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**A Semiotic Analysis Of Movie Posters Representing Women
Empowerment**

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to those who have inspired me through their profound themes of loss and transformation, reminding me in the beauty of change and the strength found in nostalgia. Without you, I will never be who I am today.

Lysa

This modest work is dedicated to my beloved mother whose unconditional love and support encouraged me to reach my goals and to get such success and honor.
to my loving family: grandparents , uncles , aunts , cousins , thank you for always standing by me and providing the foundation I needed to persue my dreams .
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Abstract

This present research is intended to examine Ten movie posters depicting various themes of women's empowerment across different genres and historical contexts. Therefore, the present study was an attempt to satisfy two main objectives. As a first one, it aims to explore the symbols, signs, and visual language used to portray empowered women on these posters at the representational, interactional, and compositional levels. Then, as a second objective, the study seeks to unveil the hidden messages and meanings the movie posters communicate about women's empowerment. Through a detailed semiotic analysis guided Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996-2006) "Reading images: The Grammar of Visual Design", these posters reveal how visual elements such as facial expressions, body language, composition, and color are utilized to portray women as figures of strength, resilience, and empowerment. Central placement of female characters, often with determined and confident expressions, emphasizes their narrative importance and invites viewers to connect emotionally with their stories. The use of vibrant colors and symbolic backgrounds further reinforces themes of empowerment, achievement, and defiance of societal norms. By integrating diverse cultural and historical contexts, these posters not only highlight women's contributions but also challenge stereotypes and advocate for gender equality. This study highlights the role of movie posters as powerful tools for visual storytelling, shaping societal perceptions of gender roles and promoting discussions on women's empowerment within the film industry and beyond. Through this analysis, the study provides valuable insights into the ways in which visual media influences attitudes and beliefs about women's capabilities and contributions. Furthermore, in order to assess our thesis, we adopted the qualitative content analysis.

Key terms: Women's Empowerment, Movie Posters, Semiotic Analysis, Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996-2006) "Reading images: The Grammar of Visual Design"

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General Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Nowadays, the representation of women in movie posters has achieved a monumental status that is much different from what it was in times past. What was once a fight for women to attain the right to vote and be able to stand on the same platform as men in educational and occupational pursuits has evolved into a demanding notion that women are to be portrayed in the same way as men in all forms of media. The argument that feminism is aiming for in this context is not that women should be portrayed in a more positive light, but that women should be portrayed equally to men. That is to say that women should not simply be depicted as housewives, sex symbols, or comic relief to men, but that they be given strong roles of leadership, power, intelligence, and sex appeal in the same way that men are constantly conveying these images. A primary mode of media being analyzed here and throughout this dissertation is movie posters. Laura Mulvey (1975) states that in the realm of cinema, women's empowerment isn't just a narrative choice; it's a revolutionary act that challenges societal norms and redefines the landscape of storytelling.

The movies that involve women's empowerment usually have a message and moral values showing how women struggle to gain their freedom from other genders and prove to men that they are not just average individuals who usually do everything without hesitation. This subject can be observed in the movie posters where the signs that are being used can expose the real situation regarding the women's struggle and lead the viewer to have the same idea of what the director wants to portray. Additionally, these movies show various efforts of women to get their freedom and independence from other individuals and their limited assumptions and rules. Movie posters as stated by Chen and Gao (2014), are a form of visual communication designed to make an impression and entice movie goers. They are seen to have a communicative function usually signing or showing complex information for individuals or readers to identify, hence they can find the information easily. Movie posters are also considered to have a very

significant semiotic domain with the existence of signs which are full of mental concepts, cultural, and social.

Semiotics was officially introduced into philosophy by John Locke (1632-1604) in his essay entitled: ‘Concerning Human Understanding’. However, it became later a discipline on its own and emerged almost at the same time in Europe thanks to Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913) and across the Atlantic and America, thanks to Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Broadly speaking, according to Umberto Eco; semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign, the latter may be a word, an image, a flavor, a sound, a light, an object, etc.

Some previous works as ‘The semiotic analysis of women’s representation in the animated Disney film *Raya and the last dragon*’ (Wardah & Kusuma, 2022) and ‘The semiotic analysis of Barbie movie posters (Anggrahen et al., 2023) had commonly examined the representation of gender empowerment in visual media. These studies worked on the ways in which movies and posters feature female protagonists and promote themes about women’s empowerment. However; most of these previous studies didn’t shed light on intersectionality.

While the main focus of both mentioned works is women’s representation, they did not fully examine the various contexts in which these symbols are understood and interpreted. These two studies also didn’t vary their subject analysis (limited to only one movie poster for each), and this led to the incomplete capture of the several perspectives that these movie posters convey and the explicit angles which they are based on. Given this gap, the present study is an attempt to examine 10 movies posters from a Semiotic perspective at different levels.

Aims and Significance of the study

The of this dissertation is to examine how movie posters visually construct and communicate messages about women’s empowerment. More specifically, it aims to explore the symbols, signs, and visual language used to portray empowered women on these posters at the representational, interactional, and compositional levels. Then, as a second objective, the study

seeks to unveil the hidden messages and meanings the movie posters communicate about women's empowerment.

This research highlights the significance of analyzing movie posters depicting women's empowerment. By examining how visual media shape societal perceptions of gender roles, it encourages viewers to critically engage with the messages conveyed through these posters. This study aims to foster awareness and discussion about women's empowerment in popular culture, promoting a deeper understanding of its portrayal and impact in broader societal contexts. Moreover, it contributes to ongoing conversations about the representation of gender in media, advocating for more inclusive and accurate depictions that empower and resonate with diverse audiences

Research Questions

To reach the study objectives, the following research questions are advanced:

Q1: How are women visually represented in movie posters through semiotic analysis ?

Q2: what messages and meanings do movie posters communicate about women empowerment ?

Methodology

The study consists in an analysis of the movie posters. The study is, therefore, a corpus-based analysis of the posters to reveal the symbols, signs, and visual language used to portray empowered women on these posters at the representational, interactional, and compositional levels. The analysis is guided by Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996-2006) "Reading images: The Grammar of Visual Design. The findings are interpreted according to a Qualitative Content Analysis and namely the Latent Approach.

Structure of the Dissertation

The present study is carried out following the traditional simple model. Therefore, it encompasses a General Introduction followed by four chapters and a General Conclusion. The

General Introduction contains the Statement of the Problem, Aims and Significance of the Study, Research Questions, Research Methodology, and the Structure of the Dissertation. The first chapter entitled 'Review of the Literature' a presentation of the results is provided. The second chapter entitled 'Research Methodology' hands over a detailed Description of the Corpus, the Rational, along with the limitations of the study and the Data Analysis Procedures. The third chapter is devoted to 'Representation of the Findings' where the results and the findings of the research are presented in accordance to the chosen theoretical framework. The last chapter entitled 'Discussion of the Findings' enables to discuss and interpret the main results obtained throughout the analysis of the interview. To conclude, a General Conclusion is established. It holds an introductory restatement of the aims of the study, research questions the findings and the methodology.

Chapter One
Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the foundational concepts critical to our research topic. It is structured into five primary sections. Section one delves into movie posters, examining their significance and evolution, types, and characteristics. Section two deals with women's empowerment, its dimensions, and representation in movies. The third section reviews some previous studies conducted on the same issue. The fourth section discusses the evolution and foundations of Semiotics along with social Semiotics. The fifth and last chapter deals with the theoretical framework of Kress and Leeuwen's Reading Images (1996, 2006)

1. Movie Posters

1.1 The Evolution and Significance of Movie Posters

Movie posters are a form of visual communication, they are designed to make an impression and entice movie goers. Nowadays, as the aesthetic and collection value are being paid more attention to, the study concerning how to give comprehensive analyses of movie posters is significant. However, up to the present, analyses of movie posters concentrate either on text only, or on aesthetic design, but very few analyses of movie posters are conducted to study the meaning-makings of all major modalities and of semiotic tools simultaneously. (Chen and Gao, 2014).

The birth of movie posters takes us back to the 1890's, French artist Jules Chert pioneered the use of lithography to create vibrant, multi-colored prints. Those earlier incarnation of movie posters were mostly functional with the sole purpose of announcing the time and place of the movie. Moreover, it didn't take long for filmmakers to realize the powerful role of these posters play in attracting audiences They began to prioritize video art and artistic designs, which marked the beginning of film art as we know it today. This effective blend of practicality and artistry laid the groundwork for movie posters to evolve into the attractive collectibles they are today.

During the Golden Age of cinema, from 1930's to the 1950's, movie posters featured the bright and colorful performances of Hollywood's biggest stars. Among the famous poster biggest stars of the time, we have: Drew Struzan, Saul Bass ,and Reynold Brown who worked in the studio to create dramatic images. Luckily, these beautiful hand-painted posters have become the studio's main marketing tool, they showed the joy and the pleasure of the movie experience. In addition, this incredible production had not only reflected the glitz of Hollywood, but expanded the emotional breadth of the film, they helped elevate the film to an unparalleled level in the entertainment industry.

1.2 Types of Movie Posters

There are seven main types of movie posters:

1.2.1 Teaser Posters

Teaser posters may incorporate the following features: displaying only a symbol linked with the film or title, adding the text 'Coming Soon' to an international version of the poster, no or few film credits and the primary character is looking away or towards something in the distance. This sort of poster is commonly used for high-budget films or franchises, whereas smaller budget films frequently keep to a single poster.

1.2.2 Main or Final posters

A main or final poster is the last poster created for a film. This style of movie posters typically follows a teaser poster and have more information than that poster. Main posters incorporate information such as : film actor names, movie taglines, production staff information, and distribution details. Some studios produce multiple styles of major posters, however; this is determined by the film's budget ad marketability.

