CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 General Overview

2.1.1 Semiotic

Semiotic is one of the respective theories in the critical theory sphere. This theory is considered by Lois Tyson as in the frame work of Structuralism which is trying to get "insights to the study of what it calls sign systems" (216). By then, she elaborated that "A *sign system* is a linguistic or nonlinguistic object or behavior (or collection of objects or behaviors) that can be analyzed as if it were a specialized language." (216) In this manner, we can say that semiotic is used to encrypt the signs that is used in daily live in the matter. A word rose doesn't necessarily signify a red flower that has thorn. A rose also signifies love, passion, beauty, romantic etc. This meaning will also modified to a something else if then the word is added with other words, let's say word rose is combined with word white then the meaning would be then change in sincere love. The meaning of white rose itself depends on the context where the meaning is produced and received since all meanings are arbitrary and subjective. Red may signifies anger, blood, rage, violence but in Chinese red means a good luck.

However, to say sign as behavior is rather confusing because we don't actually know in what practice kinds of behavior this theory operates. Daniel Chandler argues that "Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as

'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything which 'stands for' something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects." (2) In a way, semiotic use human's interpretation as a tool to expose human arbitrariness by assuming that all humans have constructed values in their own point of view. These explanations give a better, more general and understandable idea of semiotic in which a assumption that anything that we see, feel, or hear can be treated as a sign that once again signify something towards its receptor.

Historically, semiotic began with two different terms that were founded from two people. In the book *Semiotic: The Basics*, "Peirce and Saussure are widely regarded as the co-founders of what is now more generally known as *semiotics*." (Chandler 3). As it is said, public prefer to name this theory as semiotic, regardless the individual taste to use semiology, and it is one to summarize all the variety in this theory. It is started as linguistic theory that was "derived primarily from Saussure, Hjelmslev and Jakobson" and then this theory is used by structuralist who aims to analyze something that "involves the application of the linguistic model to a much wider range of social phenomena." (5) It is also found in this book that Jakobson stated:

> Language is . . . a purely semiotic system . . . The study of signs, however . . . must take into consideration also applied semiotic structures, as for instance, architecture, dress, or cuisine ... Similarly, any garment responds to definitely utilitarian requirements and at the same time exhibits various semiotic properties' (1968, 703).

(qtd. Chandler 5)

To this extend we can be sure that the steps towards a wider range of semiotic is taken and scholars had begin to use this theory to what we now see as semiotic that covers a very wide range of study and major

This theory also experienced many changes and become a framework to many theory that in expression of "'deep structures' underlying the 'surface features' of signsystems: Lévi-Strauss in myth, kinship rules and totemism; Lacan in the unconscious; Barthes and Greimas in the 'grammar' of narrative." (Chandler 5) In other words, despite the fact that the world of criticism holds a lot of purposes and goals, semiotic can still be considered as a trustworthy theory to our criticism. To that extent, this study should be held in semiotic presumption that there has always been something beneath our entire world that operates and tells us what to think.

The most basic classification in semiotic lies within the two presumably founders of semiotic: Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. Chandler stated these two basic categories as 'model of sign' and refers each to these two people: Saussurean Model and Peircean Model. Each model has a unique characteristic and determinant that will influence the later-mentioned decision of what category of semiotic that this study uses.

Apparently, Roland Barthes uses the Saussure Model as his basic theory. In this theory, Saussure looks things as a 'relational' rather than 'referential'. What is meant by refusing the word referential is that signs are defined to differentiate it from other in the sign system. Saussure argue in this matter that a word or sentence is not

necessarily 'stands for' or refer to one object or event in the real world, instead it refer to the whole language system; that our understanding process comes from a 'whole' or 'Gestalt' to the other instead of individual meaning. (Chandler 19) He insisted on saying that "the system as a united whole is the starting point, from which it becomes possible, by a process of analysis, to identify its constituent elements." Thus, instead of just looking only the relationship between only two parts of the signs (called signification) we have to observe the relationship between a sign to all other signs in system (called value). (20) This process requires us to negatively contradict one thing with to the other by "being whatever the others are not" (21)

2.1.2 Female Representation in Media

It is obvious, if we look at the title, that this study is looking to find the female representation in the Pussycat Dolls' Music Video. The large number of researches, projects that practically trying to explore and criticize female representation in various media leave the writer a strong sense of concern in this issue. The representation of female figure in many media is somehow depicting something 'ideal' in the sense of patriarchal society. It somehow builds the constructed values to which female in societies look up. In other words, these created images is somehow controlling females in the way of they are suppose to laugh, behave or (in the worst level) live their life.

It is stressful to know that such fact is greatly hurting females in their real live reality. As in the book entitled *The Media and Body Image: If Looks Could KillI* by Maggie Wykes and Barrie Gunter said:

Despite normal hunger, slender shape and a successful social life, many young women deprive themselves of nutrition to the extent that they risk serious illness and even death. Epidemiological research has indicated that women's preoccupation with food and body shape is widespread... In another American survey, it was reported that 20 per cent of young college females had claimed to self-starve (Pyle et al., 1990).

