

The Semiotics of Redemption: Analyzing Signs in the Movie Adaptation 'Redeeming Love'

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Abstract. This study addresses analysis of The Semiotics of Redemption: Analyzing Signs in the Movie Adaptation 'Redeeming Love.' The approach used in this study was based on the semiotic theory proposed by Chandler (2007). The objective of this study is to investigate signs of redemption in the movie 'Redeeming Love'. This study was based on descriptive qualitative design. The data were collected by applying documentary technique. The result of this study reveals that there are four signs of redemption that they are words, objects, images and acts. In the movie 'Redeeming Love', words emerge as the most dominant signs of redemption.

Keywords: Christian Movie, Redemption, Signs, Semiotics.

1 Introduction

When analyzing movies, we can find the power of visual storytelling not only in the basic story, but also in the underlying signs present in every scene. One such film worth exploring is 'Redeeming Love,' which delves into the theme of redemption. Although the storyline seems simple, the real treasures lie beneath the surface, waiting to be discovered through semiotics. Barthes (1968) defines that signs can be images, gestures, sound, or anything, whatever the substance because semiotics is aimed to take in any system of signs. Eco (1986) states semiotics is concerned with everything that could be taken as a sign. Semiotics goes beyond our everyday notion of signs and encompasses a wide array of elements, such as words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. From a semiotic standpoint, these signs function as representations, standing for something beyond their literal existence. Semiotics is concerned with how signs convey meaning. A sign is not just a simple symbol or indicator; it represents something else. The study of semiotics involves exploring how meaning is conveyed, communicated, and interpreted across various forms of expression, including language, visual arts, and other cultural phenomena. It emphasizes its role in unraveling the intricate ways in which signs operate in different contexts. The two dominant contemporary models of what constitutes a sign are those of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Saussure's model of the sign is in the dyadic tradition. Within the dyadic model, the sign is the whole resulting from the signifier's association with

the signified. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is referred to as 'signification'. The signifier is now commonly interpreted as the material (or physical) form of the sign – it is something that can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted. In this model, semiotics, or 'semiology' as it was termed, is a science that investigates the role of signs within the broader context of social life. This implies that signs are not isolated entities but play a vital role in shaping and reflecting social dynamics. Danesi (2004) highlights that a sign can take various forms, including words, winks, colors, images, sounds, gestures, and objects, all of which symbolically represent something beyond their literal existence. For example, 'red' functions as a sign because it doesn't just represent the individual sounds of its letters (r-e-d), but rather signifies a specific color and possibly other associated meanings. In essence, signs extend beyond their immediate forms to convey broader concepts or ideas. Anything can be a sign as long as someone understands it to represent something other than itself. However, signs do not have inherent meaning and only become significant when we attribute a purpose to them. If something is not understood as a sign, it is not a sign. We interpret objects based on established systems to recognize them as signs, often without being aware of it. The film industry has become an increasingly compelling platform for individuals to express their creative thoughts and talents. Many filmmakers view movies as a medium through which they can convey their ideas and perspectives. Like drama, films use gestures, actions, and speech to communicate ideas both verbally and visually. According to Boggs and Petrie (2000), movie is a unique art form with a profound impact on its audience, blending elements of painting, technology, music, literature, and drama to create an engaging visual experience. A movie can be seen as an art of decoding, where each frame acts as a sign intricately woven into a sequence. In this context, the movie 'Redeeming Love' is an excellent subject for exploring semiotics. With its powerful visuals and many signs, the movie is an ideal canvas for analyzing the complex language of signs within the context of semiotics. This implies that the movie through its use of visual and symbolic elements provides a rich and intricate terrain for understanding how meaning is created and conveyed in the cinematic medium. Semiotic analysis of such movies can reveal the layers of communication embedded in the visual and auditory aspects, contributing to a deeper understanding of the artistic and storytelling techniques used in cinema. A movie is an audio-visual medium, using sound and images to communicate. Watching a movie can influence audiences, making them feel as though they are part of the plot. Movies are a series of recorded motion pictures with sound, telling a story in a film or cinema. They have a significant impact, and while most are for entertainment, some directors include hidden messages and signs in their works. Therefore, further study is required to understand the significant signs in movies.

