwell conveys the oldness and stasis of the East syntactically through the use of the past tense, especially the perfect tense, which is repeated three times in the extracts mentioned. Orwell ensures that

Burma remains explicitly unchanged through the Negating tool (20%), especially the syntactic one, using "not". Hypothesizing tool (11%) is used by Orwell through modality, especially the modal verb "would", which indicates uncertainty to soften the harsh description of Burma, and through "could", which explains their inability to sleep in the hottest part of Burma. The author doesn't rely heavily on contrasting and equating tools; he uses contrasting to show the readers that Paris is a place of art and modernity, while Burma is poor, and with the coming of colonialism, the West brings modern progress for the East, while he mentions equating to criticize the Burmese women while they put on cosmetic to appear just like Africans. The little circulation of Numerating (2%) relates to the fact that Orwell doesn't need to mention the small number of Europeans living in Burma because of its primitiveness.

7. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that:

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- 1-The Naming and Describing tool (33%) is mainly used by the author to convey a negative, evaluative portrayal of static and decaying Burma.
- 2- In addition, the Numerating tool (2%) shows a small percentage; Orwell shows the superiority of Europe through its small population.
- 3- Stylistically, the author uses imagery by painting vivid pictures of the town, employs symbolism to represent the harsh summer weather in Burma, and repeatedly uses the pronoun "no" to emphasize the sense that change in weather or modernity is impossible.
- 4- Building on these stylistic and conceptual choices, the author uses textual-conceptual tools to represent Burma's negative ideology, showing how it is static and, with the coming of colonialism, becomes "a seat of progress". The British author wants the reader to realize that colonialism is synonymous with modernity.