

ICON, SYMBOL, INDEX AND PRIMARY SIGNIFIER DESCRIBED IN SHAKESPEARE'S – *HAMLET*

Haryati Sulistyorini
Dian Nuswantoro University

Abstract: *This paper describes icon, symbol, index, and primary signifier in one of the famous Shakespeare's works, Hamlet. The analysis begins by describing the basic narrative structure, icon, symbol and index which is found in this play. Then it also describes the syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimension to find two different things between good and bad. From the result of the analysis it can be found that the primary signifier on Shakespeare's Hamlet is Hamlet that symbolized the good things; honesty and loyalty. This can not be changed by the bad things; dishonesty, greediness as symbolized on Claudius.*

.Keywords: *icon, symbol, index and primary signifier*

Drama is one of literary genres which has its own characteristics. Similar to other genres in literature, drama also tells the readers about human's life. It portrays the social life and it is not only read, but also performed on stage. Another term of drama is play. Like prose and poetry, drama also has structural elements to build up the unity of the story. Those elements like plot, conflict, character and characterization, theme, point of view, symbol and irony are put together on the same way. As stated by Reuben (Wardoyo, 2005) in PAL (Perspective in America Literature), drama has one characteristic peculiar to itself. It is written primarily to be performed, not read. It is a presentation of action through actors, stage, and audience. The playwright cannot directly comment on the action or the character and cannot directly enter the minds of characters and tell us what is going on there.

Reuben also states that drama can be divided into three types of drama. Those are tragedy, comedy, melodrama and farce. Aristotle (Reaske, 1966) explains that tragedy is defined as the imitation form of an action that is serious and complete, with incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith it affects a catharsis of such emotions. The difference between tragedy and comedy is that tragedy shows greatness in human nature and human freedom, whereas comedy shows human weakness and human limitation.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can be categorized into tragedy, since this drama contains the story about misery, greed, power, pride, prestige and love. Those characteristics definitely affect the whole story, and create a catharsis for readers such as emotion and fright. *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's longest play, and the content of

the play seems trying to describe something happens behind the life of the Victorian age (*Shakespeare's era*). It is one of Shakespeare's plays which is popular since the content of the story tells about greed among the noblemen. Denmark is used as the setting of place, and background of the story.

Hamlet has many characters with their own characterization. It also contains many kinds of conflicts on each scene, and supports the story well. By describing the condition of Denmark in Monarchy, *Hamlet* presents power, greediness, and revenge covering most of the story. *Hamlet* is built by structural elements like plot, conflict, character and characterization, and setting. Besides that, by reading this play, readers will find a lot of symbols, icons and index which show a lot of useful meanings.

Based on the above reason, this paper will discuss a basic narrative structure, icon, symbol, index and primary signifier in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Semiotic approach is used to gain information about that besides describing the correlation of syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimension, and also the primary signifier which reflects the theme of the story. In line with those elements on semiotic approach, the problem will be presented in this paper are:

1. What is the basic narrative structure described in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* ?
2. What are icon, symbol, index and primary signifier described in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* ?

Basic Narrative Sequence Described in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Some of Shakespeare's plays / dramas like *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* were the most popular works in the Victorian age. *Hamlet* was first printed in 1603. It is Shakespeare's largest drama among the others, and the play is responsible for the immortal lines *to be or not to be : that is the question:*” and the advise “*to thine own self be true*”. This drama which can be classified into tragedy tells about Hamlet, the King of Denmark who was killed by his brother Claudius, for his ambition to be the next King of Denmark. Then Claudius married the Young Hamlet's mother, Getrude and makes the Young Hamlet dislike and take the revenge to his uncle.

On his revenge, the young Hamlet found many difficulties and problems. He has to face many people who dislike him until he has to loose his girlfriend Olivia because of suicide. Those people are Claudius, Olivia's father, Polonius, Olivia's borthor, Laertes. By the end of the story, the young Hamlet finally proved that his father was murdered by Claudius' hand. Claudius who has ambition to be the king of Denmark poisoned the King Hamlet by his ear until the king died.

