

Anthropocentrism in the Graphic Novel *Black Beauty*

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Abstract

This article explores the link between linguistic formations and socially organised meanings in a graphic novel of the adapted classic genre. Focus has been placed specifically on its verbal text contained in speech bubbles and captions. Using Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework of the ideational metafunction that employs transitivity, the article discusses how the ideology of anthropocentrism and the theme of mistreatment of animals are represented in the verbal layout of the novel *Anna Sewell's Black Beauty*. In addition, a typography analysis of onomatopoeic words will also be examined, as that complements the representation of the ideology and themes. The analysis of the data indicates that the linguistic choices of the author support the construction of the ideology and themes. The main significance of the study is that it highlights how discursive choices that represent the inner and outer experiences are constructed in the panels of *Black Beauty*.

Keywords: graphic novel; Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL); transitivity; onomatopoeic words

“Anthropocentrism is the ultimate sin”

-Phil Wollen

1. Introduction

This article discusses the link between linguistic formations and their link to the constructed representation of literary themes. Using a graphic novel, the focus of the analysis is the verbal text contained in its speech bubbles and captions. By adopting Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL), specifically the transitivity framework, the article attempts to reveal the ideology of anthropocentrism and the theme of mistreatment of animals that underpin an adapted classic from a semantic-grammatical point of view. This study is also intended to contribute to the area of research on the employment of transitivity in exploring graphic novels. This will help to elicit a deeper understanding of the text through exploring the relationship between meanings and words that scaffold the linguistic features of a graphic novel.

A graphic novel is “a sturdy, lengthy comic book that contains a single story or a set of interrelated stories...” (Rothschild, 1995, p.xiii). Concurring

with this definition, a graphic novel must be a standalone comic book, telling a story within its own framework. However, the terms graphic novels and comics are often used interchangeably due to their similar characteristics. The graphic novel used in this study, *Black Beauty* (hereafter BB), is categorized as an adapted classic. In addition to a transitivity analysis, this study will also draw attention to the physical structure of words or typography (specifically onomatopoeic words) in extrapolating the embedded issues.

2. Previous Research

The last ten years have witnessed a steady increase in the number of studies related to content analysis of both graphic novels and comics. A critical discourse analysis of the *Superman-Peace on Earth* comic book revealed embedded ideologies (Veloso, 2008) while another study pointed out how discursive and intertextual elements are deployed in Japanese anime and manga (Yoong, 2009). A more recent study investigates how narratives of comics are construed to propagate controversial policies as in Marvel's *Civil War* comics series (Veloso & Bateman, 2013). These studies indicate that there is a focus on the dissection of graphic novels to reveal ideologies, beliefs and propagandas. Nevertheless, research on the depiction of themes in graphic novels based on adaptations is limited indicating a gap in the literature.

In terms of transitivity, Simpson (1994) opined that “the fact that transitivity has proved a useful analytic model in both stylistics and critical linguistics makes it a useful bridge between the analysis of narrative fiction and other discourse types” (p. 81). Halliday's (1971) seminal study on the language of William Golding's *The Inheritors* discusses the patterns of transitivity materializing in a clause or sentence. Other studies have included an analysis of Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*, which reveals the mental state of the novel's protagonist through a SFL framework (Ji & Shen, 2004). Similarly Cunanan (2011) focuses on raising awareness through the stream of consciousness technique using transitivity to analyse Virginia Woolf's *Old Mrs. Grey*.

The studies mentioned indicate that transitivity is useful to analyse the overall construction of meanings in literary texts through both stylistics and critical linguistics. In addition, the focus of previous studies has mainly concentrated on the analysis of conventional literary texts. Up to now, little attention has been given to the analysis of a graphic novel from the lens of transitivity. A transitivity framework has yet to be used in the analysis of captions and speech balloons which are a prerequisite convention of graphic novels. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) asserted that the construction of socially motivated linguistic choices denote the manifestation of social functions which are important to explore ideologies, themes and other elements in literary texts.

In addition, the ideology of anthropocentrism in graphic novels has also hardly been explored. Though both visual and verbal texts are fundamental components in a graphic novel, this paper concentrates on the meaning making properties of the verbal text besides looking into the typography of the special effect words. On this basis, this study investigates how the ideology of

anthropocentrism and the theme of mistreatment of animals are represented in the verbal layout of the graphic adapted version (2010 edition) of Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*.

3. Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL) was pioneered by Halliday (1994). In SFL, the relationship within the language is dynamic and text is considered a social exchange of meanings. In short, meanings are construed through our choice and use of words. The term metafunction is used in SFL to show that function is a fundamental component within SFL. There are three metafunctions of the semantic system which are realized by distinct systems at clause rank in the lexicogrammar. The systems which encode ideational (for construing experience), interpersonal (for enacting personal and social relationships), and textual (for the constructing of text) meanings are the grammatical systems of transitivity, mood or modality and theme respectively.

The grammatical system of transitivity encodes ideational meanings which are realised in two modes: experiential and logical. The experiential mainly focuses on content or ideas while the logical concentrates on the relationship between ideas. This “permits us to encode, both semantically and syntactically, our mental picture of the physical world and the worlds of our imagination” (Downing & Locke, 1992, p. 110). The concept of transitivity itself is a significant tool in the analysis of meanings expressed in clauses, as it identifies the different processes, the relevant participants and circumstances in the text.

As this study focuses on the representation of themes, only processes will be identified and analysed in detail. The participants of the processes will be discussed in relation to the relevant processes as the focus is on clauses as representations of meanings. This is pertinent in encoding the ideology and the subthemes of the novel. Circumstances will not be discussed in this article as these usually are only “attendant on the process” which give additional information in the clauses (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 260). It is important to note that “transitivity analysis implies a process of reasoning and interpreting data, rather than merely labelling” (Alcantud-Diaz, 2012, p. 65). Table 1 lists the process types and their respective participants.

Table 1. Types of Processes and Participants (Butt, Fahey et al., 2000, pp. 62-63)

Process Types	Representation of Process	Central Participants	Additional Participants
Material	Physical action, doing	Actor, Goal	Range, Beneficiary
Mental	Thinking, feeling, knowing	Senser, Phenomenon	
Relational Attributive Identifying	Identifying the features of somebody/something	Carrier, Attribute Token, Value	
Behavioural	Physiological, Psychological	Behaver	Range
Verbal	Speaking, telling	Sayer, Verbiage	Receiver, Target
Existential	Signalling the existence of something/someone	Existent	

4. Typography

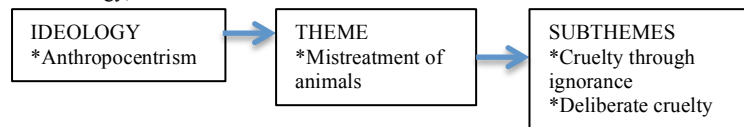
Typography can be used ideationally to represent actions, identities and qualities (van Leeuwen, 2006). This is akin to the transitivity analysis of the linguistic elements where identifying process in the analysis means identifying actions undertaken by the participants in the clauses. The potential of typography in representing actions and qualities is through the different combinations of ‘distinctive features’ of the letterforms. Therefore, based on Kress and van Leeuwen’s framework (2006) for analysing typography, distinctive features like weight, slope, expansion, curvature, connectivity, orientation and regular or irregular typeface will be considered in the analysis. The focus is on the onomatopoeic words in BB.

Onomatopoeic words whose sounds are imitative of the sound or action designated are used for dramatic or rhetorical effect. For example, the word ‘boom’ is related with an explosion. There are quite a number of such words in the novel BB, and this justifies the need for analysing them as their meaning potentials further realise the themes. Thus, analysing the physical structures of these words complements the transitivity analysis of the linguistic elements in the novel.

5. Anthropocentrism and Mistreatment of Animals

Anthropocentrism, a major concept of environmental philosophy, is the belief that human beings are superior and central on earth. Boddice (2011) posits anthropocentrism “...as a charge of human chauvinism, or as an acknowledgement of human ontological boundaries” (p. 1). In addition, Xu and Nangong (2012) stated that the concept is “the marriage of literature and natural science” (p. 25). The ideology of anthropocentrism in BB is evident through the many acts of mistreatment towards animals which are linguistically structured in its verbal text. These acts support Boddice’s (2011) view that anthropocentrism “is in tension with nature, the environment and non-human animals” (p. 1). The theme of mistreating animals encompasses two subthemes, which are deliberate cruelty and cruelty through ignorance, as seen in Figure 1.

