

PATTERNS OF PERCEPTION THROUGH IMAGERY - A CASE STUDY OF CHILDREN'S SONGS: A SEMIOTIC READING OF IMPLICIT MEANINGS

سنن الإدراك عبر الصورة - أغنية الطفل - نموذجها "قراءة سيميائية في المضمرات"

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Abstract:

It is no exaggeration to highlight the abundance of literary and visual discourses devoted to children in various forms, stirring the treasures of hearts before minds. Since it is a contemporary theme that dominates the nowadays discourses, we have chosen to knock on the door to directly enter a world enveloped in spontaneity and guaranteed by innocence. It breathes justice and demands rights that have become more frequent today, in a form that transcends the boundaries of language to include language through media presented by images and songs.

Keywords: Conventions; Image; Frequency; Media; Child; Song; Implicit Meanings

ملخص باللغة العربية:

ليس من المغالاة في شيء أن يلاحظ المتلقي اليوم عجيح الخطابات الأدبية والبصرية بصورة الطفل وبأشكال مختلفة، تستثير فينا دفائن القلوب قبل العقول، ولما كان تيمة تتصدر هذه الخطابات المعاصرة، ارتأينا أن ندق الباب لندخل مباشرة في عالم تحوطه العفوية، وتكفله البراءة، يتنسم العدل، يطالب بالحقوق التي باتت أكثر تواترا اليوم في صورة تتخطى تخوم اللغة إلى تضمين اللغة عبر وسائط تقدمها الصورة والأغنية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السنن؛ الصورة؛ التواتر؛ الوسائط؛ الطفل؛ الأغنية؛ المضمرات

Introduction

It is imperative for us to contemplate these daily images in their openness to a visually encrypted world. We have chosen the Palestinian child, as the protagonist in these images, where songs take on their objective equivalents and a language parallel to the logic of acknowledging childhood destinies. These images speak, cry, demand, even beseech and implore humanity. In this paper, we aim to explore:

1. Visual messages and perceptual conventions through visual formation.
2. A semiotic analysis of the most famous visual transmissions worldwide.
3. Approaching perceptual conventions through implicit meanings in:
 - a) The song "Jerusalem Will Stand Forever" was performed by Lara Al-Hamidani. (Lara Al-Humaidan, 2018)
 - b) The song "The Right of Childhood" was performed by Hisham and Maria. (Hisham & Maria, 2023)
 - c) The song "Midnight" was performed by Mohammed Al-Saeed. (Karamesh, 2023)

In this research paper, we relied on a rich reference material, spearheaded by Kaddour Abdullah Al-Thani's "Semiotics of the Image," an adventurous journey into the most famous visual transmissions worldwide. Al-Thani is an Algerian professor at the University of Oran, specializing in the semiotics of images. Additionally, we draw upon his other reference, "Semiotics of Visual Reception and Interrogating Visual Messages."

Moreover, we incorporate the work of Salah Fadel, "Reading the Image and Images of Reading," and Hanan Anani's "Children's Literature."

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1- Visual Formation and Perceptual Conventions:

The most potent level of visual discourse, one that is both impactful and performative, lies in imagery and its formations. Images proliferate everywhere, expressing identity, history, and countless other concepts that defy enumeration.

In light of this idea, it has become imperative for us to receive and interact with images, considering them as a discourse parallel to linguistic discourse. As the Chinese proverb says, "A picture is worth a thousand words." (Akabour, n.d.). Confucius reiterated this notion, regarding it as a universal language understood by all.

In today's context, the image is considered the "sacred essence" of our era, as it rejuvenates the world anew. Rooted in Greek and Latin origins, the image connotes similarity and likeness. It corresponds to what the Greeks and Romans referred to as the icon, a term which Peirce identified as central to distinguishing it from various semiotic signs, such as index, symbol, and icon.

Visual semiotics defines the image as "a manifest analyzable unit, comprising iconic signs." (Qaddour, 2004, p. 164) It signifies a resemblance or representation of the real world. It is considered every representational imitation or visual expression. It provides sensory data to the visual organ, enabling a direct perception of the external world in its illuminated form. In ancient times, the prevailing belief was that rays of light emanated from the eye to encounter objects, resulting in visual sensation. This notion persisted until the renowned scholar of optics, **Alhazen**, *Abu al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham*, in the 11th century, proposed that light rays emanate from objects in straight lines until they collide with the eye, eliciting the sensation of sight. He distinguished between self-luminous bodies like the sun and a lamp, and those illuminated by other sources. This was later confirmed by Newton, stating that these bodies fall upon the cornea, thus causing human vision.

