

The Reproduction of the Relations of Dominance in *Ahou Khanom's Husband*

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Abstract

The novel, *Ahou Khanom's Husband* has been recognized as one of the first feminist works in the discourse of contemporary fictional literature. Considering the concept of "ideology" as discussed in Marxist readings, the present paper studies the novel to demonstrate that despite its outer layer which attempts to show and inculcate a kind of pioneering feminism, the novel is, in its inner layers, affected by patriarchy as a social macro-structure and therefore, in the final analysis, it is an ideological apparatus in the hands of this dominant institution for the reiteration and reproduction of the logic of dominance. Ahou Khanom's actions, as the novel's protagonist and the source of its feminist theme, have been organized in such a way as to result in the least amount of conflict and friction with the values of the patriarchal system. In fact, patriarchy, as the driving force behind the text in a clever and meticulous scenario, and by denying the relations of dominance, has guided the text in such a way that its support for the novel's heroine, who is actually only a hollow heroine, has misled the critics to undertake feminist readings. However, by disclosing the ideological function of the text's latent dimension, this study shows that it is a text harbouring the continuation of patriarchal dominance.

Keywords: *Ahou Khanom's Husband*, Ideology, Patriarchy, Discourse Analysis, Feminism.

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Extended abstract

1. Introduction

The focal theme of the novel *Ahou Khanom's Husband* is the problems of women in the framework of the transitional Iranian society. The readings and criticisms of the novel have so far tended towards a pioneering feminism in the sphere of contemporary literature. Such interpretations have, in general, been in accordance with the surface structure of the text and this reveals that the scenario of "artificial feminism" and the "ideology of pseudo-feminism" have authoritatively influenced the results of these studies. In fact, the text's support for Ahou Khanom as the indisputable heroine of the novel is one of the factors influencing these interpretations. The main aim of the present paper is to find out about the degree to which the novel's "hero" and "anti-hero" are in relation to the values of a patriarchal system and how they have adapted themselves to the forward-moving dimensions and qualities of the text.

2. Theoretical Framework

Adopting the ideas of the intellectual-philosophical tradition of Marxism, the present paper offers a new reading of the novel.

3. Methodology

The present study falls under the rubric of content analysis. It first explicates the concept of 'ideology' and then discusses the process through which the novel has managed to consolidate and, then, naturalize the dominance of a patriarchal system over female elements.

4. Findings and Discussion

This novel which, as "the novel of the century", had due to its pioneering role in feminism occupied a lofty place was put to question. It was also found out that the feminism in the novel has an ideological dimension.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the novel demonstrates that patriarchy, as a system and institution seeking power, has developed and imposed on the reader a type of heroine as the model "ideal woman" who fulfils the desires and guards the interests of the dominant group. It is the story's treatment of the other woman in the novel that shows its real orientation towards the female element. Homa is invited to the story as an accidental presence and once she is described as a tool to quench Seyed Miran's lustful desires, she is driven out of the story in favour of a reactionary discourse. When the hypocrisy of ideology is revealed, the main reason behind such treatments which shows the incompatibility of this brave woman with the values of patriarchal society is clarified. In fact, Homa Zandi's unpardonable sin is her transgression of the imprisoning order of patriarchy and her criticism of the social institutions founded on gender inequality. Thus, patriarchy, as the dominant discourse, through reflecting its own aims in the form of a novel which, according to Althusser, is an ideological entity, covertly reproduces and maintains the relations that dominate and confine women.

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