





VISUAL MEANING OF CRITICISM OF CAPITALISM IN FILM: KARA, ANAK SEBATANG POHON

Nandang Wahyu Setia Abdi Buana

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Abstract: Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon (2005) is a short film with a story that reminds of the presence of capitalism in the social conditions of a family who lives very far from the crowds. The author is interested in researching this film because the story built by this film is critical of capitalism, and semiotics as a theory the author uses to analyze the process of sign formation and meaning production to see how media texts build their meaning. With the dichotomy of the sign system explained by Ferdinand De Sausurre, namely Signifier and Signified, whose relationship is an association between 'the signified' and 'the signifier', the author uses it to reveal the meaning of the series of symbols (signs) in the film This will be the presence of capitalism amidst the happiness of the life of a small family. Qualitative methodology and the Constructivist paradigm are used as a thought approach in looking at the unit of research analysis, namely the "shots" in the film Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon so that the writer has a reference in interpreting the meaning in the film's story content. Research on this film explains how the content of the story is built and constructed, namely capitalism in carrying out its distribution using all means, and the presence of capitalism has had a negative impact. An ironic condition occurs where a condition that was initially undesirable is rationalized.

Keywords: film; capitalism; semiotic

Introduction

The object of the author's research is a short film entitled Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon. A short film that has achievements and received the best short film award in 2005 at the Indonesian Film Festival, and also received international appreciation at the Cannes Film Festival in Paris, France for the Director's For Night Program. Short films relate to stories that are short, but have great meaning, as is the case in the world of visual art, and have experienced various explorations of form and creation which have resulted in a very distinctive style(Wati et al., 2023).

The object of the author's research is the film Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon, which tells the story of a family who is left in an area far from the hustle and bustle of urban areas, a place that is very calm and peaceful. However, this atmosphere of calm and peace is lost because of the presence of capitalism which is represented by the fall of Ronald the McDonald statue and the killing of the mother who has just given birth.

In its spread, capitalism always car-

Nandang Wahyu Setia Abdi Buana is a lecturer at The School of Design and Creative Arts Universitas Mercu Buana, Jakarta.

e-mail: nandang.wahyu@mercubuana.ac.id

ries out expansion after expansion with the argument of productivity which then presents a dramatic phenomenon with the emergence of colonization and imperialism to other areas (Kristeva, 2015). In line with the story shown in the film Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon, how the Ronald McDonald statue suddenly appears in the life of a family, even though the family lives very far from the hustle and bustle of big city life. The meaning that emerges from the content of the film's story is an interesting thing for the writer to carry out research using a semiotic approach.

The practice of capitalist ideology is presented in the content of the film as a criticism of how capitalism exists and destroys the happiness of a family. In media studies, it is said that the media is an institution that is born in society's life sociologically and its position is influenced by the perspective of society itself (Pawito, 2014). The media is controlled by market laws, in this thinking the ideology adopted by the media is the ideology of liberalism or market ideology. What is interesting about the author's research is how the media (film) is used to criticize the presence of capitalism, in this case McDonaldization (Alamsyah, 2020).

The film Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon is an alternative film that depicts a story about the cruelty of the presence of capitalism in society. The reality in films is not actual social reality, but because films are a medium for conveying messages, it is clear that the contents of the media have ideological content (Wati et al., 2023).

Therefore, the focus of the author's research in examining the film Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon is to see how the story construction is built in the film Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon in the context of criticism of the presence of capitalism which is presented through the visuals arranged in the film's story. The paradigm used by the author in looking at the problem above is constructivist, to see how reality or events in the film are constructed and in what way the construction is formed (Umanailo, 2019).

Methodology

Semiotic theory put forward by Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913), in this theory semiotics is divided into two parts (dichotomies), namely signifiers and signs. Signification semiotics is a sign system that studies the relationship of sign elements in a system based on certain rules or conventions. Social agreement is needed to be able to interpret these signs. According to Saussure, signs consist of: Sounds and images, called signifiers or markers, and concepts from sounds and images, called signified (Silaban & Aini, 2022).

