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## **Semiotic Description of an Animated Movie “Tangled” Applying Peirce’s Semiotics Theory**

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### **Abstract**

This research analyzed the semiotic description of animated movie “Tangled” by using Peirce’s Semiotic theory. Descriptive qualitative method was used. The data for this investigation were collected from Tangled movie through observation and using note taking as its research tools. The findings showed that fifteen visual signs were found in the movie including four icons, five indexes and six symbols. The findings demonstrate that Peirce’s semiotic theory is used to interpret the meaning of the sign’s constituent parts, particularly with respect to the relationship between representamen, object, and interpretant. Rapunzel’s glowing hair, for example, is considered as the main icon because it resembles sunlight which means life and power. Her long, tangled hair also counts as an index for representing Rapunzel’s isolated life and her association with the mysterious tower and the symbol of floating lanterns represents themes of hope, dream chasing and freedom.

Keywords: Semiotics, Peirce theory, Triadic Model, Film, Icons, Indexes, Symbol.

### **Introduction**

The study of animation as a semiotic system has attracted a significant amount of scholarly attention in recent years. Everything in this world is a sign, even though some things are meaningless by nature but can be categorized as signs if a deeper meaning is given to them. Semiotics is the study of signs, images, gestures, sounds and symbols. Signs in the semiotic sense can be words, pictures, sounds, motions, or objects (Chandler, 2022). Dennis (1985) states that a film can have spoken and occasionally written words (such as in signs or a letter seen up close), background music, performers dressed in period clothes, visual pictures (perhaps in color), and other methods used by the film medium to communicate ideas and feelings to viewers. “Tangled” is a visually stunning film where fantasy combines with comedy and adventure. Through a dynamic mix of signs, symbols, and cultural codes, the film tells a story of identity, freedom, and manipulation. Every movie conveys a special message through different signs and symbols. These signs, symbols and indexes used in movies make it more beautiful and appealing (Islam, 2021). This study intended to investigate the kind of signs that



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are conveyed and analyze the three distinct categories of sign such as icons, indexes and symbols found in the movie by using triadic semiosis concept of Charles Sanders Peirce theory.

There are nine kinds of signs such as, qualisign, sinsign, legisign, icon, index, symbol, rheme, decisign and argument. Peirce introduced the three-dimensional model (triadic) in relation to three elements of signs i.e., iconic, index and symbols. He divides the concept of sign into three parts: the sign (also known as representament), the object (also known as referent), and the interpretant. According to Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) the first part is equivalent to Saussure's (1857-1913) notion of signifier, which refers to physical signs and Chandler (2002) and (Sajjad et al.,2023) believed that these physical signs must not be material. Golden and Gerber (1994) claimed that triadic interaction including the sign, the interpretant, and the object is thought to be essential to the semiotic process.

Many scenes in the movie exemplify that semiotic information plays a significant role in narration. Islam (2021) believed that the use of semiotic comprehension to enhance the narrative in animated films draws in audiences with thought-provoking ideas and elevates creativity of the work. Here the semiotic elements such as colors, visuals, gestural, audio, symbols and others contributed to the new world of Rapunzel. The visuals and her body language confirm that she is enjoying her freedom and wants to see the world more. The wanted poster of "Flynn Rider" in the beginning of the movie is displayed to get the idea that he is a thief. The symbol of "sun" in the movie represents kingdom and fertility. The flowers in Rapunzel's hair show freedom as mother Gothel always removes them. There is light and darkness in many scenes of the movie which show freedom and captivity or imprisonment. Analysis and interpretation of the film's signs are not as simple as one might think to comprehend the meaning conveyed inside, but a semiotic approach might help (Pauzan, 2018). The primary goal of this study is to investigate the meanings that are sent by various signs that are produced, reused, and mediated during the movie.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In this study, the researcher is interested in analyzing an animated movie Tangled. The declared purpose of this research is to determine signs and symbols that are used in the film Tangled and the ways these signs will provide various interpretations. Through the semiotic analysis of the movie this study aims to explore how signs and symbols help the audience to comprehend meaning. In this case researcher wanted to conduct research on semiotic aspects based on Charles Sanders Peirce theory to discover relationship of signs found in the movie Tangled with Peirce's triadic model. The present study will investigate different types of signs including icons, indexes and symbols expressed in the movie Tangled and to provide various interpretations.

### **Objectives of the Research**

The objective of this study is formulated as:

- To investigate how signs are conveyed in the Tangled movie.
- To interpret the meaning of the movie's icons, indexes, and symbols.

