

## The Use of Qur'anic Verses in the Indonesian Horror Film *Munkar* (2024): A Narrative Analysis Using Propp and Pierce's Semiotics

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to provide an academic critique of the phenomenon of religious horror cinema in Indonesia by analyzing the film Munkar (2024). The research addresses the theoretical issue of commodifying sacred texts within the cinematic realm. Drawing on Vladimir Propp's narrative analysis and Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, the study examines how verses from the Qur'an are transformed from theological authorities into elements that evoke horror. The narrative analysis identifies 24 Proppian functions that position sacred verses as magical agents driving the plot. From a semiotic perspective, symbolic deconstruction emerges through the icon of the red mukena and the subversion of the mosque's sacred space, leading to the portrayal of a religious devil. The study's contribution confirms a pattern of desacralization of Islamic symbols, blurring the line between the sacredness of the text and the interests of the entertainment industry. These findings offer a new perspective on how popular media reconfigures discourses of morality and destiny through provocative horror imagery. Propp's analysis reveals 24 narrative functions within the film's plot, while Peirce's semiotics examines icons, symbols, and indices related to these verses—such as Herlina's red clothing, the mosque as a site of terror, prostration facing away from the qibla, and the roles of water, prayer beads, and the Qur'an in confronting evil forces. The results show that the film does not merely use Qur'anic verses as decorative or proselytizing elements, but also as tools to reinterpret Islamic values, depict the arrogance of the devil, illustrate the consequences of rejecting destiny, and convey the law of cause and effect (retribution) for unjust actions. However, there is also potential for a shift in meaning or commodification*

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menyajikan kritik akademik terhadap fenomena sinema horor religius di Indonesia melalui analisis film *Munkar* (2024). Kajian ini menyoroti persoalan teoretis mengenai komodifikasi teks-teks suci dalam ranah sinematik. Dengan memanfaatkan analisis naratif Vladimir Propp dan semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an ditransformasikan dari otoritas teologis menjadi elemen pemantik horor. Analisis naratif mengidentifikasi 24 fungsi Proppian yang memosisikan ayat-ayat suci sebagai agen magis penggerak alur. Dari perspektif semiotik, dekonstruksi simbolik tampak melalui ikon mukena merah dan subversi ruang sakral masjid, yang berujung pada representasi "setan religius". Kontribusi penelitian ini menegaskan adanya pola desakralisasi simbol-simbol Islam yang mengaburkan batas antara kesakralan teks dan kepentingan industri hiburan. Temuan ini menawarkan perspektif baru tentang bagaimana media populer merekonfigurasi wacana moralitas dan takdir melalui citra horor yang provokatif. Analisis Propp mengungkap 24 fungsi naratif dalam alur film, sementara semiotika Peirce menelaah ikon, simbol, dan indeks yang terkait dengan ayat-ayat tersebut—seperti busana merah Herlina, masjid sebagai locus teror, sujud yang membelakangi kiblat, serta peran air, tasbih, dan Al-Qur'an dalam menghadapi kekuatan jahat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa film ini tidak semata menggunakan ayat-ayat

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Al-Qur'an sebagai elemen dekoratif atau dakwah, melainkan juga sebagai instrumen untuk menafsirkan ulang nilai-nilai Islam, merepresentasikan kesombongan setan, menggambarkan konsekuensi penolakan terhadap takdir, dan menyampaikan hukum sebab-akibat (pembalasan) atas tindakan zalim. Namun demikian, terdapat pula potensi pergeseran makna dan komodifikasi.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Films are cultural products that not only capture social reality but also contribute to shaping the general public's mindset on various aspects of life. Indonesians have a keen interest in the supernatural world and rituals involving invisible beings. This interest has grown to the point where horror films have become one of the most popular genres in Indonesian cinema.<sup>1</sup> The rise of horror movie enthusiasts is marked by high audience interest in films such as *KKN di Desa Penari* (2022) produced by MD Pictures, which attracted 10 million viewers, *Agak Laen* (2024) directed by Imajinari with 9 million viewers, *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* (2022) produced by Rapi Films with 6 million viewers, and for the horror-religious subgenre, the most viewers were attracted to the film *Siksa Kubur* (2024) directed by Come and See Pictures in collaboration with Rapi Films and Legacy Pictures, which drew 4 million viewers.<sup>2</sup>