Saussure developed language as a sign system. Semiotics is known as a discipline that studies signs, signifying processes and marking processes. Language is a particular type of sign. Thus it can be understood that there is a relationship between linguistics and semiotics. Saussure used the word 'semiology' which has the same meaning as semiotics in the Pierce ways (Silaban & Aini, 2022).

According to Saussure, a sign is a combination of a concept and a sound-image which cannot be separated. The relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary (whichever you like). There is no definite logical connection between the two, which makes the text or sign interesting and problematic at the same time. Saussure's thinking became a source of inspiration for a school of thought called structuralism (Ilmu et al., 2023).

Result

The story information in this film is

conveved through a series of shots (visuals), the relationship between the text and the signification produced in the first layer, namely the Signifier is only an assumption of experiences that we have mastered, and the Signified is a form of meaning in the next layer. Through the division of this model the author tries to analyze and find the meaning stored behind the signs.





Figure 1. The ambience of the place (Source: https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=hU44op_4oNw)

Table 1. Signifier and Signified of the somewhere place

Signifier:

In the first scene, a series of shots shows a very beautiful place, filled with lush trees and a very calm lake.

Signified:

This calm atmosphere suggests peace, that the place is a location that has not been "touched" by many people and is far from the hustle and bustle of the city. Describes comfortable and very beautiful conditions.

Analysis:

Showing a landscape image (scenery) at the beginning of the scene, as can be seen in Fig.1, gives an understanding that something beautiful has calm in it, this leads the audience to understand that the location in the film is very peaceful. Far

from the hustle and bustle of the busy city, this place is a place that has not been touched by modernization.











Figure 1. The ambience of the place (Source: https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=hU44op_4oNw)

Table 2. signifier and signified, scene of the husband carrying his wife.

Signifier:

Depicting a husband carrying his wife, the wife is depicted as being pregnant and about to give birth. The husband was in a hurry to carry his wife, but the husband looked happy. This condition was depicted when he was running while carrying his wife. The husband stopped to pick flowers and gave them to his wife, then the husband

Signified:

In this scene it starts with footsteps which give the meaning of struggle. Followed by the next shot which shows the husband carrying his wife, showing how a man takes full responsibility for his wife. And her joy about the birth of a baby is reflected in her husband, when he stopped and picked a flower and gave it to his

rushed to run	wife. This scene
again.	shows his deep
	affection for his
	wife. It is clear that
	the family is
	described as a
	happy family.

Analysis:

The scene of the husband carrying his wife who is about to give birth, as can be seen in Fig. 2, explains to the audience the understanding that a man must naturally be responsible for his wife and provide full protection. The depiction of the scene above shows the condition of a society that respects each other. It is clear how a husband is very caring and responsible for his wife, a condition that does not occur if capitalism is present.







Figure 3. The husband took his wife into a house in a very quiet place
(Source: https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=hU44op_4oNw)

Table 3. Signifier and signified of the husband taking his wife into a house in quiet place.

Signifier:	Signified:
The husband is	This depiction is a
seen taking his	depiction that is
wife into a house	far from the
at the foot of the	situation that most
hill, the house is	people often

"alone" with no other houses around it. Then it was heard that a baby had been born, and not long afterward an object fell into the house.

experience, where a family chooses a place to live without any other human life there. The sound of a newborn baby crying explains that new life is present, and an object falling from the sky also explains that an unexpected condition could occur at any time.

Analysis:

With a very wide shot and a long duration, the husband and wife enter their house, as can be seen in Fig. 3. By using this wide shot, it explains the geographical conditions where they live, namely under the foot of the hill. Not long after, the sound of a baby crying was heard, the audio of the baby crying explained that a baby had been born in the house, which meant new life had come. And unexpectedly, a fairly large object fell from above into their house. A fairly large object falls and enters the house, giving an illustration of how capitalism appears unexpectedly, the process of expansion of capitalism is even carried out outside the boundaries of the territory where capitalism originates. This was done to distribute power and to expand the coverage area. We can understand the objects that fall from "above" as a way for capitalism to distribute its power.



Figure 4. Heard the sound of a baby crying loudly and a mother who died because statue Ronald was crushed (Source:https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=hU44op_4oNw)

Table 4. Signifier and Signified, Ronald's statue falls, suddenly killing the mother.