Figure1: Ideology, theme and subthemes



5.1. Sub-Theme of Cruelty through Ignorance

As shown in Extract 1, drivers were under the impression that horses could carry extreme heavy loads just like steam engines in bad weather conditions. This clearly depicts ignorance as horses are not as strong as steam engines.

Extract 1 (p. 41)

Other drivers thought horses were like steam engines and could pull heavy loads through any kind of weather. (Chapter 3)

In other instances, horses were whipped to make them work harder and even rode upon with loose shoes. These are acts which brought pain and lend themselves to cruelty to these animals.

5.2. Sub-Theme of Deliberate Cruelty

The actions of deliberate cruelty are also found in many instances and one is exemplified in Extract 2. Here, the horses were subjected to wear checkreins and the deliberate act of tightening the reins of Black Beauty is to hold his head high. Although it was considered fashionable to ride horses with their heads high up during the 18th century, this tradition is a purely painful and torturous experience for the horses, as it subjects the horses to deliberate cruelty.

Extract 2 (p. 29)

Our lady insists the horses wear a checkrein. (Chapter 3)

Interestingly, in the original version of BB (1994), Sewell intended to depict ignorance as an act of mistreatment. Chapter 19 of the original BB (1994) is significantly entitled Only Ignorance.

6. The Selected Novel

BB, a classic equine autobiographical memoir, has been a children's education classic for generations mainly in the Western world. It was originally written by the English author Anna Sewell in 1877 during the Victorian Literature era (1830 to 1900). The adapted version (2010) is retold by Lisa L. Owens and illustrated by Jennifer Tanner. This study will be using the adapted version as data for analysis,

In writing this novel, Sewell intended to expose the widespread mistreatment of horses which was a common practice in England from mid-to-late nineteenth century. Sewell's concern for humane treatment of horses is further grounded as the book is written from the point of view of a horse. This denotes the embodiment of anthropocentrism and can be viewed as a subtle way Sewell tried to improve the welfare of animals through honest representations. Her attitude towards animals and in espousing animal rights is apparent in the following lines of the original version of BB.

“...there is no religion without love, and people may talk as much as they like about their religion, but if it does not teach them to be good and kind to man and beast, it is all a sham – all a sham.

(Sewell, 1994, p. 52)

7. Stages of Analysis

There were three stages involved in the analysis of the textual component of the novel. First, an overview of the chapters is provided and their narrative structures are identified. Narrative structures, which concern the sequence of events, are important in maintaining an interest in the story line besides assisting the construction of themes of the story. To analyse the transitivity patterns, both captions and speech bubbles related to the theme of mistreatment to animals

were first identified and this is further verified by two other coders to eliminate biasness and subjectivity in isolating the theme related clauses. These clausal structures were then analysed using the transitivity framework to infer how thematic meanings are coded. Finally, the onomatopoeic words found within the panels were analysed in terms of their typographical features.

8. The Narrative Structure

In this stage, a brief overview of chapters is deduced. The identification of the narrative structures in BB is essential to further comprehend how the textual elements are constructed and put together. As Iwamoto (2011) noted, “it is important to note the ways in which the structural stages of a narrative can be ordered, controlled, and even manipulated in order to encode ideological assumptions, and also to get across some ideas” (p. 62). Table 2 denotes the layout and narrative structures of BB.

Table 2. Chapters, Pages, Panels and Narrative Structures

Chapter	Title	Pages	Number of Pages	Number of Panels	Narrative Structure
1	My Early Home	6-13	8	19	Exposition
2	Birtwick Park	14-27	14	33	Rising Action
3	Earlshall Park	28-44	16	40	Climax
4	A London Cab Horse	45-55	12	26	Falling Action
5	The Final Sale	56-63	8	18	Denouement

An overview of the chapters identifies Chapter 1 as the exposition of the narrative where Black Beauty remembers his days with his mother. Chapter 2 continues with his early beginnings as the structure of rising action. The climax in Chapter 3 sees a list of abuses culminating in Black Beauty’s near fatal collapse. Chapter 4 depicts the structure of falling action whereby he moves to London. Lastly, Chapter 5 holds the denouement of the story, in which Black Beauty finally finds solace with the Blomefield sisters. BB’s narrative structuring supports the classic narrative structure of ‘home-away-home’ in children’s literature (Nodelman and Reimer, 2003) which leads “to a new and better understanding of what both home and oneself are and should be” (p. 198). In BB, this is evident from the time Black Beauty leaves his comfortable home with Farmer Grey, goes through much hardship and finally finds a perfect “happy place” (Black Beauty, 2010, p. 63) and a new home with the Blomefield sisters.