Horror-religious films are not only attributes of beauty, but also reinterpret the Islamic values contained in the Qur'an. Various symbols are scattered throughout, such as mosque settings, Islamic boarding schools, Qur'anic studies, prayers, zikr, and so on. This causes these films to combine entertainment with sacredness, horror with faith, and sensation with preaching.<sup>3</sup> The phenomenon of quoting verses from the Qur'an in Indonesian horror films has become an interesting trend that deserves scientific study. This is because in recent years, several horror films have featured verses from the Qur'an at the beginning or end of the film. These verses usually appear after the film title or towards the end of the story.<sup>4</sup>

Studies on the intersection of religion, media, and narrative structures have been conducted extensively, but significant analytical gaps remain. Previous studies can be classified into four main approaches. *First*, the purely semiotic approach is used to dissect sociopolitical signs and identities. Toni and Fachrizal used Peirce's semiotics to analyze human rights violations in documentary films, but this study was limited to humanitarian issues and did not touch on the transcendental dimension of religion.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Alfathah and Maulana apply the same theory to read Islamic identity symbols and messages from the Qur'an in drama and horror films. Although it touches on sacred texts, this study is more

<sup>1</sup> Namira Choirani Fajri, "Ketakutan dalam Iman: Analisis Semiotika Pierce pada Film Horor-Religi," *Konferensi Linguistik Tahunan Atma Jaya* 23, 2025, 178.

<sup>2</sup> Film Indonesia, "Daftar Film Peringkat Teratas Dalam Perolehan Jumlah Penonton Pada Tahun 2007 - 2025 Berdasarkan Tahun Edar Film," <https://filmindonesia.or.id/film/penonton>.

<sup>3</sup> Fajri, "Ketakutan dalam Iman: Analisis Semiotika Pierce pada Film Horor-Religi," 179.

<sup>4</sup> 31/12/2025 19:10:00

<sup>5</sup> Ahmad Toni and Rafki Fachrizal, "Studi Semiotika Pierce pada Film Dokumenter The Look of Silence: Senyap," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 11, no. 2 (April 2017): 137-54, <https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol11.iss2.art3>.

about identifying moral messages and does not yet address how these verses function structurally in driving the horror narrative.<sup>6</sup>

*Second*, the approach to representing Islam in film. Hakim, through content analysis, explores the representation of Islamic boarding school characters in the film *Qodrat* as an effort to fortify oneself with faith.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Aulia and Miski examine how the values of the Qur'an and Hadith are constructed into an image of piety in the religious-romantic genre.<sup>8</sup> The main limitation of this study group is its focus, which is too oriented towards image and religious messages, thereby neglecting the potential for deconstruction or commodification of sacred verses when placed within the framework of the horror industry.

*Third*, a special study on the horror-religious genre. Fajri made an important contribution by analyzing how sacred symbols were transformed into instruments of terror in the films *Munkar* and *Thaghut*.<sup>9</sup> However, this research is still macro in nature at the level of visual symbols and has not conducted an in-depth textual analysis of the specific function of Al-Qur'an quotations in constructing the logic of the story. Similarly, Kadir uses Peirce's semiotics in drama scripts to examine the reflections of modern humans.<sup>10</sup> However, it has lost its relevance in the context of popular religious discourse on the big screen. *Fourth*, the narrative theory approach. Tama and Dhani apply Vladimir Propp's narrative function to analyze characters in action-fantasy films. However, this research is still limited to the formalistic and technical application of the theory without connecting it to the ideological or theological implications that arise when the narrative structure is filled with sacred religious texts.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, most studies only view verses as patches or solutions to conflicts, without critiquing them as narrative instruments that undergo shifts in meaning or commodification for the sake of the dramatic interests of the film industry. This practice also reflects a shift in religious authority, where the legitimacy of the meaning of verses no longer stems from the authority of interpretation and Islamic scholarly tradition, but is determined by popular cultural actors and the dramatic logic of the film industry.<sup>12</sup> This article attempts to analyze how quotations from the Qur'an are presented and interpreted in the film *Munkar* (2024). This study aims to fill the gap in research through a comprehensive analysis of the film *Munkar* (2024).

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<sup>6</sup> Suryana Alfathah and Rizqi Akbar Maulana, "Simbol Identitas Penggunaan Ayat Al-Qur'an dalam Film Indonesia (Kajian Semiotika Film Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck dan Makmum)," *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Ushuluddin* 3, no. 2 (April 2023): 210–35, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpiu.25467>.

