

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE COVER OF THE NOVEL "*HOUSE OF HUNGER*" BY ALEXIS HENDERSON

RINA MARIANA¹, MENTARI NASYA PUTRI², MUH HASBI^{3*}

English Literature Study Program, Universitas Negeri Makassar

*Corresponding Email: emhasby@unm.ac.id

Abstract

This research is a descriptive qualitative study that analyzes the signs on the cover of the novel *House of Hunger* by Alexis Henderson and the parts of the signs that represent the content of the story. The aims of this research are: (1) To find out what signs are on the cover of the novel *House of Hunger*; (2) To find out how the signs on the cover represent the contents of the novel. This research data was obtained by reading novels. Data analysis uses an interactive analysis model which includes data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions (Huberman & Saldana, 2014). This research uses Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach to analyze the signs on the cover of the novel *House of Hunger*. Based on the research results, the author found 3 types of signs on the cover of the novel *House of Hunger*: Icon, Index, and Symbol. The data obtained were 10 signs on the novel cover, 4 of which were icons, 3 indexes, and 3 symbols. All the signs on each book cover represent the content of the story in the novel such as characters, situations, settings, conflict, and characterization.

Keywords: *Semiotics, House of Hunger, Charles Sanders Peirce, Cover novel*

INTRODUCTION

Novels are one of the most popular types of literary works and are most in demand by readers. According to Wiyogo & Kumala (2023, p. 14), A novel is a literary work that tells the experiences of each character, thus producing a closer and more detailed picture of the characters in the story and the world they live in. Novels have many genres, such as romance, mystery, science fiction, history, fantasy, thrillers, and horror. One of the most popular novel genres is Horror. Horror is a genre of fictionalized stories that are meant to evoke feelings of fear or horror in its readers. Horror novels rely on the reader's imagination to visualize horrific scenes through narration and dialogue in the story, allowing the reader to get more into the tension with the characters. This makes the horror genre popular because readers are curious about how the horror genre in novels can reach the reader's emotions with just narration and dialog. In addition, the curiosity to read a horror novel can also be influenced by the visuals and verbiage presented on the book cover of a novel.

In addition to the story that can attract readers, the book cover is an important consideration in designing a book. The book cover is the first thing the reader sees. The book cover plays an important role in readers' interest in reading as important as the title or headline of a news story. Therefore, the book cover will attract readers' interest and determine the success or failure of a book in the literary world. Not only does it function as a protector of the contents of the book to keep it intact when stored or used, but the book cover also functions as an attractive promotional tool to increase sales and influence readers' interest (Marzuqi, 2023, p. 406). In addition, the cover also functions as a medium used to convey the book's message.

In designing a book cover, the design must be adjusted to the content of the book. All elements of the parable displayed in the cover design are efforts made by the designer or artist to present the content of the book. This indicates that the design on the book cover has a meaning that is closely related to the content of the book. The meaning or message

contained in the book cover can be explained through the visual signs that appear, supported by Ulfa (2021, p. 2) opinion that the book cover is the first window that opens the world of the characters in the story. The visual image on the book cover plays an important role in helping readers understand the characters in the story, which in turn reflects how individuals understand the world around them.

This study aims to analyze the book cover of "*House of Hunger*" by Alexis Henderson. This is done by examining the elements of shape and color and the perceptions formed on the book cover. This research is examined using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. Semiotic theory is used to analyze the meaning and signs both visual and verbal that appear on the book cover. In addition, the semiotic analysis of the book cover aims to reveal the hidden messages that the author wants to convey through the use of these elements. Through the semiotic approach, it is expected to better understand how authors use signs to construct meaning and communicate certain concepts to readers. Thus, this study will not only provide an in-depth understanding of the visual aspects of the book cover but will also open up insights into the wealth of meaning implied in the book's work.

Semiotic research that is almost similar to this research is research titled "A Semiotic Analysis of Novel Covers of "Diary of a Wimpy Vampire: Since the Undead Have Feeling Too" by Tim Collins" which was researched by Rohmania (2014). This research uses Charles Sanders Peirce's theory. After conducting an investigation, the author found that there was a total of 15 iconic signs used on the cover of the novel, both in the original version and the Indonesian version. With eight symbols and six indices, more symbolic signs are used than indexical signs. According to the author, the original print is better able to capture the essence of the story than the Indonesian print cover. Apart from that, there is also research from Nofia & Bustam (2022) entitled "Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes Pada Sampul Buku Five Little Pigs Karya Agatha Christie" which is also quite similar to this study. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, the researcher explains the denotative and connotative meanings of the signs contained in the novel. In this research, the author obtained data discovered three key findings: (1) the connotative meaning of a sign is metaphorized through denotative meaning; (2) some text and images used as signs featured both connotative and denotative meaning when referring to a specific object; and (3) visual signs were shown to be more prevalent than verbal signals.

