

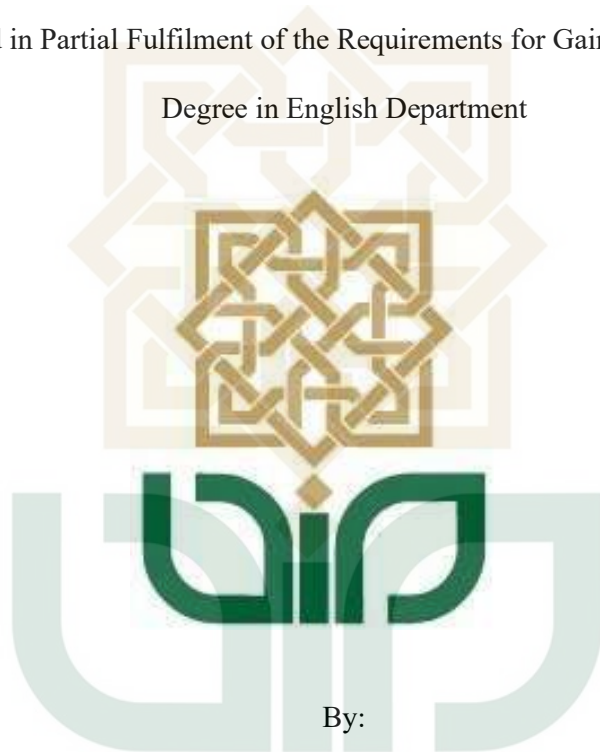
**UNVEILING MEANINGS IN VISUAL AND VERBAL SIGNS OF MEMES
RELATED TO PALESTINE ON MINTPRESS INSTAGRAM PAGE:**

A SEMIOTIC APPROACH

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for Gaining the Bachelor

Degree in English Department



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2025

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researcher's opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

Yogyakarta, May 26th 2025


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Assalamu 'alaikum Warohmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

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Atas perhatian Bapak Dekan, kami mengucapkan terima kasih.

Wassalamu 'alaikum Warohmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

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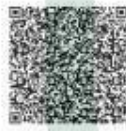
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MOTTO

“Fortunately, prayer knows no distance, nor does it choose a face.”

NKCTHI



DEDICATION

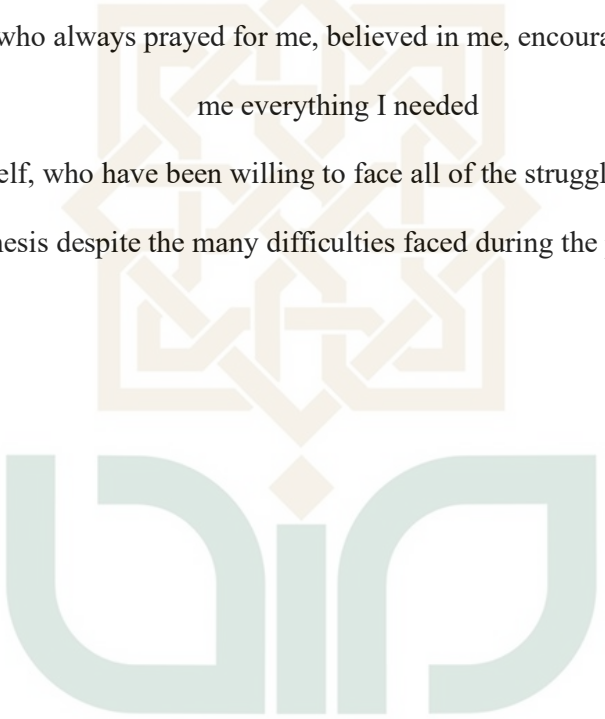
I dedicate this graduation thesis to:

All lecturers of the English literature department, Faculty of Adab and Cultural
Sciences, State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

My advisor, Mr. Ubaidillah, who always guided me greatly until this thesis could
be finished

My family, who always prayed for me, believed in me, encouraged me, and gave
me everything I needed

And for myself, who have been willing to face all of the struggles to complete this
thesis despite the many difficulties faced during the process



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Yogyakarta, May 29th 2025



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A SEMIOTIC APPROACH

By: Suci Istiqomah (21101050043)