9. The Themes

In this stage, sentences pertaining to the theme of mistreatment of animals and its subthemes were isolated to distinguish the identification of related clauses, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis of Subthemes

Chapter	Title	Number of Theme Related Sentences		Total
		Ignorance	Deliberate Cruelty	
1	My Early Home	0	0	0
2	Birtwick Park	2	2	4
3	Earlshall Park	14	10	24
4	A London Cab Horse	3	9	12
5	The Final Sale	0	0	0
Total		19 (47.5%)	21 (52.5%)	40

The analysis identified 40 sentences related to the main theme of anthropocentrism. The subtheme of cruelty through ignorance is found in 19 sentences, denoting 47.5% of the total sentences. There are 21 sentences which reflect the subtheme of cruelty through deliberate actions that accounts for 52.5% of the sentences. The analysis indicates that most of the portrayals of mistreatments occur in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 contains 12 sentences while Chapter 2 carries only 4 sentences that realises these subthemes. This analysis indicates that the author has left much of the explication of the theme in both Chapters 3 and 4 which embodies the climax and the falling action of the narrative respectively. In addition, Chapters 1 and 5 are free from the theme of mistreatments towards animals. This is probably because Chapter 1 contains Black Beauty's early blissful days at Farmer Grey's farm, while Chapter 5 holds the denouement of the story in which Black Beauty finally finds peace in his new home. In adapting the original BB, it is evident that the linguistics choices in the graphic novel complement the ideology of anthropocentrism from the original novel which is. The containment of these sentences in the respective chapters supports Sewell's hope "to induce kindness, sympathy and an understanding treatment of horses" (Ferguson, 2003, p. 76) by exposing the different subthemes of mistreatment of animals.

10. Representation of Meanings

In using transitivity, the process types found in the clauses were identified and analysed in terms of their frequency and how they realised the various themes. A total of 55 clauses were identified within the 40 sentences related to the subthemes. This is due to the existence of more than one clause in a sentence, as denoted by the example in Extract 3:

Extract 3 (p.41)

Clause 1		Clause 2
Other drivers thought horses were like steam engines	and	could pull heavy loads through any kind of weather

Table 4 shows the distribution of process types in the clauses that reveal the main theme.

Table 4: Process Types and Frequencies

Chapter	Types of Processes					Total
	Material	Behavioural	Mental	Relational	Verbal	
1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	4	1	0	4	0	9
3	10	7	9	5	1	32
4	3	1	3	7	0	14
5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	17 (30.9%)	9 (16.36%)	12 (21.82%)	16 (29.09%)	1 (1.82%)	55

The identified clauses in the novel are realised by five types of processes namely Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioural Processes and Verbal. The mistreatment of horses is significantly portrayed through the Material Process in 17 clauses (30.9%), thus representing anthropocentrism through the experiences of the external world. The Material Process which shows physical actions as a salient process is realised through lexical terms like treated and tightened in the novel. The deployment of a high percentage of Material Processes shows that the experiences of the outer world are crucial in highlighting the plight and sufferings of the horses. An example of a clause that realises this process is shown in Extract 4.

Extract 4 (p.20)
Mr. Blomefield's boys rode me like I was a steam engine. (Chapter 2)

The Relational Process represents 16 clauses (29.09%) of the total thematic clauses. A Relational Process construes the relationships of being and having between two participants, thus describing abstract relations. There are two types of Relational Processes which are Identifying Relational and Attributive Relational serving to identify and characterize respectively. Words like is and were are used in BB to represent the Relational Process. Extract 5 denotes a Relational Process.