1.2.3 Character Posters

Chris Evans' ad contains a picture of him as his character with the tagline 'Chris Evans is the Trust Fund Playboy'. This poster depicts his character's appearance and involvement in the film. Many studios use character posters to target an actor's fan base, this is especially true for huge series like: Marvel's Cinematic Universe. Also, in the case of Knives Out, Chris Evans' character is an excellent approach to promote the film due to his big fan base and general notoriety.

1.2.4 Color Driven Action-Thriller Posters:

Colors play an important role in movie poster designs. Using the proper color scheme might result in an eye-catching poster that also matches the atmosphere of the film. Many action and thriller films employ three primary colors on their posters: blue, orange, and red ; these three hues appear in various posters from this genre, and studios prefer this palette since it complements the film's subject. On a scientific level, the color blue is opposite to the color orange. According to color theory, blue and orange are complementary colors appealing to the human eye and making an image.

1.2.5 Couple Leaning Against Each Other Posters

Movie studios often use this type of posters to introduce the main characters of the film's main couple. If two big movie stars are playing the couple, the studios use this leaning

pose to attract audiences. This pose increases the feeling of a light, funny film. It's very common for them to use this poster as a clue about the plot of their films.

1.2.6 Large Text on Faces Posters

These posters often feature the character's face with large text placed above or below their face. The text is either the name of the film or the title which convey charged emotions and the film's mood. Furthermore, the characters on the posters often look sad, angry, and pained; showing a character's emotions is a great way for the audience to sympathize and identify with the character.

1.2.7 Award Review Posters

Film posters that prominently display positive reviews and awards received by the film are award review posters. They are designed to give audiences a taste of critical acclaim and anticipation. In order to highlight the achievements and quality of the film, these posters are often accompanied by quotes from respected critics or publications. Award review posters serve as a way to validate the film's excellence and persuade viewers to watch it; in the marketing of a film, they can be an important tool to generate interest and attract viewers.

1.3 Characteristics of Movie Posters

The movie posters have a number of characteristics that make them visually attractive and effective in bringing attention to themselves:

1.3.1 Eye-Catching Imagery

Movie posters often feature captivating visuals that draw viewers in and pique their interest. This may be the striking works of art, captivating photographs or iconographic scenes in a film.

1.3.2 Title and Tagline

The title of the film is very prominent on a movie poster, frequently accompanied by an appealing phrase that lets viewers see what's going on in the story.

1.3.3 Cast and Crew Information

The names and images of the main actors, as well as members of the production team such as a director or a producer, may be included on movie posters. This helps the audience to recognize familiar faces and creates a sense of excitement for the film.

1.3.4 Genre Indication

Visual clues such as: color schemes, images, or text are often used to convey a film's genre on posters. This will help potential viewers to understand the type of movie they are going to see as quickly as possible. Also, depending on the text or the use of banners, movie posters usually contain information about the release date.

1.3.5 Visual Hierarchy

Effective film posters use visual hierarchy to guide the viewer's attention. The most important elements are usually larger or more prominent than the secondary ones, such as a title or a key image.

1.3.6 Mood and Tone

Movie posters convey the mood and tone of the film through their design choices. Color schemes, typography or overall visual style can be used for this purpose.

2. Women Empowerment

2.1 Dimensions of Women Empowerment

According to Furman (1991) women empowerment has five critical components:

- ✓ **Sense of Self-Worth:** Empowerment begins with women recognizing and valuing their own worth and capabilities. This includes developing a strong sense of identity, self-esteem, and confidence.
- ✓ **Access to Opportunities and Resources:** Empowerment means ensuring women have equal access to education, employment, healthcare, and financial resources. This access allows them to improve their living conditions and participate fully in society.

- ✓ **Power to Control Their Own Lives:** Empowerment involves giving women the autonomy to make decisions that affect their lives. This includes the ability to make choices about their bodies, relationships, careers, and personal goals, both within the household and in the broader community.
- ✓ **Ability to Challenge and Combat Oppression:** Empowerment should enable women to recognize and confront the systemic barriers and societal norms that perpetuate their oppression. This includes advocating for their rights, challenging discriminatory practices, and striving for legal and policy reforms that promote gender equality.
- ✓ **Marginal Improvement of Material Circumstances:** While true empowerment involves significant changes in power dynamics, in practice, efforts often focus on making incremental improvements in women's material conditions. This might include providing microloans, vocational training, or access to reproductive health services, which can lead to better economic and social outcomes for women.

Based on these components it is evident that women's empowerment is a multi-dimensional process. It not only aims at improving material conditions but also seeks to transform power relations and societal structures that hinder women's full participation and equality.

2.2 Women's Representation in Movies

The portrayal of female figures in film and television has evolved over time as problems in female representation have been uncovered. In other words, females are frequently misrepresented in the media, and as a result, film and television audiences begin to view females as their stereotypes in real life. Ultimately, women bear the brunt of these misrepresentations since their stereotypes can be dehumanizing and identity-altering. Unfortunately, many industrial practices continue to keep these misconceptions alive. Similar to how an incorrect-stereotypical portrayal of women might distort the image of female-gendered individuals, an accurate portrayal of women can lead to favorable interpretations. Studies have shown that

accurately expressing gender and race correlates with positive behavior and engagement. Moreover, one study focused on the importance of positively representing women in movies and they wrote: ‘...the characters that run counter to the stereotypical portrayals in entertainment media can evoke strong relationships with the audience,’ (Hoewe and Sherrill, p.28). They conclude that female characters who play lead roles and break preconceptions do a good job of connecting with their audience.

This demonstrates how significant and vital accurate images of girls can be as long as the media continues to present them positively. When accurate depictions arise, people who have suffered as a result of the male gaze and racism can finally relate to a character and see themselves behind the camera. Mis portrayals, as Hook described, can be extremely damaging to one’s self-image and confidence, thus these accurate depictions are critical steps toward a more thorough, accepting, and self-accountable industry. Furthermore, it is critical to support and advocate for good representations and inclusive media. This will not only challenge the established quo in the film and television industries, but will also urge viewers and customers to embrace inclusive habits. As previously said, the portrayal of women has a direct impact on how people see and treat women in real life, both negatively and positively. Dismantling the ideals on femininity requires a collaborative effort, therefore be accountable. Consumers should investigate, advocate, and support accurate depictions of women.

It is critical to be a voice for those who have none. By encouraging and recognizing positive female portrayals in films. In addition, the film and television industries’ standards will gradually change to listen to their audiences, and females will finally have characters with whom they can truly connect. As misconceptions about women crumble, the actual fluidity of femininity will emerge. As a result, media that accurately depicts the truth is created.

Going back to way before women acceptance in this kind of field, according to Kurtz (1997), women appear as different embodiments: The homemaker, the sex kitten and the

independent women. The Homemaker is the queen of the domestic sphere. In the early years of the Industrial Revolution, she symbolized tradition. The independent woman first appeared at the turn of the century and became a dominant figure in the 1990's. Each culture has a set of general beliefs about what constitutes femininity and beauty. According to Wood (1999), to be feminine in the United States is to be attractive, deferential, unaggressive, emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships. Moreover, for Hofstede (1999), in Confucian cultures, femininity is associated with virtue and modesty.

3. Previous Studies of Movie Posters

In diving into the semiotic components of the movie posters' analysis representing women empowerment, it is vital to put in perspective this work within an encompassing setting of movie posters research. Prior studies have afforded significant revelations for the aspirations and the content of movie posters of empowered women.

One of the previous works is the semiotic analysis of the Barbie movie poster done by Anggraheni et al., (2023). Their work offers a qualitative semiotic analysis of the poster investigating the numerous semiotic aspects in it based on fundamental theories such as Saussure's sign theory. Moreover, they highlighted the importance of visual and verbal clues in transmitting narratives and evoking audience involvement providing insightful information on the complex semiotic methods used in movie marketing. Besides, their analysis illuminates cultural messages and exemplifies how theoretical frameworks can peel back layers of meaning in visual communication to show the gender issue.

Wardah and Kusuma worked on a semiotic analysis of women's representation in the animated Disney film *Raya and The Last Dragon* (2022). Their study is mainly about the stereotypes inherent in society that women are vulnerable, inferior, and frequently depend on men. This is similar to what is shown by the media, including films where the plot often discredits women in the public sphere. But Disney is trying to change that and this animated

film is the biggest example. Furthermore, this research was descriptive qualitative with the use of different theories, mainly the one by Ronald Barthes. On top of that, the sample of this research were scenes that represented women characterized by trust in women as leaders, emphasizing friendship not romance, the appearance of a formidable kingdom and brave women warriors. Lastly, this study shows that women are as strong, dominant and independent, and they are no longer oppressed by patriarchal culture. The traditional gender concept is being gradually forgotten.

Another prior research was done by Dehchenari and Abdullah (2014) who adopted a social semiotic analytical framework, to examine the shift in women's representation in 30 movie posters between 1930 to 2012. In addition, this study examined the visual representation of women and investigated gender bias in titles and taglines to show the shift which occurred across three eras of Hollywood. This work resulted in the emergence of a few thoughts about the possibility of changes of weak and dependent women to strong and independent.

Further research was conducted by Memon (2014) aims to reveal Gender bias in movie posters through the lens of Spatial Agency Bias. Moreover, research has shown that women are perceived as having less agency than men and numerous studies have found portrayals of gender inequality in different aspects of media, including movie posters. So, this study attempted to examine the top 250 grossing movie posters of all time in the US to determine if there are differences in portrayed agency based on one's gender in movie posters. The study found that women are portrayed in positions of less agency compared to men in movie posters; there was gender inequality in various contexts through the unfavorable stereotyping of women relative to men in their perceived levels of agency.

4. Semiotics

4.1 The Evolution and Foundations of Semiotics

The origins of semiotics date back to the Greek antiquity (from 1867-1868) from the work of the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. He stated that semiotics is the other name attributed to logic (Peirce, 1978, p.58). Thus, semiotics is the study of signs and their meaning. Yakin (as cited in Sudjiman and Zoest, 1996) argued that the semiotics word humbled its origins from Greek language 'Sèmeion' meaning sign. Whereas Endaswara (2013) defined semiotics as the study of how to signify things.

