



A CRITICAL LINGUISTIC APPROACH IN A NARRATIVE OF THE CAPTIVITY AND RESTORATION OF MRS. MARY ROWLANDSON

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Abstract

Fowler and Kress argue that linguistic meaning in a text is inseparable from ideology: "... a critical linguistic approach is not concerned with developing a theory of language which is specific to literary texts only, but attempts to theorize language as ideology with respect to all texts..." (qtd. in Birch, p.155). Critical linguistics focuses on the significance of context in the study of language and the relationship between ideology and linguistic structures. It maintains that language does not only reflect reality, but socially constructs it, placing a particular worldview and value system.

Mary Rowlandson's *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* is both an adventure story and Puritan quest to be saved from sins. This paper intends to demonstrate how language reflects ideology and can thus be used as an instrument of power and control in Rowlandson's narrative. It will also focus on not only her own ideological perspective but also inconsistencies through which the meaning based on her captivity and restoration breaks away. Thus, in her textual quest for her subjective clarity, the writer/narrator uses binary oppositions to build her Puritan ideology based on her own subjectivity.

Keywords: Critical Linguistics, Captivity Narrative, Mary Rowlandson, Binary Oppositions.

1. Introduction

Language is the linking element between individuals' knowledge of the world and their social practices. It has a vital role in the ideological process. Language carries ideology, which, however, is often overlooked by both the writer/speaker and the reader/hearer. Fowler tries to hold a neutral definition of ideology, "the ways in which people order and justify their lives" (1991a, p.92). According to Fairclough "ideology involves the representation of 'the world' from the perspective of a particular interest" (1995, p.44). Thomson argues that "ideology, broadly speaking, is meaning in the service of power" (1990, p.7). So while Fairclough and Thomson focus on ideology's political function, Simpson believes "language can be used by powerful groups to reinforce their dominant ideology (1993, p.6).

Fairclough (1989) introduces the term Critical Language Analysis focusing that this approach to language study is an attempt to demystify what may be hidden from people. People are unconsciously influenced by ideology hidden in language. Thus, Critical Language Analysis (CLA) may help individuals to become aware of the processes of domination through language. It also aims to denaturalize the ideology and make it crystal to the readers.

This paper makes an analysis of *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* from the framework of CLA gives an interpretation of the narrative to reveal the interaction between language and ideology, how these two are influenced and determined by power and how they are used to serve a certain group of people in a society. It also aims at examining the ideology reflected in *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* as intended meaning of the author. In order to find out and interpret the intended meaning, we need to scrutinize the language of the text through binary oppositions selected from the text. Thus, we will observe the relationship between the subject (the power of participant in the action) and the object (the effected participant).

Mary Rowlandson's *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* was written after the foundation of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The text was edited by her first husband, Joseph Rowlandson, and by the Puritan minister Increase Mather, who wrote its *Preface*, and published it in 1862. Captivity narratives were stories of trial and persecution experienced in the Puritan World. It was symbolically an imprisonment of the soul suffering from sins. She commented on her rescue an act of God's mercy that would bring His chosen people to Heaven. One of the themes of this work was the uncertainty of life. Rowlandson learnt from her captivity that no one was guaranteed life, and life could be short. The second theme was faith in God's will. In Puritan belief, God arranged everything with a purpose. Rowlandson believed that humans had no alternative but to accept the will of God and attempt to make sense of it. Rowlandson learnt a lesson from this experience: naturally she had assumed the Native Americans as violent savages but later she found out the similarities of the Native Americans and the

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European settlers. She ironically became a part of Native American culture, eating their food and behaving like them.

As a captivity narrative, it embodies both visible and invisible modes of signifying. There is a gap between what Rowlandson intends to express and what her writing composes. Rowlandson employs fictional elements of conflict, suspense, plot development and resolution although she gives the documents of some historical facts about colonial America. Her account is organized by a narrative of twenty removes each of which represent a separate place during her 12 weeks of captivity. Each re-location in the primitive land symbolizes a path towards spiritual redemption. Thus in her textual quest for her subjective clarity, she uses binary oppositions to build her ideology that signifies the Indians as the members of a satanic world.

