Splendor In The Grass : A Semiotic Outlook on Genious Anatolian Film Director Elia Kazan’s Dramatic Work of Art

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1-Introduction

“Splendor in the Grass” is a very emotional and a realistic work of two men who were incredibly talented and imaginative in the movie industry: William Inge, the writer of the movie, and Elia Kazan, the director. Elia Kazan encouraged Pulitzer Prize winner William Inge to turn a true story he heard during his Midwest youth into an Academy Award-winning script of “Splendor in the Grass” as penetrating, poetic and powerful as it was two generations ago (Splendor in the Grass –cinematography&details.html). Elia Kazan made quite a name for himself with some of the most popular movies of all time. He also made a legendary star out of James Dean, and gave Marlon Brando much of his fame as well. He touched on subjects that were part of many peoples’ lives. He did not shy away the harsh realities in life, and directed such stories in an exquisite manner that made them into classics. Like Inge Kazan was not afraid of approaching ad conditions of society, and often presented life in all of its misery, with no sugar coating on life as it stood. He presented depressing realities, he brought forth violent relationships and the pain. He dealt with the topics involved with bigotry, racism and inequality of mankind, social issues and realities of life. In Splendor in The Grass there are issues of sexuality, dreams of being loved and cared for, social pressures that confine people and keep them away from grasping happiness tightly. It points out the harsh realities of life while dealing with emotional and sensitive issues as well. (www.greatestfilms.org). Elia Kazan, who mentions himself proudly in his autobiography, being an Anatolian boy descending from an Anatolian-Greek family, somehow seems to have reflected his conservative Turkish Culture relating to “chastity” on the screen. Although it was written by Inge, Kazan’s and Inge’s views on the issue seem to cover each other quite well on the screen.

The movie tells us that even people fated, meant for each other love does not conquer all. Splendor in the Grass creates an astonishing and tragic power instead of a happy ending cliché. That’s why the picture differs from the ones having the same cliché endings of that time. However, most of his works have been studied mostly such as “A Street Car Named Desire”, “East of Eden”, “On the Waterfront”, Kazan’s this unique work of art seems to have been ignored in Turkey. This research will be the first to study the film from semiotic point of view. What Inge in essence says to the audience with deep irony that
the “splendor” of young love is not consoling at all, that the past leaves permanent wounds, that time itself is unforgiving and permanent, and that love has a single season when it must be captured or lost forever (ibid.). The main idea of the film can be understood easily if political and economic situations of 1928’s, in which this true story was told, are explained before the summary of the story.

1.1 Political and Economic Panorama in 1928-1929

In the late 1920s the American economy at first seemed immune to the mounting troubles, but with the start of the 1930s it crashed with startling rapidity. However, with the opening of the US federal reserve bank, for the first time credit could be created out of thin air without the demands of economic productivity necessary with the specie money used up until then. The US federal reserve had permission to begin a massive fraud. It was allowed to generate credit dollars without needing to back those dollars with anything—even though the US was still supposed to be operating in a 100% reserve currency at the time. Federal reserve credit was, to begin with, easily obtainable on the "easy money" policy begun in 1924. An apparent abundance of wealth and the roaring twenties was the result. This was reflected in the stock markets by a sudden upswing in the Dow Jones commodities index beginning in 1915, curving upward gradually, and finally tripling between 1923 and 1929—an unprecedented trend, and one that has not been seen since. In early 1928, the Federal Reserve increased interest rates in response to the incredible amount of speculation on the stock market. This was an attempt to restrain the spending of these easily obtainable Federal Reserve dollars. There was an incredible, and tragic, economic credit "bubble" burst on Black Thursday, and the stock market gains of the previous 17 years were all lost in the space of 30 months. This was followed by a deep and protracted depression—the Great Depression.