2 Theoretical summary

2.1 Semiotics

Semiotics is a broad and interdisciplinary field that encompasses the study of signs and their interpretation. The term has evolved and has been used in various ways by different scholars. Initially, it referred to the study of signs within linguistics but has expanded to include broader cultural and social contexts. Nöth (1990) highlights that the word "semiotics" is now widely used to refer to the entire field. Harman (2009) states that the term semiotics (and, equivalently, the term semiology) means theory of signs. On the other hand, Tomaselli (1981)

said that semiotics and semiology were quite different paradigms stemming from different origins. While "semiotics" and "semiology" are often used interchangeably, there are fundamental differences between them, and scholars may prefer one term over the other based on their specific theoretical orientation. In a broad sense, semiotics and semiology refer to the study of signs. However, the term "semiotics" is often associated with the American tradition, especially the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, who developed a pragmatic and philosophical approach to the study of signs. In contrast, "semiology" is more closely related to the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and his structuralist perspective on signs in the field of language. Semiotics now includes the examination of signs in various forms, such as verbal language, nonverbal communication, visual arts, music, gestures, and more. The word "semiology" is indeed derived from the Greek word "semeion," meaning "sign". The term was coined by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and later popularized by French philosopher Roland Barthes. It encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including linguistics, literary theory, communication studies, and cultural studies, among others. Barthes (1968) defines that signs can be images, gestures, sound, or anything, whatever the substance because semiotics is aimed to take in any system of signs. In semiotics, the focus is on understanding how signs convey meaning and how they function in different cultural and social contexts. This field explores how signs communicate meaning not just in language, but also in various aspects of culture, communication, and representation. It is an interdisciplinary field that encompasses linguistic, philosophical, sociological aspects, and more. Eco (1986) claims that everything that can be interpreted as a sign. Semiotics is the study of everything that signifies something else, including what we commonly refer to as "signs" in general discussion. Chandler (2007) states that signs are words, images, acts, and objects. They are described as follows,

1. Words: In movies, the dialogue between characters can be seen as signs. It is not merely a collection of words, but also signifies the speaker's understanding and acceptance of the listener.
2. Images: Visual elements in movies, such as natural scenery, costumes, and character expressions, play a significant role.
3. Acts: Character's actions are important signs in movies.
4. Objects: Various objects in movies can carry symbolic meaning.

3 Research methods

The research design of the study on analyzing signs of redemption in the movie 'Redeeming Love' was described as a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study method. This qualitative method aimed to understand how theory works in different phenomena by collecting data in the form of words rather than numbers. Bogdan and Bilken (2007) state a qualitative method has a natural setting as the direct source of data. The case study approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the semiotics of the movie, providing a rich and detailed analysis of the subject matter. The study's qualitative nature aligned with the goal of exploring the meaning and interpretation of the theme in the movie, rather than quantifying or measuring them. As Flick (2007) defines that qualitative research is a methodological

approach focused on comprehending, describing, and elucidating social phenomena. This was achieved through the analysis of individual experiences or group dynamics, interactions, and various forms of documents such as text, images, films/movies, and music. The emphasis lay in capturing the subjective and contextual aspects of the studied phenomena, aiming for a nuanced interpretation and exploration of the underlying meanings inherent in the data.

3.1 Data Source of the Research

The data were taken from the movie ‘Redeeming Love’. The movie ‘Redeeming Love’, produced in 2022, can be downloaded from this link <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11365186> on YouTube.

4 Results

4.1 Data Analysis

The data analysis was meant to answer the research question which particularly in this study was to describe signs of redemption in the movie ‘Redeeming Love’. In the movie ‘Redeeming Love’ signs of redemption are words, images, acts and objects.