Moreover, the notion of the sign emerged in the 20th century, in both traditions : the European tradition, with Saussure who used the term 'Semiology', and the Anglo-Saxon tradition, with Pierce who used the term 'Semiotics'. According to Klinkenberg (1996), the two founding fathers agreed on attributing the two terms, semiology and semiotics to the science of signs and admitted that signs work like a formal system as well.

Additionally speaking, the coinage of the term semiotics dates back to the founding father of Western medical science; Hippocrates (460-377 B.C). Hippocrates' main concern was to associate a sign (in this case s symptom) to the disease it refers to. For example, a sore throat may stand for a cold. In other words, semiotics at that time was regarded as medical diagnosis.

4.2 Social Semiotics

Social semiotics originates from the work of Michael Halliday's systematic functional linguistic (1978). He points out a number of key features which are related to language which are according to him: 'the grammar of language is not a code, not a set of rules for producing correct sentences, but a source for making meaning' (Halliday, 1978: 192). This means that language and society are interrelated and that language is a meaning making resource used by individuals to communicate meaning in a given social context. Therefore, social semiotics basically deals with the study of meaning within society. In this respect, Hodge and Kress 1988:

261 state that: ‘the social semiotics is primarily concerned with human semiotics as an inherently social phenomenon in its source, function, context and effects’. So, according to this view, the semiotic systems do not deal with fixed meanings in isolation, but with meaning in the social context.

5. Theoretical Framework

Kress and Leeuwen’s Reading images: The Grammar of Visual Design

Kress and Leeuwen are concerned with the way various modes of expression are joined together to form a meaningful whole in visuals and how these visuals are interpreted and understood by the viewers. In this regard, Kress and Leeuwen introduced three different though complementary patterns in order to comprehend the meaning conveyed by the visual components. they are patterns of representation, interaction, and composition .

5.1 Patterns of Representation

Patterns of representation refer to the participants (people, things, and places) that constitute the visual composition and the relation between the participants and the viewers. Kress and Leeuwen identify two kinds of representation: narrative and conceptual.

5.1.1 Narrative Representation

According to Kress and Leeuwen (2006:76) Images involve an active interaction between the represented participants. this interaction is specified by the presence of a vector (a diagonal or oblique line with (an) arrow(s)). The latter refers to actions and lines of emotions . The participant that creates a vector is called “actor” and the received one as a “goal”.

5.2.2 Conceptual processes

This process is not dynamic since the vector is absent in the visual and the participants are not active. Therefore, it is the state rather than the focus that is important in

conceptual process.

5.2 Patterns of Interaction

Patterns of interactions cover the way relationships between the represented participants along with the interactive ones are made. these relationships, according to Kress and Leeuwen are achieved thanks to three semiotics resources consisting in gaze , social distance , and angle of interaction. Kress and Van Leeuwan (2006).

Figure 1

Interactive meanings in images

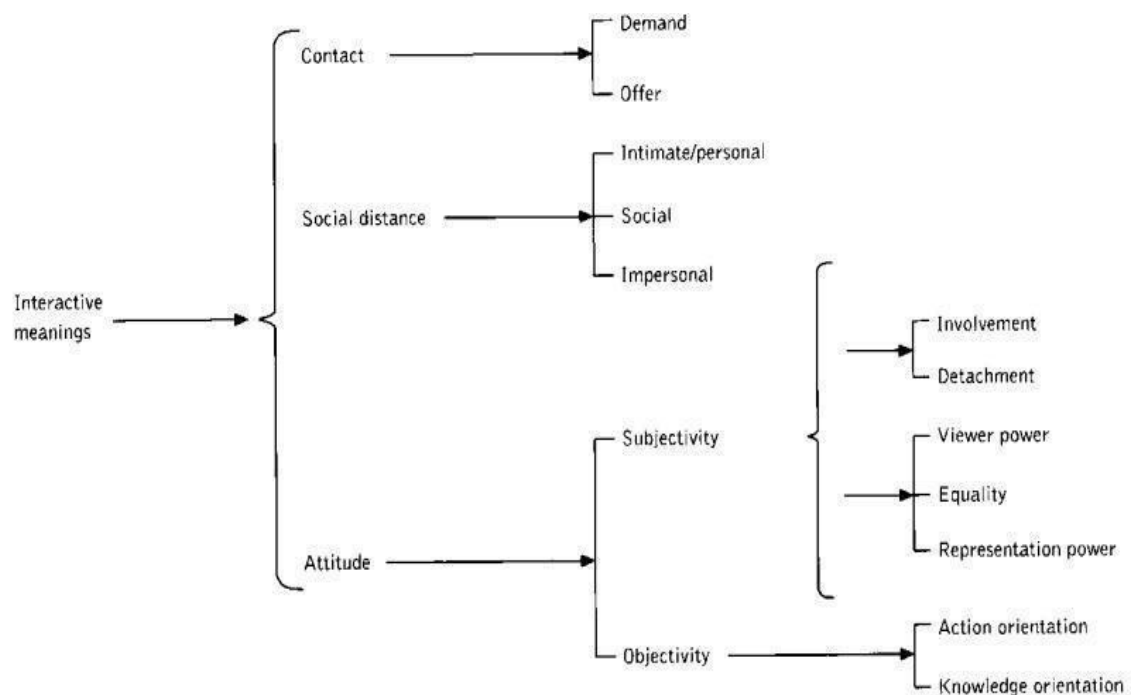


Fig 4.23 Interactive meanings in images

5.2.1 Gaze

Gaze is an important constituent in the interpretation of a visual because it reflects the interaction between the viewer and the participant. It is divided into two types of images:

5.2.1.1 Demand images

The participants have eye contact with the viewers. Kress and Leeuwen stated that the demanding image “constitutes an image-act”. it creates direct contact with the viewers by asking them to react to the visual

5.2.1.2 Offer images

The participants do not direct their gaze towards viewer. Kress and Leeuwen claim that offer image “offers the represented participants to the viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation, impersonally, as though they were specimens in a display case”. That is to say, offering images do not incite the viewers to react, they are only exposing information.

5.2.1.3 Social Distance

Social distance is transcribed, according to Kress and Leeuwen, in terms of “the size of the frame” which can be close up , medium , and long shot . the visuals create a social distance between the viewers and the represented participants that can be portrayed close or far depending on the image makers intention (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006: 124-126) to help classify these distances, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) adopt a schema from Edward

5.2.1.4 Angle of Interaction

The angle of interaction consists in the position from which the participants are portrayed in the visuals. Kress and Leeuwen point out two types of angles: horizontal and vertical.

a. Horizontal Angle

Kress and Leeuwen indicate that the viewers may see the participants from a frontal or

oblique point of view referring to the attachment or detachment of the viewers and the imageproducer regarding the visual participants. Kress and Leeuwen state: “the frontal angle says, as it were, ‘what you see here is part of our world, something we are involved with.’

The oblique angle says ‘what you see here is not part of our world; it is their world, something we are not involved with.’”(ibid, 136).

b. Vertical Angle

Kress and Leeuwen specify that when the viewers observe the represented participants from a high vertical angle; the viewers have power over the participants. When the participants are viewed from a low vertical angle by the viewers, the participants have power over the viewers. When the represented participants are at an ‘eye-level’ with the viewers; they are equal

5.3 Patterns of Composition

The patterns of composition are related to “the way in which representations and communicative acts before cohere into the kind of meaningful whole we call ‘text’” (Kress & Leeuwen 1996: 181). In other words, it is the way the representational and interactive patterns of the image are connected and compose a meaningful visual. These patterns of composition are realized by three interrelated systems: information value, salience and framing.

Figure 2

The Meaning of Composition

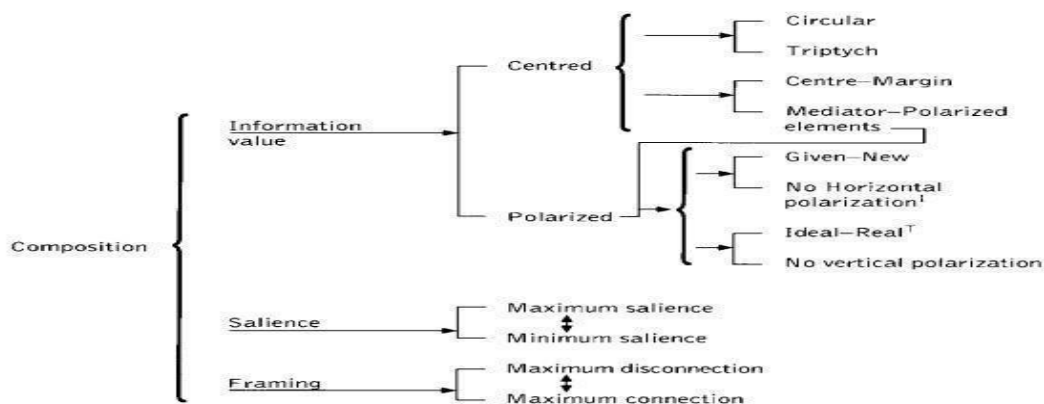


Fig 6.21 The meaning of composition

5.3.1 Information value

Kress and van Leeuwen define information value as ‘the place of elements (participants and syntagms that relate them to each other and to the viewer) endows them with the specific informational values attached to the various ‘zones’ of the image: left and right, top and bottom, centre, and margin.

5.3.2 Information Value of Left and Right

Kress and Leeuwen claim that the constituents positioned in the left are presented as ‘given and the elements placed on the right as ‘new’. (Kress & Leeuwen 2006: 179-185). In other words, the left side represents information that is assumed to be commonly known, whereas, the right side portrays the new information, something unknown that aims at attracting the viewers’ attention.