Signifier:

Bloodstains are clearly visible on the walls of the wooden house, the sound of a baby continuing to cry and a mother can be seen who has died because an object, namely a statue of Ronald McDonald, was hit by an object. This situation lets us know that the object that fell in the previous sequence was a statue of Ronald. In the first scene, a series of shots shows a very beautiful place, filled with lush trees and a very calm lake.

Signified:

A mother is crushed by a McDonald's statue, explaining the meaning that capitalism has killed her mother for no apparent reason. The scene in this sequence depicts how a family's happiness was taken away by an "almighty" force that fell from above. "Above" in this context can be interpreted as power. And the husband continued to cry, lamenting what would happen to the baby in the future. The implied meaning is that the baby will grow up without a mother.

Analysis:

This scene, as can be seen in Fig. 4, provides an understanding that an object falling from "above" has destroyed the life of a happy husband and wife, "above" in the context of power has exerted its power on a weak family. Ronald is an icon of McDonald's, a multinational franchise company. This scene explains that capitalism has killed a mother who has just given birth to her baby. Looking at this context provides an understanding that capitalism is always looking for new areas to dominate. Capitalism always looks for opportunities to spread widely and dominate economics and ideology, also known as commercial liberalism (McDonald, 2009).







Figure 5. Kara have grown up and Kara lives alone (Source: https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=hU44op_4oNw)

Table 5. Signifier and Signified of the Child Kara have grown up and lives alone.

Signifier:	
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The story in this scene starts with the baby (Kara) who has grown up, Kara, the child's name, lives alone and the father has gone

Signified:

The shot of Kara sleeping is depicted upside down, explaining the meaning that Kara is not like a child in general. He lived alone in a hut at the foot of the hill.

somewhere. While sitting next to the house holding a piece of wood, Kara heard the sound of a photo camera "snap". While running holding a machete, Kara looked for the source of the sound.

When he was next to the house, Kara held a tree trunk which further emphasized that Kara was "a kara". The camera's "snap" sound made it clear that someone else was stalking Kara. While running, Kara carries a machete, giving the meaning that Kara doesn't know anyone, she is very wary of something that is foreign to her.

Analysis:

Kara, who is sleeping in an upside down in the shot in Fig. 5, explains that this child is not like most other children, this child lives alone in a house at the foot of the hill. Continuing with the next shot, Kara is holding a stick of wood, which further emphasizes that Kara is just a stick. When Kara heard the camera sound, Kara looked confused and alert, because the sound was very foreign to Kara, but it could be explained that there was something stalking Kara.



Figure 6. Kara was standing under a big tree, and a photographer took a picture of Kara looking confused (Source:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hU44op_4oNw)

Table 6. Signifier & Signified of Kara interacting with the photographer scene.

Signifier:

Kara was alone under a big tree, and suddenly a man appeared carrying a camera and tried to take a picture of Kara. The man tried to give Kara food, but Kara refused and left the man.

Signified:

Kara is always isolated and Kara is always friends with a tree. The man carrying the camera is depicted as a journalist who wants to find out who the child (Kara) who is always alone is. The journalist tried to give food in the form of products from McDonald's but Kara refused, this explains that capitalism is slowly trying to enter a new place. However, anything new is always rejected, as illustrated by Kara leaving the journalist because Kara doesn't like the presence of capitalism. This scene is taken with a very wide shot showing that this very beautiful area is facing the threat of the arrival of a new form of colonialism, namely capitalism.

Analysis:

This scene depicts Kara alone under a tree, as can be seen in Fig. 6, gives the next layer of meaning that Kara is only friends with trees. Trees in this context are friends and family for Kara, only trees are friends for Kara to interact with. The sudden presence of a journalist with a camera explained that Kara had received new information about the existence of another world out there besides the world she had always experienced. The scene where the journalist gives Kara food from McDonald's products explains that Kara as a human being who has not been touched by modernization and capitalism is slowly being introduced to a new form of understanding of other lives. And this understanding can clearly be seen as capitalism, Kara slowly begins to feel that her life is starting to be threatened.









