Cognitive Stylistics and Horror Fiction: A Case Study of Stephen King's Misery

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Abstract : Misery generates fear and anxiety in readers through its intense plot associated with the unpredictable emotional states of the nurse, Annie Wilkes. At the same time, she mentally and physically abuses the novelist victim, Paul Sheldon. The suspense is not only at the story level, where the violent expressions are used but also at the discourse level, where the linguistic structures may intentionally cause the reader to view language as disturbing performative. This performativity could be reflected through linguistic choices where the writer triggers a new imaginative world through experiential metafunction and schema disruption. This study explores striking excerpts from the fiction through mind style and transitivity analysis to demonstrate how the horrific experience contrasts when the protagonist and the antagonist converse extensively. The results reveal that stylistic deviation can be found at the syntactic levels, where the intensity of emotions can be apparent when the protagonist is verbally abused. In addition, transitivity can flesh out how the protagonist is expressed chiefly through the internalized process, whereas the antagonist is eminent with the externalized process. The findings suggest that the application of cognitive stylistics, such as mind style and transitivity analysis, could contribute to the mental representation of horrific reality.

Keywords : horror, mind style, misery, stylistics, transitivity