### **Research Questions**



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The objective of this study is formulated as:

- To investigate how signs are conveyed in the “Tangled” movie.
- To interpret the meaning of icons, indexes, and symbols used in “Tangled” movie.

### **Significance of the study**

The researcher aims to contribute to the work of other researchers as well as scholars in the department of English and Literature. The findings of this study can be utilized to broaden one's perspective on language and offer insights into semiotic analysis. This study might serve as a resource for anyone working in the film industry to assist them in producing high-quality movie posters. Researcher aims that the result of this study will be useful to the students of English department at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) as well as students at other universities doing research in the same area. Additionally, the researcher expects that the findings of this study will provide additional context for the evolution of semiotics theory, particularly Peirce's semiotics.

### **Literature Review**

Jossep M. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie's stated in their book “The Art of Watching Films” (2008), that films do not have to be neglected just because understanding them takes more work. The study of animation as a semiotic system has attracted a significant amount of scholarly attention in recent years. Regarding the application of semiotic analyses and techniques, several studies have been conducted (Ishtiaq et al., 2022).

Wardah (2021) worked on “Semiotic Analysis of Women's Representation in the Animated Disney Film Raya and The Last Dragon.” This study aimed to examine the representation of women in the animated films Disney Raya and The Last Dragon. Scenes depicting women were utilized as a sample for this study, which applied Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory analysis technique. The study's findings revealed that this movie portrays women as powerful, independent, and dominant characters, and that feminism is mildly discussed.

Pauzan (2018) and (Gul et al., 2023) conducted “A Semiotic Analysis of the John Wick 1 Film Using Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Theory”. The study aimed to explore the kinds of signs that are expressed in the movie and to analyze the meaning of the three elements of signs including icons, indexes and symbols found in the film. This research followed qualitative descriptive method and Peirce semiotic theory as its theoretical framework. The results of this investigation suggested that the meaning of these three components of signs, specifically the link between their object, representamen, and interpretant, can be understood via the lens of Peirce's semiotic theory.

The current study's findings are like the earlier ones mentioned above in the way that they all deal with signs and interpretation. The research's purpose and the theory it employed were the main distinctions between this study and the earlier findings mentioned above. Specifically, the object of Pauzan's research is the same but only different in terms of the title of the film. From the two researchers above, one of them followed Peirce's theory about semiotics where they found elements of signs including icons, indexes and symbols and realize how they interpret meaning using triadic relationship between representamen, object and interpretant. Wardah's research is radically distinct as it followed semiotic theory



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of Ronald Barthes about connotative and denotative meaning. According to Mudjiyanto (2013) and (Habib et al.,2025) denotative refers to a term or object's precise meaning, whereas connotative refers to the cultural connotations that are associated with a term.

The researcher draws the conclusion based on two sources that Roland Barthes' theory created two elements including a denotative and a connotative with verbal and nonverbal languages to analyze a level of the sign. Subsequently, Charles Sanders Peirce used three semiotics components such as representation (sign), object, and interpreter to examine a symbol or sign. However, this research focuses on Peirce theory of semiotics as its approach to analyze signs and their meaning conveyed in the movie Tangled.

### Research Methodology

This study used a Descriptive Qualitative approach to conduct a semiotic analysis of an animated movie “Tangled” using Charles Sander Pierce’s semiotic theory. The primary source of data for this investigation was an animated movie “Tangled”, and the secondary data included other sources that relate to Semiotic theory, including books, journals, and theses. Data was collected through observation and notetaking technique. The researcher analyzed the data to find out the ideas and concepts that signs represent, according to Charles Sander Peirce’s theory.

### Results and discussion



Figure 4.1 Scene 1

Description	
Scene	Scene five in minute 15:40-16:20
Context of the Scene	Flynn Ryder is a thief he has stolen the princess’s crown from the kingdom. While running from the guards he saw his wanted poster in the middle of a forest. But all he was concerned about was his nose in the picture.
Conversation	<b>Flynn Ryder:</b> No, no no. This is bad, this is very, very bad



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	<p>This is really bad. They just can't get my nose right.  <b>One of the thugs:</b> Who cares.  <b>Flynn Ryder:</b> Well, it's easy for you to say.                  You guys look amazing.</p>
Kinds of Signs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Icon:</b> Wanted poster of Flynn Ryder</li> <li>2. <b>Index:</b> Flynn's worried about his tilted nose on the poster</li> <li>3. <b>Symbol:</b> Guards and the horse</li> </ol>

