
Judging a Book by Its Cover: A Semiotic Analysis of Three Sesotho sa Leboa's Novels Covers

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Novel covers are external objects of art, and art is an expression of the artist's thoughts or ideas to the audience. Authors use book covers to express their artistic and linguistic thoughts or ideas to the readers or viewers. This is to assist readers in comprehending the content of a text or having a glimpse of what the text could be about without reading it. This paper argues that there is a connection between a novel's cover and its potential content, rather than cover pages being mere decorations or illustrations. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the semiotic representation of cover pages of the three selected novels: *Mahlatse a Madimabe* by O.K. Matsepe (1981), *Lenong la Gauta* by H.D.N. Bopape (1982), and *Kgalagalo tša Setu* by M.S. Machitela (2016). It further seeks to explore how meanings are generated and understood through these cover pages. This paper employs a qualitative research method to gather data, which will be thoroughly analyzed and interpreted through textual analysis. Roland Barthes's semiotic theory of understanding foregrounds this paper and sheds some remarkable new developments in this field of study. This paper's findings indicate that authors tend to use cover pages to convey both denotative (literal) and connotative (figurative) meanings. Additionally, the findings indicate that authors collaborating with a publishing house should carefully consider the cover design process, ensuring that they choose designs that effectively convey their linguistic ideas or the essence of the text. Since cover pages are as crucial as the content itself, they serve as predictive indicators of what the text may entail.

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