

CHAPTER II

FRAMEWORK OF THE THEORIES

In this chapter, the writer will explain the framework of theory used to analyze the song lyrics of Dream Theater, Metropolis Pt. 2 “Scenes from a Memory”. The writer uses Semiotics experts Roland Barthes’ theory which are denotative, connotative and myth. The writer also uses mediumship theory to support the analysis.

2.1 Semiotics

Semiotics is the theory and study of signs, symbols and signification as communicative behavior, especially as elements of language or other systems of communication. It is the study of how meaning is created, not what it is. Below are some brief definitions of semiotic terms, beginning with the smallest unit of meaning and proceeding towards the larger and more complex. Semiotics is closely related to the field of linguistics, which, for its part, studies the structure and meaning of language more specifically. The semiotic tradition explores the study of signs and symbols as a significant part of communications. As different from linguistics, however, semiotics also studies non-linguistic sign systems. Semiotics studies focus on the relationship of the signifier and the signified, also taking into account interpretation of visual cues, body language, sound, and other contextual clues. Semiotics is linked with both linguistics and psychology. Semioticians thus not only study what a symbol implies, but also how it got its meaning and how it functions to make meaning in society. Symbols allow the human brain continuously to create meaning using sensory input and decode symbols through both denotation and connotation.

In semiotics, a sign is something that can be interpreted as having a meaning, which is something other than itself, and which is therefore able to communicate information to the one interpreting or decoding the sign. Signs can work through any of the senses, visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory or taste, and their meaning can be intentional such as a word uttered with a specific meaning, or unintentional such as a symptom being a sign of a particular medical condition.

Semiotics has two important figures, Ferdinand de Saussure, a linguist of Swiss (1857-1913) and Charles Sander Peirce, a philosopher of America (1839-1914). Both two figures develop semiotics separately and they do not know each other. Although the two figures name this kind of science differently, Saussure uses 'semiotics' while Peirce uses 'semiology', but they still refer to a same thing. For the research purpose, the writer uses the word 'semiotics'.

According to Saussure, a sign consists of two aspects which bond to each other as like as a paper. Those two aspects are called 'signifier' and 'signified'. In Introduction to General Linguistics, Saussure explains that signifier can be found in physical expressions such as; sounds, characters, words, pictures, colors and objects. On the other hand, signified is something which has something to do with content of what is being expressed. Thus, a sign, on the other hand, will always refer to signifier and signified which eventually produce a meaning to the person who uses the sign. A sign can include several things such as; colours, gestures, winks, et cetera (Danesi, 2004:7). This fact is the thing that makes semiotics become interdisciplinary that it defines a sign as discourse

It turns out that the Saussurian tradition is not yet stopped with Saussure himself. The one who develops Saussure's big project about sign is Roland Barthes. The distinction between denotation and connotation is the guiding idea of Barthes' semiotic theory. He claims that when we read signs and sign- complexes, we can distinguish between different kinds of messages. In semiotics, denotation and connotation are terms describing the relationship between the signifier and it's signified, and an analytic distinction is made between two types of signifieds:

2.1.2 Denotation

A denotative signified and a connotative signified. Meaning includes both denotation and connotation. 'Denotation' tends to be described as the definitional, literal, obvious or common-sense meaning of a sign. In the case of linguistic signs, the denotative meaning is what the dictionary attempts to provide and the first level of signification, it means the permanent sense of a word excluding all subjective evaluations (dictionnaire de la langue Francaise 1993), it describes the literal or obvious meaning of the sign, thus, denotation of the visual image refers to what all people see without association to their culture, ideology or society. Roland Barthes expressed that

the denoted message bears analogical properties and it is primary to connotation in the process of signification.

In this level of signification, we deal with the sign as the basic meaning that is independent of context and subjective interpretations as in connotation. Denotation is the "literal or obvious meaning" or the "first-order signifying system". The denotative meaning of an image refers to its literal, descriptive meaning. For example: the image of sunrise denoted as the beginning of the day, and the end of night, while in connotation the sunrise can be described if a new day full of hope, the end of darkness, may be light ...etc and many other interpretations. For the art historian Erwin Panofsky, the denotation of a representational visual image is what all viewers from any culture and at any time would recognize the image as depicting (Panofsky 1970, 51–3).