Therefore, in its most precise definition, the image is "an instinctual art through which humans seek to translate their reality and immortalize their memory with their original imprints." (Qaddour, 2004, p. 165) Just as the Romans engraved their memories on the walls of their buildings in Rome, "the image has dominated our contemporary lives." (Fadl, 1997, p. 05) It has become a qualitative communication bridge when "embraced by the most important human communication strategies, revolutionizing the production of meaning in contemporary culture. Those who possess the ability to manoeuvre with images, control their production, and market them can manage situations to their advantage." (Fadl, 1997, p. 05)

The image, in order to produce its meanings, relies on data provided by iconic representation for visual production, carrying two messages:

- The first message is a declarative one, affirming the reality.
- The second message is an implicit one, derived from the first through analysis and interpretation. Barth, during his work on developing his semiotic theory about photography in 1961, affirmed that interpreting the image leads us to the culture of the receiver - the message recipient. Here,

we emphasize that in our interpretation of images, we move from situational reading to analytical reading. Analytical reading may inquire about various aspects such as important photographic techniques, the creator of the image, and its relationship with societal life.

Childhood is associated with expressive songs. It represents the initial stage in a human's life, beginning from birth and ending at maturity, (Anani, 1990, p. 29) as stated in the wise verse: " Then He brings you out as a child; then [He develops you] that you reach your [time of] maturity, " (Quran 16:70).

As for the second aspect, the song is a poetic piece, with words set to music, characterized by ease in its organization and content, structured according to a specific rhythm. (Anani, 1990, p. 29)

Childhood takes on various forms in discourse, from oppressed child to prince, from homeless to extraordinary, from lost to mischievous, and many other interactive forms influenced by environmental or genetic factors.

In literature, the child is often portrayed as a reclaimed figure, spoken for by the "adult." Even in autobiographies, childhood is depicted through memory, with the writer assuming the role of the child. This is evident in our analysis of "The Return of the Spirit" by Taoufik al-Hakim, "The Loaf" by Yusuf alouadi, and "The Search for Oualid Massaoud" by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. Novels such as "The Espionage" by Sanaa-Allah Ibrahim, "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, and "Lord of the Flies" by William Golding in 1954, further explore this theme.

Not far from the field of novels and other literary genres, songs in their various forms grant the child full agency to speak and express. They even refuse and transcend, aiming through images to achieve what the legitimacy of life has not provided - safety and peace.

There is a parallel language in children's songs, a language of imagery that produces meaning capable of both expression and impact simultaneously. We can recall together, in this regard, those scientific visual messages adopted by Qaddour Abdullah Al-Thani's semiotics:

1. The image of "Child Mohammed al-Durrah" as he was dying as a martyr, a vivid picture captured by the photographer Talal Abderahman of France 2 Channel on the 30th of September 2000. The twelve-year-old martyr, hiding behind a concrete cylinder for the sewage network in the Al-Bureij refugee camp. This image serves as unequivocal evidence of the Zionist crime against the child of Al-Bureij, as he sought shelter behind a concrete cylinder, part of the sewage network, rising 70 cm above ground level.
2. The image by journalist "Kevin Carter," famously known as "The Picture That Shocked the World," was taken on March 26, 1993, in Sudan during the famine

crisis. This iconic image portrays the harsh reality of people's destinies, as seen in the foreground where an exhausted child struggles against death, crawling in search of food, while behind her, a vulture eagerly awaits her demise. The scene depicts drought and cruelty from all angles.

3. The image of the events of September 11, 2001, in New York and the collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

Visual reception, or the visual component, provides the closest embodiment of the concept that legitimizes visual discourse. This discourse encapsulates a range of key elements, transforming reading into a visual experience. We will rely on this in our analysis of selected children's songs, focusing on:

1. The first song titled "Jerusalem Will Stand Forever," was performed by Lara Al-Hamidani, a child who represented the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Canada.
2. The second song titled "The Right of Childhood," was performed by the children Hisham and Maria, with lyrics by Duaa Al-Ibrahim.
3. The third song titled "Midnight," performed by Mohammed Al-Saeed.

2- Common Imageries:

Childhood bursts into tears when it realizes it has become a target, tears passing from one child to another, compensating with screams when hope is lost.

1) Image of Tears: More expressive than any other form, eyes speak of pain and sorrow for the killing, hunger, and displacement of children. Tears replace sound when breath is held. It is the image of Palestinian children robbed of childhood instead of living in peace and safety.

2) Image of Fire and Destruction: Childhood is surrounded by fires emanating from everywhere as if the earth has turned into a collapsed house. Fog obscures everything, hardly revealing anything, a state of horror permeating through the grey colour, hiding many corpses and many living dead. It is war in all its manifestations, robbing humans of their right to live in peace during childhood. Children seem to echo with one voice, "Stop, we want to live in peace. We are children, we have no weapons, we cannot defend ourselves, we cannot bear it. The smell of the bodies is everywhere, and sounds of Takbir from every direction, it is war, war of stones and arsenals, war of bombardment.

3) The image of confiscated dolls: Children's dolls appear torn, their original colour fading into another shade that renders them undesirable. Left buried under rubble, they may be found in their original form, as if the quest for the doll has become impossible in the world of Palestinian childhood, a futile endeavour.

4) Image of Blood: Childhood suffers under bombardment and all forms of elimination, one of the most violent witnessed by humanity in its history. What happened to the children of Gaza, martyrs of fetuses, amputated limbs, infants in a state of panic, hysteria of pain, surpassing all expressions, caravans of martyrs, unknown, their destinies repeated images of blood, to create immense strength thereafter.

