



Semantic Sign of Nima Youshij's Poem "Moonlight Flower" Based on Rifater's Structuralist Model

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Abstract

Semiotics is considered an interdisciplinary approach that studies the semiotic systems of a work. One of the fundamental branches in the field of semiotics of poetry is Michael Refatter's theory. Applying Refatter's semiotic model in the study and rereading of literary works, especially poetry, sheds light on important points about the creation of the work and its re-creation by the reader. According to this theory, the reader is considered a very important factor in the process of reading the text. In this model, poems are first examined in two ways: receptive reading and latent reading, which in the first stage analyzes meaning and in the next stage linguistic implications. Then, the reader or critic analyzes and perceives lexical associations or key themes, and finally ends up discovering the semantic network of the work. In this research, using the Refater theory in qualitative analysis and with the approach of retrospective reading, the descriptive accumulations and systems of poems have been identified, and the dispersed matrix in the entire poem has been obtained, and finally the semantic structure has been clarified. The aim of the article is to show to what extent Refater's structuralist model in the analysis of the poem "Moonflower" leads to a creative reading of the poem and how the narrative plurality in Nima's poem has caused a fluid space of discourse. The result of the research indicates that the main accumulation of the poem revolves around the axis of

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"change and transformation" and "revolution", and the systems of poems of "despair and hopelessness" have been formed alongside the structural network of pain and suffering, hopelessness and darkness, and the confrontation and arrangement of a multitude of words and concepts bring to the reader's mind. It also shows that Yushij's poetic language is more complex than that of his contemporaries, and that using Riffater's theory, one can easily penetrate the inner layers of meaning in his poetry and understand the semantic structure.

Keywords: *semiotics, structuralism, refater, Nima Yushij's poetry, lexical and conceptual associations.*

1. Introduction

Semiotic criticism is one of the systematic approaches and theories of the 20th century that is an interpretation of the ideas of Saussure and Peirce and was expanded by them. This theory and approach are considered Saussure's legacy; however, it became an independent branch with the theories of Charles Sanders Peirce. The impact of this branch on literary and artistic studies is more dependent on the study of text structures; for this reason, it changes the direction of literary theory from examining the meaning of the text to examining the relationships existing in the text, and as a result, a more precise analysis is provided. Regarding semiotics, many theorists analyzed and studied signs; but the science of semiotics was founded with the theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. Semiotics is analyzed and studied as a science that studies the life of signs in the heart of social life. In this branch of criticism, both prose and fiction works and poetry are addressed. The sign of semantics is the result of the evolution and development of semiotic studies that began with the studies of de Saussure. By considering signs in a specific relationship with words and the fluid space of the text, this science explains how signs will end up producing meaning and in a way cause its multiplicity and fluidity, and in this way, meaning is freed from its mechanical and frozen state.

Among the critics who have dealt with the semiotics of poetry is Michael Riffater, a French-American critic who believed that a coherent and precise theoretical framework should be found for a more accurate reading of a poem. Regarding Riffater's theoretical position, it should be stated that he grew up and was raised in the midst of the structuralist movement and developments and, like Jakobsen, he believes that poetry is a special use of language that emphasizes the message. In his book *The Semiotics of Poetry*, Riffater proposed a

semiotic framework for reading poetry that has been widely used. He believed that in order to study a literary work, one should choose a method that comes from literature itself. It can be understood from Riffater's theories and opinions on the semiotics of poetry that the significance of poetry depends on understanding the relationships between signs and organizing them based on a set of specific structural rules. According to Rifater, in poetry and literary works, we are dealing with two poles of meaning: first, the explicit meaning with an emphasis on explicit signs, and in the next stage, the hidden and esoteric meaning of the poem, which is obtained in connection with the entire poem.

Apart from these, Riffater also pays special attention to the reading of the text. In general, he wants to find out which factors cause a meaning to be formed in the reader's mind when reading the text; for this reason, in his works he has tried to answer questions such as which processes transform the text into a literary work. In his opinion, the reader's reaction to the text or the meaning he gets from the text.

