

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS IN POETRY: UNVEILING THE MEANING BEHIND SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

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ABSTRACT

Poetry, as a literary work, serves as a medium of expression rich in meaning. Each word, line, and stanza in a poem contains signs that can be interpreted in multiple layers. This study aims to analyze poetry using a semiotic approach, particularly the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, to uncover the denotative and connotative meanings of poetic signs. The object analyzed is a short poem titled 'At Midnight', which is rich in symbolism and representation. The study reveals that poetry harbors meanings beyond linguistic structure, reflecting cultural and ideological constructions. The semiotic approach enables a deep and multidimensional exploration of meaning in poetry.

Keywords: *Semiotics, Poetry, Signs, Saussure, Barthes, Symbolism, Meaning.*

INTRODUCTION

Poetry is a literary form that is both concise and rich in meaning. Poets craft not just grammatically structured sentences but also symbolic, emotional, and philosophical effects through their unique use of language. Therefore, poetry offers fertile ground for analysis using a semiotic approach.

Semiotics, or the study of signs, is vital in literary studies as it deciphers hidden meanings embedded in linguistic symbols. Ferdinand de Saussure posited that every sign consists of two components: the signifier and the signified. Roland Barthes expanded this concept into two levels of meaning: denotation and connotation. Through these major theories, poetry can be interpreted more deeply, both linguistically and culturally.

This research aims to analyze a symbolic short poem using semiotic theory to uncover how meanings are constructed and interpreted.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with text analysis as the primary approach. The object of study is a fictional short poem titled 'At Midnight'. The analysis identifies key signs within the poem and interprets their denotative and connotative meanings using the semiotic theories of Saussure and Barthes. Interpretations are made with consideration to cultural and ideological contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Poem Text:

At midnight, the owl sings,
Carrying messages from the silence.

Analysis of Signs and Meanings

In this poem, several significant signs emerge: 'the owl', 'sings', and 'silence'. Denotatively, the owl is a nocturnal animal. Connotatively, it may symbolize death, solitude, or wisdom, depending on the cultural context.

The word 'sings' is metaphorical—it does not merely indicate sound but the act of conveying something unseen. The owl's song is interpreted as a mysterious message from

the night.

'Silence' suggests stillness, but connotatively it may represent isolation, reflection, or even a transcendent condition. Thus, when the owl 'carries messages from the silence', the poet might be expressing that within quietness lies profound truth—psychological, spiritual, or philosophical.

Cultural and Ideological Context

In Indonesian culture, owls often symbolize bad omens or death. In Western traditions, they represent wisdom. According to Barthes, signs can form myths—constructed meanings that appear natural but are culturally and ideologically shaped. In this poem, the owl serves as a 'messenger' of inner awareness concealed beneath the noise of everyday life.

The poem can also be seen as a reflection on modern life, where silence reveals more truth than constant activity. Semiotic analysis allows not only for linguistic interpretation but also for uncovering existential and social meanings in poetry.

CONCLUSION

A semiotic analysis of the poem 'At Midnight' reveals its multilayered meanings—both denotative and connotative. Signs like 'the owl' and 'silence' function as symbols reflecting psychological, spiritual, and ideological aspects. Through the theories of Saussure and Barthes, we understand that poetry is not merely aesthetic expression, but a complex site for cultural and ideological reflection. Therefore, semiotics is a powerful analytical tool for in-depth literary analysis.

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