Figure 7. Kara went into the house and the photographer came in and took photos of Kara, until Kara remembered her parents (Source: https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=hU44op_4oNw)

Table 7. Signifier and Signified of the photographer taking photo of Kara and the flash light make Kara remembers her parents.

Signifier:	Signified:
Kara tried to avoid the photographer, but the photographer still insisted and went	Kara avoids the photographer and the photographer keeps chasing her. Explains the

into Kara's hut. Kara suddenly remembered her parents, the image that came was of her parents who were very happy.

meaning, how far we avoid it but the new form of capitalism will still force us into it. And when Kara has a flashback, she remembers her parents, giving the impression that they are the new targets of capitalism. A family in a remote location represents a new territory about to be invaded by capitalism. This situation could not be rejected by little Kara alone.

Analysis:

Kara refused and tried to enter the house, but the photographer was still curious about Kara and also entered the house. The shots from the photographer's camera had a flash effect, so that Kara remembered past events about her father and mother and a harmonious family before the arrival of capitalism in the middle of their life, as can be seen in Fig. 6. Kara looked sad remembering this incident, until finally Kara decided to look for Ronald and take revenge for her mother's death. Kara's face showed great resentment, the flash of light from the reporter's camera flash aroused Kara's anger. The flashback in this scene explains that things used to be better than now and that new things are not easy to accept. Humans essentially when they feel comfortable will reject things that are new and foreign to them. The scene with Kara and the flashback of her parents brings out an experience

within Kara, and that experience invites Kara to take revenge.



Figure 8. Kara leaves the area where she lives (Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hU44op_4oNw)

Table 8. Signifier and Signified of Kara leaving the area to find Ronald to take revenge.

Signified:

Signifier:

Kara left the area where she lived, Kara had a very long journey

The landscape is very beautiful, meaning that this place is the target of many people. And when she was about to leave. Kara came to a tree as if Kara was telling the tree to take care of this place. Kara got on a raft and walked on the grass carrying a piece of wood, explaining the meaning that Kara was only friends with nature and a piece of wood that always accompanied her.

Analysis:

In this scene, as can be seen in Fig.8, a place that is very enchanting and ideal for humans is shown again, but this peaceful place will soon be abandoned by Kara. Kara went looking for Roland to avenge her family. Before leaving, Kara chatted with a tree as if she was asking for approval for the action she was about to take. With a piece of wood on her shoulder that always faithfully accompanies Kara wherever she goes, the wood on Kara's shoulder represents family for Kara, that wood is identity and life that is always beside Kara. This self-identity is explained as a dialectical relationship that is formed by social processes and takes shape, is maintained, modified and reshaped by social relationships, and what is attached to Kara becomes Kara's self-identity.



Figure 9. Desert image with rotating shot to transition to urban area (Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hU44op_4oNw)

Table 9. Signifier and Signified of the transition from desert place to the urban area.

Signifier:	Signified:
The picture of a desert that is spinning and transitioning to the next picture, namely an urban area, and you can	The image of the swirling desert explains the conditions of Kara's long journey to the city, as well as the

see that Kara is in front of a McDonald's outlet.

transition in time and place of moving from a remote place to an urban area. Then a picture of Kara is seen from behind holding an object, depicting that Kara is ready to take revenge for her mother's death. The log on Kara's back became Kara's loyal friend in her journey to seek justice.

Analysis:

The image that rotates to the right gives a transition effect of moving time and place, as can be seen in Fig. 9. Previously the audience was informed that Kara was still in a very beautiful place, and then we saw that Kara was in a city that was foreign to Kara. Kara entered another world, and long story short, Kara was in front of the McDonald's outlet. Kara's instincts immediately felt that Ronald lived here. The location of the McDonald's outlet is in a shop that is very busy with visitors (Ritzer, 2002, p. 8-9). McDonald's has become a phenomenon in suburban and medium-sized cities. Over the years, McDonald's has continued to greet the public in various ways. With the aim of total domination of the fast food restaurant industry throughout the world.



Figure 10. Kara hits Ronald and finally gives in and drinks coca cola from McDonald (Source: https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=hU44op_4oNw)

Table 10. Signifier and Signified of Kara taking revenge on Ronald, got tired and then drank coca cola from McDonald.