ABSTRACT

This research aims to unveil the meanings of visual and verbal signs, as well as the embedded ideological, cultural, and religious messages. The object of this study is memes related to Palestine, which were uploaded on the Instagram account of MintPress News. The study adopts Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, particularly examining myths through an Islamic perspective by referring to relevant verses from the Qur'an. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, with eight memes selected as primary data, posted between October 2023 and March 2024. The findings reveal that each meme contains interconnected layers of denotative meaning, connotative meaning, and mythological. Visual signs such as the hijab, graves, and children symbolize suffering, resilience, and the identity of Palestinian Muslims. Verbal signs, including phrases such as "no mercy," "from genocide Joe with love," and "ban TikTok now," embody figurative elements such as irony, metonymy, and hyperbole. These signs serve as a critique of the violence experienced by the Palestinian people and expose ideological myths associated with domination, power, and injustice. This study recommends that social media users adopt a more critical stance in interpreting implicit messages within memes and highlights the importance of semiotic analysis in uncovering the ideologies and myths embedded in digital content.

Keywords: *Semiotics, memes, Roland Barthes, ideological myths*

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap makna tanda visual dan verbal, pesan-pesan ideologis, kultural, dan religious. Penelitian ini menggunakan objek meme-meme terkait Palestina yang diunggah pada akun Instagram MintPress News. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan semiotika Roland Barthes, dengan meninjau mitos melalui perspektif Islam dengan merujuk pada ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an. Untuk menganalisis penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan delapan data utama berupa meme yang diunggah antara Oktober 2023 hingga Maret 2024. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa setiap meme mengandung lapisan makna denotative, konotatif, dan mitodologis yang saling terhubung. Tanda-tanda visual seperti hijab, kuburan, dan anak-anak menjadi simbol penderitaan, ketaguhan, serta identitas Muslim Palestina. Tanda verbal seperti frase “no mercy”, “from genocide Joe with love”, hingga “ban TikTok now” mengandung makna ironi, metonimi, dan hiperbola. Tanda-tanda tersebut juga menyampaikan kritik terhadap kekerasan yang dialami oleh rakyat Palestina, dan membongkar mitos ideologis yang berkaitan dengan dominasi, kekuasaan, serta ketidakadilan. Saran dari penelitian ini adalah agar pengguna media sosial lebih kritis untuk memahami pesan yang tersirat dalam memeserta pentingnya kajian semiotic untuk mengungkap ideologi dan mitos di balik konten digital.

Kata Kunci: Semiotika, meme, Roland Barthes, mitos ideologis

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

The media has an important role in raising cases that are considered to have not received justice. Therefore, an editorial team is needed to achieve a goal of each social media account, one of which is to convey information related to cases that are widely publicized to the public or community. Social media has many impacts on its users, either bad impacts or good impacts for each individual. It has been proven that the power of social media, especially Instagram can greatly influence both the news media account itself and the public (Azzaakiyyah, 2023, p. 1).

Social media allows people to criticize an issue, such as on the MintPress page. MintPress is a website that does not cooperate with an organization or independent journalists without supervision. The way MintPress criticizes an issue is by creating several accounts on social media such as Youtube, Website, and Instagram. In addition, MintPress provides engaging content in the form of videos, photos, interviews, and memes. MintPress' Instagram page uploads many memes about the ongoing issues in Palestine. The memes uploaded on MintPress' Instagram page (<https://www.instagram.com/mintpress>) related to the ongoing case in Palestine contain many meanings in their content. The current cases faced by the Palestinians that MintPress made memes about on its Instagram page include bomb attacks launched by Israel, brutal attacks by Israeli soldiers on Palestinian children, support from other countries to strengthen Israel's attacks on Palestine, cases of famine, and cases of many children being orphaned.

Memes have various forms, criticism usually in the form of digital images by combining images, texts in layers, also intertextuality that blend together (Zhang & Gearhart, 2022, p. 55). The image is one of the ways to communicate something so that the reader can visualize what is being communicated (Abrahams et al., 2023, p. 48). These memes are usually formed due to a social phenomenon or issues that are widely discussed on social media or in real life (Umamah et al., 2023, p. 52). Meme creators distribute memes on the internet with various purposes such as, to humor, criticize, provoke people, etc (Destira et al., 2021, p. 48). In general, memes have a deep meaning where people who read them cannot immediately understand the purpose of the meme and the relationship between the image, the text, and the social context (Zubaidah & Ardelia, 2018, p. 158).

