CHAPTER II

LITERARY REVIEW

II.1   Theoretical Framework

II.1.1.1 Semiotics Approach

Commonalities between pictorial and verbal signs are emphasized, when pictures as well as sentences of natural language are preferred to as symbols, when one talks about a "language of pictures" or about "visual literacy" (Schnotz 2001, p. 15). Semiotics has been applied, with interesting results to film, theatre, medicine, architecture, zoology, and a host of other areas that involve or are concerned with communication and the transfer of information (Berger 1998, p. 4).

Peirce argued that interpreters have to supply part of the meanings of signs. He wrote that a sign "is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity" (quoted in Zeman 1977, p. 24). For Saussure, according to Jonathan Culler (1976, p. 19), the production of meaning depends on language: 'Language is a system of signs.' In the semiotic approach, not only words and images but objects themselves can function as signifiers in the production of meaning (Hall 1997, p. 37). In semiotic analysis, an arbitrary and temporary separation is made between content and form, and attention is focused on the system of signs that makes up a text (Berger 1998, p. 6).

Semiotics is the study of how meaning occurs in language, pictures, performance, and other forms of expression through the use of signs and the ways

in which they work (Tomaselli 1996, p. 29). The basic matter of semiotic is the sign. The definition of signs begins with problems of terminology and the ontological question of the nature of the sign and its signifier as opposed to the non semiotic world (Noth 1990, p. 79). A sign, according to Saussure is a combination of a concept and a sound-image, a combination that cannot be separated. He propose to retain the word sign to designate the whole and to replace concepts and sound-image respectively by signified and signifier; the last two terms have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts (1966, p. 67). Every sign in the world carries meanings. Meaning is being adapted as the general term covering both sense and reference (Noth 1990, p. 92).

The concept of representation has come to occupy a new and important place in the study of culture. Stuart Hall stated that representation connects meaning and language to culture. Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people. Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of culture. It does evolve the use of language, of signs and images which stands for or represent things.

II.2.1.1 Roland Barthes' Semiotics

Semiotics began to become the major approach to cultural studies in about 1960s as a result of Roland Barthes' work. The translation into English of his popular essays in collection entitled *Mythologies* (Barthes 1975), followed in

the 1970s and 1980s by many of his other writings, and greatly increased scholarly awareness of this approach. In about 1964, Barthes stated that "semiology intend to take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits, images, gesture, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all of these which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification' (Barthes 1972 p. 9).

The underlying argument behind the semiotics approach is that, since all cultural objects convey meaning, and all cultural practices depend on meaning, they must make use of signs and they must work like language works, and be amenable to an analysis which basically makes use of Saussure's linguistic concepts. Thus, Roland Barthes in his essay *Mythologies* (1972), brought a semiotic approach to bear on 'reading' popular culture, treating these activities and objects as signs, as a language through which meaning is communicated (Hall 1997, p. 36).

Hall (1997, p. 38) stated that some signs actually create meaning by exploiting 'difference'. A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern (Chandler 2002, p. 20). Today, the linguistic message is present in every image, as title, caption, accompanying press article, film dialogue, comic strip balloon, and so on. The linguistic level of analysis in which the verbal text accompanying the ad, has denotative and connotative meaning. The linguistic message serves two functions. One is called by Barthes as "anchoring", in which the text helps the reader choose the right level

of perception, or select the correct details to notice. Another function is relaying additional information: the text serves as a second, supplemental source of information, like dialogue balloons in comic strips, which is necessary for full comprehension of the image –rather than mere focusing of the image- (Hancher 1997).

After discussing the linguistic level then, it moved to a wider, culture level. First, the basic code which links a particular piece of material which is cut and sewn in a particular way (signifier) to our mental concept of it (signified). The combination of signifier and signified is what Saussure called a sign. Barthes called the first, descriptive level, the level of denotation; the second level, that of connotation. Both, of course require the use of codes.

