



RESEARCH PAPER

From Literal to Layered: Mapping Representational Depths in Mohsin Hamid's *Discontent and Its Civilizations* through a Barthesian Lens

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ABSTRACT

The study enquires into the transformation of ostensibly neutral linguistic expressions into ideologically and emotionally charged constructs in Mohsin Hamid's *Discontent and its Civilizations: Dispatches from Lahore, New York and London* (2014). Grounded in Barthes's (1972) three-tier (denotation-connotation-myth) semiotic framework and the contemporary application proposed by Barus et al. (2025), the research situates language as a ideological site for the naturalization of cultural hierarchies and dominant binaries such as East/West and Self/Other. Through interpretive thematic qualitative analysis, the scrutiny is conducted on the selected textual fragments mapping out the layered transition from literal articulation to symbolic depth and mythic naturalization. The findings unfold Hamid's emphasis on plural identities and hybridity to destabilize essentialist narratives and challenge ideologically entrenched assumptions. The study advocates for fostering critical thinking and recommends cultivating reflective literacy practices to challenge mythic narratives and delve into more postcolonial research that will dismantle rigid cultural demarcation and endorse inclusively hybrid frameworks of identity.

KEYWORDS Denotation, Connotation, Myth, Barthes's Semiotics, Naturalization, Hybridity

Introduction

The study presents a qualitative semiotic analysis of Mohsin Hamid's *Discontent and its Civilizations: Dispatches from Lahore, New York and London* (2014), applying the theoretical lens of Ronald Barthes semiotic framework, the framework carries the crucial concepts of denotation, connotation and myth. The notion of Semiotics traces back to the 17th century when in 1690, in all modern sense, the English philosopher John Locke first used the term. However, later it resulted in an established academic discipline. This evolution was strongly related to structuralism, a theoretical framework for examining linguistic and cultural processes. Semiotics as a discipline, investigates the production, naturalization and communication of meanings using the signifier in language, literature and culture. Between 1906 and 1911, Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, his early work established the sign as comprised of the signifier and the signified, but Roland Barthes, a French literary theorist, philosopher, and semiotician whose work significantly influenced structuralism and post-structuralism, broadened this model aiming to find out how signs culturally operate. Barthes (1967), put forth the argument that meanings are not fixed, rather they are sculpted by ideology, leading to the genesis of myths that support hegemonic power structures. Barthes brought in a concept of two operation of meaning ; denotation which is the first order of significance referring to literal and direct meaning of sign, and connotation which is the second order significance where there is an emergence

of emotional cultural and ideological significance. Beyond these levels, he also manifested the concept of myth, as described by him as a set up that reshapes culturally formulated meanings into unquestioned and naturalize realities. Dominant ideologies conceal themselves with the help of myth as common sense and get themselves deeply rooted in societal consciousness.

Barthes contributed in demonstrating that language does not happen to be a neutral medium, rather behaves as a potent mechanism for the circulation and reinforcement of power ideology and cultural values. His theories are particularly relevant to literary studies where ideologies reside on the language which function as a site emphasizing Semiotics a crucially valuable instrument to bring to the surface the underlying narratives (Barthes, 1972). Roland Barthes in one of his books *Mythologies* (1967) scrutinizes the devious mechanisms through which the societies perpetuate and naturalize myths. He puts forth that contemporary ideological myths are created with a reason, to reinforce an idea of society conforming to the prevailing ideologies of the dominant structures. As we reside in the world of signs which is inclined towards the established power structures and purports to be natural. The values, standards and priorities of dominating influential groups within society are also endorsed by the ideology. As beautifully quoted by Terry Eagleton "a dominant power may legitimate itself by promoting beliefs and values congenial to it: naturalizing and universalizing such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable, denigrating ideas which might challenge it, excluding rival forms of thought and obscuring social reality in ways convenient to itself "(Eagleton, 1991,p.5).