The USA's economy had been showing some signs of distress for months before October 1929. Business inventories of all kinds were three times as large as they had been a year before (an indication that the public was not buying products as rapidly as in the past), and other signposts of economic health—freight carloads, industrial production, wholesale prices—were slipping downward. Banks foreclosed on businesses, only to find that the businesses had used all their money, and the assets were unsaleable—then those banks themselves were unable to continue to operate. Factories were closed, and masses of factory workers lost their jobs. These workers were also consumers, but their consumption of produced goods trailed off when they had no work. The economy went into a terrifying downward spiral. This was a period of serious financial contraction (kids.net.au)

All these political and economic failures caused people to be precautious and eager for “easy money”, which can easily be recognized all the film long. Almost all people—except the young—in the story were deeply dealt with the stock business in their daily lives.
1.2. Identifying The Text, Movie Details

The Title: The title is taken from English romantic William Wordsworth’s 1807 Ode, Intimations of Immortality from Reflections of Early Childhood, some of which is quoted here:

> Though nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower
> We will grieve not, but rather find
> Strength in what remains behind.

The medium: Cinema, Genre: Classics; Drama; Subtitles: Director: Elia Kazan, Producer: Elia Kazan; Writer: William Inge; Studio: Warner Bross; Photography: Boris Kaufman; Music: David Amram

Language: English; Running time: 2 hours 4 minutes; Country: USA; Colour: IMDb Rating: 7.5

Oscar: William Inge (screenplay) Oscar Nomination: Nathalie Wood (Splendor In The Grass-cinematography & details)

1.3. Actors & Actresses:


1.4. The Synopsis

From the first notes of David Amram’s intense score and the opening image of Bud and Deanie kissing in a car by a raging waterfall, Splendor in the Grass sums up the appeal of Hollywood melodrama at its finest (1001 Movies, Schneider). The film presents us the conflict between respectable behaviour and human desire which push both lovers to psychological and physical collapse. Its ending is unlike the others. The whole plot seems quite related to the customs of the country in which the director was born, Turkiye. There are so many binary oppositions on the basis of the story. It seems the whole plot is set up upon some
oppositions and connotations. The posters give the impression of another rendition of the Romeo and Juliet theme, with an ending that is quite possibly more tragic than the classic ending in Shakespeare’s work.

Deanie and Bud are a couple in love in the 1920’s in a small Kansas town which sees unbearably beautiful Natalie Wood (as Wilma Dean “Deanie” Loomis) hectored by mother not to give in her love and passion for gorgeous Warren Beatty (Bud Stamper), son of the town’s wealthiest man, who offers his son to find “another kind of girl” to relieve his sexual desires. They are just lovers who imagine living happily ever after with another. But their economic and social status are different and as such they are doomed to be denied their dreams. Bud’s father is ruthless in his determination to avert their happiness from ever happening. He always reminds him of his family business. Bud has to resist his father’s class-bias message that she is beneath him, that he is headed for Yale. This is literally so for Deanie, whose enforced virginity and repressed desire leads Bud to be unfaithful. Deanie is a good girl who only wants to become Bud’s wife. Her mother is also happy with the situation but makes sure there is no consummation before a church wedding. Although Deanie is willing, Bud does not allow her to trip off her pedestal but gives into his own urges with his high school hussy. Then they see no future together as a consequence of it and Bud leaves for Yale as his family had planned for him. Then Bud tells her that they should stop all kissing and fooling around and not to see each other for a while. This pushes Deanie to go mad, so she loses her mind. After her suicide attempt, she is sent to a sanitarium for years of recovery (Tail Pop-p 2). She spends years in the sanitary trying to forget Bud. Meanwhile, she makes a boy friend there like her. After recovering and coming home safe and sound, she wants to see Bud, recalling her psychiatrist’s advice to overcome her feelings, to bury her love deep in his heart. After a hard times of recovery in a psychiatric ward painting and making friends of the other kind, Deanie is prepared to forget his ideas and her dreams. Years later, Deanie – recovered and dressed in white – finds Bud again and realizes that it is too late: Bud is married with one child and his wife is pregnant again. He is a blue collar labourer on his father’s farm. His father had lost everything in the 1929 crash. Deanie realizes that there is no going back and leaves for her new life with her fiancé, whom she is going to get married soon. The ending scene, the last climax of the film is certainly one of the greatest scenes in American cinema and the one that elevates the film itself to near-greatness. Both Bud and Deanie who honour the wishes of their parents, clearly suffer moved on their lives, finding “pale imitations of one another” and forever see what they could have had, but were not strong enough to take.