One interesting novel that displays a horror story about the power of blood and treasure is Alexis Henderson's work entitled "*House of Hunger*". To earn money, the poor girl in the novel chooses to become a blood maid or a servant who gives her blood to her master for consumption. Marion is an orphan girl who accidentally kills her brother because of an argument about money. Marion decides to leave her brother's body and the city to be sent to the *House of Hunger* to become Blood's maid. Marion becomes one of the blood maids in the house and gets the best facilities and food to maintain the quality of her blood. However, what was promised by his employer about the maid's post-retirement wealth turned out to be inappropriate and instead, he found terrible facts behind it. From this novel, the researcher then determined two questions as answers to how the story in this novel could be represented by the sign on the cover.

1. What are the signs on the cover of the novel *House of Hunger* by Alexis Henderson?
2. How do these signs represent the content of the story in the novel?

Review of literature

Semiotics

The study of signs is called semiotics. Semiotics is the scientific study of signs and epistemology of the presence or reality of signs in people's lives (Yakin & Totu, 2014, p. 4). It has to do with how we depict our world to ourselves and others. It's a human endeavor. Humans can communicate both verbally and nonverbally. They convey communications using signs, sounds, symbols, or paralinguistic techniques. According to Ulfa (2021, p. 2), semiotics is concerned with the creation and interpretation of meaning. This is the primary principle that governs the intent of actions and objects performed using other signs. A sign system refers to the complicated semantic relationship that might exist between two signs. Semiotics is a topic that is quite diverse and broad in studying types of signs in various media and channels, socially developed and organized sign systems, as well as how the environment around the sign or process acquires meaning (Prior, 2014, p. 1). Semiotics is the science that studies signs and how to interpret them (Pauzan, 2018, p. 11). Eriana (2015, p. 3) states that the study of signs and symbols, as well as the workings of signaling systems, is the field of semiotics. Meanwhile, Faturahman (2014, p. 2) believes that semiotics is a science that studies signs in humans. So, based on the opinions expressed above, it is possible to conclude that Semiotics is a science that investigates signs in people's lives and how to understand them.

Peirce's Semiotics

According to Peirce, semiotics is the study of signs and all that is associated with them, including their usage, relationships with other signs, transmission, and reception by users. According to Peirce, Semiotics begins with three elements, such as signs (signs or representations), sign references (objects), and the use of signs (interpretants). In semiotics, these three groups are referred to as trichotomy relations. The process of interpreting a sign that begins with a basis known as the representamen or ground, relates to an object, and concludes with the interpretant process is called semiosis, and it describes this relationship. This semiotic theory focuses mainly on the use and function of signs. Sign language is incredibly useful in a variety of situations and may be applied to many different communication contexts. According to Peirce's meaning triangle concept, Peirce's triadic model describes the three main elements that comprise a sign: the representamen, object, and interpretant. Signs in the broad sense can be interpreted as having three interconnected parts: (1) signs in the narrow sense are also called *representamen*, namely something that represents something else; (2) the *object*, or what the sign symbolizes; and (3) the meaning made possible by the sign, which can be realized as the translation of the sign into a new sign, this is what Peirce calls an *interpretant* (Faturahman, 2014, p. 11). Representation, object, and interpretant are something that must always exist together. Supported by Eriana (2015, p. 21) that representation, objects, and interpretants cannot be separated in semiosis because they both have their respective functions to determine each other so that the semiosis process can describe or determine signs.

Pierce's Sign Classification

Peirce classified signs depending on shape, context, and position. The model below depicts these three categories:

1. Icon

An icon is a representation of what it symbolizes which appears as an object or image. According to Wiyogo & Kumala (2023, p. 13), an icon is a symbol of an

object that is only used to identify it based on its properties and attributes, regardless of whether the object is real or not. An icon is a correspondence between a sign and a similar object or referent. For example; icons on signs depicting police excavating on the road indicate actions being taken or carried out in compliance with relevant actions.