Signifier:

It was seen that Kara was very angry with the statue of Roland and immediately hit the statue of Ronald with an object. A mother Kara's saw action. The mother felt sorry for Kara because Kara was very tired, the mother Kara drink. The drink was a product from McDonald's, and Kara was seen finally drinking

Signified:

Kara is hitting Roland's statue, giving the meaning that Kara, even though she is still small, can take action against something that has ruined her life. In this case, Ronald the McDonald statue was not injured in slightest, the explaining that Ronald representation capitalism is a very big force and is not easy to destroy. A mother felt sorry

drink while for Kara and gave the reporter Kara drink, describing her watched. mother as a wise person. Even though she gave Kara a glass of drink from McDonald's products, the mother tried to make Kara realize that capitalism is not easy to fight.

Analysis:

Kara's punch meant nothing to Ronald, as can be seen in Fig.9. This condition illustrates the situation that small communities will not be able to fight the strength and power of capitalism, no matter how much effort is made to fight, capitalism is very strong. Next, a mother is seen who feels sorry for Kara, Kara is tired and the mother gives her a drink from McDonald's. Kara accepts the drink. This condition really illustrates that Kara, as a representative of small society, has finally surrendered to the power and authority of the presence of capitalism. Kara as a small child is unable to fight against a very large McDonald. Discomfort and resistance to being McDonaldized because the allure of the McDonald's institution is so great that it makes Kara become a devotee and get caught up in rationalized activities.

Discussion

In this film, capitalism propaganda is depicted in a very extreme way. The collection of signs (symbols) of capitalism in the film explains that capitalism is very evil, allowing any means to achieve its mission of spreading its ideology. In this context,

it is explained how Kara, a child who lives alone in a lonely place, has to endure her life because her parents were "killed" by Ronald. After growing up, Kara plans to take revenge, but Kara gives up and is unable to fight big capitalism. This is illustrated by how Kara has to accept capitalism, namely by drinking Coca Cola.

The presentation of the focus of the author's research on criticism of the presence of capitalism in the film Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon illustrates how the spread of McDonald's as part of capitalism uses very cruel methods, all of which is carried out despite this, even if it means sacrificing the lives of other innocent people. The spread carried out by capitalism is also carried out everywhere, even to very remote places, this cannot be separated from the grip of capitalism.

Criticism of Capitalism Through Film Media

It is true that film as a medium is an agent of capitalism, but it is very clear that the film Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon constructs its story in order to reject/criticize the presence of capitalism in the social order of society. The ideology presented in the film is resistance to capitalism.

Conclusion

It is very clear how the film firmly constructs meaning towards criticism of the presence of capitalism in the social order which is depicted through the life of a family living in a remote area, and the desire of a child named Kara to take revenge for the atrocities committed by capitalism (depicted via McDonald's) to his family. From this series of events the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The calm and peaceful environment depicted in the film has disappeared since

the arrival of capitalism in their family. This event also explains that capitalism will always distribute its power and spread its network to all corners of the world, capitalism will always look for new colonies in all kinds of ways.

- 2. The presence of capitalism in the film Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon is depicted through a very tragic event, where McDonald, as part of capitalism through the statue of Ronald, kills a mother who has just given birth and causes the baby to live alone.
- 3. The child named Kara, in her efforts to take revenge for the atrocities that capitalism has committed against her family, must give up and accept that McDonald's is capitalism which is impossible for her to fight. So that Kara's child is rationalized by the presence of McDonaldization and accepts the reality of the presence of capitalism.
- 4. Films from an industrial perspective are part of capitalism, but in the film Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon, the film is used as a medium to criticize capitalism itself.

Film as a work of art, media for viewing and hearing, has absolute freedom in conveying its ideas. However, we can only find films with interesting ideas and concepts such as the film Kara, The Anak Sebatang Pohon only in short films (alternative films). Bearing in mind that film production requires very large costs (capital), and critical film content is very difficult to obtain financing (capital), as well as space for exhibitions (screenings). We still rarely encounter films with critical content in Indonesia, which according to the author's opinion is that our society also has the right to enjoy films with alternative content as learning or other references to events that are actually happening around us.

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