

Paragraph commentary for the article 'Zen and the art of switching off'

Context

In the article entitled, 'Zen and the art of switching off', Nina Karnikowski shares her pursuit of zen, as she travels to Bali for a yoga retreat. Published within the *Sunday Age* Travel section, the article is designed primarily to entertain an audience of middle aged, working class females, evident from her lexical choice and cultural references, but also to persuade the audience of the efficacy of ONELife Retreats. This double-pronged purpose only becomes transparent as the article unfolds. Karnikowski immediately establishes an informal register through her use of the first person pronoun and other linguistic features, ultimately working to support her primary and secondary purposes.

Syntax

From the beginning of the article, Karnikowski is quick to establish an informal style of addressing the audience. The opening lines, written as sentence fragments, 'A restless sleeper. A compulsive mental to-do list compiler. A neurotic over-analyser.' (line ?) reflect the fragmentary nature of her thinking and works to establish a writing style similar to that of a stream of consciousness. She frequently employs simple sentence structures, 'Hangovers and quests for spiritual enlightenment don't mix.' and coordination, ' (line ?) in order reach a wider range of her female audience and as a way of mimicking the simple and spontaneous style of spoken discourse. These various syntactic constructions work cohesively to close the social distance between the writer and the reader, ultimately operating to fulfil the secondary purpose of the article, which is the to persuade readers to try the ONELife retreats.

Lexis

Karnikowski's lexical choice works to establish a positive relationship with the audience. This is achieved through the semantic fields addressed, of attractive men, 'the monk running it is so hot' (line ?) and the consistent use of the first person pronoun 'I, me, my etc'. (line ?). In referring to the monk as 'hot' she excludes heterosexual men from the audience who are not concerned with the aesthetic quality of a monk. She goes further to exclude a young female audience by using dated colloquialisms, 'post-boozy, late-night' (line ?) and phonological rhyming patterns 'toxins shmoxins' (?) as attempts to humour the audience. Her choice to use the first person pronoun closes the social distance between her and the audience, creating a stronger sense of intimacy and solidarity with those who can empathise with her 'frenzied pace' of life.

Discourse

One key semantic field consistently addressed in the text is that of meditation and spiritual enlightenment. Phrases such as 'nothing but euphoria' (?) stand in stark contrast to run on phrases, 'post-boozy-late-night-flight' (?), with the two working together to present the retreat as the perfect antidote to the problems posed by modern life. This, in conjunction with the transition from past tense, 'when I received an invitation' (?) to present participle, 'sitting still' (?) encourages the

reader to undergo the same introspective transformation as the author, furthering the efficacy of the text's persuasive subtext. Karnikowski's use of a journal style format, 'Day one....day two' invites the reader into an intimate look at the inner workings of her mind. In doing so, she creates a stronger sense of connection with the audience, further supporting the secondary persuasive function of the text.