Many works can be examined and analyzed based on Rifater's semiotic approach and a new understanding of them and their intratextual meaning can be achieved. Every poet creates his own special signs in his poems. Nima Youshij's poetry also has special signs that familiarity with can help to better understand the concepts of his poems. The aim of the present study is to become familiar with semiotics as a method for examining literary and artistic texts and semiotic analysis of a sample of contemporary poetry. In this essay, we will explain the function and semiotic scope of the poem "Moon Flower" by Nima Youshij based on Rifater's theory.

At the end of the article, we will show which semiotic process best clarifies the implications and messages for the reader and leads to creative reading with a deep understanding of the text. It also shows that the narrative and semantic plurality in Nima's works causes the fluidity of discourse and meanings.

Research Question(s)

- 1- Can the approach of creative reading of Refater provide the audience with the possibility of a deeper and more effective understanding of this poem?
- 2- Does this poem have the potential to be analyzed within the framework of structuralist semiotics?
- 3- To what extent can the cryptic findings resulting from creative reading be adapted to the surrounding environment and society?

2. Literature Review

The reader-oriented approach has been considered by many theorists, and finally, in the late twentieth century, Michael Riffater proposed the theory of literary competence in the interpretation of poetry. He developed his theory in *The Semiotics of Poetry* (1987), arguing that only readers with literary competence are capable of understanding the inner and deeper meaning hidden in the inner layers of poetry.

Michael Riffater (1924-2006), a French-American critic, distinguished the function of poetic language from the function of ordinary language by presenting the structuralist theory of poetry. He is one of the reader-centered critics and attaches great importance to the creative reader. He always adheres to the structuralist principle that the internal relations of the text are of the greatest importance in its study. However, his subsequent theory on the semiotics of poetry indicates that he tries to turn to hermeneutics while maintaining the theoretical framework of structuralism. This is why his theories are examined under the topic of hermeneutic structuralism, and it is noted that every poem is formed at the time of reading and every literary phenomenon is not only the text itself, but also its reader and the set of reader's reactions to the content and perception of the text are considered to be the main elements of the literary phenomenon.

According to this theory, poetry is a specific use of language, and poetic language emphasizes the message as its goal, and the play of signs “increases from the pole of the language of science to the language of poetry” (Safavi, 2012, p. 222). This theory shares with the New Criticism approach that states that every poem and literary text is a unified whole, each part of which reflects the theme emerging from the whole. This theory is also an understanding of the way in which the reader processes the text and understands its meaning, in which sign systems are not applicable without the intervention of the human subject, and the reader discovers the experience of the literary nature of the text. The core of Riffater’s semiotic approach is that literary works acquire their meaning through semiotic structures that link their separate words, phrases, sentences, key images, themes, and rhetorical devices. (Allen, 2010, p. 166). As a result, if we consider a poem or literary text as a connected set of sentences, we have limited its meaning and have reduced it from the vast world of poetry and literary text to an incomprehensible string of unrelated parts and segments, while the impact of semiotics on literary studies is the study of the structure of the text and the examination of the relationships existing in the text, which provides the basis for deep and systematic analysis.

According to Michael Refater, when reading poetry, the existence and formation of the work of art acquires meaning in the process of creative reading, and he believes that the literary work is not only the text, but also the reader's reaction to the text is considered a part of the literary work. After reading and identifying non-grammatical norms, he seeks lexical coherence in the entire structure of the poem, identifies a central core, and then justifies grammatical deviations, and considers the textual context of the poem as a set of hypograms (lexical and conceptual associations). A poem or literary text constitutes a system of meanings that emerges through processes such as accumulation and descriptive system. Accumulation occurs when the reader encounters a set of words that are related to each other through a single semantic element that is a common signifier. Accumulation arises through an emphasis on multidimensional signifiers; This multidimensionality causes the displacement of words and semantics, and the reader comes closer to the meaning of the poem. Accumulation emphasizes the type of relationships between words and also the common and co-basic concepts in the literary text.