Within the scope of contemporary literature, the literary repertoire of Mohsin Hamid, a contemporary Pakistani novelist and essayist, emerged as an exceptional testimony to the multifaceted intricacies that undergrid the narrative craft and socio-political cultural tapestry. A visionary in the chronicles of Pakistani Anglophone literature, his authorial canon consolidates a compelling synergy of rhetorical dexterity and narrative sophistication, animating his inaugural novel, *Moth Smoke* (2000), into the Hall of fame of literary distinction and narrative mastery. This seminal work is a stirring example of his literary dexterity, surfacing as an irrevocable foundation across the tapestry of the cultural-literary discourse of South Asia. Hamid's biographical relation, anchored in dual Pakistani-London landscape, grants him an outstanding interpretive stance which goes beyond the geographical and cultural boundaries and forms the prism which he uses to refract the essence of Pakistan's rich tapestry. Hamid turned down the writing styles of his contemporary writers and the technique they use. His modernist writing style and literary technique provide us a vision that the dynamics of Pakistani modernity shifts away from the view point that is (prevailed since 9/11) of the region as traditional and obsolete (Yaqoob, 2010). *Discontent* is a collection of essays which gives him the dual role of both participant and observer. The writing revolves around the themes of global fear, migration and physical and psychological trauma. His tone and reflective introspection asks a rhetorical question and critically evaluates the dominant narratives across the world.

Discontent and its Civilizations (2014) is Hamid's non-fictional work, a collection of essays, that apprehends his intellectual entanglements with the chaotic verities of this modern world. The collection is thematically organized into three section; Life, Art and Politics to show the inter-connectedness. The discourse explores the fear experienced by the individual, displacement, alienation and belonging in the abruptly changing worlds. This change is shaped by political tensions and cultural disagreements. Hamid, through his repeated encounters with suspicion and cultural stereotyping, graphically portrays how bigger ideological systems demonstrate themselves everyday. He questions and challenges dominant narratives and provokes reader to be skeptic about simplistic binaries and rigid

categorical divisions in society. He wants readers to understand how psychological and cultural processes normalize fear and segmentation in society. The title itself is a critique toward the framing of dissatisfaction and dispute within the global discourse. Barthes theoretical semiotic framework to Hamid's text enables a reader to have in-depth understating on language functioning and how it surfaces as a tool for the construction of ideologies. On the denotative level, the expression often comes across as neutral or descriptive, however going forward, the analysis critically and meticulously, unfolds the connotative layers with the infusion of cultural and political significance. The belief system is then shaped by the layered meanings from connotation through the formation of myth. Barthes theory postulates that myth is operated by articulating historically distinct meanings as both universal and natural. The narrative repeatedly underscores how cultural gaps, moral judgment, fear and belonging along with social pressures is disseminated through ordinary language. These processes are uncovered to make the revelation that the narratives which appear to be factual, are actually ideologically driven and shaped by power structures.

Literature Review

Research and academic participation in Barthes's semiotic theory has persistently manifested its critical value by showing the transcend descriptive role of language to function as a wholesome mechanism of ideological signification. Barthes three-level semiotic system becomes an incredibly compelling framework to examine the literary and cultural discourse for the construction of dominantly leading ideological formations. Meanwhile their original political and historical genesis is masked alongside. The critical discourse analysis of Mohsin Hamid's writings has widened the ways to explore global dislocation, negotiation of socio-political instability and belonging within the transitional context. Nonetheless, Hamid fictional genre has been considerably acknowledged, his essay collection *Discontent and Its Civilizations* (2014) remains to be relatively under-explored especially in terms of semiotic lens. This under-examination makes it necessary to fill theoretical gap and conduct an interpretive study grounded in Barthesian framework of Semiotics to beam on the ideological processes crafting meanings and myth within his narration.

