

An investigation of Symbols Representing Underlying Themes in the Movie “MOANA”: A Semiotic Analysis

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Abstract

In Semiotics, cultural society and regular phenomenon are investigated as signs. The fundamental reason for semiotic analysis is to examine, comprehend and translate signs and the co-operation of the signs and sign systems. The objective of this study is to find out the symbols in the movie “Moana” through Semiotic Analysis. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the symbols, “Ogden and Richard’s Theory of Meaning” is applied on the movie “Moana”. The whole movie revolves around the characters especially “Moana” while her feminine approach represents that all the female characters depicts positivity as all the allies of Moana are female characters while all the male characters depicts destruction as all the male characters are obstacles for her. The researchers interested in any kind of visual imagery are hence provided by a platform through which one can analyze, understand and interpret these symbols used in the movie.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Research

Semiotic analysis was said to start by two individuals, Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher and a Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Both Peirce and Saussure construct their speculations with respect to the crucial qualification of the sign between the signifier and the signified, that is, between the oral or composed type of the sign and the importance it epitomizes. As indicated by Saussure, semiotics is the signs found in writings. Signs that are comprehend when the signifiers and signified are consolidated. Saussure as referred to in Chandler (2000) characterized signifier as the type of which the sign takes. It is the material indication of dialect, the genuine letters, sound and image used to speak to what the speaker/writer needs to convey. Signified on the

other hand, deals on concept it represents. It isn't the material object however a theoretical idea of what the signifier implies.

The study intends to apply the approach “Semiotic Analysis” on the movie “Moana”. Moana Waialiki, a sea voyager and the only daughter of a chieftain. The demigod “Maui” stole the heart of the goddess, Te Fitti. The island’s happiness can only come back when “Moana” sets off on an epos journey across Pacific along with “Maui” to return the heart of the goddess.

Everything that is said has meaning. Similarly, everything in visual discourse refers to various interpretations. The statement of the problem is to find out the symbols in the movie ‘Moana’ through semiotic analysis. It intends to identify the signs that are understood when the

signifiers and signified are combined. It intends to cover the relation of signifier and signified and helps to explore the underlying themes.

The study is the delimitation of the semiotic analysis. In semiotics analysis, Semiotics can be applied to anything which can be seen as signifying something - in other words, to everything which has meaning within the movie. Particularly, remain focusing on the “symbols” and the recurrent “themes”. The main objectives of the study are to explore the symbols by semiotic analysis of the movie “Moana” and to extract the underlying themes in the movie with the help of symbols

The study is significant as it has not been applied on the respective movie earlier. It will be helpful for the students of literature and linguistics to understand the movie. The study is significant because ‘Semiotics’ is likewise critical to concentrate on the signs and symbols that the movie needed to convey. The movie takes after the enterprise of the young lady who discovers her own particular voice and produces her own character.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards(1923) in their sculpture “The Meaning Of Meaning” asserted that this may be truly illustrated via diagram, wherein the three factors worried every time any declaration is made, or understood, are located at the corners of the triangle, the family members which keep between them being represented with the aid of edges. The point just made may be restated via announcing that in this appreciate the bottom of the triangle is quite specific in composition from both of the other aspects among a thought and an image, casual family members maintain while we talk, the symbolism we rent is triggered partially through the reference we are making and partially with the aid of social and mental factors the purpose for which we are making the reference, the proposed effect of our symbols on different humans, and our own mind set. Whilst we hear what is stated, the symbol each cause us to perform an act of reference and to count on an attitude to be able to, in step with occasions, be greater or less much like the act and the attitude of the speaker.

M. A. K. Halliday and Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen (1999) in their book “Construing Experience through Meaning: A Language-based Approach to Cognition” uttered that the authors don’t forget language as a semiotic device, however they best point out the dyadic model of semiotics developed by using Saussure and linguistics influenced by Saussure, along with Hjelmslev and Firth. Peirce analyzed the sign relation in extra intensity than Saussure and emphasized its irreducible triadic nature. Even though Halliday and Matthiessen by no means point out Peirce, they have rediscovered many of Peirce’s triads in their systematic evolution (Peirce 1991-1998). Their choice of phenomenon because the most standard category is an unconscious endorsement of Peirce’s factor that his categories have been in most cases phenomenological in place of ontological. The systematic triad of being-having, doing-happening, and sensing-announcing corresponds to Peirce fundamental triad of satisfactory, reaction and illustration.