For a correct semiotic analysis of Michael Rifater, the concept of accumulation, the description system, the hypogram, and the matrix must first be stated. These will be discussed after reading the "exploratory" post-action; then the poem "Moonflower" will be examined based on this approach.

Accumulations, descriptive rhymes, hypograms and their relationship with intertextuality, the matrix, create the structure and construction of a poem or literary text and give unity and integrity to the poem. According to Riffater, a poem or literary text is the result of the change and transformation of matrices, and matrices are the content or theme or implications hidden in the superstructure of the poem that are discovered by the reader's literary ability. Ultimately, the structural network of a literary text cannot be obtained directly, but is obtained through accumulations, rhymes and associations, and ultimately gives unity to the text.

3. Methodology

In the Refater method, attention to the reader and his importance in understanding the work is very significant; as a result, the literary text and its meaning cannot be separated from the role that the reader plays in understanding the work. The reader also includes his own views in understanding and comprehending the work, and as a result, he will have an approach that includes interpretation and hermeneutics. As a

result, the reader has a huge contribution to reading the text; a reader who has literary ability has left direct reading behind and, in dealing with non-mandatory obstacles, has the ability to connect more deeply with the poem and its signs. This reader, through reflexive or indirect reading, understands and analyzes the accumulations, descriptive rhymes, and hypograms well, reaches the structural matrix of the poem, and ultimately this matrix structure gives unity to the poem. Using the semiotic model of Riffater's poetry, we will analyze the poem "Moonflower" and focus more on the implicit reading and semiotics of its inner layers.

In this article, an attempt has been made to evaluate some interpretations from the perspective of their justifiability based on the aforementioned evidence, using a scientific method and citing the evidence in the text, so that a documented and valid reading of the poem can be presented in the end. To achieve this goal, the method proposed by Michael Riffater, a prominent French semiotician and poetry scholar living in the United States, regarding the decoding of poetic texts has been used. A method that, by proposing the idea of understanding poetry in terms of the poem itself and not by referring to external realities, sets aside all historical and social considerations in the process of understanding meaning, and by proposing the duality of imitative reading and semiotic reading, considers poetry as a field for representing a central idea that is reflected in the text in various ways.

4. Results

Gol Mahtab's poem can be analyzed using the Riffater model, and with this type of model, the codes and messages of the poem can be accessed and creative reading can be achieved. By examining Riffater's model, we come to the conclusion that his emphasis is on the recipient of the message and that he believes in creative and exploratory reading, in which the audience does not seek a predetermined meaning, but analyzes and finds meanings and propositions based on his own findings and mental data.

Using this model and the drawing of hypograms, we reached the signs and messages used in the poem and the poet's technique for indirectly presenting meaning and exploratory reading, and we came to the conclusion that the poet also hides codes behind the appearance of the words that need to be analyzed and explored.

It is clear that Nima is talking about the rise and fall of the revolution that has passed over his country. These cases reveal themselves in a retrospective and exploratory reading from within the accumulations

and descriptive poetic systems and lead to a deep understanding of the poem; in such a way that the poem passes from the mimetic level in the process of reading and goes to a higher level, namely the semiotic level, and it is here that the unity of the poem and its significance can be sought. The space of the poem shows that the poet is seeking change and transformation in order to cast aside habits and sees a glimpse of this transformation and transformation in the distance and prepares himself for the revolution, but the further he goes, the more he sees this space abandoned and distant and he perceives the fence of oppression and conflict in the context of society more vividly than the light of lanterns and finally abandons it.