Extract 5 (p.20)
If only men were more caring. (Chapter 4)

The Mental Process which is found in 12 of the clauses (21.82%) indicates the importance of the internalized classes of cognition, perception and affection in BB. This process deals with verbs like feeling, wanting, thinking, etc. and is an internalized process. In BB, this process is realised through words such as likes and think. The rather high percentage indicates the utilisation of internalised clauses to reflect on the inner world of the characters in realising the main themes. Extract 6 depicts a Mental Process of the cognition class in a clause while in Extract 7, the verb bear represents affection. Finally, Extract 8 represents a Mental Process of perception.

Extract 6 (p.20)
He knows that I am weak, so he is trying to get all he can out of me. (Chapter 4)

Extract 7 (p.32)

My rein was tightened and I almost couldn't bear it. (Chapter 3)

Extract 8 (p.55)

I hoped it was Ginger. (Chapter 4)

The Behavioural Process is denoted in 9 (16.36%) clauses and it purely relates to both physiological and psychological behaviours. In the novel, words like insists and suffered are used to support the Behavioural Process as shown in Extract 9. The low percentage of Behavioural Processes indicates the reliance on more action oriented verbs of the Material Processes and the internalised verbs through Mental Processes. To a certain extent, this indicates the under reliance on physiological and psychological clauses which are better presented through images in this particular graphic novel.

Extract 9 (p.20)

Our lady insists the horses wear a checkrein. (Chapter 3)

There is only 1 (1.82%) clause representing the Verbal Process. This is mainly due to the fact that the comics convention of speech bubbles is a prerequisite for graphic novels and direct speeches are already contained in these speech bubbles denoting what 'is being said'. The one clause associated with the Verbal Process is an indirect report of sort. Extract 10 represents a Verbal Process. Nevertheless, it must be noted though, the first clause, 'You'll do' reveals the Material Process.

Extract 10 (p. 20)

You'll do as I say, York. (Chapter 3)

Analysis also indicates that as the protagonist of the story, Black Beauty is the main Participant in realizing the themes of the novel. As a major character, Black Beauty succeeds in bringing "the unfolding of the process through time, leading to an outcome that is different from the initial phase of the unfolding" (Halliday, 2004, p. 180). In addition, it shows that both Material and Relational Processes are prevalent in the thematic clauses. This substantiates the fact that the Participants are involved in various actions which support the narrative structure, thus contributing to the theme of the novel. Incidentally, both these processes are crucial in the construction of a narrative genre (Gerot and Wignell, 2004). The underlined words below denote each of the represented Participant in the clauses.

- i. Day by day, notch by notch, our reins were shortened. (Par: Actor)
- ii. She likes the horses' heads held up high. (Par: Senser)
- iii. Too many people in this world ignore cruelty. (Par: Behavior)
- iv. If only men were more caring. (Par: Carrier)

11. Typographical Analysis

It must be noted that although this study focuses on transitivity, a few elements must be considered as they are pertinent in representing the themes and subthemes which underpin the ideology of anthropocentrism. The use of special effect words like 'WHUMP' (denoting a hard fall), 'NEEIGH' and 'SNAP' (representing the pain of wearing a bearing rein) and 'GGG' (illustrating the soreness of the tongue and mouth) imbues the narrative with real world sounds to amplify meanings. The salience of these words through deep colours and prominent fonts are clearly highlighted as shown in the example (Figure 1). These words are in capital letters, bold and highlighted without any connectivity. As a result, the focus is purely on the words to further enhance the representation of the ideology and themes. These onomatopoeic words are rendered to further accentuate the sound landscape of the emotions of these horses in pain as a result of mistreatment.

Figure 2: An Example of an Onomatopoeic Word in BB (2010, p. 33)



12. Discussion

The results of this study highlights that the author of the graphic novel has adhered to selective linguistic structures and comics conventions to complement the original version of BB by Anna Sewell to construe the theme of mistreatment towards animals which supports the ideology of anthropocentrism. In relation to the narrative of the novel, all five chapters represent the common pyramidal structure which is exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement. In addition, all clauses related to theme of mistreatment of animals only appear in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, thus leaving Chapter 1 to introduce the main

character Black Beauty and Chapter 5 to provide a resolution to his plight and sufferings. In adapting the original BB to a graphic version, the author has observed careful linguistic choices to draw attention to the inner lives of these horses.