Culture, norms and value system affect our thoughts and language. Language is also influential on the way we conceptualize reality and form cultural ideas and values. Since the aim of critical linguistics is to “display to consciousness the patterns of belief and value which are encoded in the language”, binary oppositions play an important role in the categorization of culture, belief and value systems (Fowler, 1991, p. 67). One of the most important applications in structural and post-structural criticism is binary opposition which defends that the essence of everything is revealed through opposition with another thing that has no quality at all. The binary oppositions can be found in the majority of the structuralists viewpoints, especially among narratologists. According to Roland Barthes, the most fundamental concept for structuralism is binary opposition (Barthes, 1992). The structuralist school of thought views binary oppositions as a fundamental principle underlying the structure of language and ‘classificatory systems’ within cultures (Chandler, 1994).

2. Analysis Through Binary Oppositions

Christians	Heathens / Infidels
English/ we	Indians/ they
Civilization	Wilderness
God	Devil
Liberty	Captivity
English Army	Enemy
Lamb	Wolf/ Hell-hounds
Worldly values	Spiritual values

The selected binary oppositions from the text perfectly fit together for they contribute to our reading not as an expression of captivity but as a narrative in which the narrator constructs her own subjectivity. The fact that the author is the narrator creates not only her own ideological perspective but also inconsistencies through which the meaning based on her captivity and restoration breaks away and is sometimes erased.

Mrs. Mary Rowlandson starts telling about her experience of captivity, as she suggests in the title, by making a distinction between the English (we) and the Indians (they). In this opposition, she directly uses negative adjectives and verbs to describe the actions of Indians, assuming herself in the position of an object exposed to the actions of the subject: “... these *murderous wretches* went on, burning and destroying before them... we must go... the Indians gaping before us with their guns, spears and hatches to devour us... *we were butchered by those merciless Heathen...*” (p 319). The words in italics are examples to nominalization¹—a method that transforms the verbs into nouns—through which we understand the relationship between the Indian (the agent) and the English (object of the agent) that is based on power. Furthermore, the usage of passive construction shows that the object of the agent is passive and powerless whereas the agent is active and powerful.

However, she contradicts herself which is apparent in her usage of pronouns. The distinction she makes between “we” and “they” at the beginning is diminished. This reveals how fictitious her narrative is because she mentions about the removal of Indians from the English, whereas she, at the same time, feels she belongs to the community of Indians. “...on that very day came the English Army after them to this river, and saw the smook of their Wigwams, and yet this river put a stop to *them*. God did not give *them* courage or activity to go over after *us*; *we* were not ready for so great a mercy as

¹ Fowler writes that nominalization gives opportunities for deleting information about the participants, time and modality which writers include while they use active verb clauses. Fowler also uses phrases that delete the sort of information that would have been included if he used active verbs. For example he uses a sentence referring to ‘allegations’, rather than stating X alleged that Y did A. (1991)

victory and deliverance..." (p.325-6). In the first sentence, she refers to Indians as *them* and in the second one she includes herself to this Indian community – *us* – who runs away from the English Army.

When remembering her first capture, Rowlandson describes them as "Black creatures of the night" and "hell-hounds", and their dancing "resemblances of hell" so as to impose that they are citizens of hell and servants of the devil. For example, she relates, "a company of hell-hounds, roaring, singing, ranting and insulting, as if they would have torn our very hearts out" (p.70). Rowlandson certainly reads her captors as Satanic in the phrase "hell-hounds." She also considers their "singing" as both distasteful and demonic as a Puritan witness. She can recognize expression in their voices (e.g. "insulting"), but the voices are not speech. Through identifying voices instead of speech, Rowlandson suggests that the Indians do not possess logic and are thus excluded from being civilized, both in the family and in the colony (Artiano, 2015).

Rowlandson, later, separates Indian voices from speech and subjectivity. We, as readers, might identify these characterizations as basic indications of pain or pleasure: "Speech is something different from voice, which is possessed by other animals also and used by them to express pain or pleasure... Speech, on the other hand, serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and so also what is just and what is unjust" (Ranci re, 1999, p.1).