5.3.3 Information Value of Top and Bottom

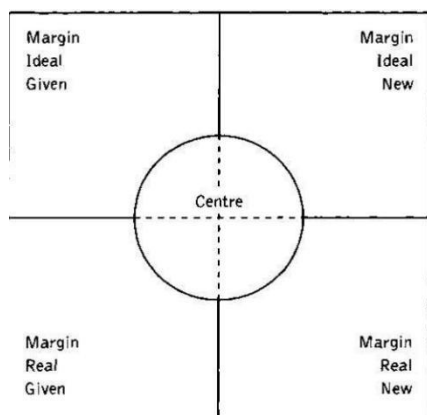
The information placed on the top of a visual are ‘ideal’ which which designates the main components of the visual having the ‘lead role’. On the other hand, the elements positioned at the bottom are ‘real’ portraying the details or practical information having a ‘secondary role’.

Information Value of Centre and Margin

When an element is put in the middle of the visual, it is called a ‘centre’ .It conveys the principle information and the surrounding elements are called ‘margins’. The centre takes more place in the visual to portray prominence.

Figure 3

Information Value of Centre and Margin



5.3.4 Saliency

Saliency, according to Kress and Leeuwen is viewed as “The elements (participants as well as representational and interactive syntagms) are made to attract the viewer’s attention to different degrees, as realized by such factors as placement in the foreground or background, relative size, contrasts in tonal value (or color), differences in sharpness, etc.” To word it differently, saliency is to emphasize some constituents composing a visual and making them captivating in order to attract the viewers’ attention.

5.3.5 Framing

Framing is the way the compositional elements of a visual are linked or detached from each other. Kress and Leeuwen viewed that the connection of these elements is “the degree to which an element is visually joined to another element, through the absence of framing devices, through vectors and through continuities or similarities of color visual shape, etc. which stands for ‘individuality and differentiation’. Whilst, the disconnection is the degree to which an element is visually separated from other elements through frame lines, pictorial framing devices, empty space between elements, discontinuities of color and shape, and other features” (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006, p. 210).

Conclusion

In sum, this chapter has reviewed the literature associated with the subject under investigation mainly analyzing semiotically movie posters representing women's empowerment. It is structured into five primary sections. Section one delved into movie posters, examining their significance and evolution, types, and characteristics. Section two dealt with women's empowerment, its dimensions, and representation in movies. The third section reviewed some previous studies conducted on the same issue. The fourth section discussed the evolution and foundations of Semiotics along with social Semiotics. The fifth and last chapter dealt with the theoretical framework of Kress and Leeuwen's Reading Images (1996, 2006)

Chapter Two

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology of the current study, which involves conducting a Semiotic Analysis of ten movie posters. The chapter is composed of three main sections. The first section presents the corpus of the study and provided a detailed explanation of the rationale behind selecting the Ten Movie posters in particular. The second section, describes the limitations faced during the collection of the corpus. The third section, accounts for the data analysis procedure, namely Qualitative Content Analysis (Latent Approach), as the most suitable approach for the interpretation of our corpus.

2.1 Corpus and Rational

The corpus of the present study comprises 20 movie posters depicting various themes of women's empowerment across different genres and historical contexts. However, after a close examination the researchers decided to opt for 10 movie posters to represent the sample of the study which are:

1. North Country
2. Not Without My Daughter
3. Legally Blonde
4. Iron Lady
5. A League of Their Own
6. The Help
7. The Breadwinner
8. The Color Purple
9. Little Women
10. Hidden Figures

For any detail about the other 10 movie posters check Appendix A.

The abovementioned movie posters are chosen as the data for the research for the following reasons. Firstly, the movies shown by these posters are very popular, so the visual elements analyzed are easy to recognize and relevant to many people. Each poster clearly shows the main idea and theme of the movie, which helps in analyzing how women's empowerment is depicted through semiotic elements. Secondly, the movie posters are chosen to demonstrate specific aspects relevant to the framework, so these posters have distinct features that need to be explained. Moreover, the different genres and contexts of the movies—from historical dramas to biographical films and sports stories—provide a broad view of how different types of movies show empowered women. This variety helps us understand the cultural and social factors that influence these depictions. Additionally, the popularity and positive reviews of these movies suggest that their posters have had a big impact on how the public views them. This makes them valuable for studying how visual media can shape society's attitudes towards gender roles and empowerment.

2.2 Limitations

The researchers have encountered certain challenges that impose two primary limitations on its scope. Firstly, due to time constraints, a comprehensive analysis of all 20 posters was not possible within the scope of this study. Additionally, in the initial phase of the research proposal, there was a plan to conduct online interviews with individuals to gather diverse interpretations and perceptions of the movie posters. However, for the same aforementioned reason, the researches decided to eliminate the interview as a second tool of data collection. These interviews would have provided deeper insights into how different audiences perceive and interpret the visual messages of the posters, enriching the study with broader perspectives.

2.3 Data Analysis Procedure

2.3.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data, allowing researchers to identify patterns, themes, and meanings within the visual content (Schreier, 2012). This approach is particularly well-suited for analyzing visual media, as it enables the detailed examination of visual elements and their symbolic meanings (Krippendorff, 2018).

Within this method, two primary approaches are often employed (Braun and Clarke, 2006); semantic and latent. These approaches differ in their focus and interpretation of the data, with semantic analysis emphasizing surface-level meanings and latent analysis delving into underlying themes and concepts. Henceforth, for the interpretation of the data, the latent approach was opted for. The latent approach focuses on identifying underlying meanings and themes that are not immediately apparent but are embedded within the content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method allows for a deeper understanding of the implicit messages conveyed by the visual elements in the movie posters, providing insights into how they communicate themes of women's empowerment.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methodology adopted to examine the movie posters. It has presented the corpus of the study, a detailed explanation of the rationale behind selecting the ten movie posters in particular, and the limitations faced during the collection of the corpus. It has also described both the corpus of the study and the procedures of data collection. The third section provided the explanations for the data analysis procedures through the application of the Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), namely the latent approach as the most suitable approach for the interpretation of our corpus.

brief biography of both the interviewer and the interviewee and a short description of the TV show. The fifth and last section, has accounted for the procedures of data analysis namely the Qualitative Content Analysis, Framing, Conceptual Blending and Simpson

Chapter Three

Presentation of the Findings

Introduction

This empirical chapter is devoted to the analysis of the movie posters from a semiotic perspective. The chapter is comprised of one main section which presents the findings of the semiotic analysis on their main levels, namely presentational, interactional and compositional.

3 Results

3.1 North Country Movie Poster Analysis

3.1.1 At the Representational Level

The poster depicts a woman (Charlize Theron) prominently featured in the foreground her serious expression and direct gaze shows determination and resilience. In the background, there are multiple figures, likely representing the community or the workers in the context of the movie. The image hints at a story of struggle and triumph. The text “All she wanted was to make a living. Instead she made history.” Indicates a narrative of overcoming adversity and achieving something significant.

3.1.2 At the Interactional Level

It is a demand image since the gaze of the main participant portrayed is in direct contact with the viewers asking them for action. By using a very close shot and frontal angle, the represented participant is captured at an intimate distance portraying the protagonist face. This type of angles designates the implication of the image producer and the viewers.

3.1.3 At the Compositional Level

Salience is given to the main actress who is foregrounded and practically occupies the entire poster space. The title of the movie is also a salient component as it is written in a big font size. In terms of information value, the linguistic details are placed in the lower center of the poster representing the names of the actors, a mention of the movie director previous work “Whale Rider” are all margins. The sentence “All she wanted was to make a Living, instead

she made history” is positioned at the top of the bottom which showcases an important information about the plot of the movie.

3.2 Not Without My Daughter Movie Poster Analysis

3.2.1 At the Representational Level

The poster represents a woman holding her child indicating a protective and determined relationship. In the background, there is a woman running, symbolizing escape or pursuit. The title written in yellow at the right side of the poster in bold with the emphasis on the word “daughter” suggests a story of a mother’s determination to protect and stay with her child.

3.2.1 At the Compositional Level

The woman and the child are looking directly at the viewer, creating a demand image inviting the viewer to engage emotionally with the audience. Their expressions convey fear and determination. By using a very close shot and a frontal angle. the represented participants are captured at an intimate distance emphasizing the personal stakes and emotional intensity. the medium shot of the running figure adds to the narrative’s urgency.

3.2.2 At the Compositional Level

The title is placed prominently at the top eight in large bold letters drawing attention. The woman and child are the most salient features due to their size, central position, and contrasting colors. their intense expressions and the bold title further attract the viewer’s attention. The characters are framed together, emphasizing their bond and main conflict of staying together. the running figure in the background is framed by the street and surrounding scenes, adding depth and context to the narrative.

3.3 Legally Blonde Movie Poster Analysis

3.3.1 At the Representational Level

Elle Woods played by Reese Witherspoon is the central and dominant figure in the poster. She draws the viewer's attention immediately. Moreover, we can see secondary elements like her Chihuahua dog Bruiser. Elle is shown with a confident and dynamic pose which indicates movement and action. Adding to this, her smile and aura are giving confidence and determination vibes. Elle's pink dress and fashionable accessories suggest her lifestyle and personality. Furthermore, the books that she carries with her and the law school setting perhaps hint at the plot enhancing her role as a law student. The background of the poster is a university campus with students. The brightness of the back evokes a positive and upbeat tone. In addition, the use of the pink color particularly is a symbol of Elle's personality (cheerful, funny, extrovert, feminine, ...). Also, the movie title 'Legally Blonde' is written in bold uppercase letters in a bright pink color which is associated with playfulness and style, it is placed at the top center of the poster making it impossible to not notice. Besides, the tagline 'This summer go blonde' is placed directly below the title in a smaller noticeable yellow font, adding an inviting urge to the message. On top of that, the actors' names are written in the top bottom of the poster in thin uppercase letters in a blue color.