Saussure conceptually framed the sign as constituted by two elements. The first is the signifier (sound/image) and the other one is signified (concept) (Saussure, 1916/1983). According to him, the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary, establishing the foundation for structuralism. The semiotic studies were expanded by Barthes with the introduction of a second-order system. In his seminal work *Mythologies* (1957), he broke down everyday vernacular cultural entities and exhibited signifier as ideological instrument. In accordance with the Barthesian description on myth, it is a category of speech through which meanings grounded in historical context are mythologized into naturalized truths (Barthes, 1972). Denotation pertains to the overt or literal meaning of a sign, while connotative interpretation entails the culturally or emotionally attached associations (Barthes, 1967). He describes myth as a "second-order semiological system" (Barthes, 1972). A sign operating with the first-order system of signification (denotation) becomes the signifier in the second, the system where the connotative meaning is naturalized as "common sense." Thereby, the ideological undercurrent is disguised by the myth cloaked in natural truth.

Barus et al. (2025), offered a contemporary articulation of Roland Barthes' semiotic model by systematically explaining and operationalising the three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth, within modern cultural and textual analysis. While Barthes laid the foundation for understanding how signs move from literal reference to

seemingly “natural” ideological truths, Barus et al. (2025) focus on how that process can actually be examined in contemporary texts. Bringing these perspectives together has made it possible to follow the movement of meaning in Hamid’s writing more closely. The goal is to observe how everyday language quietly reinforces cultural assumptions. This blend of theoretical insight and methodological clarity unpacked the usefulness of semiotic approach for present-day literary study.

Nadira (2018), in her work Roland Barthes’ Denotation, Connotation, and Myth in the Change of Four Starbucks Logos, applied Barthes semiotic theory to the visual branding and conducted an analysis on the evolution of logo designs from literal imagery into symbolic portrayals and mythic representations of modern paradigms and global identity. Doing the interpretation of logos through the levels of denotation, connotation and myth, she unfolded how the commercial signs transform into naturalized cultural narratives reinforcing ideological meanings. This study illuminated the more extensive and wider functional relevance of Barthesian semiotics and facilitated it with pertinence to examine the similar progression of myth making and the construction of ideology in literary discourse particularity like Hamid’s *Discontent and Its Civilizations*.

Hurwitz (2009), conducted a semiological inquiry with a particular emphasis on accentuating how some textual segments are brought in use to negotiate a meaning. The text may be structured collaboratively by the participants, although in numerous cases, the significance is observed to be varied for the participants. For this reason, semiotics can be seen in action to examine and evaluate how communication works. In a nutshell, the semiotic theory happens to be a valuable methodological framework for exploring or investigating fallacies within cross-cultural communicative dynamics. The perception is directly related to the present study, as Hamid’s *Discontent* reflects multicultural experiences where different ideological and cultural contexts shape the meanings, this makes the semiotic analysis paramount for uncovering the construction and interpretation of meaning.

Mohsin Hamid in his literary works consistently ventures into the themes of displacement, alienation, power, and the instability of belonging. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), he emblematised cultural friction, surveillance, and more importantly the psychological impact caused by global conflict by experiencing transnational subject traversing shifting regimes and apprehensions of fear and loyalty (Hamid, 2007). Similarly *Exit West* (2017) exhibited a poignant analysis of cultural identity, assimilation, and examines how the world’s politics creates an impact through the lens of a Pakistani protagonist in post 9/11 America. The novel was nominated for the prestigious Man Booker Prize. There is a powerful depiction of alienation and internal conflict that every individual, straddling with multiple identities experience, blending realism with magical elements to portray the fluidity between the borders and the universal quest for belonging. These salient concerns coincide with the reflective discourse of *Discontent and Its Civilizations*, a narration through which Hamid scrutinized global anxiety along with ideological myth making.