According to Ranci re, the uncivilized had savage languages that were not capable of sophistication or abstract expression (1999). Rowlandson asserts herself in sharp contrast to this unsophistication that is available to animals. After witnessing Indian noises and voices she says, "It is not my tongue, or pen can express the sorrows of my heart, and bitterness of my spirit" (p.71).

As to the writer's language that portrays war as an unjustified attack, she describes the war between English Army and Indians through her ideology based on her desire to demonstrate the Indians holding the position of power. "... one was knocked on the head, the other was escaped: Another was running alone who was shot and wounded, and fell down; he begged of them his life, promising them Money but they would not hearken to him but knocked him in the head, and stript him naked, and split open his bowels" (p.319). She goes further:

Such *dreadful* sights, and to see our dear friends, and Relations ly bleeding out their heart-blood upon the ground. There was one who was chopt into the head with a hatchet, and stript naked, and yet crawling up and down. It is a solemn sight to see so many *Christians* lying in their blood, some here, and some there, like a company of *Sheep* torn by *Wolves* (p.320).

This description is also an example of opposition of how Christians (only the English people) are killed by Heathens (the Indians). In addition, the Christian/Heathen opposition is juxtaposed with the Sheep/Wolf opposition. Sheep is identified with innocence and meekness of Christ whereas wolf has a denotation of devil. Thus, the opposition between God and the Devil parallels the one between the meekness of sheep and the cruelty of wolf/hell-hounds. The narrator relates, "When they went, they acted as if the Devil had told them that they should gain the victory" (p.333).

On the other hand, an example of discrepancy obvious in the narrator's discourse is when she starts to lose control over her portrayal of the Indians as Heathens: "Those seven were killed in a *barbarous* manner by one-eyed John and Marlborough's praying Indians" (p.321). Here, she does not explain how the seven Englishmen were killed, and yet she creates a contradiction relating that Indians are praying. At this point, the *Heathen* adjective that signifies unbelief for God starts to be erased.

According to Fowler and Kress, the positioning of adjectives and other modifiers are highly revealing (Fowler & Kress, 1979). If adjectives are placed after the words, they tend to state that the writer has subjective judgment. If they come before the nouns, they are integrated as personal opinion. For example, Rowlandson uses many adjectives after words such as "barbarous creature" "dreadful sights" and "inhumane creatures." In this case, the sentence "The creatures are barbarous" appears to be the writer's judgment, while "barbarous/inhumane creature" puts the statement into a kind of category in which objective description is changed into a kind of the subjective opinion. Therefore, the narrator makes a choice between nouns and adjectives and the positioning of adjectives and other modifiers. In the text some of the vocabulary were deliberately used which demonstrates how the classification of vocabulary reveals ideology. "Hell-hounds, dreadful sights, barbarous creatures, inhumane creatures" can be exemplified for relexicalization as an aspect of classification. "Relexicalization is relabelling, the provision of a new set of terms, either for the whole language or for a significant area of the language; it provides a new perspective for speakers, often in specialized areas which are distinct from those of the larger social group" (Fowler & Kress, 1979, p.210). Another aspect is overlexicalization which is defined as "the provision of a large number

of synonymous or near-synonymous terms for communication of some specialized area of experience" (Fowler & Kress, 1979, p.211). For instance, Rowlandson uses "the wonderful power of God, the wonderful goodness of God, providence of God" several times to assert her experience of captivity due to her strict Puritan belief in God. The adjectives she attributes to God are all positive as opposed to the negative ones she has used for the devil and Heathens: "the wonderful power of God, the wonderful goodness of God to me, the Lord remembered me, whose mercies are great..." (p.320-25).

But why does God help those who "barbarously kill people" and take someone captive without justice? The captivity narrative breaks down when she describes how the Indians struggle for survival owing to their removal from the English Army and how God helps them cross a river, and does not let the Englishmen cross it. "I cannot but take notice of the strange providence of God in preserving the heathen..." (p.325). We often recognize the sudden changes in her point of view due to the fact that she wants to depict herself in a powerless victimized position. Disregarding that the narrator gets help from the Indians, she narrates it as a result of God's Providence: "... an old Indian *bade* me come to him, and his Squaw *gave* me some Ground-nuts; she gave me also something to lay under my head, and a good fire we had and through the good providence of God, I had a comfortable lodging that night" (p.328). The verbs in italics reveal the good acts of Indians while the providence of God becomes the only cause of relief for her.

