

**REPRESENTATION SIGNS OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS  
DISORDER IN *SMILE* FILM BY PARKER FINN: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS  
OF CHARLES SANDERS PIERCE**

Representasi Tanda-Tanda Post-Traumatic Stres Disorder Dalam Film *Smile* Karya Parker Finn: Analisis Semiotik Charles Sanders Pierce

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**Abstract:** This research focuses on understanding the signs that portray Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the film *Smile*, employing Charles Sander Pierce's triadic sign theory framework, encompassing Representamen, Object, and Interpretant. The research methodology employed is a qualitative descriptive approach, with textual and visual data forming the basis for analysis. The primary data sources include images and transcripts from the film *Smile*, released in 2022. The film *Smile*, directed by Parker Finn, was chosen as the representative work due to its successful portrayal of an individual's experience with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This representation involves various types of signs that depict the psychological state of the character Rose. The analysis is conducted using a sign analysis approach within the context of the film. Through this analysis, it can be comprehended how trauma is represented, interpreted, and processed in an individual's mind and emotions through the various signs that manifest in the film.

**Keywords:** Sign, Representament, Object, Interpretant, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini berfokus untuk memahami tanda-tanda yang menggambarkan Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder dalam film *Smile* dengan menggunakan kerangka teori tanda triadic dari Charles Sander Pierce, meliputi Representamen, Object, dan Interpretant. Metodologi penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, dengan data tekstual dan visual sebagai dasar analisis. Sumber data utama meliputi gambar dan transkrip dari film *Smile*, yang dirilis pada tahun 2022. Film *Smile*, yang disutradarai oleh Parker Finn, dipilih sebagai karya representatif karena keberhasilannya menggambarkan pengalaman individu dengan Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Representasi ini melibatkan berbagai jenis tanda yang menggambarkan keadaan psikologis tokoh Rose. Analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan analisis tanda dalam konteks film. Melalui analisis ini, dapat dipahami bagaimana trauma direpresentasikan, diinterpretasikan, dan diproses dalam pikiran dan emosi individu melalui berbagai tanda yang termanifestasi dalam film.

**Kata Kunci:** Tanda, Representament, Object, Interpretant, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,

## INTRODUCTION

The film is a field study that is very relevant to the field of semiotic studies, this is because the film is built with many signs and symbols (Holis, 2021). These signs encompass various sign systems that synergistically collaborate to achieve

the desired impact or outcome. Signs in movies are certainly different from other sign formats that are only textual or visual. The interweaving of signs in movies feels more complex because at about the same time, various signs can appear at once, such as visual, audio, and text. the film is a combination of the concept of a sign with community culture (Holis, 2021). The most dominant identification is through the language used. Language as it is known includes codes of representation of meaning that the sender of the message wants to express so that in language we know what meaning is contained and how we will respond to that meaning. In addition, film is also a form of meaning relation regarding the delivery of symbol forms in the concept of cinematography (Prasetya, 2019. p. 43), in film cinematography, films produce images, spoken word sounds, and music in films. Over time, films develop so rapidly, namely by displaying several genres that begin to vary course such as horror, thriller, fantasy, romance, history, and others accompanied by images, spoken word sounds, and increasingly quality music as well, whereas in this case there are also various signs and symbols contained in it.

The researcher chose film as the object of research because the film has a great contribution to describing social reality and the many signs and symbols in it. The film chosen was the film *Smile. Smile* (2022) is a supernatural horror and psychothriller film, released in 2022, written and directed by Parker Finn which is also an adaptation of a short film titled *Laura Hasn't Slept* which was also made by director Parker Finn (Andani, 2020). This *Smile* film is one of the films made and raised on current issues related to psychological trauma (Andani, 2022). The film, directed by Parker Finn, raises the theme of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and psychological trauma experienced by Rose. This related information was also conveyed by Andani that in the film *Smile*, Parker Finn as the writer and director tried to make a horror genre film with a concept that was far different from the others, presenting horror through a calm and contrived *smile*. horror by relying on fear of trauma, and this is a breakthrough for Parker Finn in his film (Andani, 2022). So after watching the film, researchers can also conclude that this film is thick with suicide scenes, sightings of invisible creatures, and blood threats that will trigger trauma. The depiction of trauma-related mental disorders, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), is a significant aspect of the portrayal of

Rose's life in the narrative. Rose's character is depicted as having a childhood background marked by foreshadowing and hardship, which contributes to the development of these mental health challenges.