2- Methodology

Semiotics is the theory of the production and interpretation of meaning. It’s basic principle is that meaning is made by the deployment of acts and objects which function as “signs” in relation to other signs. Systems of signs are constituted by the complex meaning-relations that can exist between one sign and another, primarily relations of contrast and superordination/subordination (e.g. class/member, whole/part). Signs are deployed in space and time to produce “texts”, whose meanings are construed by the mutually
contextualizing relations among their signs (Theories, J.L. Lemke Online Office). Semiotics can be applied to anything which can be seen as signifying something, in other words, to everything which has meaning within a culture. Even within the context of the mass media you can apply semiotic analysis to any media texts (including television and radio programmes, films, cartoons, newspaper and magazine articles, posters and other ads) and to the practices involved in producing and interpreting such texts (Chandler, Daniel.) The primary goal is to establish the underlying conventions, identifying significant differences and oppositions in an attempt to model the system of categories, relations (synchronic and diachronic), connotations, coding and decoding, and rules of combination employed. A film “text” or “script” is in itself a complex sign containing other signs. The analytical task in this research is to identify the signs within text of the film and the codes within which these signs have meaning, ‘textual codes’ such as camerawork, or ‘social codes’ such as body language. Within these codes paradigm sets are to be identified, too (such as shot size: long shot, mid shot, close up). The structural relationships are also to be identified between the various signifiers. Finally the ideological functions of the signs in the text are to be discussed as a whole.

3. Findings

The movie is analysed semiotically, which means in the light of some relative signs compiling the main story. The structure of the film is analysed upon some relations within the film; synchronic analysis, diachronic analysis, proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure and developed by Vladimir Propp and Lévi–Strauss. Metaphoric characters are also included as subtitles.

3.1. Synchronic / Paradigmatic Analysis: binary oppositions in the text

All ‘texts’ (mythical narratives, literary texts, advertisements, films, fashion etc) are signifying structures that work according to an underlying system which is synchronic. It means the relationship of the signs within a signifying structure. The relation between the signs are controversial as Propp proposed in his theory then developed by Lévi–Strauss in cultural context. In the story here the oppositions represent the conventions and morality and understanding of “chastity” in 1928s Kansas town. The important binary oppositions in the film are focused on 4 characters: Bud, Deanie, Bud’s father and Deanie’s mother.