(Wykes 1)

To assume that such basic idea of slenderness could creates such massive effects to the society is increasing the sense of urgency to explore entire image of female in each media.

The issue of harmful depicted image of female figure in media have been brought up in early feminism yet society still disagreed to the extent that the issue is really damaging the society in factual (i.e. physical abuse or mental abuse that greatly affects); even though critics always argue the treatment that most literature works support a physically abusive treatment in real life. The coming of age in the issue awareness, as writer noted, came from the work of Naomi Wolf that is called Beauty Myth. Instead of exposing the unfair and abusive treatment, this book is exposing how women abuse themselves in their own real life as the cause of their internalization of female image.

This book strongly fears the effect that the female image in media brought. It spots how female hurt themselves in case of extreme and unhealthy diet, plastic

surgery, and many others. Naomi Wolf stressed out that "Hunger makes women's bodies hurt them, and makes women hurt their bodies," to make a argument that idea of being slender creates a valid impact to female. Other than the concept of slenderness, Naomi also noted a case of surgery to get younger look. She argued that "Cosmetic surgery is the fastest-growing "medical" specialty. More than two million Americans, at least 87 percent of them female, had undergone it by 1988, a figure that had tripled in two years." (Wolf 218)

Regardless female images in media varied. We can say that all these images are categorized as something disadvantaging towards female. This statement is proven by many studies that criticized media (especially if it involves the sense of consuming) because it always depicting an ideal image that most females will strive for and, as the consequence, torture themselves. Wykes argue that "the 1990s showed frail femininity – models seemed... Later in the decade, if not actually children and vulnerable, models were nevertheless as small as pre-pubescent girls but apparently so by choice." (Wykes 65) By this words, the idea of youthful is later giving the society the ways to achieved it through consumption of cosmetics or 'tips' about their own bodies. Wykes takes example of *Glamour* Magazines in one edition that all of them content advertisement of how female "should smell 'sexier' (perfumes and deodorants), colour hair, lips and skin 'naturally' but 'scientifically', deal with menstruation 'discreetly' and shape and smooth their bodies." (84)

In short, the female representation in media seemingly conveys misogyny and/or patriarchal values that disadvantage most of female who consume it. The

danger of this image lies not only of the thought of how women 'must' and/or 'naturally' treated by society (especially by male) but also from the thought of how women must and/or naturally treat themselves. In suited explanation towards the construction of female image, media often (and seem to never ignore) depicts female image through their relationship and position in society and how they carried themselves through events.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study saw the possibility of using many kinds of unique and distinct theories, and by that considers all the ranges in which the theory revolve and sorts the best suited theory based on the needs in the study. It was then chosen semiotic as the essential tools in order to finish the current study. It is for this manner that the complementary explanation about the chosen semiotic will be delivered so that all the ambiguity and confusion can be minimized.

2.2.1 Roland Barthes' Mythology

The theory of Roland Barthes of so called Myth is chosen for this very study. The reason for this action is because it is known that Barthes himself is one of the well known person that use semiotic in analyzing something besides language (in his renowned book called *Mythologies* he analyze many of popular events or object as s product of popular culture). It is somewhat fits to be the theory of this study which analyze Music Videos as some popular culture product. Furthermore, Chandler had a notion that "Discourses of gender are among the 'explanatory' cultural frameworks which have been interpreted by some cultural semioticians as myths or mythologies,"

(Chandler 143) which is the exact same subject that will be discussed in this study. Likewise, this theory allows this study to get further analysis than just shallow conclusion of female image.

To use Roland Barthes theory of Myth there is one aspect that needs to be done; it is to look at the method used by Roland Barthes and the idea used by him in analyzing the object. Roland Barthes, for information, is pretty much influenced by Saussurean models of semiotic by using the terms signified and signifier. Graham Allen, in his book *Routledge Critical Thinkers: Roland Barthes,* wrote that:

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. The sign is the relation we draw between signifier and signified. If roses, for example, are a sign of romance in our culture, then they are so because, when used, say, in a love poem or pictured on a Valentine's Day card, they combine a signifier (the word or the image) with a signified (the cultural concept of roses) to produce the rose as a sign of romance, passion and love. The sign, then, is the equivalence we draw between a signifier and a signified. (Allen 42)

However, in this substance, the word culture needs to be highlighted because, as the writer said earlier, it signifies that this meaning of signs is relative as different culture perspective would see something differently. The example in quotation is used because t gives us explanation about how the assumption of one sign is justified by what people do or what that sign related in the real world.

