



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Semiotic Analysis and Personality of the Main Character in the Film *Lady Bird* and the *Edge of Seventeen*

Feby Herdini Lestari¹,
Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jakarta, Indonesia
Hanna Sundari²,
Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jakarta, Indonesia
Rifari Baron³,
Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jakarta, Indonesia

e-mail: febyherdini23@gmail.com
e-mail: hanna.sundari@unindra.ac.id
e-mail: rifari.baron@unindra.ac.id

Abstract: The purpose of this research is to identify semiotic data as well as the personality of the main character in the films *Lady Bird* and *The Edge of Seventeen*. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. This research uses Roland Barthes' Semiotics theory, which is divided into 3 types of meaning, namely Denotative, Connotative, and Myth. The data analysed are 31 visual data of *Lady Bird* and 33 visual data of *The Edge of Seventeen*. The visual data includes scene footage, facial expressions, body language, colours, clothing, and others. This research also uses the Hippocrates- Galenus Personality Typology to analyse the main characters' personalities in *Lady Bird* and *The Edge of Seventeen*, which is divided into four personality types, including Sanguinis, Phlegmatis, Choleric, and Melancholic. In the results of the analysis of the main character's personality in the film *Lady Bird*, 27 conversation units were found consisting of 4 conversation units of sanguinis personality (17%), 13 conversation units of choleric personality (48%), and 10 conversation units of melancholic personality (37%). So it can be concluded that the main character in *Lady Bird* has a choleric personality. Meanwhile, the results of the personality analysis of the main character in the film *The Edge of Seventeen* have been found as many as 25 conversation units consisting of 8 conversation units of sanguinis personality (32%), 1 conversation unit of phlegmatis personality (8%), 8 conversation units of choleric personality (32%), and 8 conversation units of melancholic personality (28%). So, it can be concluded that the main character in the film *The Edge of Seventeen* has a dominant sanguine and choleric personality.

Keywords: Semiotics ; Personality ; Literature ; Film ; Character

Analisis Semiotika dan Kepribadian Tokoh Utama dalam Film *Lady Bird* dan *The Edge of Seventeen* (Kajian Teori Semiotika Roland Barthes dan Teori Kepribadian Hippocrates-Galenus)

Abstrak: Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah: untuk mengidentifikasi data semiotika serta kepribadian tokoh utama dalam film *Lady Bird* dan *The Edge of Seventeen*. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori Semiotika Roland Barthes yang terbagi menjadi 3 jenis makna, yaitu Denotatif, Konotatif, dan Mitos. Data yang dianalisis adalah 31 data visual dalam film *Lady Bird* dan 33 data visual dalam film *The Edge of Seventeen*. Data visual tersebut meliputi cuplikan adegan, ekspresi wajah, bahasa tubuh, warna, pakaian, dan lain-lain. Penelitian ini juga menggunakan Tipologi Kepribadian Hippocrates-Galenus untuk

menganalisa kepribadian tokoh utama dalam film *Lady Bird* dan *The Edge of Seventeen* yang dibagi menjadi empat tipe kepribadian yaitu Sanguinis, Plegmatis, Koleris, dan Melankolis. Pada hasil analisis kepribadian tokoh utama dalam film *Lady Bird*, ditemukan 27 unit percakapan yang terdiri dari 4 unit percakapan kepribadian sanguinis (17%), 13 unit percakapan kepribadian koleris (48%), dan 10 unit percakapan kepribadian melankolis (37%). Sehingga dapat disimpulkan bahwa karakter utama dalam film *Lady Bird* memiliki kepribadian koleris. Sedangkan hasil analisis kepribadian tokoh utama dalam film *The Edge of Seventeen* telah ditemukan sebanyak 25 unit percakapan yang terdiri dari 8 unit percakapan kepribadian sanguinis (32%), 1 unit percakapan kepribadian plegmatis (8%), 8 unit percakapan kepribadian koleris (32%), dan 8 unit percakapan kepribadian melankolis (28%). Sehingga dapat disimpulkan bahwa tokoh utama dalam film *The Edge of Seventeen* memiliki kepribadian sanguinis dan koleris yang dominan.