As a graphic novel, the conventions of comics are crucial, and this study reveals that the selection of captions and speech bubbles exemplifies the actions, feelings and utterances that support the construction of the ideology of anthropocentrism. For one, the limited but meaningful captions and speech bubbles that endorse the main theme are carefully construed in selected chapters. Interestingly while the regular functions of captions (to indicate space or/and time and to link the panels to show flow) are avoided, the author accentuates the pain and vulnerability of the horses by providing more information in these verbal containers. This findings agrees with Walker (2013) who puts forth that “by imbuing the horse with feelings and a perspective, these descriptions gave rise to new categories of animal ownership...the concepts of the “humane owner” and the “inhumane owner” were constituted by the animal’s ability to feel” (p. 26). Thus, while the horses are subjected to cruelty by humans, there are those who are considerate and emphatic towards these horses.

The identification of 40 sentences (55 clauses) denoting the subthemes of deliberate cruelty and cruelty through ignorance reveals that much consideration has been given in construing the ideology of anthropocentrism. Through the feelings, thoughts and conversations of the characters and the actions and events, it can be deduced that Sewell’s feelings towards animals underpins the novel. The interchange between characters and their inner and outer experiences amplify the sufferings of horses in general.

It must be noted that though only selected clauses were focused upon, their transitivity analysis correlates with the common linguistic structure of a narrative genre where both Material and Relational Processes are predominant. The analysis of the data established four main process types in BB, namely the Material, Relational, Mental, and Behavioural Processes. The prevalence of Material Processes which supports the narrative constructions of the subthemes of mistreatment to animals are inherent in the 17 thematic clauses. The animals are mainly presented as ‘Actors’ who are active participants of the Material Process. Mr. Blomefield’s boys are the other Actors, considered as antagonists who cause much pain due to their ignorance in thinking that horses could move as fast as steam engines. Apart from these ‘Actors’, two inanimate ‘Actors’ are also present in the Material Process and these are rein and heavy loads. The roles of the Actors in the processes support the evidence of anthropocentrism as an ideology in the novel.

The identification of processes denotes that the Material Process is the most significant in the representation of the theme of mistreatment of animals. The many processes of ‘doing’ also indicate the domination of humans over the horses and subjecting them to much misery. This shows that the process of doing with at least one Actor (one who does something) is crucial in representing the theme of mistreatment of animals. Though condensed in its

version, the adapted version of BB is able to support the main theme of the original narrative with careful linguistic choices.

Relational Processes account for 16 clauses and denote that Attributes are an important element in further accentuating the sufferings of these animals. For example, the wearing of bearing reins was an essential element to keep the animals' heads high and this subjected the animals to cruelty to make fashion statements. This indicates that attributes are pertinent in a narrative "to characterize and identify" (Halliday, 2004, p. 210). Using terms like tired and ached shows that the writer prefers to reveal more about the quality of the Participants in BB through character definitions. The descriptive vividness of these characters enables readers to understand the experiential meanings embedded in BB.

The analysis also reveals the emergence of 12 Mental Processes. As the 'Senser', a phrase like "I almost couldn't" describes the suffering of Black Beauty through his inner consciousness. The choice of Mental Processes also adds a degree of 'humanness' to the narrative. The analysis also shows that Black Beauty is concerned with his feelings and worries. The other three 'Sensers' are the antagonists in the novel who are the Mistress of Earls Hall Park, men in general and a cab driver. The occurrences of Mental Processes indicate that characters are very much concerned with their feelings and the agony of getting mistreated. The liberal deployment of Mental Processes shows that elements like knowing, fearing, and others are used to encourage the readers to do the same, thus construing meanings within the particular social context. Through these Mental Processes, there are clear representations of both protagonists and antagonists to evoke a sense of sympathy towards the plight of these horses among the readers. As an internalized process, these depictions also support the biographical account of Black Beauty. This is further supported by the first person point of view. In addition, the victimization of Black Beauty and his friends through various acts of mistreatments scaffold the ideology of anthropocentrism in the novel.

There are nine clauses representing the Behavioural Process. This shows that only a few common physiological and psychological behaviours are constructed to complement the original version of the story especially in the construing of the theme of mistreatment towards animals. The obligatory Participant, the 'Behaver' is represented by other horses, the cruel mistress of the house and people in general. Thus, the portrayal of the Participant as a 'Behaver' does not favour the protagonist Black Beauty.