The researcher chose to select memes because memes have various forms of signs to convey a meaningful meaning. It is essential to observe because signs have deeper meanings to be explored. Therefore, an analysis of meaning is needed to find out the overall meaning of the MintPress Media memes. The memes found on MintPress Media contain numerous verbal and visual signs. The two signs are integrated to form a meaning. To find out the meaning of an image, especially in the form of memes, semiotic analysis can help analyze how an image communicates a message and meaning (Haq & Nugraha, 2020, p. 188). Therefore, semiotics is essential to convey the message because the sign has a difference from its literal meaning (Friska, 2024).

Figure 1.1 Example of The Object



Source: MintPress' Instagram
(Uploaded on 2 March 2024, accessed on 10 April 2024)

Figure 1.1 above is one of the memes found on the MintPress News Instagram page. The objective of creating these memes is to simply distribute information or news in a more attractive way (Suswandari et al., 2022, p. 159). The meme contains many signs, both visual and verbal. The signs represent the identity, suffering, struggle, and hope of the Palestinian people. In the context of memes from the MintPress News Instagram page, it reveals the suffering and conditions occurring in Palestine. The symbols contained in the memes provide a deeper meaning, such as hijab, keffiyeh, national identity, etc. Therefore, this research aims to unveil the meaning of visual and verbal signs of culture and historical context in the conveying of meme information on the MintPress News Instagram page.

Barthes developed the theory discovered by Ferdinand de Saussure into the concept of denotative meaning and connotative meaning. From this theory, the meaning of each meme will be explained, and a myth will emerge. Through

analyzing the verbal and visual signs in memes, it is possible to find deeper meanings and hidden myths.

In accordance with the descriptive explanation above, the researcher is interested in analyzing the memes found on the MintPress News Instagram page. The researcher will examine using Roland Barthes' theory with a Muslim perspective. Therefore, the researcher will utilize the Quran as a reference for the analysis of this research.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the research background described above, the researcher formulated the following questions:

1. How do visual and verbal signs in MintPress memes convey meaning regarding the Palestinian conflict?
2. What cultural and ideological myths are revealed through these memes?

1.3 Objectives of Study

Based on the research questions, this research has an objective of study. This research aims to find out the meaning of each meme in conveying information and to find out the cultural and ideological myths raised in MintPress memes about the ongoing conflict in Palestine by relating to the guidelines of Islam, namely the Qur'an.

1.4 Significances of This Study

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of meaning, especially the semiotics analysis study and is able to help researcher who want to analyze meaning through semiotics analysis. This research is expected to get results

that can contribute to language, especially in the linguistic field, namely semiotics analysis study. It is also expected that this research can be a reference for further research for everyone who will research semiotic analysis, especially on memes. This research is dedicated to everyone who wants to understand the meaning of conveying information, cultural and ideological myths of memes related to the incident in Palestine, using a Roland Barthes semiotics analysis approach.

1.5 Literature Review

Some research that examines the Semiotics Analysis approach include Haq & Nugraha, (2020), Al-Khawaldeh & Al-Rabadi, (2020), and Pratiwi et al., (2023). Research from Haq & Nugraha (2020) The title “Bill Gates COVID-19 Conspiracy in Reddit Memes: A Semiotic Approach”. The researcher used the object of the Bill Gates Covid-19 conspiracy in a Reddit Meme by using the theory of Roland Barthes. The researchers used a qualitative method and the researchers used a semiotic approach to analyze. In contrast to the research that will be conducted by the writer uses meme objects with different contexts, namely memes related to the issue in Palestine on MintPress media's Instagram page.