Kata kunci: Semiotika; Kepribadian; Sastra; Film; Karakter

Introduction

Literature serves as a medium of creative expression that captures human experiences, emotions, and social realities. As a form of literary work, movies are not always simply a source of amusement. Rather, it is a way of verbal exchange that conveys messages via visible and narrative elements. Films can depict human interactions, cultural symbols, and mental aspects, making them a treasured source of semiotic and mental analysis. Understanding how the messages are built in movies calls for an in-depth examination of signs, symbols, and male or female portrayals.

This study focuses on *Lady Bird* (2017) by Greta Gerwig and *The Edge of Seventeen* (2016) by Kelly Fremon Craig, two coming-of-age films that explore themes of adolescence, identity crisis, and personal growth. The data collected will be analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which is divided into denotation, connotation, and myth. This study also uses Hippocrates-Galenus' personality theory, which classifies individuals into four personality types: Sanguine, Phlegmatic, Choleric, and Melancholic.

The research adopts a qualitative descriptive method, analyzing 31 visual data of *Lady Bird* and 33 visual data of *The Edge of Seventeen*, including scene composition, facial expressions, body language, colors, and costumes. The semiotic analysis identifies the deeper meanings behind these elements, while the personality analysis classifies the protagonists—Christine "Lady Bird" McPherson and Nadine Franklin—based on their behavioral traits. The study also draws comparisons between the two films to determine how their semiotic and psychological elements shape character development and narrative progression.

The results show that the *Ladybird* protagonist has a dominant choleric personality (48%), followed by melancholic (37%) and optimistic (17%) traits. In the meantime, Nadine from the end of 17 shows a mix of optimism (32%), choleric (32%), melancholic (28%), and phlegmatic (8%) traits, reflecting emotional struggle and introspective personality. These psychological profiles correspond to the visual and narrative elements of the film and reinforce the thematic message.

This study contributes to the fields of film studies, semiotics, and personality psychology by showing how filmographic elements function as indications that convey deeper meanings about identity and emotional development. By using the semiotics and personality theory of *Lady Bird* and *The Edge of Seventeen*, this study provides insight into the construction of films and psychological representations through the interaction of symbolic images and characters.

Research Method

This study uses qualitative descriptive research methods to analyze semiotic elements and personality traits of the main characters of *Ladybird* (2017) and *The Edge of Seventeen* (2016). A qualitative

approach is chosen to allow for detailed interpretation of visual and narrative elements within the film and focusing on signs, symbols, and character representations. The data consists of 31 visual data points from *Lady Bird* and 33 visual data points from the 17 edges, including scene composition, facial expressions, body language, colour, outfits, and other symbols. Additionally, dialogue and character interactions are analyzed to identify personality traits based on verbal and nonverbal communication.

This analysis is performed using two theoretical frameworks: Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and Hippocrates Galenus's theory of personality. Barthes' semiotics is used to examine the visual and symbolic elements of the film in three levels of meaning. In the meantime, Hippocrates Galenus's personality theory is used to classify the personality traits of the protagonist into four types: Sanguine, Phlegmatic, Choleric, and Melancholic. Each main character's dialogue and behavior are divided into these personality types, determining the dominant traits.

To ensure credibility, triangulation is applied by cross-referencing visual and narrative elements with existing literature on semiotics and personality theory. The data are carefully coded and categorized to maintain consistency in interpretation. This methodological approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how films construct meaning through semiotic elements and how character psychology is reflected in cinematic storytelling.