The Verbal Process is only evident in one clause, indicating that it is an insignificant contributor to the construing of meaning-making in this novel. This is mainly attributed to the genre of graphic novel which heavily relies on the conventions of comics where captions and speech bubbles are utilised instead of using verbal action words like say or told to indicate a Verbal Process. As dialogues usually involve Sayers and Receivers (sometimes only a Sayer is present), the speech is contained in speech bubbles. As such, clauses pertaining to Verbal Processes do not exist. On the contrary, verbal action verbs clauses (usually part of captions) represent the Verbal Process.

The different transitivity patterns also help to elucidate differences in how BB defines, evaluate and foreground the theme of mistreatment of animals. Montgomery (1993) asserted that, “if character is ‘the major totalizing force in fiction’, then it is important to discover how characters are constructed and on the basis of what kinds of linguistic choices” (p. 141). The sensitivity towards language in graphic novels is crucial for writers and adapters to convey intended messages efficiently as intended by the original writers. At times, these meanings are construed explicitly, but at times the involvement of the readers is important. This echoes with Dibell’s (1988) views that “vivid, exaggerated happenings can hold the eye and the interest while the meaning penetrates more subtly” (p. 151). Through the incorporation of these themes, the ideology of anthropocentrism supports Boddice’s (2011) notion that “anthropocentrism is not the great evil to be denounced and eliminated, but the great problem to be embraced and directed” (p. 12). Herein rests the skill of the author to carefully interweave and interplay the text to serve the purpose and original intention of Sewell’s classic.

The findings further reveal the discursive choices by the author in foregrounding the inner and outer experiences by the use of different lexicogrammatical structures. As a truly animal-centric graphic novel, the voices of these animals succeed in making readers understand the otherness of animals. Nevertheless, besides the mistreatment of horses, BB also depicts the humane behaviours of humans in general. This is clearly evident in the actions of Farmer Grey, coachman John and cab driver Jerry. The lessons implicated through these protagonists are for the edification of the readers.

The typographical visual details that embrace anthropocentrism show that they are capable of transmitting connotative meanings and are pertinent as a semiotic resource. This concurs with Kannenberg (2002), who opined, “comics allows for the simultaneous presentation of convergent or divergent information via the arrangement of various visual elements within the unifying space of the comic page” (p. 307), in this case typographical visual details.

13. Conclusion

This study explores how transitivity has succeeded in explicating the ideology of anthropocentrism and of the theme mistreatment of animals through its two subthemes. These two subthemes are cruelty through ignorance and deliberate cruelty which are identified in the lines of captions and speech bubbles. The findings show that Material and Relational Processes are used extensively and explicitly to negotiate these subthemes. In addition, both Mental and Behavioural Processes are instrumental for the manifestation of the subthemes, albeit to a lesser degree. More importantly, the involvement of readers in discerning the various subthemes is also crucial as at times these themes are not explicitly represented.

The study also adds to a growing body of literature on the use of linguistic approaches to analyse graphic novels and comics, in this case that of an adapted classic. For writers in this medium, awareness of linguistic construction of themes is as essential as the depiction of these themes by their

illustrators. As studies before have advocated, there is great potential in the employment of transitivity in investigating how meanings are created through verbal analysis. This supports Simpson's (1994) argument that transitivity constitutes a framework of analysis that could be used stylistically to investigate 'point of view in narrative fiction' or as a critical linguistic techniques to reveal 'ideological' point of view (p. 108). For graphic novels, this is an excellent tool to further explore the verbal text critically to reveal their embedded themes and ideologies. Nevertheless, within its limitations, this study only focuses on the verbal text of the graphic novel. A focus on the images may yield a more comprehensive discussion of the topic. This indicates that the potential for a comprehensive analysis of graphic novels is very much an open field with the availability of different genres of graphic novels.

The study clearly supports Halliday's (1994) notion that language is a social phenomenon. By using the framework, readers will be able to unlock the themes easily and appreciate the text better. As Thomas aptly posited, "reconsidering text, reading and genre through comic books and graphic novels – texts often associated with those children's worlds – is a step toward honouring more nuanced and sophisticated perceptions of text..." (2011, p. 199).

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