The catastrophe of this drama tells the reader that finally the Young Hamlet take the revenge by fighting in a battle with Laertes after killing Polonius or Laertes' father. Both of those men are fighting on the battle with their same mission, taking the revenge. This fight finally was ended by the death of both Hamlet and Laertes.

The following basic narrative scheme shows the sequence of the incidents happened in *Hamlet*:

1. The news telling that King Hamlet of Denmark has recently died.
2. King Claudius, who now rules Denmark, has taken over King Hamlet's wife, Queen Gertrude as his new wife and Queen of Denmark.
3. Hamlet meets the Ghost of his father, King Hamlet and follows it to learn that he was poisoned by King Claudius, the current ruler of Denmark.
4. King Claudius instructs courtiers Rosecrantz and Guildenstern to find out what is causing Hamlet's strange "transformation", or change of character.
5. Hamlet plans to use a play to test if King Claudius really killed his father as King Hamlet's ghost told him.
6. Hamlet is eager for King Claudius and Queen Gertrude to watch a play tonight which Hamlet has added lines to.
7. King Claudius and Polonius listen to Hamlet's and Ophelia's private conversation.
8. Hamlet suspects Ophelia is spying on him and is increasingly hostile to her before leaving.
9. King Claudius decides to send Hamlet to England, fearing danger in Hamlet since he no longer believes Hamlet is merely lovesick.
10. The play is performed, causing King Claudius to react in a way which convinces Hamlet that his uncle really poisons his father King Hamlet.
11. Queen Gertrude attempts to scold her son but Hamlet instead scolds his mother for her actions.
12. King Claudius learns for Polonius' murder which shocks him; it could easily have been him.
13. King Claudius is now scared of Hamlet, then decides to send Hamlet to England immediately.
14. Claudius instructed Rosecrantz and Guildenstern to ask Hamlet where Hamlet has hidden Polonius' body.
15. Hamlet refuses to tell about that.
16. Young Fortinbras marches his army across Denmark to fight the Polish.
17. The death of Polonius makes Ophelia mad, and downing herself on the lake.
18. Laertes is getting angry and upset to hear Claudius's explanation about the death of his father, and Ophelia.
19. Hamlet fights with Laertes about Polonius and Ophelia's death at the Ophelia's burial.
20. Hamlet reveals his desire to kill King Claudius.
21. Hamlet arrives at a hall in the castle and fights Laertes.
22. Queen Gertrude drinks a poisoned cup meant for Hamlet, but she is not telling all that he has been poisoned.
23. Hamlet wins the first two rounds against Laertes but is stabbed and poisoned fatally in the third round.
24. Hamlet wounds and poisons Laertes who explains that his sword is poison tipped.
25. Hamlet recommends Young Fortinbras as the next King of Denmark.

26. Fortinbras arrives, and cleans up the massacre.
27. Horatio promises to tell all the stories we have just witnessed.
28. Ending the play.

The basic narrative scheme above presents the whole story of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* which contains five acts. Based on the above analysis, we may directly continue on the analysis about classical tragic structure of this play.

Analysis on Icon, Symbol and Index in Shakespeare's *-Hamlet*.

Symbols described in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

In the previous description, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can be classified into tragedy. Usually, tragedy concerns about religious, misery, human suffering, and pride, curiosity, and jealousy. What is told and presented in this drama also contains about that. Shakespeare's drama wants to tell the readers that life is a tragedy. By finding out the meaning of the life, we automatically learn about suffering, pride, curiosity and jealousy, even powerness.

Since tragedy contains a misery, usually it also carries away some meaningful symbols or signs. Certainly, when we are talking about signs symbols, we will also talk about icon and index. Those elements are analyzed by using semiotic approach to gain the coherent meaning. By analyzing some words, phrases or may be sentences in every acts of the drama, we finally find the correlation between symbols, icon and index and then find the primary signifier of the play..