3.3.2 At the Interactional Level

Elle Woods (Reese Witherspoon) smiles and looks directly at the viewer. This direct stare establishes rapport with the audience, confident and engaging. Besides, it draws the observer into her world, creating a sense of contact and involvement. Moreover, she is depicted in a full-body image, creating a formal and visible social distance. Additionally, this type of distance is common in movie posters because it allows spectators to see the

character's whole clothing and location, giving context to her part and personality. Also, the other characters in the background are shown at a farther distance and less detailed which places them in a secondary, less significant role in the viewer's immediate interaction with the poster. Furthermore, Elle is depicted in the poster at eye level, making her the same height as the viewer. This angle emphasizes equality and relatability, making Elle appear like someone the spectator can relate to or want to or like. On top of that, the poster is extremely realistic, with clear, brilliant colors and vivid artwork. This high modality increases the plausibility of Elle's universe, making the setting and characters more realistic and accessible. In addition, Elle is positioned centrally in the poster, making her the focus point. This center placement emphasizes her prominence and directs the viewer's attention to her. Finally, the detailed background provides context, but the primary interaction is with Elle in the foreground, highlighting her as the key subject of the viewer's focus.

3.3.3 At the Compositional Level

In the 'Legally Blond' movie poster, we see Elle Woods, played by Reese Witherspoon, centrally positioned, often with a bright and confident expression, dressed in pink; background elements, like Harvard Law School, frame her journey and ambition. Besides, Elle's placement on the right side suggests she is the new, exciting focus. Moreover, her being at the top and center highlights her aspirational qualities, while the title and credits at the bottom provide real, practical information. In addition, Elle's bright pink attire and confident posture make her the most salient element. Furthermore, the clean background or inclusion of Harvard imagery links her character to the movie's setting and themes of ambition and transformation.

3.4 Iron Lady Movie Poster Analysis

3.4.1 At a Representational Level

The poster's main image features Meryl Streep in the role of Margaret Thatcher who

is looking directly at the audience creating rapport and project authority. Thatcher's gaze is directed towards something or someone, which could imply contemplation or involvement in political events. Moreover, Thatcher's face is depicted in great detail, emphasizing traits like her determined look which may point to a thorough examination of her personality and character. Besides, her expression is firm and resolute displaying fortitude and might which may categorize her as a particular kind of leader. In addition, her clothes are formal (royal blue) accented with a jacket and pearls to represent her own style and political position. Furthermore, her political background is reinforced by this stylized depiction of the British Parliament. Adding to this, things like the Union Jack, political icons, and Thatcher's go-to outfit and hair style serve all to reinforce her identity (her blue suit represents men). Also, Thatcher's positioning in the center and being emphasized by contrasts in color and light in a close-up shot is probably the most noticeable element. In addition, the title 'The Iron Lady' is written in a greyish bold white at the top center in uppercase letters emphasizing her nickname and public persona, and just on top of it, the actress's name written in the same way, yet thinner than the title.

Finally, we can see some information written in thin black upper case letters located in the top bottom and a phrase on the center 'Never Compromise' written in white which may highlight her political philosophy.

3.4.2 At an Interactional Level

Meryl Streep portraying Margaret Thatcher is staring directly at the viewer; this direct demanding gaze establishes a powerful, confrontational interaction making the viewer feel engaged and possibly challenged. On top of that, this close-up of Thatcher's face emphasizes her emotions and character. Moreover, the image is taken at a slightly low angle. Adding to this, this dominant perspective enhances Thatcher's authoritative presence making her appear strong and commanding. Besides, the colors are somehow vibrant in a mysterious way and the image is highly detailed. Lastly, every little thing on

the poster had increased the lifelike quality of the image, making Thatcher's portrayal more compelling and realistic.

3.4.3 At the Compositional Level

Meryl Streep as Margaret Thatcher is placed centrally, indicating her paramount importance in the poster. Her face is likely the focal point, emphasizing her identity and character. Furthermore, the title 'The Iron Lady' which is placed at the top, representing the aspirational or iconic nature of Thatcher's persona. At the bottom, practical information such as the release date, credits and taglines are found grounding the poster in concrete details about the film. Besides this, Thatcher's image is likely highlighted with strong contrasts and colors making it stand out against a more subdued background. In addition, her face or figure is prominently sized to dominate the composition. Thatcher's features are rendered in sharp details drawing the viewer's focus. As we notice, there are additional elements eg: British flag, political symbols, integrated into the background connected to Thatcher's image without overshadowing it.

On top of that, there is a minimal use of borders and frames around Thatcher's image that suggests a seamless connection between her and the elements around her indicating her integration into the political and cultural context. At last, the use of realistic colors and high details in Thatcher's portrayal, enhances the authenticity of the image making it more credible, and the background elements were kept slightly less detailed keeping the focus on Thatcher while providing necessary context.

3.5 A League of Their Own Movie Poster Analysis

3.5.1 At the Representational Level

This image depicts a diverse group of women in baseball uniforms with two main women in the center wearing red and blue baseball caps. Besides, the women have a range of

skin tones, hairstyles, and facial features representing a diverse cast of characters. As we notice, the women are in dynamic poses swinging bats and throwing balls which indicates movement and action (it implies processes of playing baseball, training, or competing in a sports league). On top of that, the use of vibrant colors such as the green background and the red and blue adds a sense of energy to the image reflecting the active and sports-oriented nature of the content. In addition, the overall composition creates a sense of unity and teamwork among the group of women with their expressions giving vibes of camaraderie and a shared purpose. Finally, the title ‘A League Of Their Own’ is written in the center in bold white and a mixture of uppercase and lowercase letters with two white stars that further reinforce the narrative and thematic elements of the movie series which focuses on a women’s baseball league.

3.5.2 At an Interactional level

The two central women in baseball caps are looking directly at the viewer, establishing a strong eye contact and demand image. Moreover, this kind of gaze captures the viewer into the scene and invites them to engage with the plot and the characters. Adding to this, the women are framed in a medium shot, permitting to the viewer to see their full upper bodies and faces. Also, this medium distance framing creates a sense of personal connection and involvement with the characters. Furthermore, the image is shot from a frontal angle, this frontal eye-level angle evokes a sense of equality and solidarity between the characters and the viewers. In addition, the vibrant colors, sharp focus, and realistic rendering of the image create a high modality transmitting authenticity and trustworthiness. In other words, this kind of modality helps draw the viewer into the world of the series and invest in its events. Finally, we can notice the women welcoming expressions and open body language that invite the viewer to join in the narrative and feel it. The prominent prime video branding and ‘New Series’ text also serve as interactive cues prompting content engagement.

3.5.3 At a Compositional Level

The two central women wearing baseball caps are placed in the center of the composition, giving them the highest information value. Moreover, this makes them the most salient and important elements of the image. Also, the Prime Video logo and series title at the top bottom create a significant vertical structure, framing the central figures. In addition, the use of overlapping figures and shared gazes create a sense of unity and harmony among them.

However, the central two figures are set apart from the others through their large size and prominent positioning. This framing device separates the essential characters from the secondary supporting cast, drawing the viewer's attention. On top of this, the vibrant colors, especially the green background and the red and blue baseball caps create a high salience and visual prominence. Besides, compared to the other participants, the two main women's salience is increased due to their larger scale and central positioning. Adding to this, the Prime Video branding at the top also carries high salience emphasizing the content platform. At last, the realistic, photographic rendering of the image with sharp focus and vivid colors, conveys a high modality which helps to create a sense of truthfulness aligning with the real-world setting and characters.

3.6 A Change begins with a Whisper “The Help” Movie Poster Analysis

3.6.1 At a Representational Level

The image appears to be a movie poster for ‘The Help’, a 2011 historical drama film. The poster features a group of women in 1960s era fashion standing in front of a vibrant yellow background. Furthermore, the women are positioned in a way that suggests a sense of unity and shared experience, with some standing together and others seated in a more contemplative pose. Moreover, the positioning and body language of the women conveys a sense of camaraderie and support, hinting at the collaborative nature of their roles in the film's narrative. Also, the diversity of the women's appearances and dress suggests they may represent different social or racial backgrounds, potentially alluding to the film's exploration

of issues of race, class and power. Besides, the use of a vibrant yellow background creates positivity and optimism hinting the film's themes of hope, change, and empowerment. On top of this, the title 'The Help' is written in bold purple lowercase letters for 'The' and uppercase letters for 'Help', situated on the top center of the poster. The title suggests that the focus of the film is on these women's experiences, who may be in service or support roles. Also, the tagline 'Change begins with a whisper' written on top of the title in bold purple introduces subtlety and gradual transformation. Lastly, the women's symmetrical arrangement creates a sense of balance and harmony, and the use of a depth of field with the women in sharp focus and the background slightly blurred helps to draw the viewer's attention to the characters' relationship.

3.6.2 At an Interactional Level

The women in the poster are not making direct eye contact with the viewer creating detachment and observation. Moreover, this lack of eye contact means that they are not engaging with the viewer, but rather presenting themselves as subjects to be observed. Also, the poster adopts a more distant offer perspective. In addition, the medium shot framing of them places the viewer in a social distance, neither too close nor too far, and this kind of shot suggests that the viewer is positioned as a neutral observer rather than being directly invited. Besides, the confident and assertive posture and body language of them convey a sense of authority and agency (they are not passive subjects or active ones in their own plot). On top of that, the vibrant saturated colors and the realistic rendering evokes credibility and authenticity (a sense of historical and social realism). The overall mood is one of poise, confidence and calm. Finally, the tagline is giving vibes rather than confrontational ones, inviting the viewer to contemplate the complexities and nuances of the story.

