

MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS USING ROLAND BARTHES THEORY IN THE POSTER EXHUMA

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Abstract. This study looks at one official theater poster for the 2024 Korean horror movie Exhuma and uses it as the main source of information. This study looks at three male characters by using a method that brings together Roland Barthes' ideas about how signs work and Kress and van Leeuwen's way of understanding visual messages. The analysis looks at four different ways things are shown visually: the colors used, how the body moves, where someone is looking, and the style of the text. The results indicate that the dark color scheme suggests a cursed area, the three different movements represent the roles of Challenger, Fearful, and Sacrificial, and the lack of eye contact shows a danger coming from above. Together, these parts create the story of Jogsa, or how family sins are passed down through generations. This study suggests that visual elements without words are very important in creating scary stories. Previous research on Exhuma or Korean horror posters usually looks at Barthes' semiotics on its own, without connecting it to multimodal theory. This makes visual analysis stay surface-level, focusing only on 'expression' without looking into how color, gaze, and gesture work as signs or symbols. Therefore, this study is new in two important ways: first, it combines Roland Barthes' idea about myths with Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar (2021) to look at the poster as a real example of a multimodal text. Second, it focuses on the three male characters to show the cultural myth of Jogsa or ancestral curse, which hasn't been looked into in earlier poster studies.

Keywords: *Multimodal Semiotics; Roland Barthes; Kress and van Leeuwen*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini menganalisis poster resmi film horor Korea tahun 2024, Exhuma, dan menggunakannya sebagai sumber informasi utama. Penelitian ini berfokus pada tiga karakter pria menggunakan metode yang menggabungkan gagasan Roland Barthes tentang cara kerja tanda dan pemahaman Kress dan van Leeuwen tentang pesan visual. Analisis ini meneliti empat cara berbeda dalam merepresentasikan sesuatu secara visual: warna yang digunakan, bagaimana tubuh bergerak, ke mana seseorang melihat, dan gaya teks. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa skema warna gelap menunjukkan area terkutuk, tiga gerakan berbeda melambangkan peran Penantang, Pengecut, dan Korban, dan keinginan untuk kontak mata menunjukkan bahaya yang datang dari atas. Bersama-sama, elemen-elemen ini menciptakan kisah Jogsa, atau bagaimana dosa keluarga diturunkan dari generasi ke generasi. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa elemen visual tanpa kata-kata sangat penting dalam membangun cerita yang menakutkan. Penelitian sebelumnya tentang Exhuma atau poster horor Korea biasanya hanya meneliti semiotika Barthes, tanpa menghubungkannya dengan teori multimodal. Hal ini membuat analisis visual menjadi dangkal, hanya berfokus pada 'ekspresi' tanpa mempertimbangkan bagaimana warna, titik, dan gerakantubuh berfungsi sebagai tanda atau simbol. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini baru dalam dua aspek penting: pertama, menggabungkan gagasan mitos Roland Barthes dengan Tata Bahasa Visual Kress dan van Leeuwen (2021) untuk memperlakukan poster sebagai contoh teks multimodal nyata. Kedua, berfokus pada tiga karakter laki-laki untuk mengilustrasikan mitos budaya Jogsa atau kutukan leluhur, yang belum pernah dipelajari dalam penelitian poster sebelumnya.

Kata kunci: *Multimodal Semiotics; Roland Barthes; Kress dan van Leeuwen*

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world of digital visual communication, film posters serve as more than just promotional tools; they are also complex texts that combine both images and words to create meaning. One example is the official movie poster for the 2024 Korean horror film *Exhuma*, which was directed by Jang Jae-hyun. The poster shows an important language idea: how words and pictures work together to create the story of Jogsae. The poster features three male actors: Choi Min-sik playing The Challenger, Yoo Hae-jin as The Fearful, and Lee Do-hyun as The Sacrificial. Their varied looks, movements, and placement along a diagonal line form a story structure that shows three steps of handling a family curse. The main black color and the red soil background act as symbols of death and blood, which are closely connected to the Jogsae ritual. When you say the word "EXHUMA" aloud, its typography has a cracked, soil-like texture. This isn't just a name, but a pictorial symbol that shows the action of digging a grave, which is the main reason for the curse in the story. Therefore, the poster also features actors. It's a type of text that uses both pictures and words together to depict the cultural fear of Jogsae, but it doesn't explain what happens in the story.