4.1.1 Signs of Redemption in the Movie ‘Redeeming Love’

signs of redemption are words, images, acts and objects in the movie ‘Redeeming Love’. The table below shows the signs of redemption used in the movie ‘Redeeming Love’:

Table 1. Signs of Redemption in the Movie ‘Redeeming Love’

No	Signs of Redemption	N	(%)
1	Words	10	50%
2	Images	3	15%
3	Acts	3	15%
4	Objects	4	20%
	Total	20	100%

From the table above, it is shown the signs of redemption that mostly dominated by words, the second is object, and the third is images and acts. In the movie “Redeeming Love” 50% of data is words, 20 % of the data is objects, and 15% of the data is images.

Based on the definition above in "Redeeming Love," words emerge as the most dominant signs of redemption. It means that the role of the redeemer, Michael Hosea as the kinsman-redeemer and Angel “the rescued” often communicate their feelings, intentions, and resolutions through dialogue, reflecting their journey towards redemption. The characters' verbal expressions, promises, and declarations convey their emotional and spiritual transformations, their commitments to change, and their journey towards reconciliation and healing. In the second are objects that the signs of redemption used in the movie “Redeeming Love”. Michael Hosea himself becomes a symbolic object of redemption through his unwavering love and presence in Angel's life, despite her initial resistance and skepticism. Objects symbolize the tangible efforts and sacrifices made in pursuit of redemption. In the

third that signs of redemption used in the movie 'Redeeming Love' are images and acts. Images as signs of redemption: In the context of "Redeeming Love," images play a significant role as signs of redemption. These images are not visual representations but symbolic representations of Michael's aspirations and promises for Angel's future. They convey themes of transformation, renewal, and the journey towards a better life. In "Redeeming Love," Michael's acts serve as powerful signs of redemption, illustrating his proactive role in bringing about positive change and transformation in Angel's life. Michael's acts signify his efforts to redeem and uplift her from her past struggles and to foster a new beginning filled with love and hope.

The characters' verbal expressions, promises, and declarations convey their emotional and spiritual transformations, their commitments to change, and their journey towards reconciliation and healing.

The data of signs of redemption in the movie 'Redeeming Love' are words, images, acts and objects.

a) Words as the Signs of Redemption in Datum 1 in the movie *Redeeming Love* :

The investigation of signs of redemption in the dialogue between Michael Hosea and the Duchess (the owner of the brothel):

Table 2. Words as the Signs of Redemption in Datum 1 in the movie *Redeeming Love*

The Sign of Redemption Datum 1 (Scenes 00:25:24-00:25:28)	
<p>Michael Hosea: "I am taking her with me". Scene (00:48:11→00:48:12)</p>	<p>The signs of redemption:</p>
<p>the Duchess: "She's not leaving until she pays me every penny she owes me" Scene (00:48:16→00:48:19)</p>	<p>Words:</p> <p>I am taking her (Angel) with me" -Michael's statement can be seen as a sign of redemption as he expresses his intention to rescue Angel from her current situation and offer her at chance a new life. The use of "taking her" implies a sense of liberation or salvation. "She's not leaving until she pays me every penny she owes me" - Duchess' words highlight the financial debt Angel owes. Michael Hosea's acknowledgment ("Okay, well then" implies the agreement to the term of restitution. Michael's statements are the sign of redemption.</p>
<p>Michael Hosea: "Okay, well then" Scene (00:48:20→00:48:22)</p>	

The datum above is words that expressed by two characters as signs of redemption for delivering the redeemed from the brothel. The two characters have different intentions of redemption. They express their intentions through words. Words are verbal's expressions as signs of redemption in the movie *Redeeming Love*'

b) Objects as the sign of redemption in Datum 11 the movie '*Redeeming Love*'

The investigation of the signs of redemption in the dialogue between Angel and Michael Hosea in Datum 11.

Table 3. Objects as the Signs of Redemption in Datum 11 in the movie *Redeeming Love*

The Sign of Redemption in Datum 11 (scene : 00:30:04→ 00:30:07)

<p>Angel: “Hmm, you again”. (scene : 00:30:04→ 00:30:07)</p>	<p>Objects</p> <p>Angel: “Hmm, you again.”</p> <p>“You” in Angel’s statement “you again” refers to Michael Hosea and also she knows exactly what Michael wants. Michael keeps coming there to offer her for marriage. Michael’s presence in the brothel signifies as a sign of redemption which Michael Hosea himself becomes a symbolic object of redemption through his unwavering love and presence in Angel's life, despite her initial resistance and skepticism.</p>
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The datum is words delivered by Angel through her skepticism that Michael as a symbolic object of redemption.

c) Images as the sign of redemption in Datum 14 the movie ‘*Redeeming Love*’

The investigation of the signs of redemption in the dialogue between Angel and Michael Hosea in the movie *Redeeming Love* in Datum 14.