<sup>7</sup> Ahmad Munirul Hakim, "Islam dan Film Horor: Membentengi Individu dengan Keimanan dalam Film *Qodrat*," *Journal of Religion and Film* 2, no. 1 (June 2023): 245–58, <https://doi.org/10.30631/jrf.v2i1.23>.

<sup>8</sup> Mila Aulia and Miski Miski, "Film Islami Sebagai Model Interpretasi atas Al-Qur'an dan Hadis: Kasus Film Ayat Tentang Cinta," *Jurnal THEOLOGIA* 31, no. 1 (June 2020): 139, <https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2020.31.1.5621>.

<sup>9</sup> Fajri, "Ketakutan dalam Iman: Analisis Semiotika Pierce pada Film Horor-Religi."

<sup>10</sup> Herson Kadir, "Analisis Semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce dalam Drama Panggoba Karya La Ode Gusman Nasiru: Penelitian," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat dan Riset Pendidikan* 3, no. 4 (June 2025): 3834–40, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v3i4.958>.

<sup>11</sup> Krisna Tama and Kurnia Rahmad Dhani, "Analisis Fungsi Karakter dalam Film Eternals dengan Teori Fungsi Narasi Vladimir Propp," *Ekspresi* 11, no. 2 (October 2022), <https://doi.org/10.24821/ekp.v11i2.8726>.

<sup>12</sup> Ani Nabila Farahdiba, "The New Trend in Digital School of Tafsir: Qur'an Journaling and the Reconfiguration of Religious Authority on @Aisharizqy's Instagram," *Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought* 2, no. 1 (June 2024): 119–47, <https://doi.org/10.15642/juit.2024.2.1.119-147>; Nopriani Hasibuan, Eka Mulyo Yunus, and Thohar Ahmad Hsb, "Digital Tafsir and the Construction of Religious Authority: A Critical Analysis of Gus Nur's Quranic Interpretation," *Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought* 3, no. 1 (June 2025): 65–97, <https://doi.org/10.15642/juit.2025.3.1.65-97>.

Methodologically, this study offers an integration of Vladimir Propp's narrative function and Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics to dissect the position of Qur'anic verses as plot-driving elements as well as triadic meaning markers.

Analytically, this study aims to explore how verse quotations are presented and interpreted in films set in Islamic boarding schools to construct a logic of horror. The theoretical contribution targeted is the revelation of the ideological implications behind the use of sacred texts, particularly in relation to the issue of shifting meanings of verses, reinterpretation of Islamic values, and the commodification of religiosity practiced to meet the dramatic demands of the entertainment industry. Through this approach, films are no longer viewed merely as entertainment products, but as critical sites where the sacredness of sacred texts is negotiated and deconstructed within the landscape of Indonesian popular culture.

## B. METHODS

This study uses qualitative film analysis through audio-visual text analysis specifications, with the film *Munkar* (2024) positioned as primary data and literature studies serving as theoretical reinforcement instruments and secondary sources of interpretation. The researcher integrates Vladimir Propp's narrative analysis and Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics to gain an understanding that brings together structural and semantic aspects. The justification for this integration lies in the ability of Propp's model to map the chronological function of the Qur'anic verses in driving the plot, while Peirce's semiotics is used to explore the production of meaning of these verses through the triadic relationship of icons, indices, and symbols in the cinematic space.

The data analysis procedure was carried out systematically through five stages to ensure transparency and replicability: (a) scene segmentation to divide the smallest narrative units; (b) mapping of Propp's narrative functions to 31 character functions; (c) identification of verse appearances through transcription of explicitly appearing Qur'anic quotations; (d) classification of Peirce's signs to see the interaction between sacred texts and film visuals; and (e) interpretation of meaning and ideological implications to dissect the phenomenon of religious commodification. The analysis was strictly limited to verses quoted verbally or textually in the film to ensure that the scope of the research remained controlled and consistent with theological aesthetic objectives.