Epistemological aligned thematic engagements emerge in Teju Cole’s *Open City*, where reflected urban alienation and cultural fragmentation is reflected by virtue of introspective narration (Cole, 2011). Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, put forth a critique towards the political exploitation within oppressive systems (Roy, 2017). Luiselli (2020), in *Lost Children Archive*, investigated migration and border political dynamics through a fragmented narrative that unmasked the emotional and ideological impacts of forced movement. Similarly, Shamsie (2018) in *Home Fire* questioned cultural loyalty, surveillance, and national identity within a post-9/11 socio-political environment,

making the revelation that the dominant power narratives shape personal experience. The integration and synthesis of these thematic concerns amplify the relevance of analyzing Hamid's non-fictional narrative by instrumentalization of the semiotic lens, since it demystifies how contemporary literature deconstruct dominant myths and ideological fabrications.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by Roland Barthes's semiotic theory of signification with the execution of his theoretical model which is a three-tier semiotic framework. This theory of signification theorizes meaning as operating and manifesting across three interrelated levels: denotation, connotation and myth (Barthes, 1972). Under this framework, denotation designates the literal or surface meaning of a sign, connotation incorporates the cultural and emotional associations that get connected to it, and myth represents the stage where these meanings are naturalized as ideological "truths" within the dominant discourse (Barthes, 1972). The implementation of this theoretical construct adheres to the contemporary interpretive structure posited by Barus et al, (2025), who exhibited how Barthes's framework facilitates the systematic excavation of meaning from neutral description to ideological construction. Barthes's original semiotic concepts is integrated with Barus et al.'s scholarly interpretation to find out how signs within Hamid's narrative undergo transformation from literal representation into culturally and politically charged narratives, delineating the mechanisms through which dominant and culturally entrenched meanings are ideologically manufactured, questioned and deconstructed.

Material and Methods

This research employs an interpretive qualitative thematic analysis to probe and map out the semiotic processes and their operational dynamics within Mohsin Hamid's *Discontent and Its Civilizations*. The current work engages in a close reading and thematic identification to investigate how selected words, phrases, and sentences operate within a wide ranging narrative and discursive patterns of meaning. The analysis stems from qualitative interpretation, with a deep focus on the signification, integration and construction of the layered meanings within their narrative and socio-cultural contexts. The thematic facet of the methodology entails identification of recurring themes first and then analyzing them through Barthes's three-tier semiotic model. These conceptual patterns are civilization, migration, hybridity, identity, and power. Through this orientation, the study comes up with a nuanced exploration of meaning shift, from denotation to connotation and subsequently to myth, eventually revealing the ideological structures embedded within Hamid's discourse. With the combination of thematic interpretation and semiotic analysis, the current study tends to highlight how the dominant narratives are constructed, naturalized, and destabilized through language.

Results and Discussion

Barthes Semiotic Reading of *Discontent and Its Civilizations*

This section examines Mohsin Hamid's *Discontent and Its Civilizations* through Roland Barthes's concept of denotation, connotation, and myth, illustrating the literal evolution to culturally charged meaning and ideologically naturalized expositions. The analysis breaks through the ways in which migration, fear and hybridity, dislocation and globalization are represented, demystified and contested across Hamid's essays.