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Analysis of Saadi's Political Thought in the Interaction and Confrontation of Discourse Systems (Case Study of Four Odes of Praise)

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Abstract

Imagology is a branch of comparative literature that examines the image of the "I" and the "other" in a literary work. The development of relationships, travel and communication caused the Iranian "me" to be more exposed to the culture, customs and opinions of the European "other" and to correct old mental assumptions or to start creating new mental stereotypes. Today we are left with many travelogues from the Qajar era that can be cited as valid evidence to examine the image of "the other". Ezz al-Doulah's Travelogue in Europe is one of the first anecdotes from the point of view of an Iranian prince. The purpose of this research is to examine the images described in Ezz al-Doulah's Travelogue in Europe and to clarify how the image of "the other" is reflected in the work and at the same time, show how the Iranian "me" presents itself during the observations. To this end, we will use the descriptive-analytical method in data analysis, and we will specifically use Ditzel's view of imagology. This research shows that the

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representation of images from the traveler's point of view emphasizes "the superiority of the identity of the other" from different dimensions and to "ignore one's own identity".

Keywords: *Saadi's odes, analysis of discourse and political thought, religious discourse in Saadi's poetry, rationalism in Saadi's poetry, self and other in Saadi's poetry.*

1. Introduction

This study examines Saadi's political thought through the analysis of four selected qasidas (odes), exploring the discourses present in his works and their interactions. Despite extensive research in Persian literature, there remains a need to analyze influential literary figures like Saadi, whose writings have shaped Iranian culture and language. This research employs discourse analysis, a method that utilizes linguistic tools and semantic processes to uncover hidden structures and dominant ideologies within texts.

The selection of qasidas is based on their historical grounding and specificity, as they address real political figures of Saadi's time. These texts reflect the socio-political conditions of his era and reveal his perspectives on governance and legitimacy. By analyzing how Saadi legitimizes or delegitimizes individuals and ideas, the study identifies his intellectual framework and its alignment or divergence from the dominant discourses of his time.

Research Question(s)

The study ultimately addresses two main questions:

- (1) Which discourses are present in Saadi's political thought?
- (2) How do these discourses interact and confront each other?

2. Literature Review

2.1

In the article "A Re-reading of the First Chapter of Saadi's Bustan with an Approach to Legitimization in the Discourse of Governance," published in the scientific-research journal *Textual Studies in Literature* by the same author (2020), the first chapter of Bustan, which is directly related to governance, has been examined in terms of methods of legitimization within this discourse. However, this article solely employs van Leeuwen's approach and does not address ideological othering in the text.

2.2

"Others in the Mirror of Saadi's Golestan and Bustan," a Master's thesis by Hadi Yazdani (2009) from the University of Ilam, identifies the most significant perspectives on "self" and "other" in Golestan and Bustan as being shaped by social class, race and language, religion, and gender. Through this lens, the author argues, one can gain insight into Saadi himself and the people of his time. While this research focuses on Golestan and Bustan, our study centers on analyzing Saadi's qasidas (odes) addressed to his own and non-own patrons. Additionally, the tools of self-legitimization and delegitimization of others, alongside the discourses that define the self or the other, are among the key issues explored in this research.

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In a thesis titled "An Analysis of the Fourth and Eighth Chapters of Saadi's Golestan Based on van Leeuwen's Framework: Representation of Social Actions in Discourse" (Shiraz University, Afrouz Rafiei, 2012), the author first examines the prominent discursive features in the fourth and eighth chapters of Saadi's Golestan and then explains the distinctions between these discourses based on van Leeuwen's framework. The difference between this research and the present article lies, on the one hand, in the texts analyzed and, on the other hand, in the chosen approach

3 Methodology

This research employs a discourse analysis approach, drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Teun van Leeuwen and Teun A. van Dijk, to examine Saadi's qasidas (odes) and uncover the political discourses embedded within them. The study focuses on identifying the persuasive strategies Saadi uses to legitimize the "self" and delegitimize the "other," as well as analyzing the ideological dynamics at play.

Van Leeuwen's Framework

Van Leeuwen (2008) defines discourse as knowledge constructed by social forces within a specific social context, enabling the production and interpretation of particular social actions. His framework emphasizes the relationship between language and society, focusing on sociolinguistic and semantic components embedded in linguistic features. These elements reveal how authors represent social activities through textual language.