The data validation strategy was carried out through theoretical triangulation and interpretive cross-checking techniques to strengthen the credibility of the interpretation. The researcher compared the results of the audio-visual analysis with authoritative interpretive literature, particularly *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by Quraish Shihab. This source was chosen based on the criteria of contextual-modern interpretation, which provides a strong epistemological basis for evaluating the extent to which the film reinterprets or shifts the meaning of the sacred text. With this approach, the analysis is expected to be able to critically and formally examine the position of the Qur'an in Indonesian popular culture.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Interpreting the Qur'an in the Context of Film

As an audio-visual communication medium, film has the capacity to construct reality through the representation of subjects and objects recorded cinematically. Through a series

of scenes that contain emotional content and dynamic events, films play an active role in influencing the perception and psychology of the audience. In the context of religious discourse, religious films have strategic potential as persuasive instruments of proselytizing, given their ability to visualize complex theological concepts into more accessible narratives,<sup>13</sup> in accordance with the purpose of the film being screened. The effectiveness of this modern medium lies in its entertainment value combined with its educational and informational functions, enabling it to transform abstract values into concrete visual representations.<sup>14</sup>

In the national film landscape, the horror genre consistently ranks as the most popular genre among Indonesians, the majority of whom are Muslims.<sup>15</sup> Contemporary trends show a tendency to integrate religious elements, particularly quotations from the Qur'an, as narrative elements to reinforce the atmosphere of horror while also providing moral content. To analyze the significance of the use of these verses, this study combines two theoretical frameworks: Vladimir Propp's narrative analysis and Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics. Propp's approach is used to identify the functional structure in the plot of the film *Munkar* (2024), which is adapted from the urban legend phenomenon of Islamic boarding schools.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Peirce's semiotics is applied to analyze the dimensions of signs and symbols in order to reveal shifts in the meaning of sacred texts when presented in the cinematic space of horror.

## 2. A Glimpse of the Film *Munkar* (2024)

The film *Munkar* (2024), directed by Anggy Umbara, is set in the Ar-Rahimu Islamic boarding school in East Java, which serves as a microcosm of the unequal power relations between female students. The narrative centers on Herlina, a new female student who experiences systematic bullying by her seniors, leading to her tragic death while trying to escape. The plot then moves on to Herlina's mysterious return to the boarding school, followed by a series of supernatural terrors. The director positions this work as a critique of the phenomenon of bullying in religious educational institutions as well as a manifestation of the consequences of doctrinal deviation through the practice of black magic. Although it claims to carry a moral message about God's protection and Islamic ethics, the film's narrative is dominated by the use of sacred symbols and quotations from the Qur'an intertwined with horror.

This plot serves as the starting point for this study to examine the consistency between the intended message of faith and the horror imagery presented. Therefore, *Munkar's* narrative will be further analyzed using Vladimir Propp's narrative function framework to identify how elements of the Qur'anic verses are positioned within the plot structure—

<sup>13</sup> M Ali Musyafak, *Film Religi Sebagai Media Dakwah Islam*, n.d., 335.

<sup>14</sup> M Ali Musyafak, *Film Religi Sebagai Media Dakwah Islam*, n.d., 332.

<sup>15</sup> Emanuella Bungasmara Ega Tirta, "Data Terbaru: Provinsi dengan Muslim Terbanyak di Indonesia," CNBC Indonesia, accessed December 7, 2025, <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/research/20250905160953-128-664560/data-terbaru-provinsi-dengan-muslim-terbanyak-di-indonesia>.

<sup>16</sup> Putri Octavia Saragih, "Kisah Horor Hantu Herlina, Santriwati dari Pondok Pesantren yang Tuntut Pembalasan," News, Fadami Indozone, January 23, 2024, [https://fadami.indozone.id/mistik/444015222/kisah-horor-hantu-herlina-santriwati-dari-pondok-pesantren-yang-tuntut-pembalasan#goog\\_rew](https://fadami.indozone.id/mistik/444015222/kisah-horor-hantu-herlina-santriwati-dari-pondok-pesantren-yang-tuntut-pembalasan#goog_rew); Nadia Omara, "Hantu Urban Legend Tiap Daerah Part 2! (Hantu Herlina, Hantu Lasmi, Hantu Farah)," YouTube, YouTube, September 10, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbxRTiCxq4Q>; MD Pictures, *Munkar: Kisah Misteri Nyata Hantu Santriwati yang Dibenci*, News, February 22, 2024, 264, <https://mdentertainment.com/pictures/id/news-id/kisah-misteri-nyata-hantu-santriwati/>.

whether as a task-giving function or an auxiliary instrument. Simultaneously, Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics will be used to evaluate the shift in meaning of these religious signs to see whether there has been a commodification of values that reduces sacredness for the sake of the entertainment industry's aesthetic needs.