Roland Barthes' semiotic theory gives a basic way to understand how signs create meaning through three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth. However, when used on its own, Barthes' model usually stays at the level of text and expression, and doesn't explain how specific visual elements like colour, gesture, and gaze work as signs. To solve this problem, the study combines Barthes' theory with Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar (2021), which is an important approach in multimodal discourse analysis. In this combined method, visual grammar is used first to explain how the poster uses visual elements, and then Barthes' model is applied to understand the cultural and idea-based meanings that come from those visuals (Rahman & Sjafrizal, 2024).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. Sugiyono (2019) states that the qualitative descriptive method is a research approach that follows the postpositivist philosophy. It is used to describe and explain data in a natural way without changing or altering it. The goal is to explain events thoroughly and clearly. In addition, Sandelowski (2000) states that qualitative description is especially useful for studies that want to provide a full summary of events using everyday language. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach because it focuses on describing and explaining the meaning behind the visual and spoken elements in the *Exhuma* poster. The method utilizes Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory to examine symbols and meanings, and also employs Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis to study how visual elements convey messages. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method and applies a multimodal semiotic analysis approach. The aim is to explain the meaning in a clear and organized way, starting from the visual elements to the cultural stories and beliefs.

The main data is a single digital poster image that was taken from the official distributor's press kit. Secondary data includes the film synopsis so that we can correctly understand the characters and their roles (Nikmatus Shalekhah et al., 2021). The study utilized the subjective methodology of researcher triangulation and involved two peer researchers with expertise in semiotics and visual communication studies who independently coded the poster using the 5-step table. The researchers discussed the final coding until they reached 100% agreement on

key terms such as colour, gaze, gesture, and myth. All disagreements were settled by talking things through and going back to the work by Kress and van Leeuwen from 2021.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After knowing the storyline of the series, there are denotations and connotations in each element that will be analyzed in the poster.

Figure 1 The Exhuma Poster



The visual elements that appear in the poster are the position of each actor facing different directions, the expressions of the actors, and the title of the series itself (Husaina et al., 2018; Qadar Basrii et al., 2019).

Table 1. Data 1

Signed	Signifiers	
	Denotation	Connotation
Character at the very top of the poster	Black and gray do not just mean 'mystery'. Narratively, they connote a space without life or air, like inside a sealed tomb. The muted red-brown connotes earth and dried blood, which culturally signals a desecrated burial site.	The red-brown color creates a visual bridge between the figures' clothing and the title typography. This links the characters directly to the act of 'exhuming', making color the unifying mode of the curse

From these data, describes a character who has a great determination to dig up a mystery and solve it.

Table 2. Data 2

Signed	Signifiers	
	Denotation	Connotation
Woman with tattoo on her face	A person who expresses determination and Courage	A shaman who dares to distract the devil to buy time for his partner to find the implanted needle, and the tattoo on her face which is explained in the film that the devil does not touch the part covered by the tattoo.

From this data, describes a character who dares to take steps to help her friends.

Table 3. Data 3

Signed	Signifiers	
	Denotation	Connotation
A man with glasses	A character who has a scared and confused expression	He is the assistant of the feng shui master, who will always be there and help his colleagues.

Based on the results above, describes a character who is afraid but doesn't want his friends to be in danger, and always helps even when he is confused and uncertain

Table 4. Data 4

Signed	Signifiers	
	Denotation	Connotation
A man with tied hair	A character who has a serious but relaxed expression	He is a disciple of the shaman who will become the body of the spirit of the grandfather and the devil.

From the results above, describes a brave and sacrificial character.

Table 5. Data 5

Signified	Signifiers	
	Denotation	Connotation
The Movie's Title	Movie's Title.	The title is transcribed as Exhuma, and the word

		exhuma means to dismantle or move a grave
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From the results above, the title above is a series title which is analyzed in the posters analyzed in this study.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at one official theater poster for Exhuma 2024 using a method that includes different types of media. The analysis focused only on the visual elements of three male characters and the typeface used, without considering the film's storyline.

The results show that meaning isn't created by just one picture element, but by how five different ways of showing things work together: color, where someone is looking, body movements, how the parts are arranged, and the style of the text. The three figures are each created as separate story characters through these different ways. Figure 1 is shown as The Challenger because of his big size and the way he looks up. Figure 2 is made to show The Fearful by using his small size and the way he looks away. Figure 3 is shown as The Sacrificial because of his stiff posture and empty expression.

Together, these three roles work together to create the myth of Jogsas through different ways of communication. "EXHUMA" features a typography that is both cracked and dusty, echoing the red-brown color scheme and supporting the ideology that exhumation is a transgression that brings ancestral sin to the living. Limitation and Suggestion: This study only looked at one. Future research could look at several posters from Korean horror movies to check if the myth of Jogsas is shown in a similar way across different visual elements (Lustyantie, 2012).

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