2. Index

An index is a sign that refers to the object it points to based on the actual influence of that object (Joesoef, 2020, p. 13). An index is an element that illustrates the cause-and-effect relationship between two signs. For example, hand markings on the cheek are a sign of a slap in the face because red marks on the cheek may indicate an altercation that ended in a smack.

3. Symbol

A symbol is a sign that refers to something it represents following a law, which is usually a set of overarching concepts that work together to make the symbol appear to refer to something (Faturahman, 2014, p. 15). Symbols are the underlying signs of a conference or convention. For example, the word "house" is a symbol for the concept of residence because we have agreed to use the word to represent that concept.

House of Hunger by Alexis Henderson

House of Hunger is a horror novel by Alexis Henderson which was published in 2022. The story in this novel is set in a world where nobles drink the blood of their maids. Tells the story of the life of Marion, a girl who is a maid who gives blood to her employer at the *House of Hunger*. This novel is the second novel from author Alexis Henderson, a best gothic writer, and a finalist for the Goodreads Choice Awards with her first book entitled '*The Year of the Witching*'. The popularity of the *House of Hunger* books continues to grow and was nominated for a 2022 Goodreads Choice Award for Best Horror.

METHOD

Research Design

In this research, researchers used qualitative descriptive methods to examine and find the signs and meanings of the signs used on the cover of the novel "*House of Hunger*" by Alexis Henderson. The descriptive analysis method is the method used in this research because the description and explanation of the analysis is the result of this research. Similar to Bogdan and Biklen opinion (cited in Ahsan, 2015, p. 10), data for qualitative research is obtained through words or images and is descriptive. Therefore, the research data is documented descriptively and consists of qualitative data and qualitative descriptive methods will be used.

Source of Data

In this study, researchers took data from the novel by Alexis Henderson entitled *House of Hunger*. *House of Hunger* tells the story of a young woman named Marion who decides to become a blood maid at the *House of Hunger*. Data was taken from the cover of the novel *House of Hunger* and then linked to the novel's story. In this study, there were no informants because the data was related to visuals and text. To facilitate the completion of this research, researchers have incorporated additional sources, including books, articles, and journals.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedure in this research was that the researcher read the novel *House of Hunger* by Alexis Henderson to understand the contents of the novel. After the book was read, the researcher traced all the visual objects along with the writing on the book cover and collected the signs on the book cover.

Data Analysis

In this study, the researchers employed the technique of data analysis outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

1. Data Condensation

The process entails selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data presented in the full collection of written field notes, the process of combining interview transcripts, records, and other empirical sources is known as data condensation (Miles et al., 2014, p. 8). The data in this step obtained from the cover of the book '*House of Hunger*' by Alexis Henderson was selected, identified, and categorized into forms of signs.

2. Data Display

A display is an organized and ordered collection of information that allows for conclusion-making and action (Miles et al., 2014, p. 8). Data display in general is a clear and structured collection of data that aids in decision-making and action. We can understand what's happening by seeing displays, and then act by completing more research or acting on that understanding. Data can be shown as text, graphs, or visual diagrams. In this step, the researcher displays data in the form of signs that have been classified into Pierce sign forms in table, images and text form. The images displayed are data from research accompanied by a brief explanation of the image in the table.

3. Drawing and Verifying Conclusion

The final phase of the analysis involves making conclusions and verifying them. At this point, researchers formulate conclusions based on the data gathered throughout the research process. The findings in this research are in the form of a detailed description of all the signs on the novel cover and how the contents of the novel are represented by these signs. It is anticipated that the conclusions or results of this study will offer new and valuable insights for future research in the same field.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