The story seems to set on opposing characters. Bud belongs to a wealthy family who has acres of oil lands but the girl belongs to an average and modest family who try to be a social climber, especially the mother. Her mother has got old mentality about the “chastity” and continuously reminds her daughter not to go far in their relationship. Deanie, full of desire, honours her mother and represses her feelings. On one side Bud’s father is trying to avert the affair, on the other side, her mother hectors Deanie to save herself for the wedding day. She is conservative but Deanie is not. Mother says her father never laid hands on her before the marriage. Virginity is something sacred. But Deanie and Bud kiss away all the time they meet. Mother knows it but never lets them go far than that. Bud, full of desire, gives all his love to Deanie and
wants to have her. Every time he insists on her, she represses herself and recalls her mother’s advice “nice girls do not!” Her mother is very happy because Deanie has a boyfriend who is the richest in the town and it seems they will get married. Deanie can not be happy because of the repression and hectoring on her. Every time they kiss they stop it not to go far. Because they have fears. They are willing but precautious. But has to decide on two alternatives which costs him much: Marriage or education. He would either educate for a better future or quit his feelings. By his father’s oppressions he prefers education unwillingly. But in the last scene he confesses that he failed in the first year. So everything was in vain. It is a shame that they suffered for a better education, but it is obvious that no education, no love anymore. When Deanie opposes consummation, sometimes Bud gives right to her but sometimes not. He is a young man and sexual needs to be satisfied. He can not stay faithful to her and have an affair with a “different kind of girl” Deanie tries but fails to be unfaithful to Bud. She can not kiss Toots. She is loyal till the day they meet each other. She keeps her promise and honour her family. She loses her mind when he leaves her. When she is with him she is healthy, so love brings happiness, lack of love brings unhealthiness. Here in the story Deanie’s mother is a social climber, richness is the most important thing not the feelings. But for Deanie love for everything that’s why she goes mad when Bud suggests her to break up. Bud is always domineered and hectored by his father while Deanie is by her mother. His mother is busy with housework and her father is busy with oil stocks. Domineering people are of opposite sex. Here is an inequality rises, while Bud, the male is offered to hire “a different kind of woman” to satisfy his sexual desire, Deanie, the female is forced to repress the desire. Because “repressing desire is a virtue and being a nice girl is much more important than anything in the world. This is the idea imposed the young of that time. Bud’s sister who is presented “a boy-crazy girl” is one of the striking opposite characters in the film. Deanie stands for the” virgin nice girl” while Bud’s sister stands for the hussy in the neighbourhood.

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<th>Bud represents</th>
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3.2 Diachronic/Syntagmatic Analysis: sequences of events forming the whole structure, the plot.

Diachronic/syntagmatic analysis means the material, a novel or a script, etc. is studied within its historical flow as Ferdinand de Saussure proposed linguistically. As Propp developed this as “paradigmatic” in which the story can be examined within the sequences of events forming the whole story or the way it develops into a successive structure, the plot. The fundamental entity in semiotic theory is the sign, a human perception which takes on meaning in part by reference to the perceiver's past experience and in part by reference to his or her (and its) cultural context. A collection of elemental signs from which more complex signs can be constructed is called a paradigm. The constructed signs are called syntagms. Paradigmatic analysis is a method of investigating a syntagm by breaking it down into its constituent paradigm, studying the individual paradigmatic elements, and seeking to reconstruct the process by which the syntagm takes on meaning (Berger, 1996). Therefore, as Propp proposed in his folk tales analysis story analysis the story can be divided into 3 or 4 parts according to the turning points in the story: In Splendor in the Grass 3 main turning points are traced: Bud's offer for breaking up, Deanie’s losing her mind, and their first meeting years later.

3.2.1. The part from the beginning, to Bud’s offer

The two lovers can not go far in their relationship due to the social pressure on them. They only kiss and embrace each other, the goodbye kiss is watched by her mother. She is a passionate town girl whose family is struggling financially to afford her education. As Deanie undresses, her mother follows her and tries to instill her with sexual fears into her. She vows that boys never respect a girl who goes all the way. Puritanical mother asserts that women do not have sexual urges. Poor Deanie struggles with wanting to be “a good girl” and worries about staying pure until marriage. The teddy bear on her bed indicates her childlike innocence that’s on the verge of breaking traditional bounds. Her sexual longing is shown by her caressing and kissing Bud’s pictures above the dresser in her bedroom. Then she kneels to recite the prayers which indicates her strong belief. On the other side his father overwhelms Bud with advice about putting off thoughts of marriage. Meanwhile Bud’s sister Ginny is the blackship of the family. She is rebellious, spoiled and headstrong with bleached hair and makeup. She has no intention of reforming herself in the backward rural town. Because she hates the town she was born. Bud’s mother is frail and soft—spoken is quite emotional in her expression “neither of my children gets any real nourishment”
After school they spend time together kissing and embracing each other. One day they arrive Deanie’s house. Her mother is not in, they enter the empty house. Deanie begins to show her sacrificial devotion. When they hear some voices approaching, they retreat into the dining room. There Bud forces her to confess her love for him. Mother arrives, strikes fear into her daughter about Bud’s sister who has an abortion. Bud’s father ignores what he says and convinces him to postpone his marriage. Because, to his father, Bud’s education is much more important than “a girl” in the town. His father also proposes to hire “different kind of girls” to satisfy his sexual needs. He puts Bud’s educational obligation on the way to prevent such an affair. On one side Deanie’s right rejection of consummation and his repression against his desire having her soon, on the other side parental repression depresses Bud and offers Deanie to stop their relationship for a while and goes out with “a kind of girl” who is a school mate of them. He agrees to go to Yale for four years before marriage. Rain streaks down the windshield of Bud’s sports car parked by the waterfall; she vows that she would wait him forever. After sometime has passed, he confesses her that he thinks they had to stop all those kissing and fooling around. Deanie is frozen and stunned by his decision. Then she is informed that he dates with a classmate. On learning this unfaithfulness Deanie tells him that she is ready for consummation at all costs because she loves him, but Bud rejects her and honours both families. In a few weeks time he leaves for Yale. This situation causes Deanie to lose her mind and attempts suicide jumping into the waterfall by which they kissed everytime.