Wolff-Michael Roth & G. Michael Bowen (2001) in their article, “Professionals Read Graphs: A Semiotic Analysis” reports that regular with conventions in semiotics and philosophy, sense and that means are not synonyms. Sense is given by using the connection of a signal to its interpretants, that is, the region is signal takes with respect to different signs, and therefore its location in language gains (Wittgenstein, 1994). Which means consists of both experience (S I) and reference (S R) dimensions of a sign and calls for sufficiently large rhizomatic or maze like community of feel and reference family members (ECO, 1994, Noth, 1990). Basically, whilst we study in everyday situations, in newspaper textual content for example, phrases and members are transparent. That is, we read, but bounce beyond the textual content itself to the matters that the textual content speaks approximately.

Chien-Wen Lin¹, Ta-Long Lin² (2014) in their article, “Using Triadic Semiotics in Storytelling” indicated that that signs and symptoms supply instant and applicable simple records; symbols, but, are the implied meanings behind visional pictures or signs (Bruce-Mitford & Wilkinson, 2009). Typically signal relation has been divided into three factors—icon, index and

image which was firstly followed by Ch. W. Morris, who also brought semantics into semiotics. Those three elements had been broadly used in fields, together with technological know-how, linguistics, logic, mass-communication, aesthetics, movie/theater and animation art, etc. signs can be regarded as triadic relation of a set of three: $ZR=R(M,O,I)$. Any signal Z can be appeared as a media M, this may represent system “Semiose”. Thru the introduction of of triadic relation of signs and symptoms exhibit fashions of essential innovation(or message), creativity elements or options (Walther,2002).

Dilara M (2016) in “Analyzing the Concept of Beauty, Femininity and Heroism Presented in Moana” highlighted that she is the fairest of all. Her skin is as white as snow, lips as purple as blood and hair as black as ebony wood. She is Snow White, the princess who were given famous via Grinn tales which was recreated as their first essential function films through Walt Disney inside the 12 months 1937. Then they brought onscreen a line of sensitive princess thru their feature movies, Cinderella, dozing beauty, Alice in Wonderland, Tangled Ever After, Frozen and the saga maintains bringing earlier than us their 56th movie released in the year 2016, presenting Moana who has gracefully subverted the so-referred to as the concept of splendor and femininity. Disney productions have practiced it even before Moana, to be precise within the year 2012 with its brave which also had made a singular break in the conventional presentation of sensitive Disney princesses with Merida, the Scottish princess of the medieval era. Merida turned into the first self-reliant Disney heroine. Moana Again is a real instance of Disney’s 0.33 wave feminism in which she, in contrast to other Disney princesses, comes inside the form of a fearless sixteen 12 months old who, hates being called a princess and defies her father who forbids her from venturing into the giant ocean to save her island from ruin. The paper therefore is making an attempt to focus on the trade that has come inside the visualization and belief of the so-known as concept of splendor that Disney is trying to bring out thru its Moana.

Madeline Streiff and Lauren Dundes (2017) in “From Shapeshifter to Lava Monster: Gender Stereotypes in Disney’s Moana” asserted that Moana(2016) maintains a subculture of Disney princess movies that perpetuate gender stereotypes. The flim incorporates the usual Electoral undercurrent, with Moana looking for to show her independence to her overprotective father. Moana’s partner in her adventures, Maui, is brazenly hyper masculine, a trait epitomized by a phallic fishhook this is critical to his identity. Maui’s struggles with shape-shifting additionally replicate male anxieties approximately performing masculinity. Maui violates the mother island, first through entering her cave after which via the usage of his fish hook to rob her of he fertility. The repercussions of this act are the basis of the plot: the mother island abandons her from as a nurturing, youthful female (Te-Fitti) centered on creation to emerge as a vengeful lava monster (Hikar). On the end, Moana effectively urges Hikar to get in touch with her actual self, a brave but simple act this is enough to convey returned Te-Fitti, a passive, smiling green goddess. The affiliation of younger, fertile woman with properly and witch-like infertile girls with evil implies that girl’s really worth and nicely-being are structured upon their procreative function. Stereotypical gender tropes that still consist of woman abuse of energy and a slim theory of masculinity merit analysis if you want to in addition development in recognizing and addressing patterns of gender hegemony in famous Disney movies.