The researcher in this research will discuss the representation of signs indicating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the character Rose in the film *Smile* by using a semiotic theory approach. Researchers only analyze various signs through pictures, dialogues, or others only to show signs that refer to the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder phenomenon. This is because the researcher believes that not everyone understands every sign presented and here the researcher tries to represent the meaning of the sign. By analyzing these signs and symbols throughout the film, the researcher aims to provide a deeper understanding of how trauma is represented, interpreted, and processed in an individual's mind and emotions through the various signs that manifest in the film.

#### **METHOD**

This research employed descriptive qualitative research methodologies. The qualitative method, as defined by Bogdan and Taylor, is a research process that generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words of individuals and observed behavior (Moleong, 2007. p. 4). Qualitative research is a method of gathering information in the form of words or words said by individuals, as well as observable behavior. As a result, the generated data will be in the form of words and phrases rather than letters and numbers. Meanwhile, according to (Creswell, 2016), numerous key efforts are performed in this descriptive qualitative research method, such as seeing, hearing, collecting specific data, interpreting data, and searching for significance in the data.

In analyzing this study, the researcher used Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis. Peirce has three levels of significance or known as "Triadic Peirce" (Sobur, 2006). Peirce's triadic includes Representament, Object, and Interpretant. The researcher in this study used documentation techniques and literature studies as data collection methods. Documentation data provide information directly from the researcher's direct observations while watching films, while literature studies provide information and views from pre-existing literature.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Films are often analyzed using various theories, including semiotic theory, and one such semiotic theory is Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics. Peirce expanded his semiotic theory with the concept of triadic relationships. His triadic model consists of representation, object, and interpretation. The semiotic process is employed to analyze the relationships among the elements contained within a sign (Sobur, 2003). In this context, this research analyzes different types of signs that indicate Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) based on Peirce's categories of signs: Representation, Object, and Interpretant. The analysis focuses on the signs that appear in the film *Smile*. The results of the analysis reveal that there is a representation of PTSD symptoms experienced by the character Rose in the film. These symptoms encompass Avoidance, Re-Experience, and Hyperarousal. Through a semiotic approach, this study provides a deeper understanding of how PTSD is represented and interpreted within the context of the film. In summary, this analysis depicts how PTSD symptoms are represented in the signs that appear in the film *Smile*, following Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory of signs.


### Re-Experience

Re-Experienced is a person's experience of recalling traumatic events that have been experienced and feeling as if these events continue to recur or continue to occur in their memory (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The following will explain some data regarding this representation, namely as follows:

Table 1

#### Re-Experience

No	Research Data Timestamp: 00.00.33 – 00.01.50
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	Scene:
1	
	Transcript
	-

The picture above shows Rose who wakes up from her sleep with a facial expression looking shocked, scared, anxious, and anxious after waking up because she dreamed about the death of her mother when she was 10 years old. In addition, this image also depicts Rose's physical arousal in the form of anxiety and shock when she wakes up from her dream. This associates the image with Rose's feelings and experiences, making it a sign that represents Rose's emotional experience of her mother's death. So Rose's facial expressions that look shocked, anxious, afraid, and agitated are displayed are identified as objects. The interpretation of the representament an object refers to the emotional reactions displayed by Rose.