Denotation (non-coded iconic) is the simple, basic, descriptive level, where consensus is wide and most people would agree on the meaning. At the second level –connotation (coded iconic) - is a signifier which have been able to 'decode' at a simple level by using conventional conceptual classifications to read the meaning. Non-coded iconic message –the "literal" denotation- the recognition of identifiable objects in the photograph, irrespective of the larger societal code. Coded iconic message is the visual connotations derived from the arrangement of photographed elements. Myth is a basic phenomenon of human culture. Beginning with Barthes, myth has been interpreted as a semiotic phenomenon of everyday culture (Noth 1990, p. 374). Myth is a result of the denotation and connotation meaning. Myth appears after denotation and connotation meaning have known. Myth not defined by the object of its message, but the way in which it utters this

message (Barthes 1972, p. 189). A narrative is a text that has been constructed in such a way as to represent a sequence of events or actions that are felt to be logically connected to each other or intertwined in some way. Narrative texts can be verbal, nonverbal, or a combination of both. The meaning of the narrative text is not a straightforward process of determining the meanings of the individual words with which it is constructed. (Danesi 2004, p. 142)

II.1.2   Woman and Media

II.1.2.1 Woman Construction in Media

In his book *Key Themes in Media Theory*, Dan Laughey wrote about woman and media. He also wrote about the construction of women in media such as in magazine, music, and other kind of media. Two feminist theorists influenced by Mulvey's argument that cinema spectators gain pleasure in identification with screen fantasies are Tania Modleski and Janice Radway. Both authors emphasize the importance of women's fantasies – particularly romantic novels and soap operas – as means of temporary escape from the harsh realities of everyday life. Both of romantic novels and soap operas predominantly represent two types of female characters: either the ideal woman/mother or the villainess (Laughey 2007, p. 105).

In an article entitled 'Rock and Sexuality' (first published in 1978), McRobbie – with co-author Simon Frith – extends her theory of codes to the construction of conventional gender and sexuality in rock and pop music.

> Cock rock allows for direct physical and psychological expressions of sexuality; pop in contrast is about romance, about female crushes and emotional affairs. Pop songs aimed at the female audience deny or repress sexuality . . . few alternative readings are available. (McRobbie 2000: 148)

Female performers in the music industry are mostly sweet-sounding solo artists or members of overtly pop-oriented groups. McRobbie's codes of romance, beauty, fashion and pop music can still be interpreted as central to the dominant ideologies disseminated by female-oriented media (Laughey 2007, p. 110). Thus, another concept about woman in media (movies) also stated by Mulvey :

> The woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified.… The beauty of the woman as object and the screen space coalesce; she is no longer the bearer of guilt but a perfect product, whose body, stylised and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look. (1975, p. 42-43):

The body is indeed presented as a perfect product inviting a direct gaze from the male spectator. The crux of Mulvey's argument, then, is that Hollywood cinema is structured along the same lines as the patriarchal unconscious and so the act of looking is it imbricate in gendered psychic and political structures characterized by power, control and submission (Boyle 2005, p. 127).

Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and James Benet's (1978) foundational collection of empirical and theoretical articles in Hearth and Home was among the earliest to problematize women's media representations. The text cited not only women's routine omission – or symbolic annihilation – from mass media, but also the ways in which women were stereotyped. Like Tuchman et al.'s work, they found that advertising, television, films, news, and other genres in Western nations, as well as those in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, disproportionately emphasized women's traditional domestic roles or treated them as sex objects (Byerly and Ross 2006, p. 17). For Maggie Humm (1997), the power of the feminist project was precisely its ability to demonstrate the ways in which the category "woman" was politically constructed and routinely oppressed (p. 19).

