

A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF TRAUMA RECOVERY ON THE *ALL THE BRIGHT PLACES* FILM



Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Getting the Bachelor Degree
of Education in Department of English Education School Teacher Training Education

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2021**

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Abstrak

Film merupakan media untuk menyampaikan pesan dengan mudah, termasuk film *All the Bright Places* (2020) yang mempunyai pesan yang baik untuk disampaikan bagi para penonton. Film *All the Bright Places* (2020) dipilih karena didalam film tersebut terdapat pesan berupa cara memulihkan trauma. Pesan dalam film tersebut disampaikan secara tersirat dan hanya dengan melalui tanda. Oleh karena itu, peneliti tertarik untuk menganalisis tanda tersebut menggunakan teori semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce yang meliputi tanda atau representamen, objek dan interpretant. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Peneliti menggunakan dua sumber data, data primer dari penelitian ini adalah gambar-gambar atau adegan-adegan yang terpilih pada film *All the Bright Places* (2020), sedangkan data sekunder dalam penelitian ini berupa data dari beberapa literature seperti jurnal, buku, maupun website yang berhubungan dengan penelitian. Teknik pengumpulan data pada penelitian ini adalah dengan melakukan observasi dengan cara melihat dan mengamati setiap tanda-tanda yang terdapat dalam film, termasuk dialog maupun rangkaian adegan untuk dapat memahami makna yang terkandung dalam film. Peneliti menemukan tujuh tanda dalam film ini yang mempunyai makna bahwa terdapat tiga faktor dalam pemulihan trauma, yaitu tekad dari diri sendiri, dukungan orang terdekat seperti keluarga dan teman, dan bimbingan dari para ahli.

Kata kunci : All the Bright Places, teori semiotika peirce, tanda, pemulihan trauma

Abstract

Film is a medium to convey messages easily, including the film *All the Bright Places* (2020) which has a good message to convey to the audience. The film *All the Bright Places* (Haley 2020) was chosen because in the film there is a message in the form of how to recover from trauma. The message in the film is conveyed implicitly and only by means of signs. Therefore, researcher are interested in analyzing the sign using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory which includes sign or representamen, object and interpretant. This research method uses a qualitative descriptive method. Researcher used two sources of data, primary data from this study were pictures or selected scenes in the film *All the Bright Places* (2020), while secondary data in this research were data from several literatures such as journals, books, and websites related to research. The data collection technique in this study is to make observations by looking at and observing every sign contained in the film, including dialogue and a series of scenes to be able to understand the meaning contained in the film. Researcher found seven signs in this film which means that there are three factors in trauma recovery, namely self-determination, support from close people such as family and friends, and guidance from experts.

Keywords : All the Bright Places, Peirce's semiotic theory, sign, trauma recovery

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature = littera (bound root, Latin) + ure (suffix for noun; abs. Noun suffix of action, result and instrument, occurring in loan words from French and Latin) which means the smallest element of writing the alphabet (letter). Where the alphabet develops into words and sentences which eventually form a text that is interconnected and has meaning. Apart from writing, literature is also expressed verbally. Thus, literature is a medium for expressing ideas in writing and orally. Literature can be classified into three major genres, namely fiction, poetry, and drama (Klarer 2013).

One genre of literature that combines written and spoken aspects is drama. However, along with the rapid development of technology, literature is no longer in the form of writing or verbal but visual, electronic, nonverbal, gestural, or social literacy. Where all these aspects are contained in the film. Film is a medium for expressing human thoughts that is packaged artistically to attract the interest of the audience. Film emerged as a second communication tool which is a communication tool after previous generations such as newspapers and television (Sobur 2013).

Where the human communication tool is in the form of language. Language consists of symbols that have meanings that make communication effective. Language is used as a means of human communication both verbally and non-verbally. The three stages of verbal language begin with messages that are converted through language so that they are easily conveyed, the second is the meaning of representing an agreed sign, the third is the participants of the communication process such as the sender and recipient of the message. While nonverbal communication is a cue from words by using body gestures from the communicant (Mulyana 2000).