Furthermore, research from Al-Khawaldeh & Al-Rabadi (2020). In previous research, the researchers used cartoons and memes about COVID-19 as the object of research. The title is “A Semiotic Approach to the Analysis of Jordanian Cartoons and Memes on COVID-19”. Researchers used descriptive-qualitative methods. The theory that researchers used is the theory of Roland Barthes, by analyzing three types of meaning, namely linguistic meaning (text), literal meaning (denotation), and symbolic meaning (connotation). Previous

researchers collected data based on metaphors and themes in cartoons or memes. The result of previous research showed that there were two levels of meaning are denotative and connotative. The cartoons and memes that serve as objects contain metaphors to identify certain aspects of the message they want to convey. In contrast to previous research, the writer analyses two levels of meaning according to Barthes, namely connotative and denotative meaning, and after both are discovered, the researcher will analyze the myth with a muslim perspective. Moreover, the writer also uses the memes as an object with a different context.

Further research from Pratiwi et al. (2023) with the title “Deconstructing Internet Memes through Semiotic Analysis: Unveiling Myths and Ideologies in Visual and Verbal Signs”. The previous research explored myth and ideology with two semiotics theories from Roland Barthes and Saussure. Previous researchers used the research object of internet memes using qualitative methods. The difference is that the writer only uses one theory from Roland Barthes by exploring the meaning of visual and verbal signs and analysing the myths contained inside with a muslim perspective (Qur'an).

1.6 Theoretical Approach

According to Saussure, semiotics is signs that can be classified into the signifier and the signified. The signifier that Saussure discussed was something related to expression, and the signified was a sign related to content. Saussure argued that signs in semiotics did not only include visual signs (drawings, paintings, and photographs), but also included sounds, words, and body language. From Saussure's theory, Barthes developed it further into the visual realm. According to

Barthes in H.Hoed (2014, p. 25), semiotics had several core concepts, namely signification, denotation, connotation, and metalanguage or myth. Signification is the process of action that links the signifier and the signified. In the process, the two parts of a sign depend on each other. The signified is expressed through the signifier, and the signifier is expressed by the signified. For example, the word “elephant”, when hearing the word, someone will integrate the signifier “elephant” with the signified “large four-legged animal”; hence, the sign language “elephant” emerges. The process exemplified before is called signification.

According to Barthes Barthes (1972, p. 122) Myth denoted a message or a communication system. Myth is a type of speech; therefore, the myth conveyed or implied in the form of discourse can appear in any form, including signs. Pervaded by signification, myths spread in social life to complement ideas related to any social context (Haq & Nugraha, 2020, p. 189). From Tolson's perspective (1996, p. 7), myths that occur in symbols or text help readers to describe the socio-cultural, political, and even other contexts that surround the myth. Culture is the work of a human soul, which has a wide meaning in the form of manifestation or embodiment (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1978, p. 34). Culture is not just behaviour practised in the real world, but has deep meaning when deeply embedded in each individual (Syakhrani & Kamil, 2022, p. 783).

In Barthes' book (1972, p. 95) argued that myths are a type of speech chosen by history. Therefore, myths are not determinate in their concepts: they can appear, change, disintegrate, or disappear completely. In politics, myths do not occur naturally but are formed as a historical choice (Urfan, 2019, p. 50). Myths

that are formed or believed, especially in the field of religion, can generate different myths according to their beliefs.

Barthes defines myth as a cultural way of thinking about something, or also a way in which there is a process of conceptualizing or understanding something. Furthermore, Barthes said that myth is a series of interrelated concepts. According to Barthes, myth is also included in the linguistic scope. In Barthes' book, myth is applied to a modern context. Barthes also gave examples of phenomena that occurred in France, where Barthes saw from various sides, namely, logically, historically, rules and existing reality.

1.7 Methods of Research

In the method of research, the researcher explains about what type of research used the data source, how to collect the data and to analyze the data.

1.7.1 Type of Research

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. A qualitative method is a classification or interpretation of linguistic or visual studies that produces a statement about the implicit or explicit dimensions and structure of a sentence in the process of creating meaning, which is explained in terms of subjective or social meaning (Mezmir, 2020, p. 15). The qualitative analysis refers to text and image data, thus has unique steps in the process of analyzing with various designs (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative research design was chosen because this research analyzes memes that contain several verbal signs and visual signs in each meme with the semiotics analysis approach.