II.1.2.2   Image of Woman in Movies or Music Videos

Laura Mulvey's article entitled 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' (first published in 1975) argue that mainstream Hollywood narrative films represent women characters as passive objects of male sexual desire. Mulvey's theory of the male gaze claims that male characters are 'bearers of the look' which is aimed – far more often than not – at physically desirable, sexually submissive female characters. Moreover, we the spectators watch cinematic films through the eyes of the dominant male protagonists and are implicitly addressed as though we were men desiring heterosexual pleasures, even if we are – in fact – heterosexual women or homosexuals. First is the notion of scopophilia which means 'pleasure

in looking'. Freudian theory suggests that pleasure in looking is a human instinct that develops in the early years of a person's existence when they begin to experience control over their sight and can fix it on various objects, such as toys. Mulvey argues that narrative cinema conventions and contexts of screening (i.e. in darkened auditoriums) foster a sense of 'voyeuristic fantasy' (Mulvey 1989, p. 17) in the spectator, not unlike the infantile variety. However, scopophilic desires accommodate male rather than female voyeurs. While women in Hollywood films connote 'to-be-looked-at-ness', men are doing the looking: 'The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure' (Mulvey 1989, p. 19). Mulvey's theory of the male gaze can easily be interpreted in such a way that female spectator = passive audience member; male spectator = active audience member. It is surely not the case that female audiences can only gain pleasure in a majority of films by passively subjecting themselves to the male gaze (Laughey 2007, p. 105).

Finally, `women's image' can no longer be seen as a simple matter of `misrepresentation', to be corrected by the more `realistic' portrayals to be produced by women themselves (Thornham 2007, p. 2). Thornham continued stated that women, as *women* rather than as glossy image and spectacle, are `not there' in media representations, and they are `not there' in the theoretical and critical frameworks through which such representations, and the institutions that produce them, have been understood. Mary Ann Doane (1981, p. 86) suggests that cinematic images of woman have been so consistently oppressive and repressive that the very idea of a feminist filmmaking practice seems impossibility. The

simple gesture of directing a camera toward a woman has become equivalent to a terrorist act.

II.2 Review of Related Studies

First related study of this study is Anastasia Srikandini's thesis. Anastasia Srikandini analyzed about Madonna's American Life music video in Semiotic. It is about the interpretation of American dream through the video and lyrics of American Life and the message reflected by this song. The writer focuses on its symbol or signs in both the video and lyrics based on the semiotics theory visual and verbal meaning to figure out the meaning of the song which relates to American dream and American Life. The writer divided American Life lyrics into the way Madonna tries to reach American dream (rich and famous); the way Madonna tries to keep her famous and prosperity she has; the way she feels about American dream, her effort to be famous and everything she got. Anastasia figures out how Madonna tries to criticize American life, which always judge their artists or celebrities based on their name, weight, appearance, clothes, etc. Conclusion of this thesis is that the interpretation of American dream in the song American Life by Madonna is the natural process of learning and struggling in reaching success of better and wealth life which relate with happiness and satisfaction feeling through hard work, time, self sacrifice, and understanding of the true meaning of success and happiness.

The second related study is the journal that entitled *The Representation of Women in Popular Music"* that written by Michele M. Prince. Prince analyzed about the ways in which women are largely viewed in the respective society.

Music as a media which can influencing women whether in consuming or lifestyle like what shows in music video or either music as reflector of women lifestyle. Her research focuses on the representation of women in popular musical culture in Western nations of Britain and the United States. The central question is whether representations of women in popular music culture shape the ways in which women are largely viewed in the respective society. Findings of this study are a great percentage of the pop music that is produced, introduced and becoming overwhelmingly fashionable is either performed by a woman, written by a woman, or explicitly centered on a woman. In these particular songs, we are able to look at the varying ways in which women are represented. Lyrically, there are a good percentage of the songs that present women in a positive light, for example women that are strong, independent, capable, clear/logical thinkers etc, any attribute that may be considered –good or affirmative. However, when we switch over to looking at the visual representation of the same song, the story is often the opposite, or at least confusing (Prince 2009).