2.1.2 Connotation

Connotation refers to "second- order signifying systems", additional cultural meanings we can also find from the image or text. Before discuss connotation from the Barthesian perspective, we should first know the meaning of this word, 'connotation is an idea suggested by a word in addition to its main meaning' (Oxford advanced learner's dictionary 2000). It is the implication evoked by words or statements and images over what they actually denote, also 'connotative signs can be personal and individual or general and universal' (J.A Cuddon 1998).

The term 'connotation' is used to refer to the socio-cultural and 'personal' associations (ideological, emotional, etc.) of the sign. These are typically related to the interpreter's class, age, gender, and ethnicity and so on. Connotation is a term used by Roland Barthes to explain the way signs work 'it describes the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emotions of the users and the values of their culture' (John Fisk 1992).

Connotation is thus context- dependent. Signs are more 'polysemic' – more open to interpretation – in their connotations than their denotations. Denotation is some- times regarded as a digital code and connotation as an analogue code (Wilden 1987, 224). It is, in this sense, influenced by the subjective factors that open more interpretations to the text. He suggested that 'connotation being

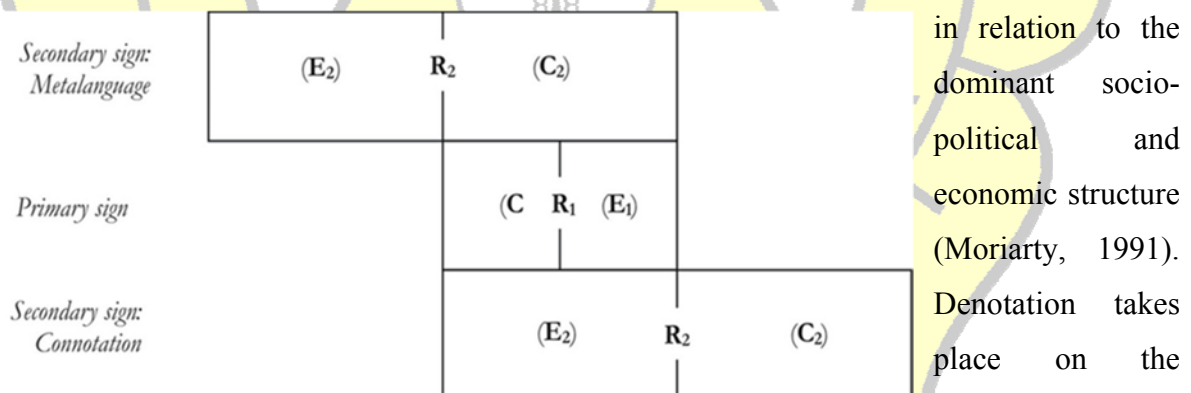
itself a system comprises signifiers, signifieds, and the process which unites the former to the latter (signification) ‘(Roland Barthes 1968)

As Roland Barthes noted, Saussure’s model of the sign focused on denotation at the expense of connotation and it was left to subsequent theorists (notably Barthes himself – drawing on Hjelmslev) to offer an account of this important dimension of meaning (Barthes 1967a, 89ff.). In ‘The photographic message’ (1961) and ‘The rhetoric of the image’ (1964), Barthes argued that in photography connotation can be (analytically) distinguished from denotation. As John Fiske puts it ‘denotation is what is photographed, connotation is how it is photographed’ (Fiske 1982, 91). However, in photography, denotation is foregrounded at the expense of connotation. The photographic signifier seems to be virtually identical with its signified, and the photograph appears to be a ‘natural sign’ produced without the intervention of a code (Hall 1973, 132). For Barthes ‘connotation relies upon the prior existence of denotation, it always works in the borrowed territory of the denoted’ (Harry Jamieson 2007). We can say that connotation is built on denotation. In analyzing the realist literary text Barthes came to the conclusion that connotation produces the illusion of denotation, the illusion of the medium as transparent and of the signifier and the signified as being identical (Barthes 1974, 9). Thus denotation is just another connotation. From such a perspective, denotation can be seen as no more of a natural meaning than is connotation but rather as a process of naturalization. Such a process leads to the powerful illusion that denotation is a purely literal and universal meaning which is not at all ideological, and indeed that those connotations which seem most obvious to individual interpreters are just as natural. According to an Althusserian reading, when we first learn denotations, we are also being positioned within ideology by learning dominant connotations at the same time (Silverman 1983, 30).

