



Extended Abstract

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A Semiotic Analysis of Houshang Moradi Kermani' Novel, *Soft Pillow*

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Introduction

Semiotics studies implicit meanings and hidden significances in texts. Ferdinand de Saussure introduced the dual model of signifier, signified, and signification in semiotics. Peirce categorized signs and named them. When analyzing a sign in semiotics, it should be examined in relation to its similarities and affinities with other elements of the text.

In the present article, the title, characters, locations, objects, and plants in the novel *Soft Pillow* by Hooshang Moradi Kermani are examined based on Peirce's semiotic model. This novel is a fantasy story with elements of humor. On the surface, the characters strive to achieve their goals, but beneath it all, the author's critical social perspective is revealed. In *Soft Pillow*, a collection of elements come together meaningfully, creating a wealth of implicit meanings and symbolism.

Review of Literature and Purpose

So far, there has been little research on the semiotics of young adult novels. Among these is the article "Analysis of Semiotic-Psychoanalysis of the Young Adult Novel *Match Dot Com*" (1398) by Amirhossein Rahimi Zanjanbar, where the author approaches a deconstructive reading of a young adult novel. In the article "Semiotic Analysis of Tajik Children's and Young Adult Stories" (1398) by Ali Karimi Firuzjai, Tajik children's and young adult stories are analyzed using a semiotic approach and the Greimas' action model. In "Semiotics of Subject Construction in the Novel *Hasti* by Farhad Hasanzadeh" (1398), Mahnaz Jokari examines signs in the social and textual context of the novel based

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on social semiotics. However, no research applying semiotic approaches to the works of Hooshang Moradi Kermani has been conducted to date.

Discussion

Examined from the perspective of Peircean semiotic pattern, the title serves as a symbolic sign, replacing concepts of comfort, selectivity, and aesthetics. The title also unfolds the themes and content of the work, providing an overarching view of the work's general implications. With its attributes, colors, and concepts, *Soft Pillow* has created broad and appealing symbolic signs. Five pumpkin seeds in the red and white cover of *Soft Pillow* adorned with plush writings pose a challenge. Alongside the title, the characters are also presented in two groups—human and non-human—each designed with tension and depth, and each producing believable implications with a positive outlook and suggestibility. Mashallah and his family of four illustrate a series of iconic signs reflecting short-sightedness, the desire for urban living, contentment with limited resources, and a limited effort paired with hope for wealth.

Mehraban, Mounes, and Haji Nokhodberiz, whose names convey notions of kindness, leisure, convergence, and activity while being committed to positional change, form the core of successful actions and spark a fundamental transformation in their residential community.

Avishan, Dalqak, Doctor Qafelehie and Shahrदार all find meaningful presence and absence in the flow of sweet and bitter events in the narrative. Shahrदार stays at the heart of the community until the last incident; meanwhile, Dalqak, true to his nature of being entertaining and engaging in fleeting actions, quickly leaves the scene of the story, handing the stage over to Mehraban and Shahrदार.

The women in this narrative create a multitude of symbolic signs. Mounes, Avishan, Gol Andam, Mehrnoush, and Doctor Qafelehie, who play crucial roles in the midst of events and unraveling the story's crises, appear as supporters, companions, and confidantes (Avishan and Mounes), and sometimes as champions (Doctor Qafelehie). Indeed, only Doctor Qafelehie can with outstanding strength move and repair the town clock. His role is unmatched and undeniable. The prominent presence of Iranian women in this narrative, acting as the builders of the bell of life, creates a captivating spectacle.

Highlighting the presence of grandfathers alongside the progressive thoughts of teenagers is another ideology woven into the signs and implications of the text's elements and characters. Frogs and crows, with their symbolic presence, seek to draw the audience's attention to seemingly insignificant matters, repeating the secret of success through innovative thinking and attentiveness to objects and other creatures.

The setting of the story, which is the town of dreams with a good past, subtly reinforces the concepts of motivation for life in the village. On the flip side, it reminds us of the pitfalls of urban living if social frameworks aren't ready. The importance of agricultural prosperity is presented as a vital principle in the depicted location.

Objects alongside characters have created beautiful narrative and emotional highlights. The sprouting of just five pumpkin seeds, in the realm of a red pillow, accompanied by literary and soul-soothing phrases that alleviate turmoil and distress, cries out for life and thought.

The large clock of the town, with its hefty shape, finally heralds a new life with the effective use of pumpkin seeds and the determination of teenager in the story and Mehraban ringing its bell and encouraging the audience to make the most of their time alongside other objects and elements.

The concepts of effort, precision, the importance of time, creating tranquility in the thought process, the necessity of work alongside enthusiasm, innovation, empathy, unity, and paying attention to the warm hearth of the family, involving teenagers in national projects, the constructive role of women in enriching life, valuing the existence of creatures, contemplating divine blessings, even the smallest seeds like lentils, chickpeas, and pumpkins, and the vital nature of farming are all emblematic signs observed in the narrative. Attention to the role of exports in boosting the economy is also a notable index sign.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the elements of the story, it becomes apparent that the relationship between the signifiers and signified is formed based on similarity, with iconic signs being the most frequently used, highlighting the concepts within the story. This relationship sometimes becomes indexical, showing cause and effect; however, the usage of this type of sign in this story is quite minimal.

Keywords: Peircean semiotics, iconic signs, indexical signs, *Soft Pillow*, Houshang Moradi Kermani.

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