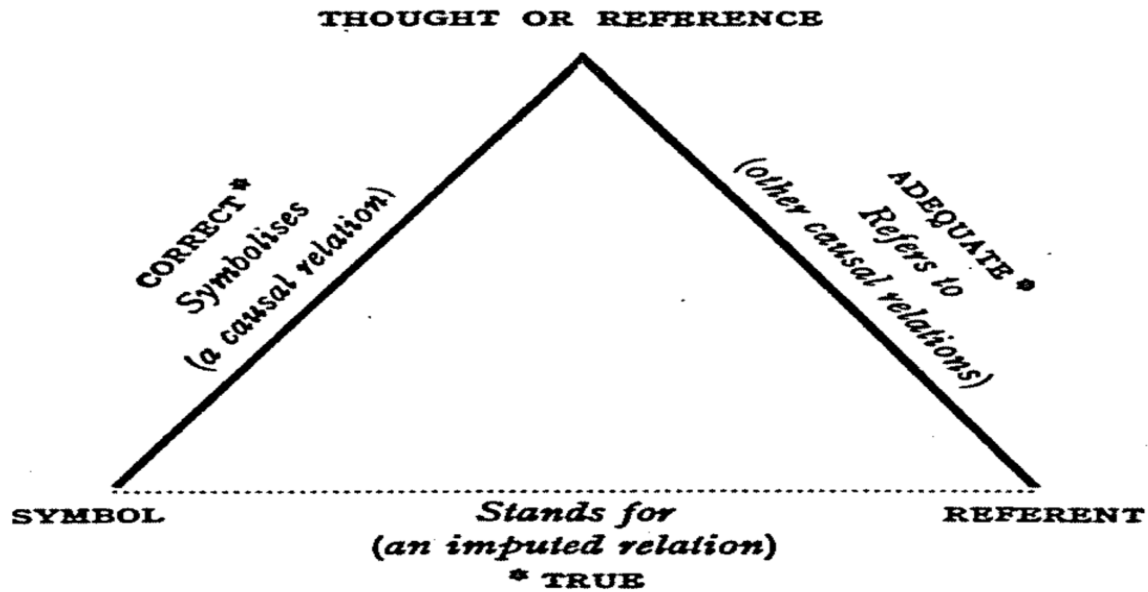
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Paradigm

The study is qualitative, interpretive and descriptive in nature. It does not have any of the numerical data. Amongst all the animated movies only “Moana” the movie of Disney Organization has been selected as the sample.

3.2 Method

The method which is used in the research is “Ogden and Richard’s Theory of Meaning”. “Ogden and Richard’s Theory of Meaning” has been used as a tool.



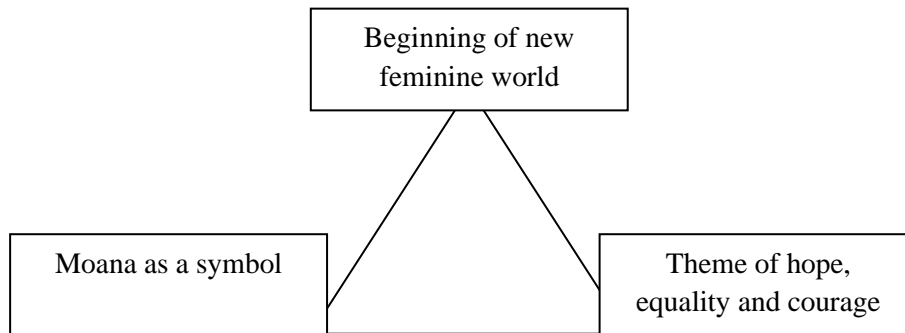
This triangle was a theoretical framework of Ogden and Richard's theory and by applying this framework on the research one can conduct the data analysis appropriately.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Representation of Moana as a symbol, reference and a thought of reference:

The whole movie is focused on the central character of the movie, i.e. "Moana". As, from the beginning of the movie, "Moana" symbolizes the beginning of the new feminine world. She is the chosen one. Although, she does not understand why or how this task (which ocean has been assigned to her) could be possible, but she knows that she was chosen for a reason.

"We are chosen even though we are not worthy".