In *Elements of Semiology*, Barthes takes up the distinction, developed by the linguist Louis Hjelmslev, between denotation and connotation. A denotative statement is a first-order statement: a statement which concerns the literal (first-order) as mentioned from explanations in the previous paragraph that the meaning of the words that make up that statement. We have the words used, or what Barthes calls a plane of expression (E), we have what the words literally mean, or the plane of content (C), and we then draw a relation between the two (R) to find the statement's meaning. We need to move to the relation (R) between (E) and (C), and thus to a second-order meaning (connotation) to make any sense of the statement. There is clearly another meaning implied in this statement and this meaning exists at the level of connotation. To move from the plane of denotation to connotation involves the same processes we have already seen in the reading of myth: we move from a first-order meaning (denotation) to a second-order meaning (connotation). As Barthes adds: 'the first system is then the plane of denotation and the second system (wider than the first) the plane of connotation. We shall therefore say that a connoted system is a system whose plane of expression is itself constituted by a signifying system' (ESe, 149). (Graham, 2003).

Figure 1

According to Barthes, there is a dual message within any singular sign: the aesthetic aspect, apparent, and the hidden ideological meaning that reinforces the historical significance of that sign



primary level of signification and consists in what we think of as the literal, fixed, dictionary meaning of a word, ideally one that can be universally agreed upon. Connotation occurs on the secondary level of signification and consists of the changing associative meanings of a word. In his later writings, Barthes is explicit that the distinction between these two levels of signification is only a useful theoretical one (S/Z Barthes, 1974). 3-11; Roland Barthes (Barthes 1977). 62- 67).

In actual practice the limiting of meaning to a single denotative one would be very difficult because signs always bear traces of their meanings from previous contexts (Kay, 1995). Denotation for images implies what all viewers would recognize the objects, which the images intend to convey, while connotation refers to the socio-cultural and personal associations of the sign (Chandler, 2002; Sturken and Cartwright, 2003). (Connolly and Iain 2002). Explain that denotative meaning of a sign corresponds to the external reality, while the connotation deals with associations. Connotation builds upon already existing system of significance, or denotation (Chandler). Denotation refers to the common-sense, obvious meaning of the sign. In 'Myth Today' Barthes reminds us that the sign is, in fact, involved in a three-part relationship. A sign is, after all, the relation between a signifier and a signified, a sound or mark and a concept (Graham, 2003). In Barthes' words, every system of signification contains a plane of expression (signifier E) and a plane of content (signified C), and relations between these two planes are the signification (R).

In his book S/Z Barthes developed further his idea of the relationship between denotation and connotation: closed system of signification is that of denotation: at this level there is a sign consisting of a signifier and a signified. Denotation is associated with closure and singularity (it is the enemy of free play, opposing even the limited plurality made possible by connotation), while connotation represents the principle of opening up the text to all kinds of cultural meanings, even to the point of questioning the coherence and the identity of the text. This leads to the issue of closed and open systems, two types of semiotic systems. Connotation is a second order of signification which uses the denotative sign (signifier and signified) as its signifier and attaches to it an additional signified. In this framework, connotation is a sign which derives from the signifier of a denotative sign (so denotation leads to a chain of connotations).

A signified on one level can become a signifier on another level. This is the mechanism by which signs may seem to signify one thing but are loaded with multiple meanings. Indeed, this framing of the Saussurean model of the sign is analogous to the 'infinite semiosis' of the Peircean sign in which the interpretant can become the representamen of another sign.