Not a few moviegoers, who like a film by reason of expressing feelings that are packaged properly and correctly. In addition, there are many films made based on true stories that have life values in them. So that the audience has its own impression when watching it. The film also provides a reflection of the reality of society which makes the communicant absorb a meaning based on their respective experiences, so that there will be no communication failure. When examined more deeply, in the film there are pictures, sounds, or gestures that contain meaning. Where the meaning is usually described through a sign. Film encodes something to be conveyed through visual and linguistic symbols (Sobur 2013).

With semiotics, the meaning of these signs can be studied. Semiotics is the study of signs and the science of how signs work (Fiske 2010). There are two basic concepts in

semiotics, the first concept is a sign as a stimulus which is interpreted to indicate another condition. While the second basic concept of semiotics is a symbol which is a sign of a sign that is complex and still has many meanings (Littlejohn and Foss 2012).

There is another term in the science of studying signs other than semiotics, namely semiology. There is no fundamental difference between semiotics and semiology, but the two terms are used to give identity to the inventor. The American philosopher model Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) was a pioneer of semiotics, while Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Roland Barthes (1915-1980) who were European (French) scholars tended to use the term semiology (Ibrahim and Sulaiman 2020).

Ferdinand de Saussure has a scientific background in linguistics, developing a science called semiology. According to Saussure (1983), semiology assumes that every human action and behavior that contains meaning or during the functioning of a sign, there must be a system of distinctions and conventions that allow that meaning.

Structuralism is a theory of language proposed by Saussure. In his research, Saussure uses three words that refer to the word 'language' in French, namely parole, langage, and langue. Parole is a language that is expressed by the individual users themselves. While langage is a combination of parole and language rules. Langue is the language rules used by the whole society. The existing basic patterns (langue) of the existing reality (parole) is a linguistic goal which is the basis of the structuralism approach (Saussure 1983).

According to Saussure (1983), the sign consists of the signifier and the signified. Signifier is a sign or symbol that can represent or have other meaning in the form of sounds and images. While the signified is the interpretation of the communication receiver on the signs and symbols received in the form of concepts from the agreed sounds and images (Sarosa 2017).

There is a successor to the thought of Ferdinand De Saussure named Roland Barthes. Saussure is more interested in complex ways of forming sentences and how to form sentences to determine meaning. While Roland Barthes is more interested in the fact that the same sentence may have different meanings in different people in different situations, which Saussure is less interested in researching. Barthes has an idea known as "Order of significations" which consists of denotation which is the dictionary meaning of a word or terminology or object and connotation which is the cultural meanings attached to a terminology. In other words, denotation is something that is depicted by a sign on an object, while connotation is a way of describing it (Kriyantono 2010).

Charles Sanders Peirce is an expert known as the "grand theory" in semiotics. In his semiotic theory, Peirce has a semiotic triangle or triangle model which consists of three elements, namely representamen (signs), objects and interpretants. Where a sign is something that has a form that can be captured by the five human senses and is something that represents something else beyond the sign itself. While the object or reference sign is something that the sign refers to. The third element is the interpretant or sign user which is the concept of thinking of the person who uses the sign and lowers it to a certain meaning or meaning that is in a person's mind about the object that a sign refers to (Chandler 2017). These three elements are interconnected in studying the meaning of a sign. If these elements are correlated, it will be easier to find the meaning of a sign that can be accepted and understood.

Messages and codes are the basic ideas of semiotics. Where codes are the only way that messages can be sent from one person to another. There are two kinds of codes that are usually used in communication, namely encoding and decoding. Encoding is the process of converting thoughts or communications into messages. While the opposite of encoding is decoding, which is the process of reading the message and understanding its meaning. Indeed, humans can only reason through signs and semiotics can be applied to all kinds of signs. In subsequent developments, the term semiotics is more popular than semiology (Tinarbuko 2008).