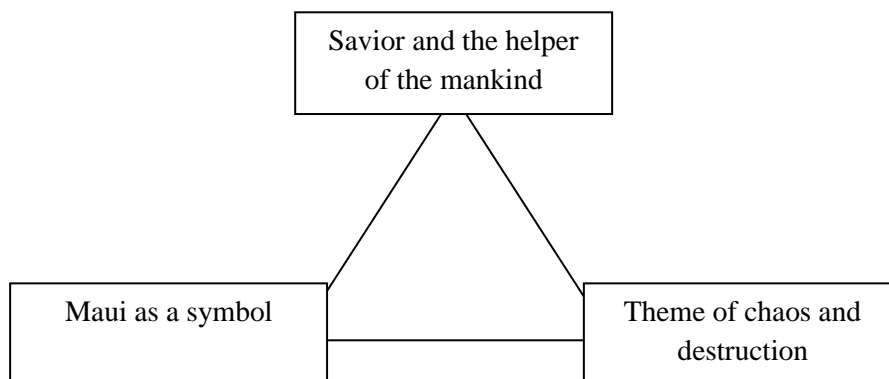
She was chosen by her villagers, her father and by the ocean itself. Chosen to take the heart of Te-Fitti and get Maui, so that Maui can replace the heart of Te-Fitti. According to semantic triangle, this was the thought of reference. But, Maui actually does not help Moana because Moana is the one who takes the heart back from the pirates. She is the one who

gets Maui's Hook from the crab. Also, she ends up the entire scenario by putting the heart back into the Te-Fitti. She also represents and produces the theme of equality because she was the new chieftain of her village. Before her, all the chiefs were men. So, she represents equality. She also represents the courage as she knew that everything is going to be

reconciled and the burden of the chaotic world is not on her shoulders. She is the one who gives Maui the hope and courage to go on because of the hope and courage that is given to her by the ocean (the god). As a believer, there is always hope which is

not about human beings, but about the god. It is not defined by the abilities, but by the god. So, “Moana” gives the theme of hope, equality and courage.

4.2 Representation of Maui as a symbol, reference and a thought of reference:



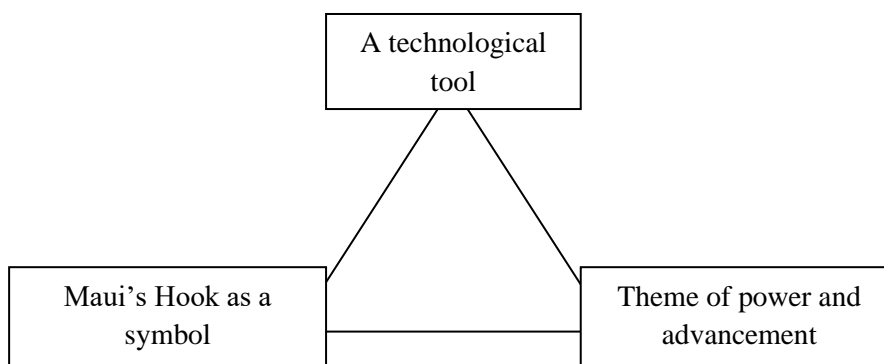
Maui, the shape-shifter, the demigod of wind and the sea. He is meant to be the savior and the helper of the mankind. Moreover, Maui who pulled out the islands by his mighty hook. According to the semiotic triangle, a thought was changed when it was realized that all the masculine characters began to steal the heart, so as Maui did. Notice mostly that Maui lifts in the air (sky) in the form of eagle to steal the heart of Te-Fitti. Finally, when Maui reached there, he is symbol of masculinity. He is not there to unite the world and to create life but is there to steal the heart and unleash the progressive destruction of all the things so simply Maui is the cause of the whole apocalyptic situation from the

very first moment. As he is defeated by the demon of earth and fire (Hikar) and lost his magical hook. In a nutshell, Maui gives the theme of chaos and destruction.

4.3 Representation of Maui’s Hook as a symbol, reference and a thought of reference:

Maui’s hook is an image of technology in its most basic sense. Although, it seems like a normal hook, but Maui reveals in the movie that,

“He is nothing without his hook”



The hook is the tool by which human can act upon, modify and run into the chaotic world. In accordance to the theory, “Ogden and Richard’s theory of meaning”, the hook of the fish is particularly important because it goes down into the

sea and catches that is useful, which can be utilized or integrated by the human society. The hook is the tool of the logo. This hook shows the ultimate capacity to pull something out of chaos and make it useful. In the movie, the pacific’s and the oceans of

these islands make them a kind of vertical height on the horizontal backdrop of the water.