3.2.2. The part from the day Bud’s offer, to the day she is taken to the sanitary house

She is taken to a sanitary house and stays there for years. No visitors accepted for months. Psychiatrists do not allow her to recall the bad old days especially her lover. During the therapies she makes friends with a man who gets along with her well. He really cares for her and she is aware of him. She likes him too. But she still keeps the old memories in her mind. She can not let them away, she still loves her sweetheart, Bud. On discharging day she and her psychiatrist make the last meeting. Seeing her obsession for Bud, the doctor recommends her to see Bud in order to overcome her feelings.

3.2.3. The part from the sanitary house to home again years later

Keeping the doctor’s last advice in mind, Deanie is determined to see Bud for the last time. On the very day she is back home from the sanitary, her school gang visits her, she openly asks them for help find him at any cost. She dresses up in white, symbolizing purity. She is so determined that it would be in vain to stop her. For the first time her father expresses his feeling about Deanie’s relationship: he unexpectedly interferes and let Deanie hear where he stays and works. Deanie is very happy and kisses her father. She looks so beautiful and innocent. Friends take her to the ranch where now he is not an owner anymore but a blue collar worker. After driving far from the town they arrive the ranch he works and stays.

3.2.4. Their first meeting years later: the last climax

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Maybe one of the most effective scenes in Hollywood movies, is the meeting of the lovers in a ranch years later. Deanie is in white while Bud is in his overalls, dirty in appearance. She looks as beautiful as an angel in white suits. In the first seconds they only say “hi” to each other. He immediately suggests her to meet his family; not knowing what to do she accepts the offer. Her close friends dare not tell her about his marriage. He takes her to a small shanty in the neighbourhood. A pregnant cooking wife and a small boy are in. He introduces her to his wife as an old friend of him. His wife modestly welcomes her warmly but doubts about the real identity of Deanie. By the facial expression of wife it can be observed overtly. Deanie picks his son, embraces and smells him, as if she once did the same to Bud. Bud watches her admiringly. Deanie takes her leave. Outside the shanty he explains he got married Angelina who was wonderful to him when things went wrong and added that he had not finished even the first year at Yale. After having seen him with his family she asks Bud whether he was happy, he answers he guessed so. But his answer does not have any importance at all. Deanie says that she did not “think much about happiness anymore”. “I am getting married next month, a boy from Cincinnati.” she explains. Because for the years she has suffered, but not anymore. Bud is so confused that he seems regretful and desperate but can not say anything. "things work out awful funny sometimes, don’t they?” They wish each other well for the future. Back in the car her friends wondered if she loved him anymore. The answer comes from the past what she recalls is William Wordsworth’s lines that they learnt at school. “Through nothing can bring back the hour of splendor in the grass...of glory in the flower; we will grieve not rather find strength in what remains.” Here she implies that there is no love for her any more in him. Once you have something you have wanted for a long time, you should experience it; if you wait for the right time come in, you will get nothing but the remains, the reminicences of good old days.