3.6.3 At a Compositional Level:

The central positioning of the women establishes them as the given information and the vibrant yellow color serves as the new information, providing a visual contrast. Also, this

juxtaposition of given and new pushes the reader to consider their story from a social and a political side. Moreover, the women are the most salient elements in the poster, taking into consideration the form and location of the title and the background being slightly blurred. In addition, the symmetrical, balanced composition of the women and the lack of strong overt framing, creates a sense of unity and shared experience which allows them to be seamlessly integrated within. Furthermore, the high-quality, realistic rendering and the vibrant colors give a sense of historical credibility. Besides, the visual style aligns with the film's period setting (historical accuracy). Finally, the poster's medium, likely a high-quality print or digital image, conveys professionalism and production value.

3.7 The Breadwinner Movie Poster Analysis

3.7.1 At the Representational Level

The central figure is an animated portrait of a young woman with vibrant green eyes and a red headscarf. She is the main participant in the narrative. Moreover, the background features ornate, colorful designs and silhouettes of people on camels, suggesting a Middle Eastern or Central Asian setting. Besides, the background elements may hint at the narrative context related to the setting and themes, or at cultural historical associations. In addition, the direct gaze of the woman and her confident expression suggest an active engaged role for her.

Furthermore, the central figure can be seen as a symbolic representation for the movie with her instinctive features. Also, her vibrant colors are giving an interactive relationship with the viewer, and the scale and centrality of the figure within the frame, position her as the primary focus of the viewer's attention. On top of that, the overall visual style characterized by bold colors and stylized illustrative rendering, contributes to a sense of artistic and cultural specificity. At last, the title 'The Breadwinner', is written in old white lowercase letters at the bottom center of the poster, and the information are written in the top and bottom of the poster.

3.7.2 At the Interactional Level

The central figure's direct gaze establishes a strong eye contact with the viewer, this direct gaze serves as a demand, where the figure is demanding attention. Moreover, the framing of the central figure suggests a medium shot where she is depicted from the waist up, this kind of shot evokes a social relationship between the viewer and her. In addition, the frontal angle of the central figure's suggests involvement and equality, and the symmetrical composition and the lack of overt power dynamics create a sense of balance and shared agency. Besides, the bold colors intricate patterns and the overall visual aesthetic suggest a high modality where the image is imbued with a sense of cultural specificity and artistic credibility.

3.7.3 At the Compositional Level

The central figure is positioned in the center of the frame, occupying a dominant and prominent position within the composition. Furthermore, this centralized placement of the protagonist gives her a sense of informational salience. Besides, the background elements are positioned in the periphery serving as contextual information. Moreover, the poster uses strong framing devices to isolate and highlight the main figure such as the decorative boarder and the subtle vignetting effect which draws the viewer's attention. Besides, the central figure's dominant size gives her a strong salience and the figure's vibrant colors such as the deep green of her eyes enhance her visual prominence. Also, the background details with their more muted rendering serve to support and accentuate the salience. Finally, the poster's overall visual style characterized by bold colors, intricate patterns and a sense of artistic craftsmanship and the illustrative hand-rendered quality of the elements viewer's attention. On top of that, the overall visual style characterized by bold colors and stylized illustrative rendering, contributes to a sense of artistic and cultural specificity. At last, the title 'The Breadwinner', is written in old white lowercase letters at the bottom center of the poster, and

the information are written in the top and bottom of the poster.

3.8 The Color Purple Movie Poster Analysis

3.8.1 At the Representational Level

The image features three central women in the foreground, likely the main characters in the film. Their expressions range from joyful to contemplative, suggesting a narrative that encompasses a range of emotions and experiences while also hinting at a story of personal and collective journeys, likely centered around themes of resilience, sisterhood, and empowerment. The women's clothing and hairstyles are period-specific, indicating a historical or cultural setting. The visual representation portrays sentences placed in different spots as well: the top (the names of the actors) and just below 'A BOLD NEW TAKE ON THE BELOVED CLASSIC' is written in uppercase letters, yellow matching the movie title "The color purple" in bold positioned at the center of the poster and at the bottom the sentence 'only in theatres, Christmas day' indicating the release date of the movie.

3.8.2 At the Interactional Level

The characters' gazes vary; some look directly at the viewer, creating a demand image, while others look away or at each other creating an offer image. this combination invites the viewer into their world while also suggesting the relationships and dynamics between the actresses. the close-up portraits establish an intimate social distance, inviting the viewer to connect closely with the characters and the frontal angle and eye-level positioning of the protagonists suggest equality and empathy, making the viewer feel part of the narrative.

3.8.3 At the Compositional Level

The title "The Color Purple" is placed in the center and written in bold. Drawing immediate attention. the tagline above provides context, while the release information at the bottom of the poster. The bright yellow and purple color make the title stand out, while the characters's faces are also highly salient due to their central placement and size. The contrast

between the dark clothing and the vibrant background further emphasizes their importance. The characters are framed together, suggesting unity and interconnectedness.

3.9 The Little Women Movie Poster Analysis

3.9.1 At the Representational Level

The image presents uppercase letters written in white and bold constituting the phrase little women situated at the lower center of the poster and referring to the movie title. The poster depicts four women who are: Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh and Eliza Scanlen. Their names are written in white while their family names are in bold white in a small size. The background depicts greenish colors with plants, flowers with white curtain which may indicate their lifestyle (countryside) along with their clothes.

3.9.2 At the Interactional Level

It is an offer image since the gaze of the represented participants portrayed is not direct contact with the viewers (they don't incite the viewers to react, they are only exposing information). By using a close shot and an horizontal angle, the represented participants are captured at an intimate distance portraying the participants faces from the side and half of their bodies.

3.9.3 At the Compositional Level

Salience is given to the main characters reflecting on the March sisters they might be arranged in a way that draws attention to their relationship and individual personalities. The characters particularly Joe March portrayed by Saoirse Ronan are placed prominently at the center of the poster. This central positioning immediately draws the viewers attention, indicating Jo's importance as the protagonist. Additionally, the characters are further enhancing their salience against the more muted background.

3.10 The Hidden Figures Movie Poster Analysis

3.10.1 At the Representational Level

In the poster of "Hidden Figures" we see three African American women representing the main characters of the movie. They are dressed in professional attire suggesting their roles as mathematicians or scientists. The presence of the NASA building in the background signifies the setting and the context of the film which revolves around this the space race and the contributions of these women to NASA's space program.

3.10.2 At the Interactional level

In the poster, the positioning of the women centrally and prominently draws attention to them emphasizing their importance in the narrative. Their confident expressions and gestures suggest competence and authority. This upward gaze of the central figure can be interpreted as inspirational looking towards the future or aiming for the stars which aligns with the themes of ambition and achievement in the movie. The overall composition and color scheme evoke a sense of inspiration and determination inviting the viewer to engage with the story and the characters journeys.

3.10.2 At the Compositional level

- **Saliency**

In "hidden figures ", the three main characters are prominently positioned in the center, thus the viewer's gaze immediately. The size, color contrast with the background and Positioning contribute to the saliency

- **Information value top and bottom**

The top portion features the movie title " hidden figures" and the names of lead actresses indicating the film's title and the main cast. The bottom portion includes additional textual information such as the tagline, credits and release date, providing supplementary details about the movie.

- **Framing**

The characters are framed by various elements such as the background imagery, text, and surrounding space which help to emphasize the importance and centrality to the narrative. Additionally, the use of color and contrast within the frame enhances the overall visual impact of the poster.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the semiotic analysis of the ten movie posters. The analysis was guided by Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996-2006) "Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design" through which the posters were analysed at three main levels, namely presentational, interactional and compositional. These results will be discussed and interpreted in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

The present chapter aims to discuss the findings presented in the previous chapter which were obtained after the analysis of the movie posters. The discussion then follows the theoretical framework inspired from Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996-2006) "Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design". Therefore, the chapter will attempt to provide extensive discussion to provide answers for the research questions asked in the General Introduction. The chapter has one section where each of the ten movie posters at three levels, representational, interactional, and compositional.

4.1 North Country Movie Poster

The poster prominently features Charlize Theron, portraying a woman with a serious expression and a determined gaze. She stands out in the foreground, while figures in the background likely represent her community or workplace. This setup hints at a story of struggle and triumph, where Theron's character faces challenges head-on. Charlize Theron's direct gaze engages viewers, inviting them to connect with her story and challenges. The close-up shot creates intimacy, making her presence and determination palpable. This portrayal asks viewers to reflect on the strength and resilience of women in the face of adversity. Theron is placed front and center, dominating the poster's space, with the movie title in bold letters. The text "All she wanted was to make a living. Instead, she made history." reinforces her narrative of overcoming obstacles. The composition highlights Theron's character as a symbol of empowerment and perseverance.

The poster underscores that women, like Theron's character, can defy odds and make history despite initial setbacks. It celebrates women's resilience and courage in demanding equal treatment and justice. By portraying Theron both as a determined professional and a resilient individual, the poster sends a message that women can balance personal life with professional

aspirations. It encourages women to pursue their goals fearlessly, no matter the challenges they face.

4.2 Not Without My Daughter

The poster features a woman holding her child with a determined expression, symbolizing a protective and resolute bond. In the background, another woman is depicted running, suggesting themes of escape or pursuit. The title, prominently displayed in bold yellow letters, emphasizes the story's focus on a mother's unwavering commitment to safeguarding her child. The direct gaze of the woman and child engages viewers emotionally, inviting empathy and connection. Their expressions convey a mix of fear and determination, compelling viewers to reflect on the stakes involved. The running figure adds urgency to the narrative, highlighting the challenges they face. The central placement of the woman and child, framed closely in the foreground, intensifies the personal and emotional dimensions of their story. The bold title and contrasting colors draw attention, underscoring the mother's struggle and the theme of family unity against adversity.