2.2.1.1 Linguistic message, Non-coded Iconic Message, Coded Iconic Message and Myth

In this section, the method that is used Barthes in exposing the Myth of something is explained so that later analysis of Pussycat Dolls will have a firm base and also will validate the coming result of this study. The use of this method that said to be "the most significant attempt to bring the methodology of semiology to bear on popular culture," (Storey 118) is mainly aiming to find the last terms in the order, which is Myth. Myth is what we called as the final steps of knowing the deep signs of something. In Allen's book there are quotation of Barthes that said "myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it *is a second-order semiological system*. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second (MY: 114)." (Chandler 43) In simple explanation, Myth is the interpretation that we may take from first signs and take it to the level further level by making the first signs as the signifier and finding the signified so that it can expose it is the 'false consciousnesses' of the object (see figure 3)
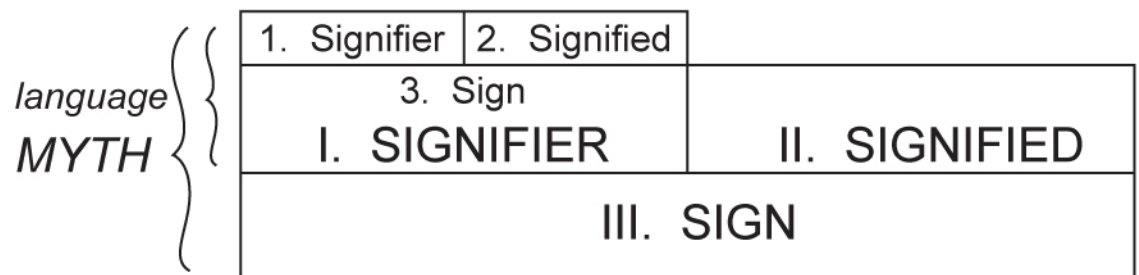

Figure II.2 The Myth Diagram

On this case, the myth in the video will be searched through the famous theory of Roland Barthes. This theory is divided into three message: Linguistic Message, Non-coded Iconic Message, Coded Iconic Message. It usually used for dissecting and analyzing a still image with semiotic. Roland Barthes stated in his book that:

> If our reading is satisfactory, the photograph analysed offers us three messages: a linguistic message, a coded iconic message, and a non-coded iconic message. The linguistic message can be readily separated from the other two, but since the latter share the same (iconic) substance, to what extent have we the right to separate them ? It is certain that the distinction between the two iconic messages is not made spontaneously in ordinary reading: the viewer of the image receives *at one and the same time* the perceptual message and the cultural message, and it will be seen later that this confusion in reading corresponds to the function of the mass image (our concern here). (Image Music Text 36)

In other words, the linguistic message involves any kinds of message in which language lies. On the other hand, Non-coded iconic message is the literal meaning of all features other than language (mostly visuals) and the coded iconic is the connotation made.

On this matter, these three factors are essential for us to have the music video analyzed. Hence, each type will have to be explored thoroughly without forgetting their 'interrelationships' so that the big picture of the music video wholly caught. (37)

2.3 Review of Related Studies

This study has taken the steps to find another research that may have some relation, including library and internet research. Unfortunately, the study that focuses on the exact same object, which is Pussycat Dolls, is scarce and inaccessible (those few research that the writer found is a private collection of abroad Universities and the writer has no clues on how to access the research paper). Nevertheless, there are some researches that related to this study in terms of the media of the object, which is music video, or in terms of finding the similar (not necessarily the same) goals by using semiotic.

The first research is a thesis of Anastasia Faradina Srikandini that is entitled *The Interpretation of American Dream in Madonna's American Life Music Video*. This thesis is trying to get the idea of American dream through Madonna's point of view by using variables of verbal and visual meaning and gesture in denotative connotative and myth level. This study results a statement that *American Life* music video is actually depicting Madonna's point of view of what she sees as American Dream (in a way that Madonna wants to criticized) and speak out what she believed that should be the real American Dream.

There are also many of magazine semiotic theses that somewhat similar to this study in way of finding the female image that represented in the object. This type of research have been found very typical of trying to expose the wrong misleading image that represented in the current magazines (whether by advertisements or articles) and criticizing, as the writer will do, the constructed female image in the

magazine. One of this notion that has seen by the writer is a thesis of Ratih Humaira that has title of *A Semiotic Analysis of Advertisements in Cosmopolitan Magazine Tenth Anniversary, September 2007 Edition.*

The last related study, which the writer thinks as the most interesting, is an article published online by Yuanyuan Zhang and friend that conduct considerably quantitative content analysis of Rap Music Video (regarded as Hip-Hop), and the results says that:

> It was found that, overall, "thin" females were overrepresented in the videos. More interestingly, the body sizes of the female characters varied by three of the four video themes. When the music videos were high in sex, or high in materialism, women were more likely to have smaller body sizes. In contrast, when the videos were high in political awareness, women were more likely to have larger body sizes.
>
> (Zhang 1)

The reason that makes the article which entitled *Female Body Image as a Function of Themes in Rap Music Videos: A Content Analysis* very crucial for this study is because it support the presumption that the female image in Music Video often is image of ideal female that actually does not reflect the actual female in the real world and would invoke critics upon the effect of this image towards real society.