Another example to how the text becomes incoherent is when Rowlandson identifies the tobacco given to her with the devil and ignores the fact that she is comforted by the Indians. She first relates that she cries because of her heartbreak and inner pain upon which an Indian asks why and says no one will hurt her. She later confesses that one of the Indians tries to comfort her:

Then came one of them and gave me two spoon-fulls of Meal to comfort me... Then I went to see King Philip, he bade me come in and sit down, and asked me whether I would smoke but this no way suited me. For though I had formerly used Tobacco, yet I had left it ever since I was first taken. It seems to be a Bait, the Devil layes to make men loose their precious time: I remember with shame how formerly I had taken two or three pipes...(p.327).

At this time of poverty, she is given food and tobacco by her "barbarous enemy," but she changes her topic and prefers talking about how hazardous tobacco is. At this point, the discrepancy in her narrative is obvious when she identifies smoking with the act of devil because she admits with shame that she was once a smoker.

Furthermore, Rowlandson is so much engaged in signifying the English Army as lacking power that she fails to see that her language do not reflect consistency. For instance, establishing a binary opposition between English Army and the Enemy, she relates the Enemy in a powerless position in which the Indians are shown as victims in a struggle for survival: "... our English Army was *so numerous*, and in pursuit of the Enemy, and so near as to take several and destroy them: the Enemy in such a *distress for food*, that our men might track them by their rooting in the earth for Ground-nuts, whilst they were *flying for their lives*..." (p.336). The words in italics contribute to the subjectivity of the narrator's point of view.

However, in her deliberate assertion of her self in a powerful position, the narrator only tries to erase the fact that the Indians can be helpful towards her. In other words, she wants to show herself as an agent who is able to act while assuming her omnipotence over the Indians: one of the Indians asks her whether she has a Bible or not since he has one in his basket. She replies, "I was glad of it, and asked him, whether *he* thought the Indians would let me read? He answered, yes: So *I took* the Bible" (p.324). The narrator's choice of the verb "take" signifies power; moreover she avoids using a sentence like "he let me read the Bible" and prefers to make an understatement using the word "yes" in order to disregard this positive action of her enemy who gives her the Bible.

Shima holds that there are many peculiarities about this passage:

... she is able to secure the Bible through a short exchange with a returning warrior. This not only suggests that Rowlandson can adequately communicate with certain Indians, it also suggests that she is willing to trust their judgment and assurances. In this case, the Indian who gives Rowlandson the Bible is transfigured in the grammatical construction of her important question...(p.8).

Shima adds that Rowlandson grammatically separates and distances this warrior from the other Indians by using the pronoun "*he*" which "represents a case of particularizing an Indian interlocutor through a grammatical relocation" (p.9).

Thus, the narrator's construction of her subjectivity transforms into her effort to manifest her condition among the Indian community either as having power to act or as being powerless to endure her

captivity. At the end of the eighth remove, she notes that a raiding group of Indians has just come back with stolen horses and sheep from an attack against the settlement of the Englishmen. She tries to benefit from this: "I desired them, that they would carry me to Albany, upon one of those Horses, and sell me for Powder: for so they had sometimes discoursed" (p.336). In this proposition she ignores the fact that the powder could be used in future attacks against the English colonists. Her position of captivity changes her attitude and behavior in the way that she becomes pragmatic to be able to survive even if Rowlandson at first appears to be strict in her belief that God will protect her.