3.3 Connotations and Metaphoric characters

Mostly visual connotations are not striking. Symbolizing characters are important. Visual effect is much more than language. There is not so much conversation in the film. Deanie symbolizes for “chastity”, Bud is for “honesty”. Bud’s sister stands for “bad girl” just opposite Deanie who dies in a car crash in the end. She is the opposite character to Deanie’s in order to present her to the spectators “as innocent as an angel,” as an ideal nice girl”, “a girl to marry”. Her mother stands for “conventions” in the society or as a “guardian for the treasure”, which is a metonymy for “virginity”. His father stands for the “domineering father” who makes a good sample for his son. He successfully hecters his son and makes both lovers unhappy till the end of their lives. His mother is not domineering here unlike Deanie’s.
4. Evaluation and Conclusion

Adolescent longing, social taboos, parental distortion of a young person’s psyche, the deep mystery of love and sex between perfect, innocent partners and the so-easy fall from grace if the heart’s longings are not pursued. These are the realities that the text constructs. By close-shots and mid-close shots and body movements supports the idea. As it can be seen especially the binary oppositions are treated quite well. Oppositions somehow neutralize its own perspectives. It is a kind of technique unique to Elia Kazan. The setting is so natural and nothing exceeds the way houses decorated or the news relating to stock market reflects the reality, Great Depression time. Though It is the first time actor Warren Betty was presented to Hollywood film market, he is quite successful. The unusual ending is just a surprise to the audience of that time, who were not familiar with such an unhappy endings. They used to watch happy endings. In the end there are two people suffering: the old lovers whose love lost against social repression and conventions. Their suffering is given by close shots, family relations are given by long shots so that anybody can witness how actor and actress is so expressive each other on the face. The mood and story line of the stormy relationship between teenaged lovers parallels the poem as the adolescents meet, fall obsessively in love and become sexually awakened, face repressed sexual attitudes, parental pressures, turmoil, social constraints and class differences, and ultimately break up and are traumatized without consummating their love. The values of the business-oriented civilization at the time of greatest crash-coincidences with the collapse of their tender romance. (Splendor in the Grass, 1961). Elia Kazan often made youth exploitation films like East of Eden, Picnic, West Side Story which mostly portrayed the problems of youth. The two stars are said to have an affair while making the film. The ironic point is Natalie Wood had an accidental death while away at the sea on her yacht named “Splendor”.

The role of the poem on Deanie is undeniable. In fact she would not take the poetry very seriously at school. But when teacher calls on her to interpret its meaning in front of the class. She reads the phrases with tears in her eyes, realizing that her relationship with Bud may be over:

“Well, I think it has some ..well, when we’re young, we look at things very idealistically, I guess, and I think Wordsworth means that when we grow up, that we have to forget the ideals of youth and find strength…” (filmscript, p 47-48)

The cultural pattern relating to “chastity and consummation” in the movie is the same with the one in Anatolia, where the director of this film originally comes from. Elia Kazan frequently mentions in his autobiography that he sometimes reveals himself as an Anatolian, like his father does in the USA. Maybe the reason he directs the film geniusly depends on the fact that he is familiar with such conventions. In Türkiye, to some families repressing the feelings and keeping virginity for the husband is still “vital”. It is a cultural pattern that can be traced back within all concepts of literature, music, painting, cinema and popular culture.
Finally it can be said that Elia Kazan and William Inge’s film, which is based upon a real love story, gives the panorama of 1928’s exploited young people’s problems realistically as well as the awful results of capitalism on a small town people in 1928 in Kansas. There is lack of communication between generations and this should be minimized through mass media especially through television and cinema texts in order to have healthy minded generations ahead.