The poster underscores the strength and resilience of motherhood, portraying the protagonist's determination to protect her child at all costs. It resonates with themes of empowerment by showcasing a woman's courageous stand for her family's well-being. By depicting a mother's protective stance amidst turmoil, the poster advocates for the empowerment of women in familial and societal roles. It conveys a powerful message about the strength derived from maternal love and determination in challenging circumstances.

4.3 Legally Blonde Movie Poster Analysis

Reese Witherspoon as Elle Woods commands the poster with a confident and dynamic presence. Her attire, including a pink dress and fashionable accessories, reflects her vibrant personality and lifestyle. The law school setting and books she carries hint at her journey as a law student, adding depth to her character portrayal. Elle Woods smiles directly at the viewer,

establishing a confident and engaging connection. Her full-body image at eye level enhances relatability, portraying her as a figure of aspiration and approachability. The background, featuring Harvard Law School and other characters, supports her narrative while maintaining Elle as the central focus. Elle's central and prominent position, framed against the backdrop of Harvard, highlights her ambition and transformation. The bright pink color scheme and bold typography reinforce her character's vivacity and determination. The clean background emphasizes her journey into a new environment, symbolizing personal growth and achievement.

The poster celebrates Elle Woods as a symbol of empowerment through intelligence, determination, and individuality. It challenges stereotypes by portraying a woman excelling in academics and professional ambition, breaking barriers with style and confidence. By showcasing Elle Woods' journey from fashion to law school, the poster promotes women's empowerment in education and career pursuits. It encourages viewers to embrace their unique qualities and pursue their goals with unwavering confidence and determination.

4.4 Iron Lady Movie Poster

The poster prominently features Meryl Streep as Margaret Thatcher, looking directly at the viewer with a commanding gaze that exudes authority and determination. Her detailed facial expression and formal attire (royal blue jacket and pearls) reinforce her political position and leadership qualities. The background, stylized with elements like the British Parliament and Union Jack, further contextualizes her political background and iconic status. Thatcher's direct stare engages viewers confrontationally, emphasizing her strong presence and political resolve. The close-up shot from a slightly low angle enhances her authoritative image, making her appear formidable and decisive. The vibrant colors and high detail enhance the poster's lifelike quality, emphasizing Thatcher's realistic portrayal. Thatcher is centrally positioned and prominently sized, emphasizing her importance in the narrative. The bold title "The Iron Lady"

in uppercase letters at the top center reinforces her nickname and public persona. Details like the Union Jack and political symbols integrate seamlessly, underscoring her influence within the political and cultural context.

The poster highlights Margaret Thatcher as a symbol of female empowerment in politics, portraying her as a resilient leader who made significant historical impacts. It invites viewers to contemplate her legacy and the challenges she faced, promoting discussions on women's leadership and political influence. By showcasing Thatcher's unwavering determination and political acumen, the poster advocates for women's empowerment in positions of authority and highlights the complexities of leadership in a male-dominated arena.

4.5 A League of Their Own Poster

The poster features a diverse group of women in baseball uniforms, with two central figures wearing red and blue caps. Their varied skin tones, hairstyles, and dynamic poses reflect a team united in sportsmanship and camaraderie. The vibrant colors and active poses convey energy and teamwork, central to the narrative of women's involvement in baseball during historical contexts. The central women in baseball caps make direct eye contact with the viewer, establishing a strong connection and inviting engagement with their story. The medium shot framing allows viewers to see their full upper bodies, fostering a personal connection and empathy for their journey. The frontal angle and eye-level perspective enhance equality and solidarity between viewers and characters. The two central figures are prominently placed in the center, emphasizing their importance and role within the team. The Prime Video branding and series title at the top and bottom provide structural framing, drawing attention to the narrative's platform and content. Vibrant colors and sharp focus enhance visual prominence and authenticity, immersing viewers in the era and storyline.

The poster emphasizes women's resilience and determination in sports, challenging gender norms and highlighting their contributions to historical narratives. It encourages viewers

to appreciate the strength of female athletes and their impact on cultural and sports history. By portraying women as central figures in sports history, the poster advocates for gender equality and recognition of women's achievements in traditionally male-dominated fields like baseball.

4.6 The Help Movie Poster

The poster depicts a group of women in 1960s attire against a vibrant yellow background, suggesting unity and shared experiences. Their varied expressions and body language convey camaraderie and support, hinting at their roles in societal shifts and personal empowerment. The diversity in appearances and dress reflects different social or racial backgrounds, addressing themes of race, class, and power. The women's lack of direct eye contact with the viewer creates a sense of observation rather than engagement, presenting them as subjects to be understood. The medium shot framing maintains a social distance, suggesting neutrality in the viewer's role. Their confident posture and assertive body language convey agency and authority within their narrative. The title "The Help" in bold purple letters at the center, with the tagline "Change begins with a whisper" above it, sets the thematic tone and narrative focus. The symmetrical arrangement and depth of field highlight their relationships and individuality, while the yellow background evokes positivity and optimism in the face of societal challenges.

The poster celebrates women's resilience and solidarity in the face of adversity, advocating for social change and empowerment. It prompts viewers to reflect on the complexities of race, class, and gender dynamics in historical contexts. By portraying women's roles in societal transformation, the poster encourages empathy and understanding of their contributions to cultural change and empowerment.

4.7 The Breadwinner Movie Poster

The poster features an animated portrait of a young woman with vibrant green eyes and a red headscarf, set against a backdrop of ornate, colorful designs suggestive of a Middle

Eastern or Central Asian setting. Her direct gaze and confident expression symbolize her active role and determination within the narrative. The central figure's direct gaze establishes a demanding presence, engaging viewers directly and inviting them into her world. The medium shot framing from the waist up creates a social relationship, fostering empathy and connection with her character. The frontal angle and symmetrical composition suggest equality and shared agency between viewers and protagonist. The central figure is positioned prominently in the center, emphasizing her importance and narrative focus. The background elements, including decorative borders and subtle vignetting, frame her effectively without overshadowing her presence. Vibrant colors and illustrative rendering enhance cultural specificity and artistic credibility, immersing viewers in her story.

The poster emphasizes cultural identity and female empowerment, highlighting the protagonist's journey and resilience in challenging circumstances. It promotes understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural narratives and women's roles within them. By depicting the protagonist's strength and determination, the poster advocates for cultural authenticity and representation in storytelling, encouraging viewers to engage with and respect different cultural perspectives.

4.8 The Color Purple Movie Poster Analysis

The poster features three central women in period-specific clothing, expressing a range of emotions from joy to contemplation. Their diverse appearances and collective posture suggest a narrative focused on resilience, sisterhood, and personal empowerment within a historical or cultural setting. Some characters make direct eye contact with the viewer, creating a demanding image that invites engagement with their story. The close-up portraits and intimate social distance evoke empathy and connection, positioning viewers as observers of their experiences. The frontal angle and eye-level perspective enhance equality and relatability between viewers and characters. The title "The Color Purple" in bold yellow letters at the center

draws immediate attention, supported by the tagline and release information below. The characters' placement and size emphasize their salience and importance, against a vibrant background that contrasts with their darker clothing. The composition highlights their unity and interconnectedness, underscoring themes of collective strength and individual journeys.

The poster celebrates the resilience and sisterhood of its characters, advocating for empowerment and representation within historical narratives. It prompts viewers to reflect on themes of identity, adversity, and personal growth. By portraying women's journeys of resilience and personal growth, the poster advocates for empowerment and solidarity among women, encouraging viewers to appreciate the complexities of their experiences and identities.

4.9 The Little Women Movie Poster Analysis

The poster features four women—Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh, and Eliza Scanlen—in period-specific attire against a background of greenish hues with plants and flowers. Their names in uppercase and lowercase letters, along with their familial roles, suggest a narrative centered on family bonds, personal growth, and societal expectations. It presents an offer image as the characters' gazes are not directed at the viewer, but rather at each other or in contemplation. The medium shot and horizontal angle capture them intimately, portraying their profiles and half-bodies in an engaging manner. This distance suggests neutrality rather than direct involvement with the viewer. The central positioning of characters like Jo March (Saoirse Ronan) emphasizes her importance as the protagonist. Their faces and clothing are highly salient against a muted background, supported by vibrant colors and subtle framing that accentuate their presence. The composition highlights their relationships and individual personalities, inviting viewers to explore their roles within the narrative.

The poster highlights the strength and independence of its characters, promoting themes of familial bonds, personal aspirations, and societal challenges. It encourages viewers to reflect on the complexities of female identity and empowerment within historical contexts. By

portraying the March sisters' individual journeys and collective experiences, the poster advocates for independence, resilience, and the pursuit of personal dreams among women. It prompts viewers to appreciate the diversity of women's roles and aspirations throughout history.

3.10 The Hidden Figures Movie Poster Analysis

The poster depicts three African American women dressed in professional attire, symbolizing their roles as mathematicians or scientists during the NASA space program era. The background includes the NASA building, indicating the setting and context of their groundbreaking work in a historically male-dominated field. The poster presents an offer image where the women are not making direct eye contact with the viewer. Instead, their gaze is directed upwards and forward, symbolizing determination, aspiration, and looking towards the future. The medium shot captures their upper bodies and faces, creating an intimate yet respectful distance that invites viewers to engage with their story. The central positioning of the three women emphasizes their significance and role as the main protagonists. They are framed prominently against the backdrop of the NASA building, highlighting their achievements and contributions to science and space exploration. The use of color, such as blue and white reminiscent of NASA's visual identity, enhances the poster's authenticity and historical context.