### 3. The Film *Munkar* (2024) from the Perspective of Propp's Narrative Function Theory

Vladimir Propp's theory of function is one of the most influential narrative theories in the analysis of story structure, especially in fairy tales and films. Propp identified that although stories different, they have the same recurring narrative functions. In his book *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), Propp discovered 31 narrative functions that form the basis of Russian folk tale structure,<sup>17</sup> and these functions can be found in various types of narratives, including films.<sup>18</sup>

The application of Vladimir Propp's morphological theory in the film *Munkar* (2024) provides a structural basis for seeing how horror narratives are built on universal folk tale patterns. Although Propp's scheme was originally designed to analyze Russian fairy tales, its relevance in this film lies in the use of the urban legend structure of Islamic boarding schools, which has functional similarities with the mystical elements of fairy tales. The integration of this theory into the horror-religious genre requires a critical note: Propp's function in *Munkar* works not only on a physical level, but also on a theological level, where the hero operates through sacred authority and the villain manifests through doctrinal deviation.

According to Propp, a story usually begins with an Initial Situation symbolized by  $\alpha$ . Although this situation is not a function, it is still an important morphological element. Family members are mentioned one by one, or the future hero (for example, a soldier) is introduced by mentioning his name or showing his status.<sup>19</sup> At 01:00-02:00, the setting of the film is shown, namely the Ar-Rahimu Islamic boarding school in Bengiratus village, Lamongan, East Java. Next, the female students are shown preparing to attend a study session after dawn led by Kiai Darrus. After finishing, the female students are given 10 minutes to prepare before reciting the Qur'an together with Umi Yayuk after dawn begins.

Next, the table below will explain Propp's narrative function in the film *Munkar* (2024) and will also display the verses of the Qur'an quoted in the scene.

Table 1. Vladimir Propp's Narrative Functions in *Munkar* (2024)

No	Function		Scene	Function Description		Verse
	Symbol	Description				
1	$\beta$	<i>Absentation</i> (One of the family members is not at home)	02:40-03:04 18:00-18:29 23:28-23:30	- Herlina did not attend the Quran recitation after dawn because she overslept in her room when she was about to	-	

<sup>17</sup> Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd ed., trans. Louis A. Wagner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Tama and Dhani, "Analisis Fungsi Karakter dalam Film Eternals dengan Teori Fungsi Narasi Vladimir Propp."

<sup>19</sup> Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 26.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- take the Quran.</li> <li>- Herlina was not at the Islamic boarding school and was found injured in an accident.</li> <li>- The cleric is not at the Islamic boarding school because he is teaching at another boarding school.</li> </ul>	
2.	$\gamma$	<i>Interdiction</i> (Prohibition addressed to heroes)	03:38- 04:39 51:57- 51:58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Female students must not be absent during dawn recitation.</li> <li>- Ustaz Ghani was not allowed to contact Kiai Darrus.</li> </ul>	-
3.	$\delta$	<i>Violation</i> (Violation of Prohibitions)	03:56- 04:39	Herlina overslept and did not attend the dawn recitation, causing all the female students to be punished by having to clean up.	-
4.	$\epsilon$	<i>Reconnaissance</i> (The criminal attempted to conduct surveillance)	10:09- 10:20	During his parents' visit, Obi was scolded by his parents and stole glances at Herlina, who was also being visited.	-
5.	$\xi$	<i>Delivery</i> (The criminal receives information about his victim)	13:15- 13:21	Obi received information that Herlina had reported him to Umi Yayuk.	
6.	$\eta$	<i>Trickery</i> (Criminals try to deceive their victims in order to gain control over them or their belongings)	13:52- 14:18	Obi, Dilla, Aminah, and Wati bullied Herlina, pulling her hair, eating the lunch Herlina's mother had packed for her, and then spitting it out on Herlina.	-
7.	$\theta$	<i>Complicity</i> (The victim is trapped in deception and thus unknowingly helps his enemy)	13:26- 17:07	Herlina was grabbed by the hair, her hand was burned with a hot iron, the wound was washed with water, her whole body was doused with water, and she was slapped.	-
8.	A	<i>Villainy</i> (The offender caused	17:11- 17:40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Herlina, who was being chased by</li> </ul>	-