Table 1

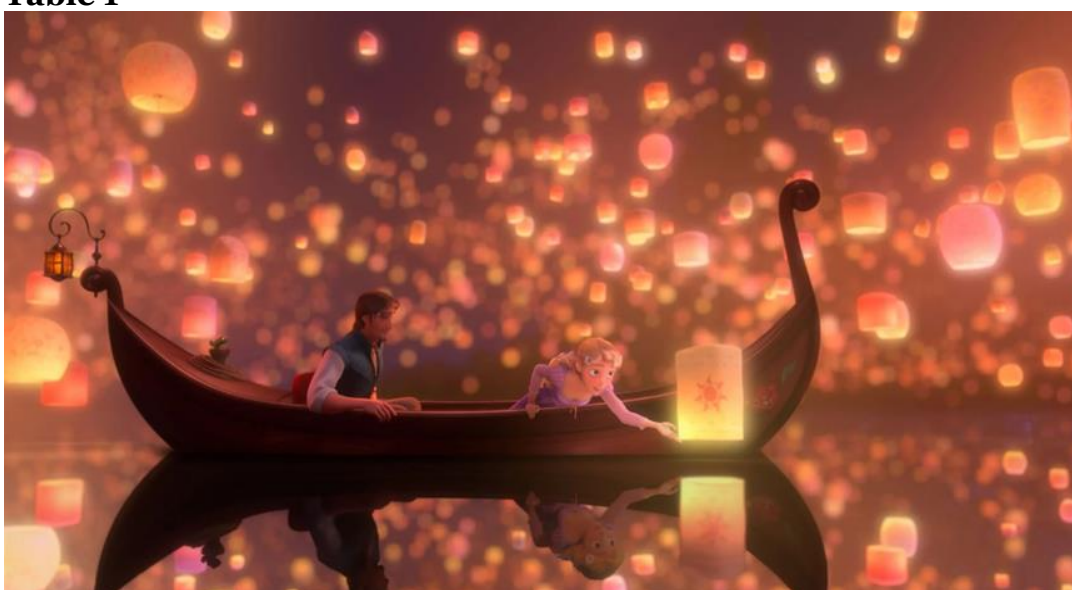


Figure 4.2 Scene 2

Description	
Scene	Scene thirteen in minute 1:08:55-1:10:35
Context of the Scene	Everyone blew lanterns after the king and queen. Rapunzel was living in a dream. She was in the middle of blowing lanterns all over the place. She fulfilled her dream, and she also found the love of her life.
Conversation	Flynn Ryder is singing: All those days Chasing down a daydream All those years Living in a blur All that time Never truly seeing Things the way they were Now she's here Shining in the starlight. Now she's here Suddenly I know If she's here It's crystal clear I'm where I'm meant to go And at last, I see the light And it's like the fog has lifted And at last, I see the light. And it's like the sky is new And it's warm and real and bright. And the world has somehow shifted All at once



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	Everything is different Now that I see you. Now that I see you.	
Kinds of Signs	1. Reflection of lanterns 2. <b>xes:</b> Lantern with the symbol of sun in Rapunzel’s hand, Flynn kisses Rapunzel 3. <b>bols:</b> Flowers in Rapunzel’s hair, Rapunzel’s purple dress	<b>Icon:</b> <b>Inde</b> <b>Sym</b>

Table 4



Figure 4.3 Scene 3

Description	
Scene	Scene fifteen in minute 1:21:40-1:25:20
Context of the Scene	Eugene came to the tower to rescue Rapunzel. Rapunzel was chained with the pillar. Gothel stabbed a knife inside his belly the moment he entered. Rapunzel tried to heal Eugene with the magic of her hair, but he trimmed her hair with a sharp piece of mirror. Rapunzel’s hair turned brown and lost its magic. Gothel became mad and finally turned into dust.
Conversation	<b>Eugene:</b> Rapunzel. Rapunzel, let down your hair. Rapunzel, I thought I’d never see you again. <b>Mother Gothel:</b> Now look what you've done, Rapunzel. Oh, don't worry dear. Our secret will die with him. And as for us? We are going where no one will ever find you, again.