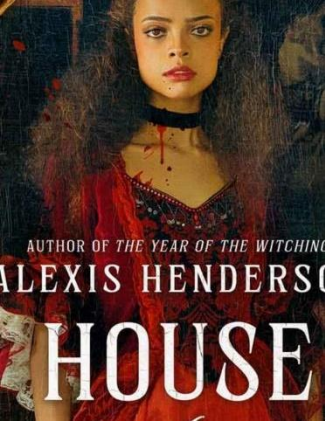



Types of signs on the cover of the novel *House of Hunger*

No	Sign	Types of Signs	Analysis
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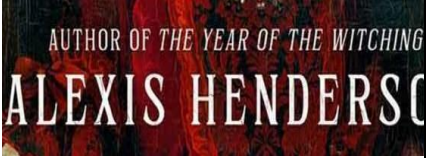
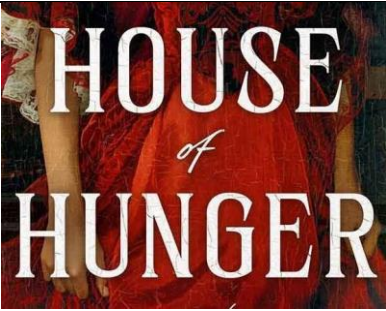
1	 <p>Woman in red dress</p>	Icon	<p>The image of the woman in red is categorized as an icon. An icon is a correspondence between a sign and a similar object or referent. In this sign, the image of the woman has similarities to the main character of the novel, namely Marion Shaw. Marion Shaw in a dark red velvet blood maid uniform is depicted similarly on the cover</p>
2	 <p>Gold frame</p>	Symbol	<p>The gold frame is categorized as a symbol of wealth, treasure, and power. A symbol is a sign based on agreement or convention. Gold is believed to symbolize wealth and treasure because gold is a luxury item that only the wealthy can afford.</p>
3	 <p>Blood</p>	Index	<p>Blood stains can be categorized as an index. An index is an element that illustrates the cause-and-effect relationship between two signs. The presence of blood is a sign of someone being injured. An injured person causes blood to come out from the source of the wound. The blood in the picture is an index of the injured person because the blood is caused by someone's injury</p>
4	 <p>Black ribbon at neck</p>	Symbol	<p>The black ribbon on the neck can be categorized as a symbol. The black ribbon on the main character's neck symbolizes sadness, mourning, or darkness. It is believed to be a visual element to depict the feelings or emotional situation experienced by the main character in the novel. The black ribbon not only represents or mimics the physical appearance of a ribbon on the neck but also has a deeper meaning or connotation about the character. The black ribbon functions as an identity instrument for a blood servant and as a cover for scars resulting from blood collection</p>

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5	 <p>Candle</p>	Symbol	<p>Candles can be categorized as symbols. The main symbolism of candles lies in their ability to illuminate darkness. Lighting a candle can be seen as a metaphorical act of seeking guidance and understanding. Candles are a symbol that symbolizes hope during oppressive darkness, indicating that there is light in the darkness or there is hope even though the situation feels gloomy. The presence of candles in the story can represent the hope and courage of the main character to fight the darkness and despair that surrounds her and how the main character searches for the truth of her employer's secret all this time.</p>
6	 <p>Woman silhouette</p>	Icon	<p>The woman silhouette can be categorized as an icon. An icon is a correspondence between a sign and a similar object or referent. This silhouette is believed to be a visual representation of the characters, namely the blood handmaids who serve their master by giving their blood as a sacrifice that will enhance their master's power, so this silhouette reflects their presence and influence in the story.</p>
7	 <p>Strach texture</p>	Index	<p>Scratch texture can be categorized as an index. Indexes are signs that are related to cause-and-effect things. The texture of scratches is the result of someone's scratches and scrapes. So, the texture is an index of the scratches. Scratch texture is damage and imperfection that can create visually appealing effects and provide specific characteristics to the cover. Scratch texture is used to create an atmosphere that suits the theme or mood of the story, such as a mysterious, classic, or dramatic impression.</p>

8	 <p>Handrails</p>	Index	<p>The handrail on the dress can be categorized as an index. An index is a sign that refers to the object it points to based on the actual influence of that object. The tight grip in the picture is a result of feelings of fear, anxiety, and tension. This sign can symbolize the fear, anxiety, or threat perceived by the character. This action also indicates that the character is seeking protection or support in a frightening situation. The sign refers to the influence of their feelings, so it can be categorized as an index. Thus, this sign can provide emotional depth to the main character and depict the journey or internal conflict they experience in the story.</p>
9	 <p>Author's name and previous work</p>	Icon	<p>The verbal text that reads "Author of The Year of The Witching" is a sentence stating that Alexis Henderson is the author of the book entitled "The Year of the Witching". So, this sign can be categorized as an icon because it represents Alexis Henderson's identity as the author of the novel <i>The Year of the Witching</i>. The sentence written to show his identity as a writer refers to the author with his best work "The Year of the Witching". This sentence can make people curious about Alexis Henderson's subsequent work, <i>House of Hunger</i>. This is also done to emphasize its identity so that it will result in sales of more copies of the book.</p>
10	 <p>The title of the novel</p>	Icon	<p>This verbal text is made large enough to highlight the title of the story. This verbal writing is categorized as an icon. An icon is a correspondence between a sign and a similar object or referent. Since an object's title is a trait that indicates its meaning and purpose, it characterizes the object and conveys its meaning (Sail Mohammed Al-Fayomi, 2021, p. 81). The <i>House of Hunger</i> is an icon for the place of bloody maids. The <i>House of Hunger</i> in this book describes the place where the master and her bloody maids begin the story in the novel.</p>