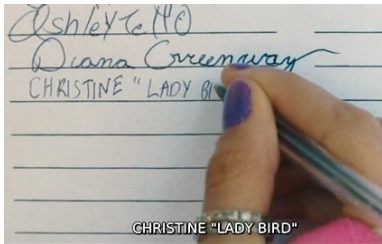
Results and Discussion




This research presented some important findings related to semiotic signs and the main characters' personalities in the films *Lady Bird* and *The Edge of Seventeen*. Based on Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, both films contain various denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings that reinforce the story narrative and character development. As many as 31 visual elements were identified from *Lady Bird*, which include the symbolisation of identity search, complex family relationships, and the spirit of teenage rebellion. Meanwhile, *The Edge of Seventeen* provides 33 visual elements, such as expressions of alienation, awkward social interactions, and the protagonist's struggle to understand herself. The findings are presented in the following table

Table 1 Visual Elements in the Films *Lady Bird* and *The Edge of Seventeen*

Visual Elements	Lady Bird	The Edge of Seventeen
Scene Capture	6	5
Facial Expression	5	7
Body Language	6	4
Color	4	5
Clothing	4	4
Other Visual Symbols	6	8
TOTAL	31	33

Table 2 Example of Semiotic Analysis of the Main Characters

Film	Scene	Visual Elements	Description
Lady Bird	Scene 00:06:02		<p>The scene of Christine choosing the nickname Lady Bird</p> <p>Denotative: Christine is writing down her self-determined nickname.</p> <p>Connotative: Christine wants to define herself, showing her uniqueness regardless of others' expectations.</p> <p>Myth: Nickname as a symbol of rebellion in search of identity, escaping from parental control, and social norms.</p>

Film	Scene	Visual Elements	Description
	Scene 00:02:48		<p>Christine's angry expression Denotative: Christine is angry at her mother's words. Connotative: Shows emotional tension and conflict between generations. In this scene, Christine feels not understood by her mother. Myth: Teenagers' expressions of resisting parents, often appearing in their resistance to them.</p>
The Edge of Seventeen	Scene 00:28:49		<p>The scene of Nadine feeling isolated at the party Denotative: Nadine is in the crowd of the party but looks aloof, with no social interaction. Connotative: Nadine feels lonely and isolated, showing internal conflict and inability to blend in. Myth: Teenagers often feel do not fit in or are not accepted in social situations.</p>
	Scene 01:29:09		<p>Nadine's sad expression after crying and then apologizing to Darian for realizing her mistake. Denotative: Nadine is sad after crying and apologizing to Darian. Connotative: Depicts guilt and a desire to repair the relationship with Darian. Myth: An apology and admission of guilt is an important step to repairing a relationship, showing how important emotional management and family relationships are.</p>

The visual elements in *Lady Bird* (2017) and *The Edge of Seventeen* (2016) effectively illustrate the protagonists' emotional struggles and search for identity. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, these films communicate deeper meanings through facial expressions, body language, and framing techniques.

In *Lady Bird*, the scene at 00:06:02, where Christine renames herself "Lady Bird," represents self-discovery and defiance. Writing her new name reflects her desire for autonomy, while mythologically, it signifies youthful rebellion against social and parental expectations. Similarly, at 00:02:48, her frustrated expression in response to her mother's words highlights generational tension, a frequent theme in coming-of-age films.

In *The Edge of Seventeen*, the scene at 00:28:49, where Nadine stands alone at a crowded party, visually conveys her social disconnection. While physically present, she remains emotionally distant, symbolizing feelings of isolation and the struggle to fit in. Additionally, at 01:29:09, Nadine's tearful apology to her brother signifies guilt, personal growth, and the importance of repairing relationships, reinforcing the idea that self-awareness is key to emotional maturity.

Table 3 Personality Traits of the Main Characters

Film	Sanguine	Phlegmatic	Choleric	Melancholic	Dominant traits
Lady Bird	17%	0%	48%	37%	Choleric
The Edge of Seventeen	32%	8%	32%	28%	Sanguine - Choleric

The results show that *Lady Bird* has a dominant Choleric personality (48%), marked by assertiveness, ambition, and a strong-willed nature. Her Melancholic personality (37%) is evident in her

introspection and sensitivity, particularly in her relationship with her mother. Her limited Sanguine traits (17%) reflect moments of social energy but do not overpower her strong sense of independence.