		harm or injury to a family member)	47:12- 47:57 1:06:36- 1:06:38	her bullies, was forced to run so far that she fell and was accidentally hit by her own mother when she was bringing her bedsheets. - Herlina killed Obi and Dilla.	
8a.	a	<i>Lack</i> (One of the family members is either lacking something or wants something)	18:35- 19:30 1:17:35- 1:19:10	Sapto, Herlina's father, was furious because his daughter, who had been sent to a boarding school, was found dead in the middle of the road late at night. He was even more furious when he found out that Herlina had died and wanted her to come back to life.	-
9.	B	<i>Mediation</i> (Flaws or shortcomings are known; heroes are requested or commanded; they are allowed to leave or sent away)	51:57- 51:58 1:07:34- 1:08:44	- Ustaz Ghani was suspicious about Obi's unnatural death. He wanted to tell Obi's parents about it, but Ustazah Yayuk stopped him. - Ranum and Siti reported to Ustaz Ghani and Ustaz Jafar that Herlina was the cause of the chaos. Then, Umi Yayuk and Umi Indri, who knew that there was danger, decided to gather all the female students in the mosque.	-
10	C	<i>Beginning Counteraction</i> (The seeker agrees or decides to take retaliatory action)	1:17:39- 1:19:12	Herlina, who had returned to her activities at the Islamic boarding school, began acting strangely and terrorizing the seniors who had bullied her.	-
1	↑	<i>Departure</i> (The hero leaves home)	23:28- 23:30	The cleric teaches at another Islamic boarding school.	-
1	D	<i>The first Function</i>	31:21-	Ustaz Ghani was attacked	Asy-Syūra:40,

		<i>of The Donor</i> (The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, and so on, which prepares the way for him to receive a magical agent or helper)	32:53	by Siti, who was possessed by Herlina.	Shād:84-85, Al-Baqarāh:286
1	E	<i>The Hero's Reaction</i> (Hero reacts to potential donor's actions)	-	-	-
1	F	<i>Provision or Receipt of a magical Agent</i> (Heroes gain the ability to use magical agents)	1:16:54-1:19:40	Kiai can fight Herlina's power	Al-Baqarāh:284
1	G	<i>Spatial Transference between two Kingdoms, guidance</i> (The hero is moved, transported, or carried to the location of the object being sought)	1:13:07-1:13:20	Ustaz Ghani and Ustaz Jafar, who were on patrol, saw Ranum and Siti being harassed by Herlina.	-
1	H	<i>Struggle</i> (Heroes and villains battle it out)	1:13:07-1:20:00	A battle ensued between Kiai Darrus, Ustaz Ghani, and Ustaz Jafar against Herlina.	Al-Baqarah:255, An-Nūr:21
1	J	<i>Branding Marking</i> (Heroes are given titles)	-	-	-
1	I	<i>Victory (The criminal lost)</i>	1:20:00	Herlina lost because, in addition to having verses from the Quran recited over her while pressure was applied to her forehead, her father also removed the nail from her crown.	-
1	K	<i>Liquidation</i> (The initial flaws or shortcomings have been eliminated)	32:52	Ustaz Ghani successfully treated Siti, who was possessed by Herlina.	Shād:84-85 dan Al-Baqarah: 286
2	↓	<i>Returns</i> (Hero Returns)	1:16:52	The cleric arrived just as Herlina was about to launch her final attack.	-
2	Pr	<i>Pursuit</i> (Heroes	51:57-	Ustaz Ghani wants to	-

		are being pursued)	51:58	contact Kiai Darrus.	
2	Rs	<i>Rescue</i> (Rescue of the hero from pursuit)	-	-	-
2	O	<i>Unrecognized</i> (Unrecognized heroes arrive home or in another country)	-	-	-
2	L	<i>Unfounded Claims</i> (False Heroes Make Baseless Claims)	22:42- 23:12 51:18- 51:56	- When Herlina returned, the teachers were discussing the matter in the staff room. Mr. Ghani suggested asking Herlina what had happened that night. Mr. Jafar was concerned that there might have been bullying among the female students. Umi Yayuk said that there was no need to do so because it was impossible for the senior female students to bully Herlina, as there was no seniority among them. - Umi Yayuk insisted that the female students should not be sent home for fear of damaging the image of the Islamic boarding school.	-
2	M	<i>Difficult Task</i> (A difficult task faced by the hero)	1:13:06	Ustaz Ghani, Ustaz Jafar, and Kiai fought against Herlina, who was possessed and tried to kill Ranum and Siti.	Al-Baqarah:255, Al- Baqarāh:284, An-Nūr:21.
2	N	<i>Solution</i> (The task is complete)	1:20:40- 1:21:53	The bodies of Dilla, Dewi, and Herlina were transported by car and buried. The cleric then gave a lecture to all the	-

