

# THE ASPECTS OF SEMIOTICS USING BARTHES'S THEORY ON A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS MOVIE POSTER

FARAH HANUM ISFANDIYARY

Dr. Y Herudjati P, M.Sc

Department of English, Faculty of Humanities

Isfandiary@gmail.com

**Abstrak**, Penelitian ini membahas tentang makna denotative dan konotative yang terdapat pada poster film *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Makna denotasi dan konotasi merupakan bagian dari aspek semiotik dalam menganalisa gambar. Analisa mengenai makna denotasi dan konotasi ini berdasarkan pada teori Barthes. Teori Barthes merupakan perkembangan ilmu semiotik dalam analisa objek gambar. Dalam teori ini, peran pembaca menjadi hal yang terpenting untuk dikaji. Peran pembaca inilah yang akan memunculkan berbagai persepsi mengenai makna dari sebuah gambar. Makna ini dapat dilihat dari dua segi yaitu denotasi dan konotasi. Makna Denotasi adalah makna dasar yang ada pada gambar tanpa mengaitkannya dengan nilai sosial budaya yang ada di dalamnya. Makna ini merupakan makna yang ada pada pada level pertama dari sistem semiotik. Sedangkan makna konotasi adalah makna subjektif yang muncul ketika kita mengaitkannya dengan unsur emosi dan perasaan pembacanya dengan nilai budaya yang mereka miliki. Makna konotasi ini merupakan level kedua dari sistem semiotik. Untuk mendapatkan makna konotasi sebuah mitos juga dapat dipakai dalam menganalisa sebuah gambar. Mitos inilah yang digunakan untuk menganalisa unsur budaya dan ideologi dalam gambar. Dalam analisa makna denotasi dan konotasi yang ada pada gambar ini, Barthes membaginya ke dalam dua bagian yaitu tanda verbal dan tanda non verbal agar tidak terjadi kesalahpahaman dalam mengamatinya

**Kata Kunci:** Barthes, Denotasi, konotasi , mitos, tanda verbal dan non verbal

## A. INTRODUCTION

A picture can represent something. How it is looked has its own meaning for the viewer.

There are many uses of picture; one of them is to advertise something like a product. Movie is one of the products which need the picture to advertise itself to the viewer. By seeing the picture; viewer can conclude not just what the picture is but what the movie is. In analyzing an image, it is not just about what exists on the image, but what the meaning of the image is. It relates to the denotative and connotative analysis described in Barthes's semiotic Theory.

Semiotic is a science which learns the sign, object, and its meaning, in Semiotics, there are the signifier and the signified, the signifier refers to the sign and the signified refers to the something that is signified. In this analysis the writer will focus on the Barthes's Semiotics theory which deals with the sign and its meaning on the picture or image.

I am interested in analyzing the picture on *A Series of Unfortunate Events* movie poster. *A Series of Unfortunate Events* is a movie from the adaptation of the 13-book series which tell the unfortunate lives of the Baudelaire orphans, Violet, Klaus and Sunny. This movie was produced in 2004 with Brad Silberling as the director, Robert Gordon and Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket) as the writer and the producer.

This unfortunate story, the actors, and the characterization of the actors are described in its movie poster. The movie poster indirectly describes what the movie is about. The analysis of this movie poster will use the semiotics theory from Barthes which learns about the denotative and connotative meaning of an image or picture.

## **B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **a. Semiotics and Visual Representation**

As a discipline, semiotics is the study of signs and their functions. In Saussurean terminology, the signs can be classified into the signifier and the signified. The signifier is related to the expression and the signified is related to the content. The signs in semiotics not only include the visual signs like drawings, paintings, and photograph but also include the sounds, words and body language.

The study of semiotics is focused on the representation of signs, like the language, image, and object. In visual semiotics, the visual signs have more direct meaning than in language. The representation not only shows the world but also the interaction in it. This interaction can be

accompanied by the text or not and then it will constitute a recognizable kind of text (paintings, poster, magazine, etc) (Jewitt, 2004). The application of semiotics is getting larger when Barthes developed the semiotics from linguistics to visual image, such as the photography, advertisements and movement picture.

#### b. Barthes's Semiotics Theory

Roland Barthes stated that Semiology 'aims to take in any system of signs whatever their substances and limits like; images, gestures, musical sounds, and objects.' (Barthes, 1968). These are as a system of significance. Roland Barthes said that semiology is the part of linguistics; to be precise; it is the part covering the great signifying unities of discourse (Barthes, 1968).

Barthes uses the denotative and connotative 'levels of meanings' to analyze the signs in visual object. Barthes distinguished the analzing of the signs into two, the verbal and non verbal signs. The verbal sign is like the texts of the poster, such as the title, the names of the actors, the date of movie releasing and many more. The non verbal sign are the images of the poster which support the verbal signs in order to make the poster is interesting as the package of advertisement.