Based on Peirce ideas about three kinds of signs, as quoted by Fiske in Wardoyo, those kinds are basically divided into :

“Iconic” : *tanda yang serupa dengan yang ditandai (misalnya: foto, foto ronsen, diagram, peta).*

“Symbolic” : *tanda yang tidak serupa dengan yang ditandai tapi arbiter dan murni konvensional (misalnya: kata 'stop' atau lampu merah lalu lintas)*

“Indexical” : *tanda yang bersifat terkait secara otomatis dalam suatu hal (eksistensial atau kausal) dengan yang ditandai (misalnya: asap menandakan api, ketukan pintu menandakan tamu, bersin menandakan flu, dst) (Wardoyo,2005:3)*

Those kinds of sign can not be separated each other. They must be placed in one order and give the meaning of a story. One might be icon, symbol, and index, or it might be a combination among those signs. Those signs are related to each other creating a primary signifier which is usually to be the message of the story. The following analysis will show us the description of symbol based on characters involved in Shakespeare's *-Hamlet* and sentences which are used as dialogues of the play.

The Ghost of King Hamlet.

The ghost of King Hamlet appears on the first act of the drama, especially when Claudius announced his marriage with the Queen Gertrude, and also for being the King of Denmark. This ghost makes Hamlet want to revenge his father's death, since the ghost also tells him about the suffering.

The ghost also makes Hamlet and his friend including Horatio to swear for the ghost's appearance as a secret. The ghost of King Hamlet once appears when Hamlet has a talk with his mother in the Queen's room, and it makes him really upset and angry. From the beginning till the end of the story, it is only the young Hamlet, the one who can see the appearance of the ghost of the King Hamlet who passed away two months before. This appearance motivated the Young Hamlet to revenge.

The King Hamlet

He symbolizes a wise man, honesty, love, a victim of greed which is done by the King Claudius.

The Young Hamlet

He symbolizes power, courage, truth, loyalty, disappointment, revenge, and intelligence.

The King Claudius

He symbolizes a greed, bad, ambition of power.

The Queen Gertrude and Ophelia

She is a symbol of beauty, patience, softness and loyalty.

Laertes

He is a symbol of emotion, anger, and revenge.

Horatio

He is a symbol of honesty, loyalty, and patience.

As described above, besides symbol can be found by describing characters, it can also be found by finding out the meaning of sentences which are used in characters' dialogues. The following sentences give prove about that :

flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off, within

It describes the King doth who wakes tonight and takes his rouse. They will hold a party while drinking a lot of drinks. When he gets drunk, so the flourish of trumpets will sound more loudly than before. The following quotation prove the analysis:

[A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off, within]

What does this means my lord?

Hamlet: The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse.

And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,

The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out

The triumph of his pledge (*Hamlet*, act 1 scene IV:41)

‘the gloom that overcast your face.....’

This sentence means that Hamlet is hurt by his father’s death. This expression is used when his mother, the Queen Gertrude tries to persuade him since his face always looks sad. From the following quotation seems the Queen always tries to persuade Hamlet, but it doesn’t work much. Hamlet is still sad and depressed.

Queen. Good Hamlet, discard the gloom that overcast your face, and let your eye regard the king of Denmark as a friend. Do not, for ever, with your drooping eyes, look for your noble father in the dust. You know that death is common; all who live must die, passing through the gate of mortality to life eternal (*Hamlet*, act 1 scene II:19)

**Icon described in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*
King Hamlet and King Claudius Photos.**

It is shown to Gertrude by the Young Hamlet to convince his mother that the king Hamlet whatever still looks well compare to the King Claudius. This event happens when Hamlet is called by the Queen Gertrude as soon as the play shows. However this condition makes the Queen Gertrude was shocked and confused.