	<p>Rapunzel, really.                  Enough already. Stop fighting me.  <b>Rapunzel:</b> NO! I won't stop.                  For every minute of the rest of my life I will fight. I will never stop trying to get away from you.                  But if you let me save him... I will go with you.  <b>Eugene:</b> (Moan) No. No, Rapunzel.  <b>Rapunzel:</b> I'll never run; I'll never try to escape.                  Just let me heal him. And you and I will be together. Forever, just like you want.                  Everything will be the way it was. I promise.                  Just like you want. Just let me heal him.  <b>Mother Gothel:</b> In case you have any ideas about following us.  <b>Rapunzel:</b> Eugene!                  Oh, I'm so sorry.  <b>Rapunzel:</b> Everything is going to be okay, in a moment.  <b>Eugene:</b> No, Rapunzel!  <b>Rapunzel:</b> Promise, you have to trust me. –  <b>Eugene:</b> No.. I can't let you do this.  <b>Rapunzel:</b> But I can't let you die.  <b>Eugene:</b> But if you do this.  <b>Rapunzel:</b> Shhh.  <b>Eugene:</b> Then you...will die.  <b>Rapunzel:</b> Hey. It's gonna be all right.  <b>Eugene:</b> Rapunzel, wait...  <b>Rapunzel:</b> Eugene, what...?  <b>Mother Gothel:</b> NOOO!                  No...NO!                  What have you done?                  WHAT HAVE YOU DONE!                  No, no, no,                  NOOO!</p>
<p>Kinds of Signs</p>	<p>1. <b>Icon</b>                  : Tower                  2. <b>Indexes:</b> Dark clouds, broken pieces of mirror on the floor, blood on Eugene's belly                  3. <b>Symbols:</b> Rapunzel's long hair, knife, Rapunzel's green eyes</p>

Table 4.5

**Discussion**

In this section, the researcher discusses the results and findings of the data represented above. The discussion is concerned with understanding the meanings of all the signs that are expressed in the movie Tangled. In this section of the discussion, the researcher applied Peirce's theory of signs to analyze the data. The researcher purposefully used a few icons, indexes, and symbols as a sample in this discussion.

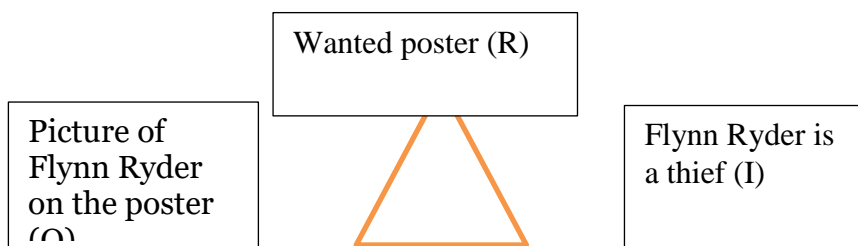


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An icon is something that represents something or shares features with the object.

### Icon from scene one

The first icon chosen from the movie is the wanted poster (R) that stands for its object (O) the picture of Flynn Ryder on the poster. The relationship between representamen (R) and object (O) produces interpretant (I); Flynn Ryder is a thief.



**Diagram 1 Icon 1**

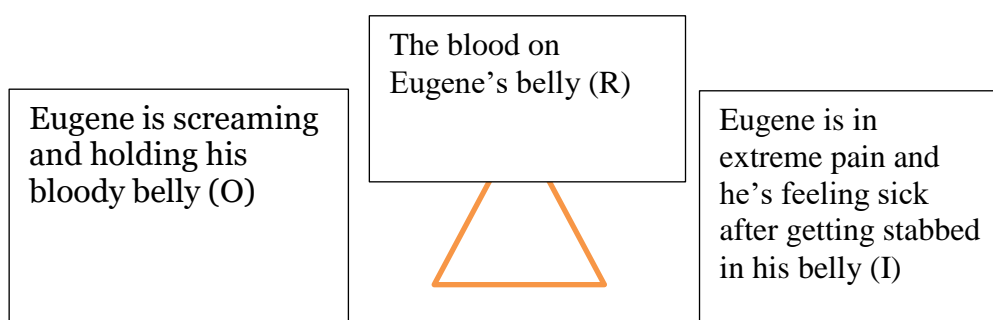
Wanted posters are displayed to inform the public about a person that the authorities are trying to find. In this scene, there is a picture of Flynn Ryder on the wanted poster, who is one of the protagonists of the film. He was a thief, and the kingdom was searching for him because he had stolen the princess' crown from the kingdom.

According to the definition of icon given by Vera (2014) An icon is a sign that represents and embodies the qualities of an object. In this sign, the wanted poster in the middle of forest became the icon of Flynn Ryder because it has same character which the object that it refers to.

The first index shows the basket of parsnips and bread on the table. According to the definition of an index, which is something that refers to the object it represents by virtue of being impacted by it. Then the interpretant in this scene gave an explanation that the mother Gothel brought Parsnips because Rapunzel loves to have parsnip soup for dinner.

### Index from Scene three

The second index that exists in scene fifteen is the blood on Eugene's belly (R) that stands for its object (O). Eugene is screaming and holding his bloody belly. The relationship between representamen (R) and its object (O) produces interpretant (I); Eugene is in extreme pain and he's feeling sick after getting stabbed in his belly.