##### 1) Denotation

Denotation is what all people see without relates it to their society, culture or ideology (Bouzida, 2014). In other words, denotation is the basic meaning of visual signs. This is the first level of signification

##### 2) Connotation

It describes the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotion of their users and the values of their culture (Fisk, 1992). Roland Barthes stated that 'connotation being

itself as a system that comprises signifier, signified and as the process which unites the former to the latter (Barthes, 1968).

c. Movie Poster

In the *Cambridge Dictionary*, poster is ‘a large printed picture, photograph, or notice that you stick or pin to a wall or board, usually for decoration or to advertise something. Poster is created as the result of Lithography development which has existed since 18<sup>th</sup>. This is introduced by Jules Cheret, the artist for graphic design. In the first time of the release, poster was just created in the text model; the paper was just full of the text. Besides, it was just produced in small size. Then Jules developed the graphic design in making poster to be very pictorial which was dominated by the picture. This improvement is based from the economical factor.

Poster is a tool for marketing. Movie is one of the products which need a poster to advertise itself. Movie poster is the tool to get the attention of the reader and to invite them watch the movie by its artistic picture. In line with this, poster is also a tool of communication because there is the element of information in it which aims to inform people who see it.

**C. METHODS OF THE STUDY**

In order to support the study, project must have a base to build up the body. The writer uses 4 methods, which are method of research, instrument of research, steps of data analysis, and units of analysis. In method of research, the writer uses qualitative methods focusing on the sign of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* movie poster as the object in this research. In instruments of the research, the writer uses herself as the subject. The writer reads and identifies the meaning of the signs in the *A Series of Unfortunate Events* movie poster after she groups the signs in it, then she writes the needed data and interprets the meaning of signs that she gets. For Steps of Data

Analysis Technique, First, the writer chooses the object to be analyzed in this research. The object is the poster of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* movie. After that, the writer specifies and analyses the semiotic literary works of the poster based on Barthes's theory. The unit of analysis which is used in this research is the verbal and non verbal signs which have the denotation and connotation meanings in the poster of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* Movie.

## **D. ANALYSIS**

### 1. Data Description

NO.	Verbal and Non Verbal Signs	Connotation
1.	Jim Carrey	One of the actor's names in this movie. It emphasizes the character in the movie. He plays the important role in this movie which makes the movie correlates to the title which is about the unfortunate events.
2.	Mishap, Mayhem, Misadventure, oh joy	The words indicate the movie plot and show what the movie tells about. The movie has some of feelings, events and complications as the steps of the story.
3.	Lemony Snicket's A series of Unfortunate Events	This is the title of the movie. It shows what the movie is telling about. By seeing this title, people will know that this movie is telling about the unfortunate events that maybe faced by the three kids on the poster, they are the Baudelaire's kids.
4.	December 17	It shows the date of movie release. It is used to inform and to ask the reader to come in that day and to watch this movie.

5	The Full Moon	The background of the picture is the full moon. The full moon here brings the scary message, it is like what are in mythology belief about full moon. The full moon is also as the light which will show the shadow that comes on it.
6	The Man Shadow	The Man shadow showed on moon light. This is the shadow of Count Olaf. Because he plays as the antagonist character in this movie, so the shadow shows the feel of mad man. He looks like the witch. He has the body like the witch, with his long nails, the sharp nose and chin. It indicates that the man is the evil man who is ready to catch his victims.
7.	The outside, nature (the cloudy sky grass, water	The place that they are standing is in the outside. It is described by the cloudy sky, the grass and the water which exist on the poster. The cloudy sky shows the impression of some feelings, like sad, melancholy, gloomy and scary. It may indicate that the movie has the emotion of those feeling. The Baudelaire's kids seem that they do not have the home. In the same time, they have to run away from Count Olaf. Because they do not have the home, they just stand there.
8.	The three Baudelaire's kids.	They are the Baudelaire's kids who get the unfortunate life since their parents died. In this picture, Violet, as the eldest kid, is bringing the suitcase while carrying her elder sister, Sunny. On her side, Klaus is standing. From the picture

		<p>we can indicate that they are running away from something. The cloudy sky which is the background and the condition of sky behind them indicate that they are facing the gloomy, sad and scary things. They seem like they do not know where they have to go so they are just standing outside while bringing the suitcase and waiting for something Joy. The three Baudelaire's Kids and the cloudy sky are placed in the man shadow. It indicates that They live in the eye of the mad man, Count Olaf. Count Olaf becomes their scary shadow in their life.</p>
9..	Count Olaf's hand	<p>Count Olaf hand is described at the corner of the poster. His hand seems that he wants to get something, he seems like he wants to catch people. His hand is bounced back to the moonlight and creates the full body shadow of Count Olaf.</p>

## 2. Data Analysis

- Jim Carrey: By using his name, it will make the viewers want to watch the movie because the actor is Jim Carrey, the name of famous and talented actor. Jim Carrey here as the tool for marketing to attract the viewers because of his talent in acting.
- Mishap: The next verbal sign is the word “mishap”. Based on *Advanced English Dictionary*, mishap is an instance of misfortune, an unpredictable outcome that is unfortunate (bad luck; mischance). This word may show the reader that this movie is telling something bad luck or mishap.

