Analysis On Defamiliarization Existent In Leo Tolstoy's Kholstomer - The Story Of A Horse

Strangeness helps us break apart our old eyes and to see the world in a slightly new way. Seeing things in an unfamiliar way will let us to look more closely at things that people assumed that something is true without questioning because they stigmatize them as “common” or just “usual”. This is premise to Kholstomer: The Story of a Horse by Leo Tolstoy.

Kholstomer, the story of the horse by features the technique of what we called defamiliarization in a sense that it adopts the perspective of a horse to show some of the irrationalities or illogicality of human liberty. It seems that people makes the word defamiliarization unfamiliar or pretending that this word is new or strange for them but knowing that there is a prefix –de that indicates negation or removal and familiarized refers of having knowledge or understanding of something.

According to Viktor Shklovsky, defamiliarization is a literary device whereby language is used in such a way that ordinary and familiar objects are made to look different. The importance of this technique is to help in demonstrating the line between the reality and their art. Eventhough some of the literary works are constantly exalt for the faithful sentiments of real life, authors or writers still considered them as an art of reflections and the use of defamiliarization will help them to remind the readers of that fact.

In the story of a horse it is connected to defamiliarization because the author makes use of alienation to expose the ignorance of people about something especially the human civilization and the moral value. Almost every part of the story was defamiliarized because it was narrated and can be seen from the point of view of a horse which can make the ordinary things for human beings delight on a different glint. Tolstoy makes use of estrangement to such an extent that it provides the majority of the evidence for the concept of defamiliarization or estrangement in his essay, Art as Technique. According to Shklovsky, poetic imagery is a means of creating the strongest possible impression. The impression of him is that 'art is thinking in an image' which implies that the greatest possible impression is achieved when perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception. In relation to Tolstoy's story, estrangement or defamiliarization can be seen anything within the text, its contents and concepts. He makes the familiar object unfamiliar by not naming them. The use of a horse as a narrator is the used of estrangement itself because it is a horse point of view and not a human's, that makes the concept and content of the story seem unfamiliar.

The work of Tolstoy’s, the story of a horse begins with a sunrise that showed the same way as the day is revealed within the story and the description of his is somewhat exposing. The introductory part tackled more about the depiction of natural world like the sky is rising higher and higher and the dawn is spreading wider and the sickle of the moon become lifeless that features the pastoral setting in the story.

Another is the castration scene which is missing instead of representing it as a blank space. Thinking that it is done out of fragility, but it badly implies that it embarked to the readers to imagine horrible or frightening event. Instead of including the process of castration, the author

exclude it for some reasons to make it unfamiliar to the readers. From the sense of sight of the horse, the world has changed and becomes repulsive that he’s like a plant that wither and does not agree with the effect of castration as an expression of desire on the author’s side to be disburdened of what he viewed as an agony of sexual lust.

'Old age is sometimes majestic, sometimes ugly, and sometimes pathetic. But old age can be both ugly and majestic, and the gelding's old age was just of that kind'. This passage which premises the depiction of the word 'piebald gelding' but the most important is to note that this happens before the description of the horse. The 'piebald gelding seems unfamiliar because it says in the text that the horse doesn't know what is the real meaning of that word. The strangeness in which the piebald gelding is described in the story is meant to add compassionate quality through alienation. But since this is the perception of an animal and the horse was to appear not so much in the comparison to man as in opposition to man. It is for the readers to change their perception about the old, ruined horse and instead of disgust to become endeared to him.

The relationship between the piebald gelding and his mother shows the significance in the scene where he narrates his family background and his kind of relation that he have with them. Significance as an important contrast in sexual morality that can be seen in the story where the mother there is selfish because she abandoned her son for her own pleasure and romantic interest. The motherhood in the story shows estrangeness because as we all know that mother is kind, loveable, and loves their children that can't be describe in words word. While in the story, Tolstoy expose the greediness of the mothers but he's also right because as we observed 'some' of the mothers also did what the mother horse have done to her son. In relation, the mother’s injustice which the young horse in the story suffers in spiritual, moral and it may be even be viewed as a crime against nature.

Moreover, the horse tried to ponder on the existence of “private property” and describes it in an unfamiliar way. “There are people who call a tract of land on their own, but they never take a stroll on it. There are people who call others their own, yet never see them. And the whole relationship between them is that the so-called “owners” treat the others unjustly”. From the point of view of the horse, the significant relationship between people who own others is not the notion of ownership rather, the horse sees and understands this kind of relationship by deeds or actions or through actual interactions and on how the owners treat those they called “mine” or own poorly. “The words “my horse”, in relation to me, a living horse, seemed to me just as strange as the words: my earth, my air, my water”. Taken in this way that the narrator itself introduces the idea of ownership and private property that it implies no responsibility, no action, but just only a label. In relation to this generation, there are women who refused to be owned because when there are men who label women as their own as their wives, yet sad to say that these women live with another men. It is this affection towards ownership which alienates human beings not only from other animals that we have seen in the story but even from one another as the interaction between the land owner and Prince Serpukhovsky.

Through the use of defamiliarization, the saddle in the story is described as a sort of torture device for the horse because the piebald gelding derives this and presents a mild grumble in which he is scolded and has his straps got tightened to such an extent to be constricted. The former owner, Nester is named implicitly in saddling that makes the scene a visceral one.