				female students.	
2	Q	<i>Recognition</i> (Recognized hero)	-	-	-
2	Ex	<i>Exposure</i> (False Hero or Exposed Criminal)	1:17:39-1:19:12	A flashback shows that Sapto revived his child with the help of a shaman. Herlina had actually been killed when she was hit by her own mother.	-
2	T	<i>Transfiguration</i> (The hero was given a new look)	-	-	-
3	U	<i>Punishment</i> (The criminal was punished)	1:22:30-1:23:05	Sapto was approached by Herlina, who had transformed into a shaman and said, "Don't pull it out before it's finished."	-
3	W	<i>Wedding</i> (The hero married and ascended the throne)	-	-	-

Based on this analysis, it can be seen that the plot of this film is as follows:  $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta, \varepsilon, \xi, \eta, \theta, A, a, \beta, B, C, \beta, \uparrow, L, \gamma, Pr, D, K, B, G, M, \downarrow, Ex, H, F, I, N, U$ . Thus, there are 24 functions in *Munkar* (2024). Propp then divides the story into seven characters<sup>20</sup>, first, Villain (who fights with the hero). Next, there is the hero character (who fights with the villain). In the character division, *Munkar* makes an interesting archetype shift. Herlina is positioned as the villain in the terror phase, but she is also a victim in the initial situation phase. Conversely, the hero characters, represented by the figures of authority in the Islamic boarding school (Kiai and Ustaz), do not fight with physical strength, but with metaphysical power through the verses of the Qur'an. Then, there are the Donor characters (who support the heroes in completing their tasks), in this case Ranum and Siti.

There are also the characters of the Princess (who is given a task) and the Princess's Father (who gives her a difficult task). These two characters represent Sapto, who incites Herlina to take revenge on her bullies and attackers. Next, there is the character of the dispatcher (who sends the hero on his mission), which corresponds to Ustazah Ghani, who contacts Kiai to return home to resolve the problems caused by Herlina. Finally, there is the false hero, which is depicted by Umi Yayuk, who represents the failure of institutions in dealing with bullying, which narratively becomes the trigger for the emergence of disaster (A). This shows that the horror in this film is not only supernatural but also stems from moral failure within religious institutions themselves.

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad Badruzzaman, "Analisis Narasi Fungsi Karakter Makna Perjuangan dalam Film Surat dari Praha" (Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, 2017), 37.

#### 4. Analysis of Al-Qur'an Verse Quotations Featured in the Film *Munkar* (2024) Through Pierce's Semiotics

Films are generally composed of many elements such as sound, images, and music that work together to achieve the desired effect.<sup>21</sup> As one of the leading figures in semiotics, Pierce explained that signs are not only attached to culture and language, but also to something that represents a person in a particular way or capacity.<sup>22</sup> For Pierce, semiotics is an action, influence, or cooperation between three things, namely the representamen/sign with the symbol R, which is a sign that can be perceived by the five senses. The object is something that refers to the sign with the symbol O. And the interpretant is the meaning of the sign that can be captured by the receiver<sup>23</sup> with the symbol I.<sup>24</sup>

Pierce also continued that there are two basic principles of the nature of signs, namely representative and interpretive. The representative nature of signs shows that a sign can represent something else. Meanwhile, the interpretive nature means that a sign can provide opportunities for interpretation for its recipients and users. Pierce then expanded his study with a classification of signs, including icons, symbols, and indices.<sup>25</sup> Here is an explanation of each sign that appears in the film *Munkar* (2024).

##### a. Icon

An icon is a sign that resembles what it represents.<sup>26</sup> For example, the image of an apple is an icon of an apple fruit. The following are icons displayed by the movie *Munkar* (2024)

###### 1) Red clothing

Throughout the film, the signs displayed by the character Herlina always use red attributes. Such as headscarves, clothes, veils, and skirts. Generally, the color red is often associated with blood, anger, and danger.<sup>27</sup> Red also triggers anger and revenge. Biologically, the face reddens when angry. As happens to Red in the movie *Inside Out*.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Herlina's use of a red mukena is a form of symbolic deconstruction of the mukena, which is traditionally synonymous with the color white. The shift to an aggressive red represents a faith tainted by revenge and black magic. The use of this color is not merely aesthetic, but rather a code of communication that carries ideological meaning.<sup>29</sup> This triggers an interpretation of danger in Herlina's character because this color directly evokes feelings of fear, suspicion, or anticipation of violent or angry actions from Herlina.