Denotation: Literal Descriptions of Civilization, Identity and Movement

Barthes's description of signs asserts that their appearance is always neutral and descriptive. Hamid starts by portraying the categories of cultural Identity, belonging and civilization as rudimentary classificatory mechanism. He states: "*Yet what are these civilizations, these notions of Muslim-ness, Western-ness, European-ness, American-ness, that attempt to describe where, and with whom, we belong?*" (Hamid, 2014, p.13). Here the diction "Muslim-ness" and "Western-ness" operate as the surface level labels and for the cultural groups they function as practical descriptor markers. The literal meaning within the narration is perceived as stable and impartially objective. This exemplifies the 'first order' signification that Ronald Barthes designated as denotation. In another instance, Hamid describes borders, physical construct and administrative formation at the denotative level as: "*Civilizations are illusions... arbitrarily drawn constructs with porous, brittle, and overlapping borders*" (Hamid, 2014, p.13). Even though he later obfuscates the term, the literal denotative function navigates to the cartographic and geopolitical demarcations. Similarly, migration surfaces as biographical fact. "*When I was younger, I thought of being a migrant and being foreign as things that made me different, an outsider*" (p.14). The terminologies "migrant" and "foreign" signify geographical movement and estrangement. Hamid's vivid portrayal of security processes also stay literal as he writes: "*There are only a hundred and one points to the inspection a Pakistani must pass to be deemed travel-worthy*" (p.29). These denotations lay the necessary foundation upon which the deeper meanings are devised later. The phantasm of neutrality, as described by Barthes, at the level of denotation it capacities ideological manipulation to remain concealed. Hamid upholds a rigorous denotative register in the *Life* essays by portraying personal movement and location in factual terms. He writes, "*Over the past fifteen years I have lived in three cities: Lahore, New York, and London*" (p.11), which clearly accounts geographical residence without insinuating evaluation or disposition. In the same manner, his remark that "*E-reading opens the door to distraction. It invites connectivity and clicking and purchasing*" comes to operate as a direct observation of contemporary global conditions, pertaining only to the existence of increased communicative interplay among societies. These statements specify observable realities related to space and time without embodying connotative or ideological meaning. However, as demonstrated by the analysis later, the same expressions build up connotative significance when they are positioned within broader cultural and political discourse.

In the essays related with 'Politics', Hamid tends to continue this descriptive mode in its entirety through references to "immigration controls," "national borders," and "security checks," which denote certain administrative procedures implemented by states to regulate movement. The expression talking about system of passports and security check up further denotes to the formal structures administering and regulating travel and legal presence, function as a neutral description of bureaucratic mechanisms that will later be laden with ideological implications. Similarly, in the 'Art' section, Hamid defines writing as "*I want to bring my imagined world back into our world, to share it, to have a reader enter it and shape it, to open a space for experimentation and imagination...*" (p.77), which identifies the functional role of literature as a vehicle and medium of communication and exchange. These expressions remain within Barthes' first order of signification, where language operates to denote directly observable conditions, institutional practices, and experiential facts, while simultaneously laying the groundwork for their subsequent transformation into emotionally and politically loaded signs at the connotative level.

Connotation: Emotional, Cultural and Political Charging of Identity

Connotation manifests itself when the movement of language takes place beyond the surface description and initiates the accumulations of cultural, emotional and ideological signification. In the Politics section of the compilation, Hamid disrupts the

seeming neutrality of civilized identity by using expressions like *"arbitrarily drawn constructs, porous, brittle borders"* (Hamid, 2014, p.13), and the projection that *"these are illusions."* These expressions show the metamorphosis of civilization to a robust classificatory term into a delicate and fabricated construct. The portrayal in *"arbitrarily drawn"* allude to a ideologically aware political patterns rather than organic formation, while *"brittle"* and *"overlapping"* indicate internal contradiction. Civilization at this level no longer connotes harmony, coherence or order, instead it signifies deception, ambiguity, uncertainty, and ideological convenience. This exemplifies Barthes concept Barthes' concept of second-order signification where cultural interpretations are superseding the literal meaning. In the 'Life' section of the collection, a very intimate shift in connotation appears when Hamid portrays the hybridity. His remarks that *"Our words for hybridity are so often epithets"* followed by the labels *"mongrel," "half-breed," "outcast," "deviant," and "heretic"* (p.13), expose the manner in which mixed identity is linguistically signified, stigmatized and becomes socially undesirable. These expressions exceed denotation and act in the capacity of culturally saturated signs connotating moral corruption, social dislocation, and symbolic contamination. Inside the experiential narratives of 'Life', trans-cultural identity and hybridity is thus restructured from a literal condition of mixture into a marker of anomaly, substantiating how language operates as an instrument for the regulation of identity. The connotative reading destabilizes the myth of pure identity by showing that the langue used to tag hybridity is embedded with prejudice and ideological fear. The exposure of this linguistic violence disrupts the authority of purity as a stable norm and undermines hierarchical identity structures.