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The contents of the book are depicted by signs

1. *Blood maid*

The blood maid is depicted by an icon in the form of a girl on the cover of the book. The image of the girl in a red dress with a black ribbon around her neck depicts her identity as a blood maid. The black ribbon tied around her neck is a symbol of sorrow and darkness for a blood maid dedicating her blood and body to her master. Blood maids cut their bodies to let out their blood. The bloodstains in the picture are an index of the wounds of the blood maids who voluntarily injured themselves. The sign in the form of a woman's silhouette on the cover is also an icon of the blood maids who inhabit the *House of Hunger*. The blood maids are collected from young girls and then given the best facilities. The silhouette of the woman on the cover represents the blood maids who are chatting and being friendly with each other. They live well with each other and wait for the master to decide whose blood will be drunk every night.

2. *Wealth and Power*

Wealth, luxury, and power are represented by a sign in the form of a gold frame. Gold is a symbol of wealth and luxury. Wealth and luxury are the factors that attract girls to become blood maids. They were promised property and wealth that would support them throughout their lives if they became retired blood maids. During their time as maids in the *House of Hunger*, blood maids are given luxurious facilities and luxurious food so that their blood is eventually milked for their master to drink.

3. *House of Hunger*

The *House of Hunger* is one of the houses where the head of the family is a woman named Lisavet Bathory. He is the master of blood maids who are required to drink blood to survive hereditary diseases. The *House of Hunger* is a home for blood drinkers to feast, a home for maids who are given good care and food, and a home where Lisavet Bathory's dark secret is the beginning of the story's conflict. The *House of Hunger* is an icon that represents the story setting in the novel *House of Hunger*.

4. *Suspense, fear and darkness*

Tension and fear in the story are represented by signs in the form of indexes, namely the texture of scratches and the tight grip of the hand. The scratched texture on the cover of the book depicts how current and former blood maids try to escape Lisavet's grip. It turns out that the blood maids were deceived by the promise of riches, they were locked in an underground room to drink their blood until it ran out. The scratches are an index of the blood maids' resistance to leaving the *House of Hunger*. Meanwhile, the sign in the form of a tight grip on the dress is an index of the blood maids' feelings of fear, anger, and tension regarding the situation they face.

5. *Courage*

Marian Shaw and the blood maids decided to fight against their master, Lisavet Bathory so that they would not end up the same as the previous blood maids, which is one thing that illustrates courage. Their hope and courage were a light in the darkness and gloom of their fate at the hands of Lisavet. The blood maid's hope and courage are symbolized by a candle on the cover of the novel *House of Hunger*. The candle is a symbol that symbolizes hope during oppressive darkness, indicating that there is light in the darkness or there is hope even though the situation feels gloomy. The presence of candles in the story can represent the hope and courage of the main

character Marian Shaw and the other blood maids to fight their masters and the despair that surrounds them. The candle on the cover shows that there will continue to be candles providing light so that they do not get lost in the darkness.