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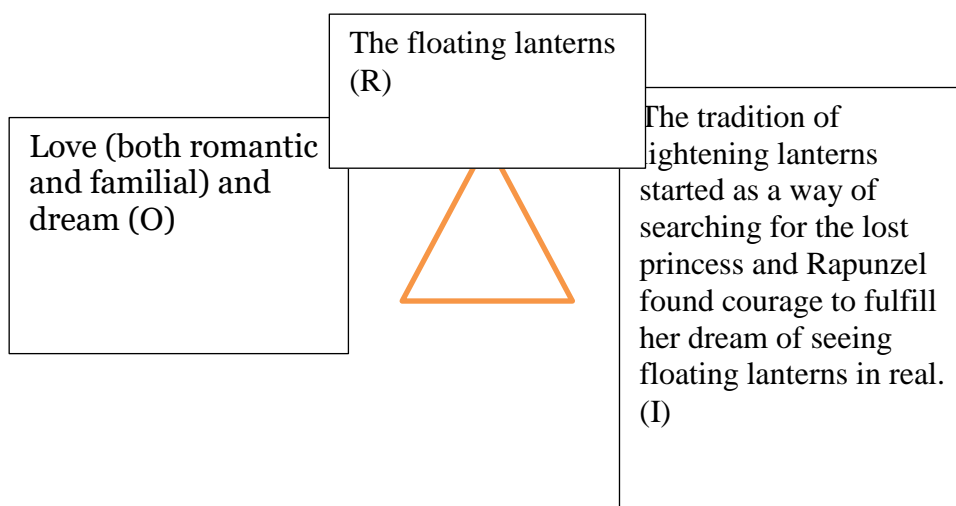
### Diagram 4 Index 2

The index from the fifteenth scene of the film shows blood in Eugene’s belly. Considering the definition of an index which says that index is something that refers to the object it represents by virtue of being impacted by it. So, the interpretant in this index made clear that Eugene screamed while holding his belly because he felt sick after getting stabbed in his belly. The most common cause of blood leaking from the skin is a wound.

The writer then moved on to talk about symbols in the next section. Pierce definition of symbol given by Vera (2014) says that a symbol is a representation that refers to the thing it represents by virtue of a law, typically a connection of related concepts, which works to make the symbol understood to correspond to that object. Afterwards, in this situation, the author used just two symbols to stand in for every symbol they discovered throughout the movie. The symbols are described in detail as follows:

### Symbol from scene two

The second symbol from scene fourteen in the movie is the floating lanterns (R) that stand for its object (O) love (both romantic and familial) and dream. The relationship between representamen (R) and its object (O) produces interpretant (I); the tradition of lightening lanterns started as a way of searching for the lost princess and Rapunzel found courage to fulfill her dream of seeing floating lanterns in real.



### Diagram 6 Symbol 2

Sky lanterns, sometimes referred to as floating lanterns, have been utilized historically since the third century BCE. These lanterns were originally created by the Chinese as wartime signaling. They were later utilized to celebrate other festivals and were believed to carry bad luck into the air with them. Initially, the lanterns are a celebration for Rapunzel, the newborn princess. Tradition began with the kidnapping of the newborn princess by Mother Gothel. Since then, the entire kingdom has celebrated the princess's birthday with a festival in which hundreds of shining lanterns are released into the sky in the hopes that the lanterns will guide the princess home.

In a magical scene from the movie, floating lanterns light up the night sky. These lanterns also symbolize the lost princess Rapunzel's dream to discover the world



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beyond her castle. She releases a lantern with Flynn Rider as a representation of their mutual desire for freedom.

### Conclusion

In a few chosen movie scenes, the researcher discovered nine different types of signs, including qualisign, sinsign, legisign, icon, index, symbol, rheme, decisign, and argument. But this study focuses on only three kinds of signs i.e. icon, indexes, and symbols so the researcher is limited to only analyzing signs as objects, which includes icon, index, symbol. In addition, the researcher discovered in certain movie scenes that there are seventeen icons, eighteen indexes, and eighteen symbols. The author then deliberately chose five indexes, six symbols, and four icons to be examined.

According to the research findings, the meaning of the signs found in the Tangled movie can be interpreted in terms of Peirce's triadic notion. Before discussing how they create the interpretant, the researcher concentrates on the relationship that exists between the representamen and its object. Every sign's meaning is interpreted by examining its relationship with the object, which served as the primary source of interpretation. In fact, the interpretation of the sign results from the interaction between the representamen and its object.

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