5) Image of the Kuffiyeh: Different songs share the image of the kuffiyeh and the extent of its association with the Palestinian people. It has evolved from a headscarf to a global symbol of freedom, a black and white scarf that transcends history and geography. It is no longer limited to the Palestinian people alone but has become a symbol of the struggle for freedom.

The kuffiyeh was originally associated with the people of Kufa south of Baghdad along the Euphrates River and with the people of the Levant under the name "al-Hatta." Palestinian writer Susan Abu al-Hawa says, "The designs on the kuffiyeh address the Palestinian's lifeblood in the same way that embroidery designs do, telling about the location, lineage, occasion, and historical significance." (Anani, 1990, p. 29)

The Palestinian kuffiyeh has become intertwined with identity, Arabness, and authenticity. It features olive leaves, symbolizing the blessed tree that God swore by, whose oil is almost luminous. The olive tree tells the story of resilience and challenge. Every Palestinian child is connected to the keffiyeh, a tale of belonging to the cause, defending the stolen land, and affirming legitimate rights. That is why the late Palestinian President Yasser Arafat paid special attention to the keffiyeh, often wearing it draped over his right shoulder, cleverly forming the Palestinian flag through its pattern and map. As for the image of the net, it signifies the Palestinian fisherman's connection to the Mediterranean Sea, and their toil to earn their livelihood. In all its various forms, the keffiyeh strives to affirm freedom and liberation in the world.

6) The Image of Patience and Reliance on Allah: Today, we need thousands of years to learn patience. It is a lesson that provides us with the elixir of immortality, delivered by the Palestinian child who decided, or perhaps didn't decide, to die as a martyr. Caravans are sent to heaven, birds to our prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him. They found sustenance and shelter in the eternal abode, where they patiently endured and persevered, earning the gardens of paradise. The children, in their patience, are moved by an enduring faith, victorious without a doubt, for this is the promise of truth. Children who fear no enemy, facing them with stones, supported by the greatest force, are unquestionably the children of Palestine.

7) The image of rejection and transcendence: Palestinian children refuse to relinquish their land. For them it is either defence or martyrdom, no other choice

is available. They transcend oppression, hunger, imprisonment, execution, and liquidation with the pledge and martyrdom in the path of Allah, for the sake of the land and in defence of the truth.

These images, woven through the collection of songs, create the foundational image: the image of Palestinian childhood, its ability to resist, endure, and challenge, and its affirmation of legitimate rights to revive life anew.

Furthermore, it is paramount to highlight other implicit messages no less significant than those previously mentioned:

a. **The symbolism of Colors:** Within the space of colour connotations, songs have relied on the colour black, with children donning black attire symbolizing the strength of pain, severe poverty, and sorrow. It is as if they are declaring mourning for childhood robbed of its colours, unified in a single hue. Colours are prohibited, portraying childhood in this era of digitization in black and white, as if war has stripped away the colours, rendering them illegitimate for Palestinian children. This is exemplified by the tattered rags worn by the destitute child, diverse in shapes and sizes, depicting the reality of childhood in Palestine today. Additionally, the grey colour, symbolizing bombardment, confusion, and obscurity, turns dreams into mere images. Palestinian girls defiantly embellish these images with vibrant colours, as if challenging the world.

Colors vanish when Palestinian children are present, revered in the midst of bombing and fires, with death's colour inevitably looming over them.

b. **Viewing with One Eye:** Represented by Maria in the song "The Right of Childhood," it portrays silence, brushing hair away from her eyes, and managing her expression, followed by declaring herself as "Gaza, the epitome of Arabism," as if she is the unknown entity seeking recognition from the world.

8) Image of Challenge: Posed in the juxtaposition of natural images of Palestinian children against military armaments, challenging the strongest forces in the world with faith in defending sacred land. Children stand steadfast against Israeli tanks, pelting Zionists with stones. Small hands gather stones here and there, these children of Palestine, are moved by divine strength, making them superior to all in the world.

9) Image of Collapsed Houses: The image of destruction permeates every song, reflecting the immense number of homeless families in Palestine. Houses have turned into piles of rubble, barely recognizable amidst the scattered concrete, a terrifying sight. The closer we get, the louder the cries for salvation beneath the debris. This scene repeats daily, portraying Palestinian children within their geographical boundaries constantly devoid of the innocence of childhood, forced to build lives anew, with no choice but to bear its consequences. This is the life of displaced children.

In conclusion, this research paper emphasizes the following key points derived from the analysis of visual semiotics:

- The role of the recipient in uncovering implicit messages within children's songs through the process of semiotic analysis.
- The dominance of national concerns in children's songs leads to the deprivation of children from exercising their playful roles like other children around the world.
- The uniqueness of Palestinian revolutionary songs, asserting their rights.
- Palestinian songs directed towards children represent a psychological and moral anticipation of a nationalist spirit; today's children are the men and women of the future.
- Children aspire to enjoy freedom like any other creature; they want the world to stand by them, and defend their desires, rights, and needs.

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