

Analysis of Mouse & Cat Mock Heroic Stories by Obaid Zakani and Sheikh Bahaie with an Emphasis on the Adolescent Readers

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Abstract

Mock-heroic, as one of the most important types of parody, uses completely different elements of epic and humor to express a single goal in a creative text format. In this type, with the help of inverting the content and form of the noble epic and combining humor and epic discourses, the dissonance between the subject and the style of a work is achieved in a satirical format, with the help of inconsistency. A subject that can have a higher effect on meeting the needs of the teenage readers by emphasizing their growth characteristics and attract more of this special class to literature compared to other undesirable cultural options. One of the most well-known titles of the mock-heroic is the symbolic confrontation between the Mouse and the Cat, which is undoubtedly the most famous in Persian works written by Obaid Zakani and Sheikh Bahaie. In this research, a comparative analysis of these two works for teenagers is presented using the content analysis of story elements. This study has been done by using the identified teenage

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humor indicators resulting from discursive and semantic inconsistency of humor. Based on this, the differences and similarities of these famous writers in dealing with a single genre using the weighted-sum method have been identified as one of the well-known multi-criteria decision making methods. The results show that the work of Sheikh Bahaie's Cat and Mouse gets a higher score of teenage humor indicators such as humiliation, simile to animals, anagram of things, idiotism and sarcasm.

Keywords: *mock-heroic, cat and mouse, Obeid Zakani, Sheikh Bahaie, adolescent.*

1, Introduction

A review of research on the mock-heroic in Persian literature indicates that this literary form has received limited attention, particularly regarding its potential for reading and adaptation by adolescents. Therefore, it is essential to outline the main criteria for humor and the evaluation process of humorous works comprehensively and practically, grounded in prevailing theories of humor. Additionally, this research highlights the qualities that make humorous works appealing to a specific adolescent audience, who are transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Understanding these qualities requires recognizing the developmental characteristics of this age group, while also considering the factors that draw teenagers to Iranian literature compared to other cultural options available in today's noisy environment. This study approached the topic with an emphasis on content criteria and offered a fresh perspective.

Using this developed framework, a comparative analysis of the mock-heroic "Mouse and Cat" by Obaid Zakani and Sheikh Bahai has been conducted. The results of this comparative study are interpreted and analyzed, providing insights that can be beneficial for writers focused on rewriting and creating humor, particularly in ways that resonate with adolescent audiences.

Research questions: What are the humor potentials of mock-heroic in adolescent literature? Additionally, how are the indicators of humor assessed in the symbolic conflict between the mouse and the cat in the well-known Persian works of Obaid Zakani and Sheikh Bahai?.

2. Literature Review

A review of research on the mock heroic in Persian literature reveals that this literary genre has received less attention, particularly regarding its reading and rewriting potential among adolescents. Notable independent researches on this topic include "A Study of the Mock Epic Genre in Persian" (Mohammadi and Taslim Jahromi, 2014) and "The Mock Heroic" (Qasemzadeh, 2013), both of which examine Persian mock epics based on factors such as age, volume, format, language, and expression.

Recent studies have also provided case analyses and comparative evaluations of prominent mock epics. For instance, Nemati and Sattari (2018) analyzed the use of satire in three poetic ridiculous epics: "The Mouse and the Cat," "Mozafar and Boghra," and "Souf and Kamkha," focusing on discursive and semantic inconsistencies. Arabnejad et al. (2018) conducted a comparative study of "The Mouse and the Cat" and "The Rape of the Hair," emphasizing structural and content analyses of these works.

Furthermore, Nasr Esfahani and Pouremad (2018) identified a gap in comparative research on ridiculous epics and cotton hero novels. They analyzed the ridiculous epic genre in children's and adolescent literature, referencing two selected works by Mohammad Reza Shams, "Tanbol Pahlevan" (2008) and "Pahlevan Panbe" (2008). Their study proposed methods for adapting the genre for children's literature, including the use of satire, illustrations, language updates, the addition of sub-sections, and employing theories related to experience and innocence.

Dashti (2018) also conducted an educational analysis of humor creation in children's stories, using the works "No! Very Very Smart" by Ghadir Mohseni (2018) and "Piyechieh Stories" by Tahereh Ebod (2016), employing interview and content analysis methods.

While these studies provide valuable insights, there is a need for a systematic framework to explain the content criteria for humor through the lens of critical discourse analysis. This framework would integrate relevant theories of humor and outline the main criteria for creating humor, as well as the processes for evaluating these elements in humorous works. Additionally, it highlights the potential to engage a

specific adolescent audience that is transitioning from childhood to adulthood

3. Methodology

The research method involved analyzing seven key indicators identified as a result of discursive and semantic inconsistencies in adolescent humor. These indicators were derived from the examination of prominent linguistic theorists on humor, such as Ruskin, Greimas, Fonagy, and Liu, as well as an analysis of major non-linguistic theories of humor, including superiority, incongruity, liberation, divinity, and play. It was also emphasized that caution should be exercised when applying humor theories based on Persian data.

To demonstrate the practical application of these identified indicators, a comparative evaluation and content analysis were conducted on the symbolic confrontation between the mouse and the cat in two well-known Persian works by Obaid Zakani and Sheikh Bahai. For this analysis, the weighted simple sum method was employed, which is a significant multi-criteria decision-making approach. Each of these literary works was treated as a decision-making option, while the seven indicators served as the decision matrix. Additionally, the weighting of the decision-making criteria was performed using the entropy method.

This analysis allowed for a comparison of the differences and similarities between the two famous writers in their approach to a single genre, specifically the humorous characteristics of cats and mice aimed at an adolescent audience. It was noted that the seven humorous components drawn from these comical tales are not exclusive to adolescents and are also relevant to adult audiences. Furthermore, the importance of using these components for young readers was underscored, considering the primary reasons adolescents enjoy certain books as well as the growth indicators relevant to this demographic.

4. Results

1. Based on the analyzed data, Sheikh Bahai's "Mouse and Cat" ranks higher in terms of adolescent humor indicators. These indicators include the heart of the content, inconsistency between words and situations, spoiling signs, contempt, animal comparisons, exaggerated praise, stupidity, and humiliation. In other words, there are more instances of humor indicators in Sheikh Bahai's work compared to Obaid Zakani's.

2. The three main humor-making indicators in Sheikh Bahai's "Mouse and Cat" are: 1) the heart of the content and inconsistency between words and situations (accounting for 25 percent), 2) spoiling signs (18 percent), and 3) stupidity and apparent foolishness (17 percent). Together, these indicators make up 60 percent of the primary humor-making factors.
3. In contrast, the three main humorous indicators in Obaid Zakani's "The Mouse and the Cat" are: 1) the heart of the content and inconsistency between words and situations (37 percent), 2) animal similes (19 percent), and 3) destruction of signs (19 percent). Collectively, these account for 75 percent of the main humorous factors.
4. The heart of the content, the inconsistency between words and situations, and the destruction of signs are identified as the key elements of inconsistency in the humorous works of both Obaid Zakani and Sheikh Baha'i's "The Mouse and the Cat." This theme aligns with the adolescent class's experience of inconsistency and growth, based on the theory of experience and innocence or systematic innocence. Therefore, there is great potential in this area to engage and encourage adolescent readers to explore these works or related adaptations.

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