1.7.2 Data Sources

The primary data of this research is memes on MintPress Instagram page related to the case in Palestine. MintPress is an online news page that publishes critical perspectives on Western governments and institutions (Beers et al., 2022, p. 7). MintPress News keeps the world informed of current issues. The data of this research are eight memes related to the Palestinian issue uploaded by MintPress News media on its official Instagram page and taken from the period of October 2023 to March 2024. The researcher chose this period based on data obtained from the WHO (World Health Organization), which stated that there were 433 victims and health assets in Gaza, and 412 victims and health assets destroyed in the West Bank of Palestine. October 7, 2023 was also declared as a massive genocide committed by Israel (Office, 2022). In March 2024 there was a decrease in the number of memes uploaded by MintPress. As in February 2024 there were 6 memes, however in March 2024 there were only 3 memes. This is the most decrease in the period October 2023 to March 2024.

1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

This research employs visual materials as a method of data collection, aligning with qualitative research approaches. According to Creswell (Creswell, 2014, p. 240), visual materials refer to data obtained in the form of images, photographs, videos, and even sound recordings. In this study, the researcher identifies visual objects in the form of memes based on predetermined criteria, specifically within the period from October 2023 to March 2024. There were twenty-three data in that period, however, the researcher reduced the data by using criteria such as memes that have verbal signs, are related to Palestine and Israel,

have state identity, and are related to civilians and power. Therefore, the resulting data amounted to eight data. Once the data is gathered, it is organized into a table to facilitate easier analysis.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

This study employs the referential identity method (padan referencial method). The identity method is a data analysis method in which the determining tool lies outside the language element being examined (Nashshar et al., 2021, p. 3). The identity method consists of several subtypes, depending on the nature of the determining tool. Anything that exists outside the realm of language can be considered a referent of language. This referent may include tangible or intangible things such as objects, events, actions, conditions, qualities, or states. The referential identity method specifically refers to a subtype in which the determining tool is still external to the language, but it focuses on linguistic referents. This method is commonly applied in ethno-biosemanantics to explain how meaning is constructed based on real-world references (Rivaldi et al., 2024).

In this research, the data are in the form of images, specifically, internet memes. First, the researcher identifies and describes each meme. Then, each meme is analyzed using Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics, focusing on the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the referential identity method to interpret the cultural and ideological meanings embedded in the visual and textual elements of the memes.

1.8 Paper Organization

This thesis has four main chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher provides information on several subtopics, which include research background, research questions, research objectives, research significance, theoretical approach, literature review, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and paper organization. In the second chapter, this research explains the details of the theoretical background used in this thesis case study, which is Semiotics Analysis on memes about Palestine found on the MintPress News Instagram page. In chapter three, the researcher presents the discussion and results of the analysis of the problems of this thesis, as it should have been explained on the method of the previous page. In chapter four, researchers provide conclusions from the research, which contains a summary of the results that have been found, then there are suggestions or recommendations for future research on the same topic, namely Semiotics Analysis on meme.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion

Referring to the research questions of this research, first, how is meaning contained in each meme in conveying information? Second, what myths emerge from the whole meme?. This research concludes that each meme on the MintPress Instagram page carries rich layers of meaning formed through visual and verbal signs. Through semiotic analysis, these meanings are broken down into denotative and connotative elements, revealing not just literal content but deeper symbolic and emotional messages. The memes effectively convey information about the Palestinian struggle using visuals and phrases that provoke thought and empathy.

The second conclusion is that the six myths embedded in these memes emerge from cultural, religious, and political narratives. These myths reflect key Islamic values for example, the role of martyrdom, the significance of hijab, or the belief in justice after death, and also reveal socio-political critiques of international relations and the power of the government. By constructing these myths, the memes do more than inform; they persuade, resist, and give voice to marginalized perspectives. Through the theoretical lens of Barthes and an Islamic point of view, this study shows that memes are capable of not only communicating facts but also shaping ideology and social memory, especially in politically charged issues like the conflict in Palestine.

4.2 Suggestion

This The suggestion of this research is for social media users to be more critical to understand the implied message and the importance of semiotic studies to reveal the ideology and myth behind the content.



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