Van Leeuwen identifies four key strategies for legitimization or delegitimization within discourse:

Authorization: Legitimacy is granted through reference to established traditions, laws, institutions, or authoritative figures, such as religious texts or socially recognized expertise.

Moral Evaluation: Texts seek to legitimize claims by aligning them with moral values, often through indirect references to ethical systems via adjectives, analogies, or abstractions.

Rationalization: This strategy involves justifying actions or ideas by linking them to institutionalized goals or societal norms. It employs explanations, definitions, or predictions to present the discourse as logical and purposeful.

Mythification: This process involves creating or recounting stories or myths that reward legitimate actions and punish illegitimate ones, embedding ideological messages within narrative structures.

These strategies can operate independently or in combination, either legitimizing certain discourses or critiquing and undermining others. They are typically embedded in descriptive and prescriptive statements, often occupying the most prominent positions in a text (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 94).

Van Dijk's Social-Cognitive Approach

Van Dijk's theory integrates discourse, cognition, and society into a triangular framework, emphasizing the role of cognition in communication and social interaction. He defines discourse as a communicative event with three main dimensions:

Language Use: The linguistic structure and function of the text.

Belief Systems: The cognitive aspect, where discourse reflects and shapes shared beliefs and ideologies.

Social Interaction: The situational context in which discourse occurs, highlighting its role in constructing and negotiating social relationships.

Van Dijk also introduces the concept of the ideological square, which outlines four strategies used in ideological discourse:

Emphasizing the positive aspects of the "self."

Highlighting the negative aspects of the "other."

Ignoring the positive qualities of the "other."

Concealing the negative traits of the "self."

These strategies revolve around two axes: positive self-presentation and negative other-representation. They manifest through textual markers that reflect these ideological biases (Van Dijk, 1995: 143). This model allows for a nuanced understanding of how power dynamics and ideological undercurrents shape discourse.

Application to Saadi's Works

This study applies van Leeuwen's framework to identify the persuasive tools Saadi employs in legitimizing or delegitimizing individuals and groups. Simultaneously, van Dijk's ideological square is used to analyze the content Saadi seeks to highlight or marginalize. By examining these discursive strategies, the research moves from macro-level discourse analysis to micro-level textual exploration, uncovering hidden meanings and ideological layers within Saadi's qasidas.

The integration of these frameworks enables a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between language, ideology, and social context in Saadi's works, shedding light on his political thought and the historical conditions of his time.

4. Results

In his qasidas addressed to the Atabegs of Fars and his own ministers, such as Ata Malek Joveyni, Saadi extensively employs ****moral evaluation**** and ****rationalization**** to legitimize their rule. These rulers are depicted as morally and rationally legitimate through repeated use of attributes such as just, trustworthy, and virtuous. By emphasizing rationalization, Saadi portrays their governance as a means to achieve social objectives like maintaining order and justice, justifying their legitimacy by highlighting the positive societal impacts of their actions.

In contrast, in qasidas addressed to the Mongols, particularly Ankanu, Saadi focuses on delegitimizing their authority by critiquing their unstable power and harsh, oppressive policies. He uses allegories and analogies to underscore the transient nature of worldly power and the fragility of the Mongol ruling system, characterizing their reliance on force and swords as their sole source of authority. This reflects Saadi's effort to delegitimize foreign rule while advocating for reform among rulers to improve societal conditions.

When addressing ideal rulers, Saadi integrates both "religious" and "rationalist discourses" to justify and consolidate their power. In an era dominated by Ash'arite ideology and fatalistic thought in Shiraz, Saadi balances the divine concept of kings as "God's shadow" with an emphasis on rational governance and social responsibility. Through rational arguments, he highlights enduring principles such as justice and care for the populace, thereby legitimizing the political systems of his ideal rulers.

In qasidas directed at the Mongols, Saadi employs rational arguments to explain the anticipated consequences of their unjust and