In addition, Nadine Franklin presents a combination of Sanguine (32%) and Choleric (32%) traits, indicating emotional intensity and expressive behavior. Her Melancholic tendencies (28%) highlight self-doubt and introspection, while her Phlegmatic traits (8%) suggest occasional passivity in dealing with conflicts.

Discussion

The findings of this study show how semiotic elements and personality qualities influence character development in *Lady Bird* and *The Edge of Seventeen*. According to Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, visual aspects such as clothes, facial expressions, and framing techniques help to create meaning by emphasizing themes of adolescence, identity issues, and emotional maturation. The study reveals that *Lady Bird*'s use of flamboyant dress and defiant expressions represents her Choleric personality, whilst Nadine's gloomy attire and isolated framing visually convey her sad inclinations and social detachment.

The application of Hippocrates-Galenus' personality typology further supports these interpretations. The findings indicate that *Lady Bird* has a dominant Choleric personality (48%), which is characterized by assertiveness, ambition, and emotional intensity, while Nadine presents a blend of Sanguine (32%) and Choleric (32%) traits, highlighting expressiveness but also emotional instability. These results suggest that semiotic and psychological analyses are complementary in understanding character portrayal in films.

The findings of this study align with prior research on semiotics and character analysis in coming-of-age films. Studies such as *Darma* (2020) and *Fahida* (2021) have analyzed how semiotic elements construct deeper meanings in film narratives, emphasizing the role of symbolic imagery in reinforcing character identity and psychological depth. Similarly, Frisnatiara et al. (2023) explored how visual cues in film serve as cultural and emotional markers, resonating with this study's conclusion that costumes, facial expressions, and framing significantly influence audience perception of character psychology.

From a personality perspective, studies like Firjatul et al. (2021) and Ratusanide (2023), which applied Hippocrates-Galenus' personality theory to literary characters, have also found that character traits strongly influence narrative progression. The current study extends this perspective by integrating semiotic analysis with personality psychology, offering a dual-layered approach to film character studies.

While previous research primarily focused on semiotics or personality separately, this study bridges the gap by showing how visual storytelling interacts with psychological representation, providing a more holistic understanding of film characterization.

The study's findings have substantial implications for film studies, semiotics, and personality psychology, specifically in understanding how visual storytelling and character psychology interact in cinematic plots. Using Roland Barthes' theory, this study highlights the significance of clothing, facial expressions, and frame in developing character identification and emotional depth. Furthermore, incorporating Hippocrates-Galenus' personality type into movie analysis establishes a formal framework for studying how personality traits influence character development and narrative progression. These findings can assist filmmakers, screenwriters, and media academics in better understanding how semiotic decisions influence audience perception and interaction. This study improves psychological film analysis by showing how personality traits are visually reinforced through symbolic representations, paving the way for future interdisciplinary research in cinema, psychology, and media studies.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. First, the small sample size, which focuses solely on *Lady Bird* and *The Edge of Seventeen*, limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should look at a broader range of films from different genres and cultural contexts to acquire a more complete grasp of semiotic and psychological representations in cinema. Second, the

interpretative character of semiotic analysis means that meanings can differ based on individual and cultural viewpoints. Conducting audience reception studies could provide more information about how different viewers perceive and interpret semiotic elements in films. Finally, this study employs qualitative methodologies, which, while beneficial for in-depth analysis, lack quantitative validation. Future research could use quantitative methods such as questionnaires, visual tracking studies, or neurocinematic analysis to determine how audiences subconsciously react to semiotic clues and character depictions. Addressing these limitations can improve the validity and usefulness of semiotic and psychological analysis in film studies.

Conclusions

This study examines how semiotic components and personality qualities influence the portrayal of the major characters in *Lady Bird* (2017) and *The Edge of Seventeen* (2016). Using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, the findings show that visual components such as costumes, color, frame, and facial expressions are critical in building character identification and emotional depth. Christine "Lady Bird" McPherson's daring fashion choices, expressive body language, and rebellious manner visually emphasize her Choleric personality, emphasizing her strong-willed and belligerent character. In contrast, Nadine Franklin's dark clothes, isolated framing, and guarded emotions highlight her social troubles and mental turmoil, reflecting her Sanguine-Choleric personality type. These findings indicate how semiotic elements and personality qualities influence character development in coming-of-age films.