Representament	
Qualisign	-

Sinsign	Rose who wakes up from sleep dreaming of her mother's death.  Based on the representation of the image above, the signs in the picture are included in the type of sinsign. This is because Rose's image represents an event that actually happened and is physically and causally related to the object or reference it represents.
Legisign	-

Table Representament

The Representament table above is a sign that is included in the category of representation as a sign that represents an object. Representatives are classified into three, namely qualisign, sinsign, and legisign. The table shows that based on the notion of representation, the analysis of signs in the scene is included in the category Sinsign, not in the category of Qualisign, and Legisign. This is because the dream experienced by Rose is an actual event (Charles S. Peirce in Triandjojo, 2008), where Rose has indeed experienced the event as seen in the picture of little Rose who witnessed the death of her mother

Object	
Icon	The little Rose seen in the picture above, has a physical characteristic with a short look is a sign of an object in the form of an icon. In addition, this icon serves to explain and reinforce Rose's trauma.
Index	Rose's facial expression was shocked, scared, anxious and agitated when she woke up from her dream.  These images reflect a physical relationship or causality to the dream event and Rose's emotional reactions that correspond to what she experienced in the dream (Desmedt, 2011).
Symbol	-

Table Object

Rose's facial expression that looks shocked and anxious after waking up from a dream about her mother's death, the object becomes an "index" representation because it shows a direct causal relationship with the events in the story. Rose's facial expressions are signs that indicate the feelings and emotional reactions that arise after waking up from a dream, and this is directly related to the events in the story where Rose dreams about her mother's death. In addition, in the image

object above there is also an icon. An icon in Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory is a sign that has a physical or visual resemblance to the object it represents (Desmedt, 2011). In this context, the image of Rose who is 10 years old with short hair depicts or represents visually how Rose looks. In addition, the image provides information about Rose's past witnessing the death of her mother, so it can also be considered as a form of further interpretation of the icon. This interpretation carries a deeper semiotic aspect, namely connecting signs (icons) with more complex meanings, such as Rose's emotional experience regarding the death of her mother. An image of Rose with short hair can serve as an icon providing visual information about Rose.

Interpretant	
Rheme	-
Dicisign	-
Argument	Confusion, fear, or anxiety after a dream about the death of his mother. The interpretation includes common feelings that Rose's character may experience after having a dream about her mother's death, such as confusion, fear, or anxiety.

Table Interpretant

The picture of Rose sleeping and her facial expression (representament) represents the feelings and events that Rose actually experienced, namely the incident of her mother's death that she witnessed (object), and from the picture interprets that Rose experiences fear, or anxiety after a dream about her mother's death (interpretants).

Of the three types of representation, object and interpretant signs based on Pierce's trichotomy, the types of representation signs are in the form of sinsign, object in the form of index and icon then interpretant in the form of argument. The type of sign above produces a representation, namely a representation of the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, namely symptoms in the form of recalling bad past events through dreams, these symptoms are called Re-Experience .The past traumatic event that Rose experienced, namely the death of her mother, had a strong psychological effect on her. Traumatic flashbacks, which are one of the symptoms of PTSD, occur when Rose is having the dream, which makes her think back to the tragic event of her mother's death. The intense

emotional reaction shown by Rose's facial expressions and actions upon awakening from the dream reflects how powerful the traumatic event had affected her. The fear, anxiety, and confusion shown by Rose illustrates how much this event means to her.

**Avoidance**

Avoidance is one of an individual's attempts to avoid situations, feelings, or memories related to a traumatic event that has been experienced. Individuals with avoidance symptoms tend to avoid things that can trigger memories or emotions associated with the trauma, because they feel inadequate or afraid to face it (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The following will explain some data regarding this repression, which is as follows:

Table 2  
 Avoidance

No	Research Data Timestamp: 00.26.38 – 00.28.02 Scene:
2	



	<b>Transcript</b>
	<p>Carl : "She's gonna die. I'm gonna die. Everybody dies".</p> <p>Rose: "Carl, look at me".</p> <p>Carl : "You're going to die. You're going to die. You're going to die. You're going to die. You're going to die. You're going to die. You're going to die. You're going to die. You're going to die. You're going to die".</p> <p>Rose: "Help!. Help! This patient is 5150! He needs to be restrained!  [screaming]</p> <p>Carl: "No! No. No! No! No! No! No! No! No! No! No!"</p> <p>[pen clicks]</p> <p>Rose : "He was aggressive. Acting psychotic.</p> <p>Morgan: "Carl Renken has been in and out of here a dozen times and has never exhibited behavior even remotely aggressive".</p> <p>Rose: "Do you think. I'm making it up?"</p> <p>Morgan: "Of course not. But yesterday, a patient in your care killed herself brutally n front of you. Is it possible, when you presumed that Carl Renken was a danger to himself, that that's what your mind was reacting to?"</p> <p>[exhales]</p> <p>Rose: "I suppose. I could've misinterpreted the situation and overreacted."</p> <p>Morgan: "Okay. So, here's what's gonna happen. You're gonna take a paid week off".</p> <p>Rose: "Morgan, that's really not necessary".</p> <p>Morgan: "You've been working 80-hour weeks for months. I'm concerned that you haven't been sleeping. We can't help these patients unless we have our own mental health in check. And it's inthe unit's best interest if you just take a week and clear your head. Just do what you gotta do and come back focused, okay?"</p>

Rose in the scene above is called by the head of the hospital Dr. Morgan to come to his room. This is because Dr. Morgan feels something wrong about Rose, after Rose makes a scene in one of his patient rooms named Carl. Rose hallucinates Carl's rebellion, but Carl did not actually commit the rebellion. So Dr. Morgan called Rose to set the record straight. Then dr. Morgan advised Rose to take a week off to rest.

Representament	
Qualisign	-
Sinsign	A picture of a scene where Rose overworks,

	experiences hallucinations about Carl, and is then called by Dr. Morgan. This representation is the physical way in which the scene is conveyed through the script text or visual imagery above.
Legisign	-

Table Representament

In the context of this scene, representamen is the physical way in which scenes, actions, interactions, and reactions are explained or described, both in the form of written text and visual images. In the Peircean semiotic analysis, representamen is the physical form of a sign that connects the object with the interpretant (Desmedt, 2011). The representation includes a description of how Rose was overworked, working 80 hour weeks for months on end. This is a concrete description of what Rose is doing physically, aiming at objects in this sign. The representation also includes a description of Rose's hallucinations of a rebellious Carl. These are visual elements or images from Rose's psychological experience that point to other objects in the sign. So, in this scene, representamen is the physical way in which the scene is described and depicted. So therefore the Representament in the scene is included in the sinsign category. Sinsign is a sign that represents an object or referent based on a physical relationship or causality with that object (Desmedt, 2011). In this case, information about Rose is a sign or indication of Rose's condition and actions that occur physically and causally.

Object	
Icon	-
Index	Rose's actions are explained by the dialogue dialogue that Rose worked 80 hours a week for months on end.  The objects in the scene are included in the category index. An index is a sign that has a causal relationship or a direct relationship with the object it represents (Peirce, 1931-1958). Rose's act of working long hours is a direct indication of how she deals with trauma and tries to deal with her feelings in this way.
Symbol	-

Table Object

Rose's action described in the dialogue dialogue that he works 80 hours a week for months on end can be considered as an index in the framework of Peircean semiotics, because it fulfills the criteria of a causal relationship or a direct

relationship with the object it represents. In the context of the scene, Rose's action of working long hours is a sign that is directly related to the object she represents, namely Rose's psychological and emotional condition and her efforts to deal with trauma. The cause-and-effect relationship between physical action (working long hours) and objects (trauma experiences and efforts to deal with them) is direct. In other words, Rose's action of working long hours becomes an index because it is a direct indicator of Rose's feelings, actions, and efforts to overcome the trauma she has experienced. This representation reflects a physical sign that has a causal relationship with a deeper object, namely emotional response and efforts to overcome trauma.