**Key Words**: Elia Kazan, Semiotic analysis, Splendor in the Grass, Youth problem, Diachronic Analysis, Synchronic Analysis

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[www.Theories,J.L.Lemke Online Office.html](www.greatestfilms.org/)


[www.scriptdb.com](www.scriptdb.com “Splendor in the Grass” script in English)

**DVD FILM – SPLENDOR IN THE GRASS**
Is it one among many copies (e.g. a poster) or virtually unique (e.g. an actual painting)?
- How does this influence your interpretation?
- What are the important signifiers and what do they signify?
- What is the system within which these signs make sense?

- **Modality**
  - What reality claims are made by the text?
  - Does it allude to being fact or fiction?
  - What references are made to an everyday experiential world?
  - What modality markers are present?
  - How do you make use of such markers to make judgements about the relationship between the text and the world?
  - Does the text operate within a realist representational code?
    - To whom might it appear realistic?
    - 'What does transparency keep obscure?'

(Butler 1999, xix)
- **Paradigmatic analysis**
To which class of paradigms (medium; genre; theme) does the whole text belong?

How might a change of medium affect the meanings generated?

What might the text have been like if it had formed part of a different genre?

What paradigm sets do each of the signifiers used belong to? For example, in photographic, televisual and filmic media, one paradigm might be shot size.

Why do you think each signifier was chosen from the possible alternatives within the same paradigm set? What values does the choice of each particular signifier connote?

What signifiers from the same paradigm set are noticeably absent?

What contrasted pairs seem to be involved (e.g. nature/culture)?

Which of those in each pairing seems to be the 'marked' category?

Is there a central opposition in the text?

Apply the commutation test in order to identify distinctive signifiers and to define their significance. This involves an imagined substitution of one signifier for another of your own, and assessing the effect.

What is the syntagmatic structure of the text?

Identify and describe syntagmatic structures in the text which take forms such as narrative, argument or montage.

How does one signifier relate to the others used (do some carry more weight than others)?

How does the sequential or spatial arrangement of the elements influence meaning?

Are there formulaic features that have shaped the text?

If you are comparing several texts within a genre look for a shared syntagm.
- How far does identifying the paradigms and syntags help you to understand the text?
- **Rhetorical tropes**
  - What tropes (e.g. metaphors and metonyms) are involved?
  - How are they used to influence the preferred reading?
- **Intertextuality**
  - Does it allude to other genres?
  - Does it allude to or compare with other texts within the genre?
  - How does it compare with treatments of similar themes within other genres?
  - Does one code within the text (such as a linguistic caption to an advertisement or news photograph) serve to ‘anchor’ another (such as an image)? If so, how?
- What semiotic codes are used?
- Do the codes have double, single or no articulation?
- Are the codes analogue or digital?
- Which conventions of its genre are most obvious in the text?
  - Which codes are specific to the medium?
  - Which codes are shared with other media?
  - How do the codes involved relate to each other (e.g. words and images)?
- Are the codes broadcast or narrowcast?
- Which codes are notable by their absence?
- What relationships does the text seek to establish with its readers?
  - How direct is the mode of address and what is the significance of this?
- How else would you describe the mode of address?
- What cultural assumptions are called upon?
- To whom would these codes be most familiar?
• What seems to be the preferred reading?
• How far does this reflect or depart from dominant cultural values?
• How 'open' to interpretation does the sign seem to be?

Social semiotics
• What does a purely structural analysis of the text downplay or ignore?
• Who created the sign? Try to consider all of those involved in the process.
• Whose realities does it represent and whose does it exclude?
• For whom was it intended? Look carefully at the clues and try to be as detailed as you can.
• How do people differ in their interpretation of the sign? Clearly this needs direct investigation.
• On what do their interpretations seem to depend?
• Illustrate, where possible, dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings.
• How might a change of context influence interpretation?

Benefits of semiotic analysis
• What other contributions have semioticians made that can be applied productively to the text?
• What insights has a semiotic analysis of this text offered?
• What other strategies might you need to employ to balance any shortcomings of your analysis?