In the 'Politics' essays of the book, the political language is subjected to striking semiotic intensification when Hamid used the expression *"war on terror,"* which on the denotative phase is connected with the policies pertaining to security and counter-terrorism. While having this denotative connection, the expression is redefined by him *"a war against a concept, not a nation,"* a construction that immediately destabilizes its presumed legitimacy. This is done by disclosing its abstract and ideological locus. The narration gets connotatively charged when it is repeatedly associated with *"a great backlash against migrants," "anti-migrant parties," and "draconian anti-migrant restrictions,"* transfiguring it from a protective rhetoric into a signifying processes of surveillance, scepticism directed at pluralism. Nevertheless, as dominant power structures pursue enduring stabilization by endorsing it as a testimony of national safety and ideological defense of civilization. likewise, in the Life and Art sections, violence seeks a shifts from objectively neutral denotation to emotionally laden connotation, since physical destruction is re-casted through imagery, *"I wondered how he would trigger the explosives... I readied myself for action... My mind ran kung-fu moves... I watched his every move"* (p.37). Migration, too, broadens beyond its denotative meaning of movement when He reflects, *"When I was younger, I thought of being a migrant and being foreign as things that made me different, an outsider"* (p.16), afterwards deepening this connotation by writing, *"yours has become another country from that of your childhood"* (p.14), destabilizing fixed conceptions of belonging and repositioning migration as sentimental temporal estrangement. However, it is also exposed how dominant discourse unremittingly strives to stabilize migrants as permanent personages of otherness. Observing through these layered examples grounded in the thematic domains of Life, Art, and Politics, Hamid demonstrates how signs transition from descriptive denotation into emotionally and politically encoded connotation, circulating and operating within a processional tension between destabilization and steady stabilization which ultimately unfold the fragility and fabricated nature of dominant cultural narratives, paving the way for their eventual exposure at the level of myth.

Myth: The Naturalization of Semiotic Meaning

In Barthes's semiotic framework, myth embodies the juncture where the denotative facts and connotative meanings undergo transformation in to naturalized "truths", purport to be self-evident and beyond question. In *Discontent and Its Civilizations*, Hamid elucidates how this procedure crystallizes, in reliance on myth of "civilization", as a stable, coherent, and intrinsically opposed entity. He overtly undermines this narrative by positing that "*the idea that we fall into civilizations, plural, is merely a politically convenient myth*" (Hamid, 2014, p.99), exposing what seems to be objective classification is in actual an ideological fabrication. This critique is strengthened when he delineates civilizational identities as "*illusions: arbitrarily drawn constructs with porous, brittle, and overlapping borders,*" unveiling the way myth freezes historically situational divisions into nominally permanent realities. The signifier explored earlier at the denotative and connotative levels within this semiotic framework, such as the "war on terror," "migrant," and "foreign" crumbles into a overarching narrative that validate exclusion, surveillance and legitimize hierarchy.

The "war on terror," previously observed as policy and later as fear-infused discourse, is rendered mythic as a moral defence of civilization, despite the fact that Hamid exposes it as "*a war against a concept, not a nation*" (p.15), hence exposing the ideological exploitation underlying its authority. Simultaneously, myth operates by persistently getting dominant power narratives stabilized while obfuscating their internal contradictions. Across this mythic logic, migrants are observed as fixed permanent figures of hostility and danger with their present justifying borders and security, even though Hamid's demonstrates the absurdity of rigid classification referring to hybrid or ambiguous identities that defy singularly distinctive belonging. Moreover, he reveals how structural inequality is disguised by the myth shrouded by the illusions of moral coherence by criticizing the world with contradictory standards that stipulate commitment to "global free markets" while denying "*the global free movement of labor*" (p.13). Hence the naturalization of hierarchy as economic inevitability is exposed by his narrative. Myth not only constructs meaning but also regulates perception by transforming ideology into common sense. By unmasking civilization, belonging and identity as mythic productions rather than natural truths, the work demonstrates how dominant cultural narratives are constructed, stabilized, and simultaneously destabilized through language.