Discussion

Types of signs on the cover of the novel *House of Hunger*

This research aims to analyze the signs on the cover of Alexis Henderson's novel "*House of Hunger*". This research applies Charles Sanders Peirce's theory where there are 3 classifications of signs, such as icons, indexes, and symbols, and all three are found on the cover of the novel. There were 10 signs found, dominated by icons totaling 4 icons, 3 indexes, and 3 symbols. The four icons found are (1) a picture of a woman in a red dress, (2) a woman's silhouette, (3) verbal text that identifies the author, and (4) the title of the book. An icon is a representation of an object that serves solely as a means of identifying it by its characteristics (Wiyogo & Kumala, 2023, p. 13). The four icons found are identified based on the characteristics of the object they point to. Meanwhile, in the three indexes found on the cover of this novel, the three signs are (1) bloodstains, (2) tight hand grips, and (3) scratch textures. An index is a sign that refers to the object it points to based on the actual influence of that object (Joesoef, 2020, p. 13). The three indices found are causal signs. Then finally there were 3 signs in the form of symbols found in the form of (1) gold frame, (2) black ribbon, and (3) candles. A symbol is a sign that refers to something it represents following a law, which is usually a set of overarching concepts that work together to make the symbol appear to refer to something (Faturahman, 2014, p. 15). The three symbols found are signs that follow the law or have widely agreed meanings.

The contents of the book are depicted by signs

The signs found on the cover of the novel *House of Hunger* represent the content of the story quite well. The signs in the form of icons, indexes, and symbols synergize with each other to describe the content contained in the story. The four icons represent that the story of *House of Hunger* is a story where a blood servant named Marion Shaw and other blood servants live in a house called *House of Hunger*. The main character in the novel, Marion Shawn is represented by an icon in the form of a picture of a woman in a red dress, the red dress itself is an icon that represents her work as a blood servant. While the setting of the story itself is represented by icons in the form of book titles and female silhouettes depicting the *House of Hungers* as a place for blood servants. Then the three indexes found in the novel cover represent the content of the novel about how a blood maid is injured or injures herself to release her blood to be used as a drink for her master and how their situation and suffering in the story.

Blood maids are also adequately represented by the index of bloodstains because maids being wounded and having their blood drawn is the routine of blood maids. The tight grip of the hands and the texture of the scratches are closely related to the content of the story, the index represents the fear and tension of the blood maids regarding their master's dark secret, and the scratch marks symbolize their attempt in panic and fear to get out of the *House of Hunger* after knowing that they will be trapped forever. Wealth and power are one of the things that shape the novel's story and this is represented by the gold symbol on the novel's cover. Apart from being represented by the index, sorrow, darkness and suffering are also represented by symbols in the form of black ribbons and candles. The black ribbon symbolizes how sad the blood maids feel when they learn the

fact that they will be locked up forever to be squeezed for blood like the previous maids who died from blood loss. Meanwhile, the candle symbol itself represents their efforts to leave darkness with courage. The courage of the main character leads them to seek the truth about their master's secret and fight Lisavet Bathory, their master, to be free from the *House of Hunger*.

Compared with previous research, the methods and findings in this research are similar to Rohmania (2014) research entitled "A Semiotic Analysis of Novel Covers of "Diary of a Wimpy Vampire: Because the Undead Have Feeling Too" by Tim Collins". Both use Charles Sander Peirce's semiotic theory and the same discovery in the form of iconic signs which are more dominant than other types of signs. Meanwhile, when compared with Nofia & Bustam (2022) research entitled "Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes Pada Sampul Buku Five Little Pigs Karya Agatha Christie ", the theory used is different, such as Roland Barthes' theory. However, in the results themselves, visuals were dominant over verbal ones, just like in this study, of the ten signs there were only two verbal signs and eight visual signs. There are similarities in the shape of the signs. From these two studies, when compared with this study, it was found that all the signs found on the novel cover contained or represented the content of the story. There were more visual signs than verbal signs found in the novel covers. Even though the authors use different theories, the mark on the novel's cover is proven to represent the content of the story.

Based on the explanation above, the author concludes that the signs found in the novel work together to represent the content of the story. Icons, indexes and symbols represent or visualize (1) the character in the novel, namely Marion Shawn, (2) the job of the blood servant, (3) the setting of the story such as the place and atmosphere, (4) characterization, and (5) the status of wealth and power in story.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the novel, researchers found that the cover of the novel *House of Hunger* by Alexis Henderson uses 3 types of sign classification, namely icon, index and symbol totaling 10 signs. In this research, there are 4 signs in the form of icons, 3 indexes and 3 symbols. Based on what has been discussed previously, it is known that the signs on the cover of the book *House of Hunger* represent the contents of the story. The signs found in the novel work together to represent the content of the story. The 4 icons represent the characters and the setting of the story and also the author's identity, then the 3 indexes represent what happens to the characters as well as the characters' situations and feelings, and the 3 symbols on the cover represent the story themes such as lust, sorrow, and struggle.

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