- c. Mayhem: The next verbal sign is the word “Mayhem”. In *Advanced English Dictionary*, Mayhem is a violent and needless disturbance, the willful and unlawful crippling or mutilation of another person. From this definition, this gives the next clue about the movie. In this movie, Count Olaf does the immoral act, this is a willful. Count Olaf does everything for the heirs of Baudelaire’s family
- d. Misadventure: Misadventure is the next verbal sign in this poster. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Misadventure is the death caused by person accidentally while performing a legal act without negligence or intent to harm, or we can call it as an unfortunate mishap. According to the meaning, it is appropriate with the story in this movie. What happens to the Baudelaire’s family is because the unfortunate life they have. They must meet the murderer which cannot be neglected and proved.
- e. Oh Joy: The next word is “joy”. In the *Advanced English dictionary*, joy means the emotion of great happiness, something or someone that provides a source of happiness. After the Baudelaire’s kids face all that unhappy things, they wish that they can get the joy of life. In the last story, finally Count Olaf is arrested by the police, this makes the Baudelaire’s kid are free from him and live happily.
- f. Lemony Snicket’sA series of Unfortunate Events: This is the title of the movie. By seeing the title people will know that this movie tells about some unfortunate events experienced by people.
- g. December 17: It shows when the movie will be released. It is on December 17.
- h. Full moon: The background of the poster is the moon with bright color. It is called as Full Moon. There are many mythologies about this full moon. Some people said that full moon describes the mad behavior like attacks of violence, murder, and the other illegal activities. In the westerns culture, Full moon is also described as the time when werewolf appears to show his true self. Werewolf refers to someone who is cursed to be a wolf. It will become a wolf when the full moon lights up
- i. The Man Shadow, the three Baudelaire’s kids and the outside: This is the shadow of Count Olaf. His character is antagonist, therefore, he is described in scary bad shadow to support his character in the poster. His hands seem like he wants to catch someone or certain people. In this case, the three Baudelaire’s kids are the target of his evil. It can be seen by the unity of the picture. The three Baudelaire’s are in the shadow of Count Olaf.

Besides, another picture in the shadow is the picture of the outside (cloudy sky, water, and the grass.

- j. Count Olaf's hand in the picture poster is placed on the corner of the poster. Although there is only count Olaf's hand picture on the corner, but the shadow which bounces back to the moonlight results the shadow of Count Olaf's full body. The hand looks so scary, it is described by the fingernails which are long like the witch.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

In the poster *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, the writer has found some behind meanings on it by using Barthes Theory. There are many signs of the poster which have the denotation and connotation meaning whether verbal and non verbal signs. These signs show not only the images and the words but also show that they have the behind meanings if we read it deeply and all of the signs support the title of this movie poster, they are about the unfortunate events. The reader will know that the descriptions in the poster are appropriate with the title *A Series of Unfortunate Events* because all of the pictures refer to unfortunate life which has faced by the people in the poster.

## **F. REFERENCES**

Barthes, R. (1968). *Elements of Semiology*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York. Hilland Wang. 21 September 2016 <[https://monoskop.org/images/2/2c/Barthes\\_Roland\\_Elements\\_of\\_Semiology\\_1977.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/2/2c/Barthes_Roland_Elements_of_Semiology_1977.pdf)>.

Bouzida, F. (2014). *The Semiology Analysis in Media Studies - Roland Barthes Approach*. Proceeding in SOCIOINT14-Internastional Conference and Social Science and Humanities. 21 September 2016 <<http://www.ocerint.org/Socioint14/ebook/papers/293.pdf>>.

Fisk, J. ( 1990). *Introduction to Communication Studies*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge.

Jensen, K.(2002). *A Handbook of Media and Communication Research*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London. 21 September, 2016 <<http://e-journal. uajy. ac. id/821/3/2TA11217>>.

Oxford Advance Learner's dictionary (6<sup>th</sup>ed). (2000). *Oxford: Oxford University Press*. 21 September 2016 <<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/poster>>.

*Curtin, B. Semiotics and Visual Representation (n.d). International Program in Design and Architecture.* Page 51-54. 21 September 2016 <<http://www.arch..chula.ac.th/journal/files/art/icle/IJjpgMx2iiSun103201.pdf>>

A'la, Tazkiyatul, F. (2011). "A Semiotic Analysis on the A-Milds Advertisement Using Roland Barthes's Theory". Thesis, English Letters Department. Jakarta: Faculty of Adab and Humanities UIN. 27 October 2016 <<http://www.repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/bitstream/123456789/979/1/97528-Tazikiyatul%20FIKRIYAH%20ALA-FAH.Pdf>>.

Halldin, O. *The History of Poster* (n.d). National Library of Sweden. 8 March 2017 <<http://www.kb.se/Docs/.../history-poster.pdf>>

History.com staff. 2013. *7 Unusual Myths and Theories about the Moon*. 4 April 2017 <<http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/7-unusual-myths-and-theories-about-the-moon>>

Jewitt, T. (2004). Visual Meaning: A Social Semiotic Approach. *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*, 9.