The captivity narratives deal with the individual struggling against harsh climate and landscape, and battles with the enemies. Puritans in the American land believed that they would be exposed to confrontation with devil in "the howling wilderness" where their holy Book has not yet reached. Through referring to one of the captivity stories of the Bible, Rowlandson demonstrates that her experience of pain and suffering will lead her to a moral lesson. "*Shall there be evil in the City and the Lord hath not done it? They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, therefore shall they go Captive*" (p.336). Her reference to the prophet contributes to the Puritan myth based on doctrine of election. God will rescue those (His chosen people) who can endure physical and mental suffering and thus they will reach towards the heavenly kingdom of Paradise. Moreover, at the center of her captivity account lies the concept of trial and persecution endured in the material world. In this sense, the narrative construction of captivity is the manifestation of the Puritan belief based on seeking redemption and quest for salvation. Ruland relates, "A chosen people crossing the sea to enter a wilderness peopled with devils, suffering, trial and captivity, learning closeness of taint and damnation and seeking redemption in the quest for the new city of salvation" (1991, p.27). Thus, Rowlandson's choice of vocabulary in her language contributes to her belief in captivity and restoration as a religious symbol that will lead her to Heaven.

The binary opposition between captivity and liberty finally contributes to the narrator's personal opinion. She mentions about her liberty so as to draw a picture of her own experience. When an Indian comes to her with a pair of stockings, she knits them fit for him upon which she relates, "I bid him ask my mistress if I might go along with him a little way, she said yes... I had my liberty *again*... Being out of her (her mistress) sight, I had time and liberty *again* to look into my Bible" (p.330-1). In both sentences, she uses "again," which indicates that she before has had several occasions to act freely.

3. Conclusion

Looking at her captivity story as a path for reaching salvation in Puritan ideology, we observe a first-person-narrator who builds a fictional reality. Through the critical language approach and the binary oppositions, we examine the narrator who presents herself as the agent of actions rather than as an affected entity in many places of the text. Via the intended construction of her captivity, she never accepts that she is in a subject position except her personal contact with God. She tries to impose that God has given her power to endure: "when my heart was ready to sink into the Earth and my knees trembled under me... the Lord brought, and now has fulfilled that reviving word unto me... *Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded...*" (p.339-40).

The Puritan ideology in the text unfairly demonstrates the Indians as members of a satanic world and the creatures of wild life who can eat bones of horses, bear, venison, beaver, dog, skunk, etc. The opposition against the wilderness of the Indians stands the civilization of the tender-hearted Christians. From this angle, the narrator is in a futile effort to show the English as civilized and polite because her discourse contradicts with Puritan view of salvation. She says that they eat "the finest of the Wheat... Instead of Husk... and the fatted calf" and adds that this extreme vanity and consumerism does not contribute to spiritual path towards salvation. As opposed to the worldly things of civilization, she learns to appreciate spiritual things during her interaction with the Indians: "One hour I have been in health, wealth and wanting nothing. But the next hour in sickness and wounds, and death, having nothing but sorrow and affliction... but now I see the Lord had this time to scourge and chasten me" (p.341). Therefore, instead of having the liberty of health, wealth and being in need of nothing, the experience of captivity and restoration leads her towards salvation—"Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" (p.342). She, in the end, focuses on her spiritual path since her captors pray and respect their English captives who wish to pray. Despite their desire for freedom in religious beliefs, the Puritan Englishmen turn out to represent the worldly values in colonial America.

What Rowlandson does is to persuade the reader that she is exposed to unfair actions of her enemy and that she is in a helpless situation. We observe the ideology that Englishmen are innocent victims which are attacked by Indians who represent the devil. However, the language of the narrator becomes inconsistent with what she has said before. The Indians share their food with her and try to comfort her physically

(carrying her things) and mentally (letting her read the Bible). The fact that she is a captive is erased when we are given information about how she has adjusted into living with the Indians, who do not signify the captors any more. Through CLA, we, as readers, might construct our own perception of reality.

To conclude, it is not easy to define language since language creates its own reality; thus all languages in their various contexts are ideological (Zaidi, 2018). Any representational discourse that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position; language is not a clear window but a refracting, structuring medium (Fowler, 1991, p.10). Critical Language Analysis is one of the important ways of analyzing a text. The ultimate purpose of CLA is to arouse the readers' awareness of language's function so as to develop a critical eye to the language use. Making an analysis via CLA helps us to be aware of the difference between the reality and the personal point of view and to be responsive to the ideology that is often normalized and therefore easily overlooked. Our knowledge about things depends on our knowledge about what is in opposition with them (Cuddon, 1999). We can realize that Rowlandson has used binary oppositions to convey her intended concepts and create the desired effect in the audience.

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