From the explanation above, the writer is interested in analyzing the film entitled "All the Bright Places". *All the Bright Places* (2020) is a film adaptation of Jennifer Niven's novel of the same name. This film tells the story of a teenage romance drama that is traumatized. Where this film presents topics such as sadness, trauma and suicide. The main characters of this film are Theodore Finch (Justice Smith) and Violet Markey (Elle Fanning) who are high school students. They became partners in a class project to visit impressive places in their city, Indiana. Because of the class project that their relationship became closer, they got to know each other deeply. That's why they know each other that they are traumatized by a sad event in the past. They realize that the trauma must be overcome and they help each other to heal their trauma.

2. METHOD

The research methodology is carried out with the aim of reaching a conclusion from a problem by redefining the problem, formulating hypotheses or suggested solutions (Kothari

2004). There are two fundamental methodologies in a research, namely qualitative and quantitative research. Where qualitative research is research that uses non-numeric data by describing the 'why' and 'how' through observation and investigation. While quantitative research is research that uses numerical data in the form of tables and graphs using the elements of 'what and how much' in achieving these results (Moleong 2018).

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is research that uses the perspective of researchers who are involved in an effort to understand the reality and certain organizational phenomena (Jonker, Pennink, and Wahyuni 2011). The researcher also uses a descriptive method by using the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce in analyzing the data. Descriptive method is used to explain the relationship between the observed objects by making a description of the research object based on the facts (Sugiyono 2014). While semiotics is a study that studies signs in all forms of communication based on a sign system (Segers 2000).

The object of this research is the film *All the Bright Places* (2020) which tells about trauma and its recovery. Where in the film there are signs whose meaning can be analyzed through Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory which includes signs or representations, objects and interpretants. Where there are two sources of data in this study, namely primary and secondary data. The primary data from this research are pictures or selected scenes in the film *All the Bright Places* (2020) which will be needed by researchers. While the secondary data in this research is in the form of data from several literatures such as journals, books, and websites related to research to support this research.

The data collection technique in this study is to make observations by looking at and observing every sign contained in the film, including dialogue and a series of scenes to be able to understand the meaning contained in the film. This data collection technique was carried out by the researchers by watching the film *All the Bright Places* (2020) several times, then documenting certain scenes and dialogues regarding trauma and its recovery in the film by means of screenshots. In addition, the researcher also conducted a literature study using several other references such as books and journals.

There are seven film scenes which are the unit of analysis in this study. Where the unit of analysis is everything related to the focus being studied (Moleong 2018). Therefore, these seven scenes are related to trauma and its recovery.

In this study, it is necessary to do a validity test to assess the validity of the data to be analyzed. Where triangulation is used to test the validity in this study. Triangulation is a technique to check the validity of data by using different theories to ensure that the data that

has been collected meets the requirements (Poewandri 2001). Thus, the theory used in this study is the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce and aspects of trauma recovery in the film *All the Bright Places* (2020).

Coding stages are also needed in the process of data analysis in this study. There are three coding stages, namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Where open coding is data that is presented carefully for naming and categorizing phenomena. While axial coding is tracking the relationship between the encoded data elements. And selective coding is linking all categories into core categories by integrating and filtering.

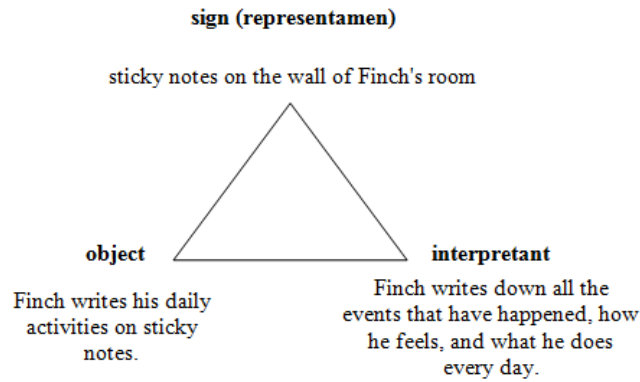
3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In analyzing the trauma and its recovery in the film *All the Bright Places* (2020), the researcher uses the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce by selecting certain scenes that show the trauma and its recovery. Then the researcher analyzes the signs, objects, and the interpretant in the film. Film *All the Bright Places* (2020) tells the story of Finch and Violet who both have trauma in the past and try to recover from their trauma by supporting each other. In this film, there are signs that the researchers found related to objects and interpreters where each sign has a meaning. There are seven scenes in this film that researchers found as signs that contain meaning. Where the meaning of these signs will be described by the researchers as follows:

3.1 The first sign (Finch writes his daily activities on sticky notes)



Picture 1. Scene at 09.55 minutes



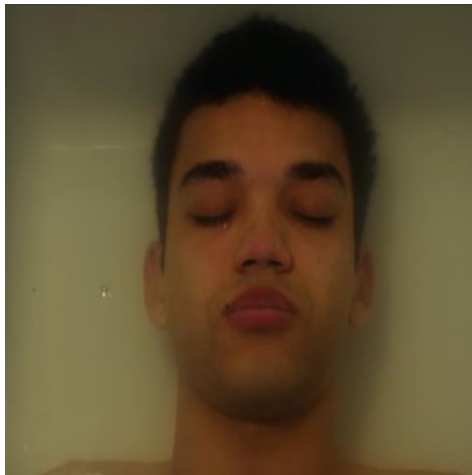
Picture 2. Peirce's triadic concept of the first sign

The scene is a sign that has meaning. A sign or representament is a term used for an object that functions as a sign (Cobley and Jansz 2002). Where the meaning can be obtained using the three-part sign model by Peirce in Chandler (2017) as described in the triangle image above. Based on Peirce's triadic concepts above, the sticky notes on the walls of the finch room were the first signs the researchers found. While the object of this sign is Finch who is sticking sticky notes on the walls of his room about his daily activities. The interpretation of this first sign is that Finch always writes down all the events he experiences, his feelings and his daily activities.

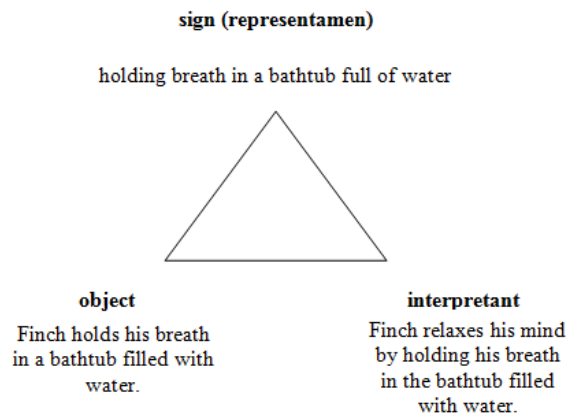
Finch has a trauma in the past because he was often beaten by his abusive father. When Finch was a teenager, he lived only with his mother and older sister, where they were very busy working and had little time with Finch. Finch is also an anti-social, he only has two close friends at school. When he has a bad day, then the only way he can vent his problems is to write, as he wrote on the sticky notes on the walls of his room.

In the scene it is clear that Finch is sticking a sticky note that says "i am awake". This is done by Finch with the aim that he is always awake from doing things that endanger himself due to emptiness and dark moods. Because the easiest activity to do to express all feelings is to write, because by writing it is no longer needed for someone as a friend to tell stories and ask for opinions. By writing, someone who is traumatized is helped in overcoming the problem. One way to improve and reconstruct personal trauma or crisis in order to cope better is to write about experiences, even painful ones (Harris 2012). So this first sign implies that one way to recover from trauma is to write.

3.2 The second sign (Finch holds his breath in a bathtub filled with water)



Picture 3. Scene at 14.13 minutes



Picture 4. Peirce's triadic concept of the second sign

The scene at 14.13 minutes is the second sign that the researchers found. By using the three-part sign model by Peirce in Chandler (2017) as described in the triangle image above, the meaning of the second sign can be obtained. Where the study of meaning is called semiotics (Zhao 2020). Based on the triadic concept put forward by one of the semiotic figures above, the second sign that the researcher found was holding their breath in a bathtub filled with water. The object of this second sign is Finch holding his breath in a bathtub full of water. So there is an interpretation that Finch relaxes by holding his breath in a bathtub full of water.