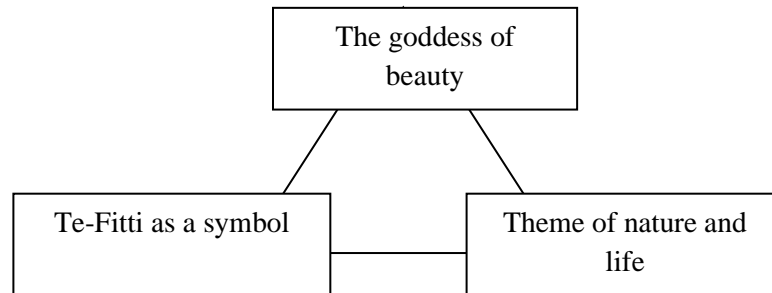
“Pulling an island out of the water is pulling it out towards heaven”.

When this hook is lost, Maui is nothing. This means that all the powers are gone. So, this hook highlights the themes of power and advancement.

4.4 Representation of Te-Fitti as a symbol, reference and a thought of reference:

“The world is made by the union of opposites: heaven and earth, the great father and the great mother”.

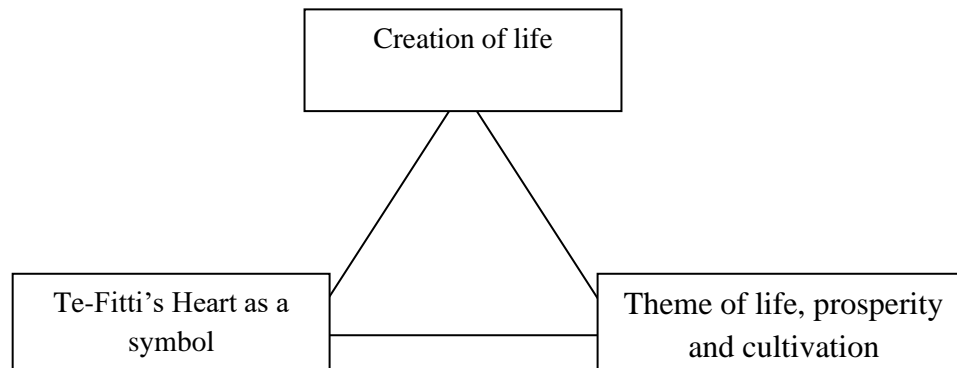
This actual myth continued to be there in the movie. It is shown as the kind of ghost, a kind of invisible strength. The feminine part has only been discussed in the movie i.e. the earthly part (ocean) from this earthly part mother island Te-Fitti, the goddess of beauty and from her, the life emerges. She is clothed in endless green leaves; she is the classical goddess of life and nature. As, portrayed in the movie she was the first island itself and became the source to produce life on other islands and brought the fertility in the world. She symbolizes the beauty but she is turned into the demon of the earth and fire (Hikar) when Maui stole the heart of goddess, Te-Fitti.



Through the semiotic triangle, it is shown that without her heart she was just a demon and unleashed the progressive destruction on the islands. While in the final part of the movie, Moana placed the heart back and Te-Fitti was transformed from dead, evil monster into a beautiful, life-giving goddess. After her transformation, all the things are set onto the right path. So, Te-Fitti gives the theme of nature and life.

4.5 Representation of Te-Fitti’s heart as a symbol, reference and a thought of reference:

Te-Fitti’s heart is an ancient green color small gem which allowed the creation of life and multiple islands that would make up the homes (life). Although it seems like a simple green colored luminous stone but the heart was the only reason to bring the life on the islands, but the heart is infiltrated from its resting place. It became the progressive destruction of all the things.

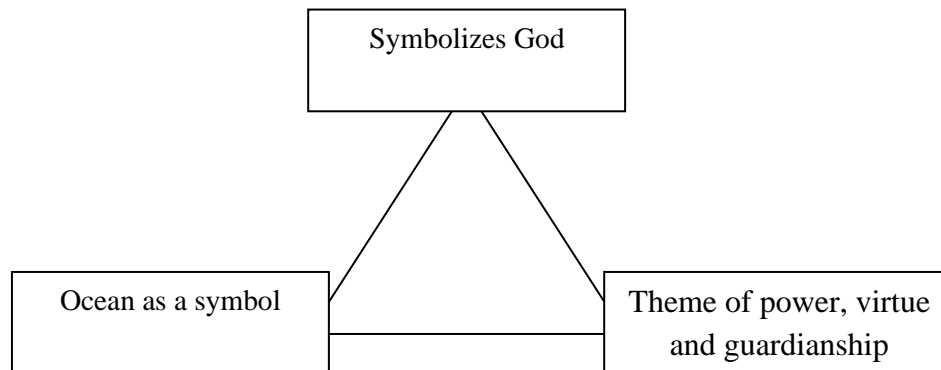


When Maui escapes taking the heart, he was attacked by the fire demon (Hikar). In the scuffle, the heart of Te-Fitti is lost. According to myths, if the heart of te-Fitti is not returned to its rightful place, the world will slowly start to decline and be destroyed. As semiotic triangle works, the heart was a source of life but unfortunately it became the destruction for the world. The heart of Te-Fitti was lost in the sea and was found and bestowed upon the