Interpretant	
Rheme	-
Dicisign	-
Argument	Rose's act of working excessively (80 hours a week for months) is associated with an interpretant in the form of an avoidance mechanism or coping mechanism to overcome or divert herself from the feelings and thoughts related to the trauma she experienced. Dr. Morgan also noticed an oddity in Rose's behavior and connected it with interpretants in the form of extending rest or leave so that Rose had the opportunity to face and overcome the traumatic problems she was facing. As such, the scene reflects the argument linking Rose's act of overwork with interpretations of the mechanics of avoidance and the importance of extended periods of rest to overcome trauma.

Table Interpretant

The interpretation in this context is a deeper understanding of how these actions reflect Rose's efforts to overcome trauma and her psychological response. Rose's physical act of overworking (object) is interpreted as an avoidance or Rose's way of trying to overcome and deal with traumatized feelings.

Of the three types of representation, object and interpretant signs based on Pierce's trichotomy, the types of representation signs are in the form of a sinsign, object in the form of an index and interpretant in the form of an argument. The type of sign above produces a representation, namely a representation of the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, namely symptoms in the form of


avoidance of thoughts that trigger trauma, this symptom is called Avoidance. The scene above, represent that Rose is having a hard time dealing with her traumatic feelings regarding her mother's death. The trauma may have left strong emotional scars on Rose, and she tries to find ways to deal with them. One of the ways he chose was to keep himself busy and overworked. By working 80 hour weeks for many months, Rose may have hoped that these activities would distract her from the traumatic event and help reduce the pain and anxiety she felt. However, while working hard can be a temporary avoidance mechanism, it may not completely overcome or heal the trauma it is experiencing. Traumatic feelings and thoughts can still emerge and affect Rose's daily life, as seen in the scene when Rose experiences hallucinations about Carl being rebellious. Perhaps, overworking is just another way Rose has chosen to deal with her feelings, and she may need further support and professional help dealing with the trauma. In the context of PTSD, these avoidance mechanisms are common. PTSD sufferers tend to look for ways to avoid situations, feelings, or thoughts that are reminiscent of traumatic events (Dr. Pittara, 2014). This is one way to overcome anxiety, fear, and distress that arises from trauma.

### **Hyperarousal**

Hyperarousal in PTSD refers to a condition in which the individual feels constantly in a state of excessive alertness and tension. tend to feel restless, nervous, or even panic for no apparent reason. This symptom of hyperarousal is an overreaction to a traumatic event that has been experienced, and the condition can occur for a long period of time after the traumatic event. The following will explain some data regarding this repression, which is as follows:

Table 3  
Hyperarousal

No	Research Data
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	Timestamp: 00.53.05
	Scene:
3	
	Transcript
	<p>Voice: "Rose".          [gasps]          [voice whispers]          Voice: "Come here. Rose".          [Rose crying]          Voice: "Baby... Please. Help me. Mommy made a mistake".          Rose: "No, no, no".          [whimpering]          Rose: "No, no, no".          [voice shouts] Rose!          [horn honks]</p>

The scene above is the scene of Rose who can't fall asleep, Rose always feels that someone is watching her so because she keeps changing her sleeping position, besides that Rose also feels something calling her and accompanying her, Rose believes that the one who calls and comes to her is her mother who died 10 years ago.

Representament	
Qualisign	The picture above is the anxious, restless, and alert facial expression shown by Rose, as well as restless behavior and looking for a comfortable sleeping position. This is a sign of physical qualities that describes Rose's feelings and psychological state.
Sinsign	-

Legisign	-
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Table Representament

The representament in the picture above is a representament with the Qualisign sign type. Qualisign refers to representations that are based on physical qualities or properties that can be observed or perceived (Desmedt, 2011). In this case, Rose's anxious, agitated, and alert facial expressions, as well as her behavior of fretting to seek the right position, frowning, and clenching fists facing the right, are examples of physical qualities that describe the feelings and psychological conditions experienced by Rose. Rose is unable to fall asleep, Rose always feels that someone is resembling her mother watching her. This behavior is manifested in Rose's actions that always move anxiously to find the right position, frowning, clench fists facing the right.

