



A study of Semiotics in Silence of Space Through *Absence of Solouch* and *Désert**

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SEMIOTICS is an approach that provides an exhaustive analysis of different manners in making and mastering meanings. Semiotics of space studies leads to spatial configuration of discourse and determines the effects in meaning which is originated from it.

Mahmoud Dowlatabadi – a contemporary realist author- has framed the space in his literary works not as a simple decoration, but rather as a productive authority. In addition, *Absence of Solouch* has a vast domain that silence – especially among other heterotopias- has been clearly resonated.

Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, the contemporary French author, expands the voice of silence in all his works and also in *Désert*, the silence represents the outcome of space vastness.

Based on the theories in semiotics of space, the aim of this research is indicating how space has been liberated from its referential nature for signifying a meaning and how silence is being created through spatial forms. For this matter, working on elements like colors, animals and the wind is unavoidable.

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In this study, despite the previous hypotheses, space is not just a factor which makes the plot of the text and describes it; rather, it is an essential element which plays an important role in the production of meaning. Also, another meaning of space employed in Dowlatabadi's analysis of Graveyard will be employed.

In Foucault's opinion, Graveyard is another city or space within the main city in which all the common signs and symbols of the city are reversed: silence rules over Graveyard and even if the living people talk, they talk slowly and their movements are slow as well. This strange and antisocial space, separated by the walls from the rest of the city, is the place of solitude and silence in which some opposing ideas like death and life can be observed.

This other space is interwoven with some features such as coldness, silence, darkness, blackness and fear of death. Furthermore, what is important is the presence of "snake" and the fear of it as an old symbol. Since most works of Dowlatabadi have desert as the place of incidents, in some of his novels, "snake" is real and in others it is figurative. The presence of snake is in close connection with the grave and the well. This image should be examined both from mythological and semio-pragmatic perspectives. The snake is the symbol of Medusa and turning something into stone. In some examples found in Dowlatabadi's works, the snake has turned another creature into a piece of stone which cannot talk anymore. In van Den Hovel's view, this inability to talk is one of the first reasons for silence. On the other hand, Denis Bertrand, the influential French semiologist, considers three layers or three dimensions for the space: the hell (underground), terrestrial, and extraterrestrial layers. From this perspective, snake can be associated with the terrestrial and even hell (underground) dimensions of the space.

According to this tri-dimensional classification of the space, it can be said that since the grave and the well are very frequent in Dowlatabadi's works, two main spaces of surface and depth are considered here based on the semantic concepts of above and below. Therefore, it can be said that the well makes an association between these two spaces. This means that the well makes the connection between "above and below" ideas and the desert makes the connection between "far and near" concepts on a horizontal surface. In addition, since based on Mitterand's view semiotics is not separated from sociological criticism, it can be said that the actor introduces and produces the discursive elements of the space so that the identity of the discursive elements can be shaped within the space. In other words, the actor's path in the space meaningfully supports his social-historical path. Therefore, in Bertrand's view, surface depends on bourgeois' system of values while the depth relates to the terrestrial or land forces. The novel "*The Absence of Solouch*" is replete with the scenes in which these two layers are in conflict with each other, and Solouch, who is a well-digger and

has left his home, has changed and even neutralized this opposition. In other words, Solouch who is the founder of the essential values related to these two spaces, has been rejected by these spaces and since he has not been able to replace this space with a new one, he had to leave his village. In Joseph Cortés' view, this departure has brought absurdity to the whole novel and is the source of later declinations, a sample of which is the collapse of Solouch family.

In Le Clézio's opinion, what is important in the analysis of silence in deserted spaces is that in the tense semiotic perspective, when the width of the space and the desert increase, the amount of noise decreases and silence appears. In Le Clézio's novels, there is frequently a center over which a deep silence rules. This center can be identified by the term "here". This silent center is related to unlimited dimensions of the space like the desert, the sky or the horizon. In addition, in Le Clézio's view, elements such as wind help this silence to shape. Bertrand believes that wind naturalizes the descriptions made by the narrator. In fact, there is an assigned connection between the extraterrestrial actor and the human actor. In most scenes in which there is a relation between the width of space and the density of the noise or sound, the wind spreads the noise in the space. In addition, in most cases, the width of the desert interweaves with the width of the sky or the horizon which reveals the frequency of terrestrial or extraterrestrial spaces. In fact, it can be concluded that in Dowlatabadi's view, the spaces are vertical from the surface to the depth while in Le Clézio's view, the spaces are mostly horizontal and sometimes vertical from the earth to the sky. Moreover, in the scenes in which silence rules over the space, colors have been meaningfully used in both novels. Dowlatabadi makes use of grey and black while Le Clézio makes use of white and blue. In fact, in these two novels, we observe a spectrum of white, blue, grey and black colors. From the semiotic perspective, these colors are the signs of promising or discouraging feelings so that for Dowlatabadi, silence is always accompanied by absence, lack and fear while for Le Clézio, silence is accompanied by peace and tranquility.

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