The Interplay of Denotation, Connotation, and Myth in Meaning-Making

The interplay of denotation, connotation and myth is very crucial in Hamid's narrative discourse since it functions as an synergistic interconnected process by means of which the meaning is incrementally constructed and ideologically polished. The expressions like 'civilization' and 'war on terror' appear to be harmless at first. They come with the built in cultural preferences. As the discussion deepens, such as "*arbitrarily drawn constructs with porous, brittle, and overlapping borders,*" the denotative expressions are destabilized and begin to feel emotionally loaded engendering the emotional and ideological tension. As the meaning of these terms shift from simple description to the judgment, they seem to be carrying the feelings of suspicion. At this point, language is performing dual function, mirroring the reality and shaping ho people perceive it.

When the emotional weight grows, myth comes into play and the connotative interpretations start to look like common sense. For example the Hamid's expression 'a war against a concept, not a nation' and 'war on terror' reframe themselves to show that it is not a dispute among countries, but a battle against invisible threat that could appear anywhere. The label like 'foreign' and 'outsider' are no longer neutral, they freeze identity

and subtly suggest who has the right to belong. As we have seen, the interplay of three tiers in Barthes's semiotic model is of utmost significance in determining that ground work is laid by denotation and connotation intensifies interpretation. The representations further lead to myth which secures ideological authority. The study traces the cultivation of dominant narratives and the process of their naturalization along with how they are questioned through language.

Conclusion

Hamid's *Discontent and Its Civilizations* presents an analysis on how language can quietly structure the progression and direct the way we envision the world and the people in it. The expression, which seems to be a simple reference, already embodies culturally bequeathed beliefs about peoples' status of belonging. At the denotative level, they are mere nation, border or even a community but deep down they carry inherited beliefs. The research made it clear to the readers that Hamid is not only exposing these subdued power dynamics but also confronting the soothe we take in them. He provokes us to look out for the juncture when ordinary language begins to feel like unquestionable truth. Through the analysis of his essays, this research postulates how denotation and connotation are exemplified and providing literal and non-literal meanings. Denotative meaning provides literal meaning, connotation provides the interpretative depth or individual meaning and myth naturalizes ideological construction and it becomes part of artificial meanings. This article makes the conclusion that Barthes's theory of semiotics is essential for critical decoding of structures in contemporary literature. Hamid's discourse draws attention to ambiguity, mixed identities and constant change suggesting that paying attention to how language performs helps us engage more critically with the narratives that shape cultural life today. If identified by the reader, his own role may also be recognized in either maintaining or questioning these narratives. On these grounds, Hamid's work turns out to be a timely reminder that meaning is never fixed, and ethical reading class out for ever-present alertness of the stories we inherit and repeat.

Recommendations

The study recommends amplifying Barthes's semiotic framework to a broader spectrum of contemporary literature, semiotic artifact and cultural narratives to unmask the consolidation of ideological meanings by seemingly neutral constructions. Future research on post 9/11 media discourse, diasporic narratives and South-Asian non fiction, may probe analogous semiotic reconfiguration by tracing down the interplay of denotation connotation and myth across heterogeneous context. Moreover, the investigation advocates cultivating critical deconstructive and consciousness-building literacies to question and challenge essentialized cultural divisions. It also enables the reader to identify the ideological work interwoven in everyday discourse. By engaging in comparative investigations of Hamid's narrative in conjunction with other postcolonial writers, the understanding of hybridity, resilience and fluidity in contemporary cultural narrative may be accentuated and deepen.

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