However, it can also tend to suggest that denotation is an underlying and primary meaning – a notion which many other commentators have challenged. As we have noted, Barthes himself later gave priority to connotation, noting in 1971 that it was no longer easy to separate the signifier from

the signified, the ideological from the literal (Barthes 1977a, 166). Classical Hollywood cinema is an example of a closed system. It wants to be "read" in a certain way, guiding the viewer and resisting alternative readings. Experimental films are often open systems. There is no "correct" way of interpreting their meaning; on the contrary, they are open to all kinds of readings. Barthes identifies connotation with the operation of ideology (which he also calls "myth").

2.1.3 Myth

According to Barthes, "ideology or "myth" consists of the deployment of signifiers for the purpose of expressing and justifying the dominant values of a given society class or historical period (the signs express not just "themselves", but also all kind of value systems that surround them). As myths, signs tend to appear "natural" and self-evident (although they are basically always artificial, coded), hiding the operations of ideology.



Figure 2

Myth, as it were, hijacks meaning and turns it into a second-order meaning or what Barthes calls signification. Signification here refers to the second-order sign; it is meaning which has been produced through the transformation of already existent meaning, already existent (first-order) signs. Myth is a metalanguage: a second-order language which acts on a first-order language, a language which generates meaning out of already existent meaning (Graham, 2003).

According to Barthes myth has four characteristics, namely:

1. Distorted. The relationship between form and concept are distorted and deformative. Concept distorts the meaning of the form so that the first level of the system is no longer a meaning which refers to the actual facts.
2. Intentional. Myth nothing for granted. Myth deliberately created, constructed by the culture of the people with a purpose.
3. Statement of fact. Myth naturalize message so we accept it as a truth that is undisputed, something that is naturally stated in ordinary reasoning.
4. Motivational. According to Barthes, the myth contains a form of motivation. Myths are created by doing the selection of various possible concepts to be used. (Barthes, 1957)

2.2 Mediumship

According to Oxford Dictionary, mediumship means the skill or practice of being a spiritual Medium. In spiritualism, the term Medium refers to a person with a psychic ability to produce phenomena of a mental or physical nature by "channeling" or communicating with a spiritual entity. Mediumship involves cooperative communication between a human and one or more discarnate, spirit personalities, often during a séance (a meeting at which people attempt to make contact with the dead, especially through the agency of a medium). Information may be attained, paranormal activities may occur, energies may be channeled, or the spirit may manifest itself materially.

Modern spiritualism in the United States dates from the activities of the Fox sisters in 1848. Some mediums acknowledged by the Spiritualist Church today include Andrew Jackson Davis, Daniel Douglas Home, and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. In Britain, the Society for Psychical Research has carried on investigations of some phenomena, mainly in connection with telepathy and apparitions, in hopes of finding scientific explanations for such occurrences.

Some scientists of the period who investigated spiritualism also became converts. They included chemist Robert Hare, physicist William Crookes (1832–1919) and evolutionary biologist Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913). Nobel laureate Pierre Curie took a very serious scientific interest in the work of medium Eusapia Palladino. Other prominent adherents included journalist and pacifist William T. Stead (1849–1912) and physician and author Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930).

In the late 1920s and early 1930s there were around one quarter of a million practising Spiritualists and some two thousand Spiritualist societies in the UK in addition to flourishing microcultures of platform mediumship and 'home circles'. Spiritualism continues to be practiced, primarily through various denominational spiritualist churches in the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom.

Mediumship, however, did not gain widespread popularity until the Spiritualist Movement in the mid-nineteenth century. The birth of modern Spiritualism is often traced back to the experiences of the Fox sisters in 1848, when the two young girls claimed to have made contact with the spirit of a murdered peddler in their New York State home. The Fox sisters would regularly hold séances, and the popularity of contacting the "other side" spread like wildfire throughout the United States and parts of Europe.

As spiritualism grew in popularity, organizations were formed to investigate psychic phenomena like channeling. The Society for Psychical Research, for example, was founded in 1882, and attempts to investigate paranormal phenomena in a scientific and unbiased way. The Society has mainly investigated phenomena connected with telepathy and apparitions, in the hopes of finding scientific explanations for various spiritualistic occurrences.