Table 4. Images as the Signs of Redemption in Datum 14 in the movie *Redeeming Love*

The Sign of Redemption in Datum 14(Scenes: 01:59:10→01:06:08)

<p>Michael Hosea: You’ll see (Scene : 01:59:10→01:59:11)</p> <p>Michael Hosea: Trust me. (Scene : 01:59:18→01:59: 19)</p> <p>Michael Hosea: That’s the life I want to offer you, Angel. (Scene: 01:59:10→01:06: 02)</p> <p>Michael Hosea: One full of color, warmth (Scene: 01:06:03→01:06:06)</p> <p>Michael Hosea: Beauty and light (Scene: 01:06:07→01:06:08)</p>	<p>Images:</p> <p>Michael Hosea: You’ll see’ Trust me. That’s the life I want to offer you" “one full of color, warmth”, “beauty and light”.</p> <p>Those words signify the image of redemption. Michael's words convey a vision of redemption for Angel. His statements like "You’ll see", "Trust me", and "That’s the life I want to offer you" are signs of hope and promise. These words suggest a future beyond Angel's current circumstances, filled with color, warmth,</p>
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These images are not visual representations but symbolic representations of Michael's aspirations and promises for Angel's future.

d) Acts as the sign of redemption in the movie 'Redeeming Love' Datum 10:

The investigation of the signs of redemption in the dialogue between Michael Hosea and Angel in the movie 'Redeeming Love Datum 10

Table 5. Acts s as the Signs of Redemption in Datum 10 in the movie Redeeming Love

The Sign of Redemption in Datum 10 (Scene : 00:27:22→00:27:33)	
Michael Hosea: Marry me. Scene : 00:27:22→00:27:33)	The signs of redemption: Acts:
	Michael Hosea: "Marry me."
	"Marry me" signify a sign of redemption. Marriage is an act that symbolizes a profound commitment and associated with support, unity and stability. Michael's offer to marry represents an act of redemption to rescue Angel from the brothel and to change her status from a prostitute to become a wife.

The datum above is acts that serve as powerful signs of redemption, illustrating his proactive role in bringing about positive change and transformation in the life of the redeemed'.

4.2 Discussion

After arranging the finding, there are some points of the finding to be discussed as improvement towards theories or previous research drawn:

The analysis identified words, objects, images, and acts as signs of redemption in the movie 'Redeeming Love'. Words appear as the most dominant sign of redemption in the movie 'Redeeming Love'. The finding underscores the power of verbal communication in conveying the theme of redemption. The use of words as the most prominent sign of redemption aims to the need of clarity and explicitness in depiction of redemption. Objects rank second in the depiction of redemption, highlighting their symbolic significance. This use of symbolism enriches the narrative, allowing viewers to infer deeper meanings and connections between characters and their actions. Images, though less frequent than words and objects, play a crucial role in the narrative of redemption. Redemption were utilized across different narratives and cultural contexts. The limited frequency of acts compared to words and objects could be due to the inherent complexity and time required to depict meaningful actions within the film's runtime. However, when these acts do occur, they often serve as climactic moments that significantly impact the narrative and resonate strongly with the audience.

5 Conclusion

This study has done in such deliberately way. It is now to conclude the result of this study. The signs of redemption found in the movie 'Redeeming Love' are words, images, acts and objects. The most dominant signs of redemption are words in the movie 'Redeeming Love'. It indicates that words as signs of redemption in the movie 'Redeeming Love' serve the primary function of conveying love, forgiveness, reconciliation, and affirmation. They facilitate emotional healing, promote personal growth, and strengthen relationships, emphasizing the transformative power of verbal communication in the journey towards redemption.

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