This study contributes to film studies, semiotics, and personality psychology by offering a dual-layered approach that integrates visual storytelling with psychological character analysis. The findings suggest that semiotic elements function as symbolic markers that enhance audience perception of character identity and narrative progression. Additionally, the application of Hippocrates-Galenus' personality theory provides a structured framework for understanding how character traits influence interpersonal dynamics and self-discovery in film narratives.

While this study offers useful insights, it has some disadvantages, such as an insufficient number of participants and the interpretive character of semiotic analysis. Future studies might broaden the scope by examining a wider selection of films from various cultures and genres, as well as audience reception studies to investigate how viewers interpret semiotic clues in different ways. Furthermore, including quantitative methods such as surveys, eye-tracking research, or neurocinematic analysis could give empirical support for the effect of visual features on character perception.

In summary, this study emphasizes how semiotics and psychology interact to construct film narratives, emphasizing the importance of visual symbols and character attributes in cinematic storytelling. This study bridges the gap between film semiotics and personality analysis, providing a better understanding of how films construct and express identity, emotion, and personal growth.

References

- Adibulasyhar, M. (2019). *Klasifikasi karakteristik kepribadian manusia berdasarkan tipologi Hippocrates-Galenus menggunakan metode FK-NN* (Master's thesis). Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik.
- Aldi, F. R. (2022). *Representasi maskulinitas dalam film 365 Days (Analisis semiotika Roland Barthes)* (Master's thesis).
- Amalia, I. N. (2022). Analisis kajian psikolinguistik penokohan tokoh utama drama monolog *Anak Nanda* karya Riris Toha Sarumpaet. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Keagamaan I*, 1(1), 7–14.
- Amir Piliang, Y. (2003). *Hipersemiotika: Tafsir culture studies atas matinya makna*. Jalasutra.
- Arsyad, A. (2003). *Media pembelajaran*. PT Raja Grafindo Persada.

- Ashfiasari, S., & Wiyata, M. T. (2021). Analisis semiotika film *The Social Dilemma*. *Noumena: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Keagamaan I*, 2(1), 44–54.
- Atmaja, J., Susanto, T. T., & Rizal, K. (2022). Representasi hero dalam film *Gundala*: Analisis semiotika Roland Barthes. *Jurnal Media Penyiaran*, 2, 1–11.
- Barthes, R. (2004). *Mitologi* (Translation). Kreasi Wacana.
- Bignell, J. (1997). *Media semiotics: An introduction*. Manchester University Press.
- Bungin, B. (2010). *Penelitian kualitatif*. Kencana.
- Danesi, M. (2010). *Pengantar memahami semiotika media*. Jelasurya.
- Darma, S. (2020). Analisis karakter tokoh film *5 Cm* sutradara Rizal Mantovani dengan kajian semiotika. *Proporsi: Jurnal Desain, Multimedia dan Industri Kreatif*, 5(2), 184–197. <https://doi.org/10.22303/proporsi.5.2.2020.184-197>
- Deviana, R. (2022). *Perwatakan tokoh dalam novel Putri Komodo karya Michael Yudha Winarno* (Master's thesis).
- Dewojati, C. (2010). *Drama sejarah, teori, dan penerapannya*. Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Efendi, E., Siregar, I. M., & Harahap, R. R. (2023). Semiotika tanda dan makna. *Da'watuna: Journal of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting*, 4(1), 154–163. <https://doi.org/10.47467/dawatuna.v4i1.3329>
- Sobur, A. (2003). *Semiotika komunikasi*. PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Soegiyono. (2011). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R&D*. Penerbit Alfabeta.
- Sugihastuti, & Suharto. (2013). *Kritik sastra feminis: Teori dan aplikasinya*. Pustaka Belajar.