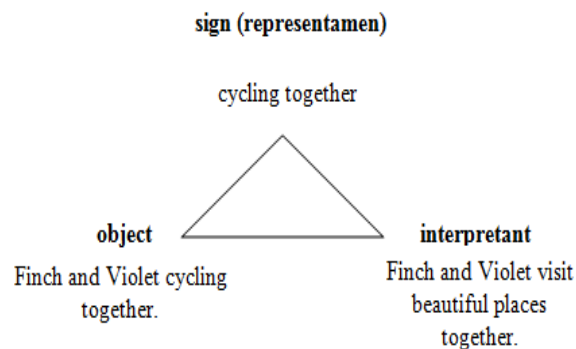
Finch's trauma in the past makes him always feel disturbed. That's why he often does relaxation in order to feel calm. One form of relaxation he does is holding his breath in a bathtub filled with water. With relaxation, Finch will be able to feel better because he is spared from dark moods that may be harmful to himself.

So it can be said that relaxation is very good to do, especially for someone who has experienced trauma because it can calm the heart and mind. Meditation programs are proven to bring about deep relaxation while also producing healthy changes in brain structure, stimulating healing and tissue repair, and providing self-care skills to turn negative emotions and thoughts into positive ones (Miller 2015). Thus, the meaning of this second sign is that trauma can be recovered by doing relaxation.

3.3 The third sign (Finch and Violet cycling together)



Picture 5. Scene at 23.41 minutes



Picture 6. Peirce's triadic concept of the third sign

The scene above is the third sign that the researcher found that contains meaning, where the meaning can be obtained using Peirce's triadic concepts above. There are two types of meaning, namely intentional meaning and unintentional meaning, one example of intentional meaning is saying a word with a certain meaning, while one example of unintentional meaning is symptoms as a sign of certain medical conditions (Lemke 2006). So based on the triadic concept above, cycling together is the third sign that the researchers

found. While the object of this sign is Finch and Violet who are cycling together. The interpretation of this third sign is that Finch and Violet visit beautiful places together.

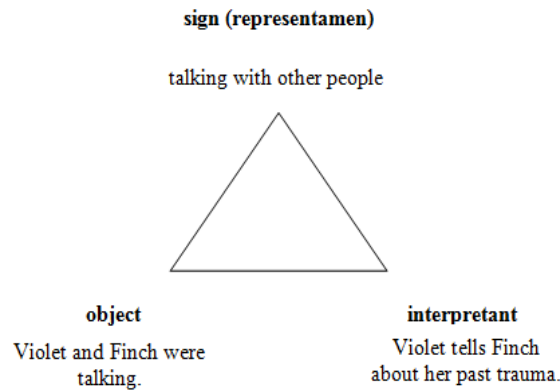
Violet is Finch's classmate. Violet has a trauma in the past due to a single accident with her older sister. Where her sister died because of the incident. Therefore Violet becomes traumatized to drive a car. Knowing this, Finch invites Violet to work on a class project together in the form of visiting beautiful places in their city by cycling together. Finch did this because he wanted to be Violet's close friend and try to heal the trauma together.

Finch and Violet do interesting activities to divert attention because of bad memories in their past, where what they do is cycle together to visit hidden beautiful places. By discovering new things, socializing with new people and doing productive activities, you can improve yourself and reduce the possibility of remembering past traumas. Because by doing creative healing in the form of sports, drawing, writing and other interesting activities, it can create entertainment to generate motivation and inspiration (Ide 2013). So this third sign implies that, by doing fun things, you can restore trauma.

3.4 The fourth sign (Violet and Finch were talking)



Picture 7. Scene at 33.33 minutes



Picture 8. Peirce's triadic concept of the fourth sign

Semiotics or semiology is a communication science that plays an important role in human life because humans always need signs and symbols (Zoest 1996). So the fourth sign that the researcher found was the scene at 33.33 minutes and the triadic concept above is a sign theory according to Peirce which shows the correlation between sign or representamen, object, and interpretant. Based on Peirce's triadic concepts above, the fourth sign that the researcher found was talking to other people. The object of this fourth sign was Finch and Violet who were having a conversation. Then came the interpretation that Violet told Finch her past trauma.