Hamlet tries to convince his mother for a couple times from the photo that there are many differences between his father and the King Claudius, eventhough they both are brothers. From the photo Hamlet found the difference from their faces. He assumed that his father’s face looks like a wise man, patient, kind, honest, and good. While the Claudius’ face portrays many bad sides like, greed, bad and dishonest person, and a liar.

A Bottle of Poison

It symbolizes bad thing, dishonesty, cheating, sickness, and death. The death of King Hamlet is caused by Claudius who poisoned his ears by giving a bottle of liquid in it. It means that by whispering something bad to someone’s ears it is the same as poisoning him / her .

Sword

It is symbolizes power. Hamlet insists that his friends keep the secret of his father’s death by holding the sword to swear it. Besides that, sword is also used as power to kill the enemy and he wants to revenge, like what Hamlet and Laertes did in the sword battle.

Index described in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*

The analysis of index is given to find the meaning of things in the story which automatically relates to the existence. The following term is the result of index analysis:

Blood,

It is sign a part of body which is hurt. It is showed when Hamlet fights againts Laertes in a battle at the end of the story.

Headache,

It is a sign for a person who is being poisoned. The old Hamlet had a headache after being poisoned by Claudius. The effect of that is that the Old Hamlet then was feeling sick and passed away.

Cemetery

It is a place for a dead person. This place is used as the setting of place where the Old Hamlet, and also Olivia took a rest in heaven.

Syntagmati and Paradigmatic Dimension on Shakespeare's Hamlet.

To know the meaning of signs composed in the story, Pierce in Wardoyo (2005:3) states that it can be done by describing the dimension of syntagmatic and paradigmatic of the narrative.

The syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimension in Shakespeare's Hamlet contains the dimension between bad and good, weak and strong, honesty and dishonesty. The following analysis shows the dimension of syntagmatic and paradigmatic of the narrative in this play

Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Dimensions

	Syntagmatic →
GOOD	BAD
The previous King Hamlet is a symbol of goodness.	The King of Denmark is a symbol of badness.
The Queen Gertrude is a patient woman, kind, lovely and tender	The King Claudius who is shellfish and never thinks about love, stubborn
Hamlet revenges his father's death	The King Claudius killed Hamlet's father.
Hamlet is a hero who is honest and loyal	The King Claudius is a liar.
Horatio adores Hamlet	Laertes hates Hamlet

Hamlet is a man who is strong, and brave.

Ophelia is a woman who is weak,
easy to get depressed.

Paradigmatic

Analysis on Primary Signifier

The primary signifier based on the above analysis represents the whole sign in this story is : **The Young Hamlet is a symbol of a good person, who is brave and loyal. His honesty and loyalty can not be replaced by the bad things being a liar, as reflected by The King of Denmark, Claudius.**

CONCLUSION

From the above analysis it can be concluded that symbols in this play are reflected by characters who play and also from the sentences which are used in their dialogues. The King Hamlet symbolizes an honest, wise and good person. On the other hand, Claudius is contrast with Hamlet. He reflects a bad thing, dishonesty, and greed. Hamlet also symbolizes a power, courage, truth, loyalty, disappointed, revenge, and intelligence. The Queen Gertrude and Ophelia is a symbol of beauty, patience, softness and loyalty. Laertes symbolizes emotion, anger, and revenge. Horatio symbolizes as honesty, loyalty, and patience. Analysis on symbol is not only described by the characters but also the sentences which are used from character's dialogues. They are flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off, within, the gloom that overcast your face

Based on the analysis, icons found in this play are King Hamlet and King Claudius photos, bottle of poison, and sword. Meanwhile indexes in this play are blood, headache and cemetery.

Beside analysis on symbol, icon and index, it also describes the analysis on syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimension, which contains sentences which show the two different things like, good and bad, honest and dishonest, dark and light. They all present the characteristic of characters in this play.

Finally the primary signifier related to those analysis can be concluded that the Young Hamlet is a symbol of a good person, brave, and loyal. His honest and loyalty can not be replaced by the bad things being a liar, as reflected by The King of Denmark, Claudius.

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