Object	
Icon	The object in this scene is a figure similar to Rose's mother, which is reminiscent of Rose's mother's physical and visual appearance. This figure became an iconic sign that influenced Rose's emotions and behavior because it triggered memories and feelings related to Rose's mother.
Index	-
Symbol	-

Table Object

The object in the picture above is an object with an icon type. Icons are signs that bear a physical or visual resemblance to the object being represented (Desmedt, 2011). In this case, the figure shows physical resemblance to Rose's mother, such as having long hair and wearing short sleeves. This iconic object plays a role in influencing Rose's emotions and behavior as it triggers memories and feelings related to Rose's deceased mother. The existence of a figure resembling Rose's mother made Rose feel scared and anxious as if Rose's mother was still watching her. Rose's perception of this figure can affect the emotional reactions and actions shown Rose, such as agitated behavior, looking for the right position, frowning, and clenching fists facing the right.

Interpretant	
Rheme	The interpretant in this scene is Rose's emotional reactions and actions, such as finding a comfortable sleeping position, moving the forehead, and clenching

	fists. This reflects the anxiety, tension, and fear experienced by Rose in response to Rose's mother-like figure. This interpretation also reflects Rose's efforts to overcome the anxiety and fear she feels, although it also shows the discomfort and tension that still affects her.
Dicisign	-
Argument	-

Table Interpretant

The interpretant in the picture above is an interpretant with a Rheme type sign. Rose's behavior of seeking the right position, moving the forehead, and clenching the fist by facing the right is a manifestation of the anxiety, tension, and fear experienced by Rose. The anxiety, tension, and fear that occur due to an event may indicate that there is significant psychological distress due to trauma or unpleasant experiences related to something (LeDoux, J, 1998). Rose's expressions of fear and actions reflect strong reactions to feelings of fear and the need to feel safe. The behavior may reflect Rose's efforts to overcome the anxiety and fear she feels, although it can also reflect the discomfort and tension that still affects her. So, the Interpretant in the image is how Rose feels and reacts to the situation or event she faces, namely the feelings of fear, anxiety, and anxiety seen in Rose's expressions and behavior. These are emotional and behavioral responses that arise as a result of the signs represented in the representative. Thus, the interpretant in the image is an understanding of the feelings and emotional reactions experienced by Rose in the situation she faces.

Of the three types of Representment signs, Object and Interpretant based on Pierce's trichotomy produce the type of Representment sign in the form of Qualisign, Object in the form of Icon and Interpretant in the form of Rheme. The type of sign above produces a representation that is a representation of the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is a symptom in the form of feelings and emotional reactions experienced by Rose, these symptoms are called Hyperarousal.

Rose's emotional and behavioral reactions in the picture, such as finding the right position, frowning, and clenching fists the hand turns to the right, reflecting the feelings of anxiety, alertness, and fear he is experiencing. This behavior can be

considered as Rose's attempt to overcome the feelings of fear and tension she felt after encountering the person that triggered the traumatic memory (LeDoux, J, 1998). However, this also shows that Rose is still affected emotionally by the traumatic experience. In the context of this representation, the interaction between an iconic figure resembling Rose's mother and Rose's emotional reactions and behavior forms a representation of a situation that includes strong feelings of anxiety and tension.

### **CONCLUSION**

The film "Smile" by Parker Finn is representative, depicting the events of an individual's experience with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This representation involves various types of signs that represent the psychological state of Rose's character. Through the concept of sign in film analysis. With this analysis, it can be understood that how trauma is represented, interpreted, and processed in individual thoughts and emotions through various signs.

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