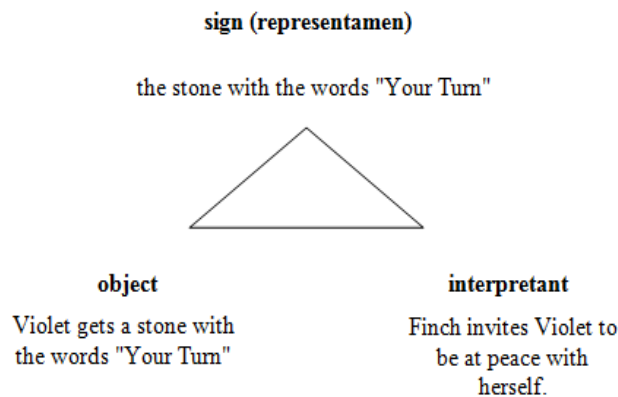
Ever since her older sister died, Violet has become a closed person. She always avoids crowds and rarely socializes, even rarely communicates with her parents. Violet also once tried to end her life by jumping off the bridge where she and her older sister had an accident. Finch, who happened to be jogging, tried to calm Violet down and persuaded her not to do that. Because of that, their relationship became closer. They often share experiences about the trauma they have experienced.

As in the scene at 33.33 minutes above, it is clear that Violet is talking with Finch, Violet tells Finch the bad experience she has experienced. By telling someone who has had the same experience, it will make you stronger, because he will listen attentively without judgment so you will not feel alone. Because exchanging stories will make you feel the same fate, even feel yourself better than others which can trigger a person to rise up and fight the trauma suffered (Lemke 2006). Thus, the meaning of this fourth sign is that sharing stories or exchanging ideas with someone who has the same experience or who understands the circumstances suffered can restore the trauma experienced.

3.5 The fifth sign (Violet gets a stone with the words "Your Turn" from Finch)



Picture 9. Scene at 36.40 minutes



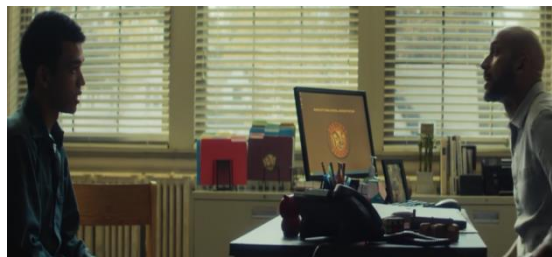
Picture 10. Peirce's triadic concept of the fifth sign

The scene above is the fifth sign that the researcher found. The meaning of the sign can be obtained by using the three-part sign model by Peirce in Chandler (2017) as described in the triangle image above. Where every sign can have a personal, social or meaning that depends on a particular context because the sign does not reveal anything but only serves to show and it is the interpreter who interprets the sign based on his experience (Vera 2016). Based on Peirce's triadic concepts above, the fifth sign that the researcher found was a stone with the words "Your Turn". The object of this fifth sign is Violet who gets a stone that reads "Your Turn" from Finch. So the interpretation of this sign is that Finch invites Violet to make peace with her past.

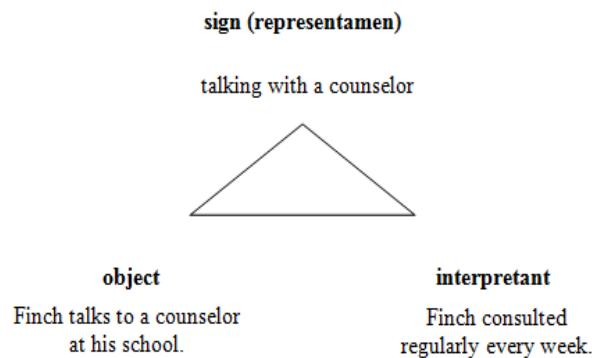
Finch's purpose in giving the stone to Violet is so that it can serve as a reminder that Violet should be able to return to a normal life like before she lost her sister. Finch realized that dwelling on sorrow and fear would only make life harder. Because of that, Finch invites Violet to jointly recover from the trauma they experienced even though it is not easy to do.