The poster highlights the intellectual prowess and achievements of these women, challenging stereotypes and highlighting their crucial roles in advancing science. It aims to inspire viewers by showcasing their determination to overcome obstacles and make significant contributions to society. Through their portrayal, the poster advocates for gender and racial equality in STEM fields, emphasizing the importance of diversity and inclusion. It promotes themes of empowerment, resilience, and the pursuit of excellence, encouraging viewers to recognize and celebrate the contributions of women in scientific and technological advancements.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings from the semiotic analysis of the movie posters. It sought to provide an extensive discussion to provide answers to the research questions posed in the General Introduction. Drawn by Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996-2006) "Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design", the chapter examined each of the ten movie posters at three levels, representational, interactional, and compositional. Overall, this chapter provided a comprehensive understanding of the posters from a semiotic perspective.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The present study has undertaken a comprehensive semiotic analysis of multiple movie posters to deepen our understanding of how they portray women's empowerment. As presented in the General Introduction, the dissertation set two main objectives. As a first objective, it aims to explore the symbols, signs, and visual language used to portray empowered women on these posters along with examining certain semiotic elements such as: color, composition, facial expressions, and body language. Then, as a second objective, the study seeks to unveil the hidden messages and meanings the movie posters communicate about women's empowerment. To attain the aforementioned aims, we adopted Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996-2006) "Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design" which is concerned with the way various modes of expression are assembled to form a meaningful whole in visuals are interpreted and understood by the viewers.

Based on the findings of the previous chapters, the following answers are provided

Q1: How are women visually represented in movie posters through semiotic analysis?

Across the analysed posters, women are predominantly portrayed as figures of strength, resilience, and empowerment. This is achieved through various semiotic elements:

- ✓ *Facial Expressions and Body Language:* Women are depicted with serious, determined, and confident expressions, often making direct eye contact with the viewer. This engages the audience emotionally and invites them to connect with the characters' stories and challenges.
- ✓ *Composition and Framing:* Women are typically placed centrally and prominently within the poster's frame, emphasizing their importance and narrative focus. Close-up shots intensify the emotional and personal dimensions of their stories, fostering empathy and connection.

- ✓ *Color and Symbolism:* Vibrant colors and symbolic elements such as clothing (e.g., professional attire, sports uniforms) and background settings (e.g., law schools, political arenas) reinforce themes of empowerment and achievement. These visual cues contextualize their roles within specific narratives of struggle, triumph, and societal impact.

Q2: What messages and meanings do movie posters communicate about women's empowerment?

The movie posters communicate several key messages about women's empowerment. They celebrate women who defy odds and overcome challenges in professional settings like law or politics, as well as in familial roles as mothers or sisters, and within historical contexts as pioneers in science or sports. These portrayals emphasize resilience and courage, urging viewers to recognize women's ability to confront adversity. Additionally, the posters depict women balancing personal life with professional aspirations, challenging stereotypes and advocating for equality in various spheres of life. By incorporating diverse cultural backgrounds and historical contexts, they promote understanding and appreciation of women's contributions across different eras and societal norms. Moreover, the posters serve as a call to action, encouraging viewers—especially women—to pursue their goals fearlessly and to acknowledge the strength derived from unity, determination, and resilience in the face of challenges.

All in all, we can say that movie posters serve as powerful tools for visual storytelling and social commentary on women's empowerment. Through semiotic analysis, it is evident that these posters not only reflect societal perceptions of gender roles but also actively shape them by presenting women as strong, capable, and influential figures. The use of visual elements such as color, composition, facial expressions, and symbolism effectively conveys messages of empowerment and resilience, influencing viewers' attitudes and beliefs about gender equality and women's capabilities.

Moreover, these representations are contextualized within cultural and social frameworks, highlighting the complexities of women's roles across different settings and periods. Overall, movie posters play a significant role in promoting discussions on gender empowerment within the film industry and beyond, contributing to ongoing efforts to redefine and celebrate women's contributions to society.

Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, future researchers interested in exploring the portrayal of women's empowerment in movie posters could conduct a Comparative semiotic analysis across genres like drama, science fiction, and historical films would elucidate how visual elements and semiotic cues vary in depicting empowered women. Additionally, Audience reception studies could examine diverse interpretations and responses to these representations, offering insights into how movie posters influence societal attitudes toward gender roles.

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List of Appendices

Figure 04: *North Country*



Figure 05: *Not Without My Daughter*

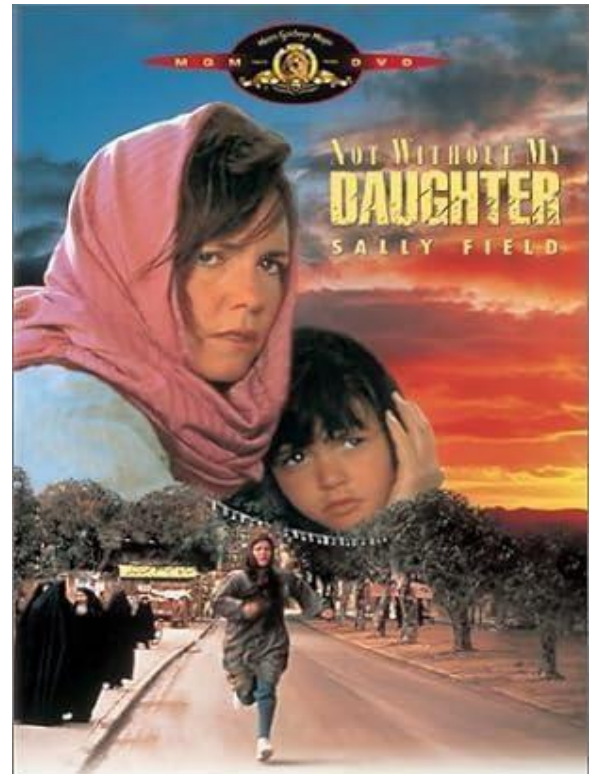


Figure 06: *Legally Blonde*

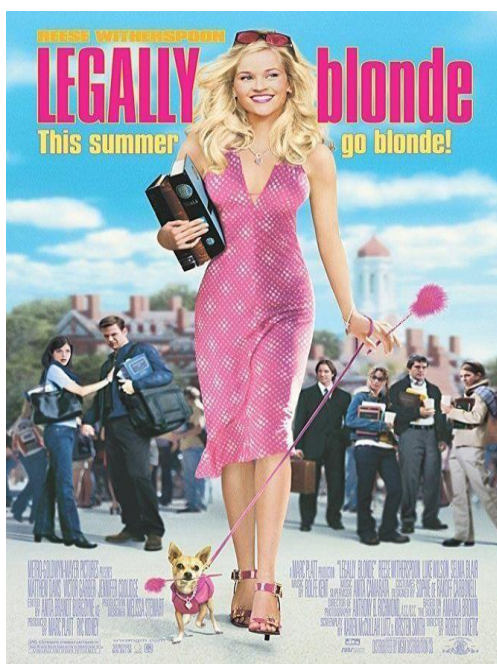


Figure 07: *Iron Lady*

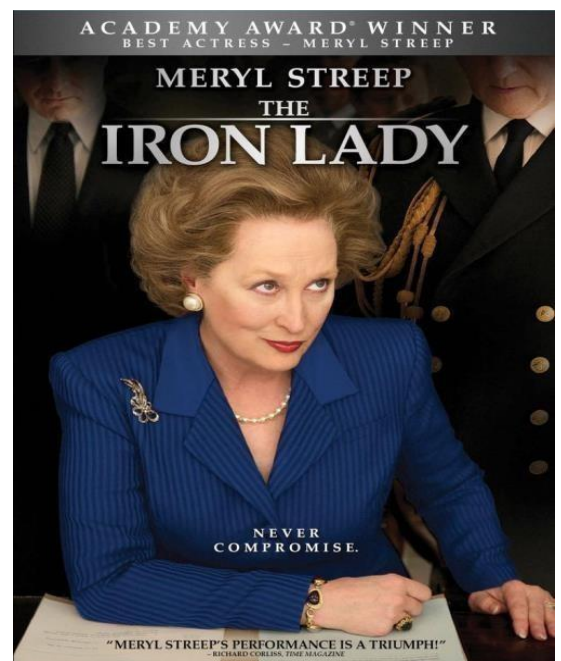


Figure 08: *On Their Own League*



Figure 09: *The Help*

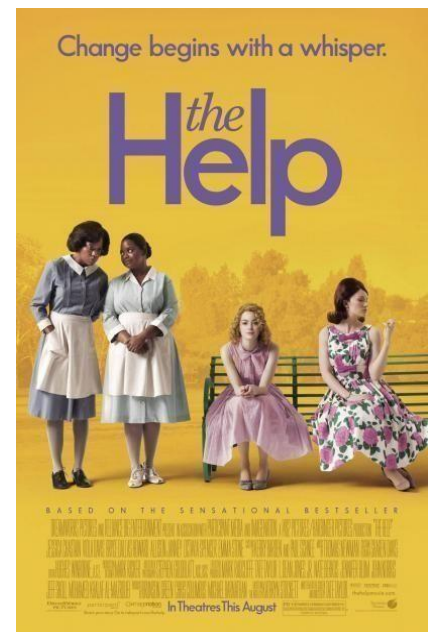


Figure 10: *The Breadwinner*

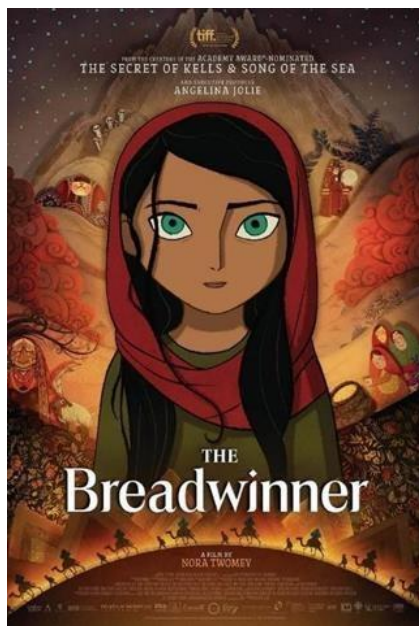


Figure 11: *The Color Purple*



Figure 12: *Little Women*



Figure 13: *Hidden Figures*