young teenager Moana by the ocean. Moana was convinced by her grandmother to place the heart back. And thus, under the guidance of grandmother, Moana made it her mission to return the heart and save the world. When, Moana placed the heart back, all the things came into its right place. So, the heart is a source to bring life. Therefore, it gives the theme of life, prosperity and cultivation.

4.6 Representation of Ocean as a symbol, reference and a thought of reference:

“God makes all things new and beautiful”.



Ocean is symbolic as it appears to be the only friend of Moana. In the beginning of the movie, the ocean became its first hurdle as Moana did not know how to swim or row a boat. Every time when she fell in the ocean and was about to be drowned, the ocean miraculously throws her on the boat or onto the shore. The ocean symbolizes the “god” and by semiotic triangle the theme of divine source can be extracted. The ocean acts as a divine source throughout the movie. It helps her, guides her and leads her to the destiny. The god has plans for everyone in this world. Similarly, the ocean also has a plan for everyone. In the movie one of the major scenes in the movie which proves that is when Te-Fitti is transformed from dead evil monster into a beautiful life-giving goddess because of the ocean. It guides Te-Fitti from the vices to virtue. This is what god does with lives if one falls astray and has even a little virtue in hearts. He brings them back because god is powerful, omnipresent and has a plan for each and every one of us.

5. CONCLUSION

This research is all about the relationship of symbols and themes. According to the theory of

“Ogden and Richard’s theory of meaning” it gives a complete description about symbol, thought of reference and the referent. There are so many of the symbols and visional imagery in the movie and thus they have been studied thoroughly by applying the theory of “Ogden and Richard’s theory of meaning” to extract the themes as it gives a complete description of symbol, thought of reference and the referent.

5.1 Findings

The findings include:

- Moana, the central character of the movie is a major symbol. According to the semiotic triangle, Moana is chosen as a symbol while her feminine approach refers to the thought of reference and referent is considered as the theme of hope, equality and courage.
- Maui, the shape-shifter, the demigod of the wind and the sea is portrayed as a symbol while thought of reference is the helper and savior, but the referent shows that he gives the theme of chaos and destruction.
- Maui’s hook is a symbol of technology. According to thought of reference, it seems like a simple normal hook. Maui was nothing

without the hook. The hook is the source of power for Maui and as a referent it gives the theme of power and advancement.

- Te-Fitti, the mother goddess symbolizes the beauty and nature. Thought of reference shows that she symbolizes beauty but she was turned into demon of fire and earth. In the end when Moana placed the heart back; she again became the beautiful and life-giving goddess. So, as a referent she gives the theme of nature and life.
- Te-Fitti's heart, the green colored spiral stone symbolizes the creation of life. Thought of reference shows that it has the spiral sign on it which gives the concept of life and death. As a referent, it shows the life and death because the heart is only the source to bring life. Thus, gives the theme of life, prosperity and cultivation.
- Ocean is symbolic throughout the movie as according to thought of reference it symbolizes god; god is powerful and omnipresent so as ocean is. As a referent, it gives the theme of power, virtue and guardianship.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendations for further researchers are:

- This article intends to focus on the use of symbols and from those symbols how one can extract the themes. Further research can be conducted on the social behavior of the characters in the movie.
- Future researchers can apply the theory of "Ogden and Richard's theory of meaning" on the other animated movies as well.
- Further research can be done on the behavior of female /male characters by using conversational analysis.
- Further Researcher can be done on these symbols as something else due to

their different area of interest, i.e. the cruelty of the male society instead of the creation of the feminine world.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

The aim of this research was to find out the symbols used in the movie and from these symbols how one can extract the recurrent themes. Although it cannot be denied that every person has different perceptions about different things but the symbols used in this research will be helpful. It will give the students a bit sigh of relief and a bit different perspective in different dimensions. Concluding all that, this research is helpful for every student who is interested in visual imagery.

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