Seeking support from others, such as family and friends, can reduce the risk of trauma. Even alone, a person can face danger with good feelings, have strategies in dealing with bad situations and can take lessons from it, because some people are able to act and respond to every case even with feelings of fear (Brewin, Andrews, and Valentine 2000). The more you avoid and endure trauma, the more bad it will be on someone who experiences it. So the better thing to do is admit your mistakes and forgive yourself so that confidence will grow again. So this fifth sign means that, one way to recover from trauma is to fight the trauma itself.

3.6 The sixth sign (Finch talks to a counselor at his school)



Picture 11. Scene at 38.34 minutes



Picture 12. Peirce's triadic concept of the sixth sign

A sign is part of human culture, according to Makkai (2011:113) humans can be called *homo signans* namely creatures who are always looking for meaning from various things around them (Hoed 2014). Like the scene which is the sixth sign that the researcher found that contains meaning, where the meaning can be obtained using Peirce's triadic concepts above. Based on the triadic concept above, talking to a counselor is the third sign that researchers found. While the object of this sign is Finch who is talking to the counselor at his school. The interpretation of this third sign is that Finch regularly consults every week.

Finch only has three close friends at his school because he is an introverted student. The other students hate Finch because they think he is a strange person, therefore Finch is called a "freak". Finch likes to cause trouble at school because he can't control his emotions, in fact he often disappears and doesn't go to school. By knowing these things, then a counselor named Mr. Embry to help Finch overcome his problem.

Thus, Finch regularly consulted every week because he felt safe, respected, and understood by Mr. Embry. With the help of an experienced trauma specialist, a traumatized person will feel less fear and pain. Where this has the potential to cause trauma again. Division 17 of the American Psychological Association (APA) in Abhimanyu and Thayeb (2009) formulated that counseling is a job to work with individuals or groups related to personal, social, educational and professional problems. Thus, this sixth sign implies that consulting a counselor is something that can heal trauma.

3.7 The seventh sign (Violet was forced to get into the car)



Picture 13. Scene at 42.54 minutes

4. CLOSING

Trauma and recovery in the film *All the Bright Places* (2020) researcher analyzed using semiotic analysis according to Charles Sanders Peirce. The researcher uses Peirce's triadic concept which includes sign or representamen, object, and interpretant. In the film *All the Bright Places* (2020), researcher found seven signs that can be analyzed using the triadic concept. Where these signs can be obtained by researcher in the activities carried out by Finch and Violet. Finch and Violet are teenagers who are traumatized by the past. Due to an accidental meeting, they become closer and get to know each other. Therefore they decided to jointly recover their trauma by supporting each other. They carry out activities to restore trauma. Where these activities are signs that contain meaning. The signs that contain this meaning are (1) Finch who always writes down his daily activities and what he is feeling on sticky notes means that one way to recover from trauma is by writing. (2) Finch relaxes by holding his breath in a bathtub filled with water, which means that trauma can be recovered by relaxing. (3) Finch and Violet cycling together means that doing fun things can restore trauma. (4) Violet and Finch were talking implies that sharing stories or exchanging ideas with someone who has the same experience or who understands the circumstances suffered can restore the trauma experienced. (5) The stone with the words "Your Turn" means that one way to recover from trauma is to fight the trauma itself. (6) Finch regularly consults a counselor at his school, which means that consulting with a counselor is something that can restore trauma. (7) Violet was forced to get into the car, meaning that by fighting the trauma, the trauma will slowly recover over time. Thus it can be concluded that trauma can be recovered if there is a strong determination from oneself, support from the closest people such as family and friends and guidance from experts. Based on the conclusions above, the researcher suggest to learn more about semiotics by Peirce and other semiotic experts for readers or other researchers who are interested in the analysis of signs in a film. Researcher also suggest to learn more about past trauma and how to recover from that trauma.

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