On the other hand, the piebald gelding realizes that nothing is to be trusted and that in

everyone, horses and humans are the same because of their inconstant actions, and that everything is unpredictable and he feels these things but no one understands him instead they just bully him because of his mottled appearance. The authors exposed the injustice of humans through alienation.

Before addressing the passage as a whole, the author estranged the phrase “good-for-nothing” which is meant literally “trash or refuse” that can also be used to describe an inferior entity and when it is applied to some animated objects. “Nester put the saddle-cloth and saddle on him, and this caused the gelding to lay back on his ears, probably to express dissatisfaction, but he was only called “good-for-nothing” for it and saddle girths were tightened”. Another one is “At this the gelding blew himself” that means to puff up or fill out and has also a colloquial figurative meaning “to pout”. The latter would seem to be more appropriate reaction to having “the girths tightened”. And that’s how the author utilized alienation or defamiliarization in the text.

In the story, there comes the Prince that is offered thousands for the piebald, which is promptly refused by him. “No, he said, this is not a horse, but a friend, I would not trade him for a mountain of gold”. But these words are strange because it will oppose the trick of fate, thus strengthening the narrator’s affirmation on the subject. Right before this, the relationship of the horse and the Prince is really strong because the Prince valued the horse higher than a human beings eventhough his appearance is not good to others and this implies the good friendship without any discrimination. The piebald gelding and the Prince fly to his mistress’ apartment, where the deed and words are confounded. The enraged Prince then pushes the horse that makes the strangeness of the story wherein readers know that the Prince is different from Nester who tortured the horse but they are wrong because the Prince pushes the horse away from him.

Afterwards, the piebald gelding was sold to an old woman that provides evidences of being “no Christian soul” or they don’t have the empathy and faith in God because of their wrongdoings. The alienation was utilized in the text from the point of view of the horse, “The coachman cried in my stable. And there I realized, that tears have a pleasant, salty taste”. In this sympathetic scene, in which the gelding’s licking the coachman’s face in an attempt to comfort him and most important is the connection made between “tears” and “pleasant” that gives an overall bittersweet texture to it. Bitter for the word “tears” and sweet for the word “pleasant”.

The author Leo Tolstoy makes use of defamiliarization from the word used in reference to the host’s pregnant female parallel to which is best translated as “hostess” that does not indicates their relationship. It will still remain unclear or foggy whether she is a wife or mistress since the word “mistress” was used. Maybe it is intended for the readers to think critically and to dig deeper.

The piebald gelding is so defamiliarized in reference to other horses that he eventually becomes depersonalized as he is no longer considered and recognized as a horse as such by other horses. This implied that people envy those people of a higher status and contempt those who belong to lower status. And the expression of being weak, disgusting, frustration of impotent old age, despair, dropping ears seemingly accepting the trick of fate.

To further expose the reality, the piebald narrator focuses on its relativity. The horse recalls the “celebrities” of the herd “all together with their foals, walking about in the sunshine, rolling on the fresh straw and sniffing at one another like ordinary horses”. This describes on how

estrangement was utilized and the classism or the unfair treatment of people because of their social or economic class. Another is the status of Vyazapurikha that considered as “one of the finest thoroughbreds” at the current state but when compared to other horses of higher status, she’s the poorest in the stud. This claims that this situation is more refined in humans than horses.

“All this was so unjust, so cruel, that I was glad when they took me away from Khrenovo and parted me forever from all that had been familiar and dear to me”. The author used the word “glad” that describes bitterness in the story but as readers know that the meaning of glad is causing happiness or joy. Leo Tolstoy makes the familiar things into unfamiliar in order to expose something implicitly and makes the art of defamiliarization.

“The weather was beginning to change. It was grey since morning and there was no dew, but it was warm, and the mosquitoes were tenacious”. It is the setting that the piebald gelding ends his story. In defamiliarizing, the author makes used of the words or phrases that were estranged to readers to interpret the real meaning for example the setting where the gelding ends his story.

The “story of the horse” does not end with the horse but with another death: Serpukhovsky , the Prince, whose greatest achievements in life were “having walked about the world, eating and drinking” and of whom, neither his skin. Nor the meat, nor the bones proved useful anywhere”. The death of piebald gelding means of easing weight, the Prince is a burden on those around him and the burying of his body “in the earth was simply an extra difficulty for people”.

At the end of the story, Serpukhovsky explains the reason why his life has lead him to the truth that the horse is a nobler animal than the man, “the actions of men are guided by words and our deeds.” If this was not the reality then, if we lived our lives by actions or deeds and not by just labels, there would be no need for us people to know the stories or texts about noble steeds and selfish men.

For Tolstoy, art is a labor which should be valued based on the purposed it may give or serve in the life of man and of humanity. Art is not necessarily rational like the piebald gelding “felt but did not understand”. According to Tolstoy, the activity of an art is based on the fact that a man receiving through his sense of hearing or sight another man’s expression of feeling, is capable of experiencing the emotion which moved the men who expressed it”. He implied that art is not simply a story but it must convey meanings.

Seeing things in a different or unfamiliar way plays an important role in the work of Leo Tolstoy, Kholstomer: The Story of a Horse because it reveals the how experience we people go through sometimes missed by our eyes because we just accepted all the things that was mandated to us. People fail to look further on what we see because we tell to ourselves that is all there is.