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<sup>22</sup> Ahmad Toni and Rafki Fachrizal, "Studi Semitoka Pierce pada Film Dokumenter The Look of Silence: Senyap," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 11, no. 2 (April 2017): 140, <https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol11.iss2.art3>.

<sup>23</sup> Yayan Rahtikawati and Dadan Rusmana, *Metodologi Tafsir Al-Qur'an: Strukturalisme, Semantik, Semiotik, & Hermeneutik*, 1st ed. (Bandung: CV Pustaka Setia, 2013), 336–38.

<sup>24</sup> Kadir, "Analisis Semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce dalam Drama Panggoda Karya La Ode Gusman Nasiru," 3839.

<sup>25</sup> Rahtikawati and Rusmana, *Metodologi Tafsir Al-Qur'an: Strukturalisme, Semantik, Semiotik, & Hermeneutik*, 336–340.

<sup>26</sup> Elsa Widia Kartika and Ahmad Supena, "Analisis Semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce Dalam Novel 'Pasung Jiwa' Karya Okky Madasari," *Pena Literasi* 7, no. 1 (April 2024): 94, <https://doi.org/10.24853/pl.7.1.94-101>.

<sup>27</sup> Fajri, "Ketakutan dalam Iman: Analisis Semiotika Pierce pada Film Horor-Religi," 181.

<sup>28</sup> Evelyn Theodora Hasiana, Mia Fitria Agustina, and Ririn Kurnia Trisnawati, "Emotions Vs Colors: A Semiotics Study," *Vivid: Journal of Language and Literature* 13, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.25077/vj.13.1.23-36.2024>.

<sup>29</sup> Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, "Colour as a Semiotic Mode: Notes for a Grammar of Colour," *Visual Communication* 1, no. 3 (October 2002): 343–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/147035720200100306>.

2) Prostrating while facing away from the qibla

The sign shown is that Obi and Dilla died while wearing mukenah and prostrating with their backs to the qibla. Based on what they did, namely bullying and torturing, this gives rise to the interpretation that they had committed injustice and done things that are prohibited in Islam.

3) Water, prayer beads, and verses from the Qur'an

In one scene, it is shown that Siti, who is possessed by Herlina, is immune to the recitation of verses from the Qur'an by Ustaz Ghani. In fact, Siti continues the recitation herself. Then, when she is splashed with water that has been blessed with prayers, a red light emanates from Siti's face and she loses consciousness. Water can be used as a medium to protect the body from negative influences.<sup>30</sup> Water is one of the media commonly used by ruqyah practitioners. At the height of the battle, Ustaz Ghani also struck Herlina's face with his prayer beads, causing her to pause before finally regaining consciousness. Prayer beads are also included as a medium in one of the ruqyah methods.<sup>31</sup> After regaining consciousness, Herlina then read QS An-Nūr: 21 (1:14:40-1:14:51)

...وَمَن يَتَّبِعْ حُطُولَتِ السَّيِّطِنِ فَإِنَّهُ يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ...

Whoever follows the steps of Satan, then indeed he (Satan) commands (humans to do) evil and immoral deeds.<sup>32</sup>

Quraish Shihab explains that this verse is a continuation of the previous verse, which was revealed in relation to the slander directed at Aisha after the battle of Bani Al-Musthalaq.<sup>33</sup> This verse commands us to always fortify ourselves with faith and forbids us from going against our nature by following in the footsteps of Satan. He invites humans to disobedience, spreads false news, and incites them to think badly of those around them. Anyone who follows the footsteps of Satan with full awareness has committed an evil and abominable act. The phrase *khutuwāt asy-syāitān* (footsteps of Satan) here indicates that Satan leads humans astray step by step.<sup>34</sup>

Shihab emphasized that initially, Satan will tempt humans gradually. Each step will be followed by another until Satan finally leads humans into hell with him. The word *fakhisyā* here is interpreted as an act that is contrary to religious commands. Specifically, acts whose punishment has been determined in this world, such as murder, adultery, defamation, and so on. Then the term *Al-Munkar* here is interpreted as despicable acts that are not only contrary to religious values but also despicable according to existing customs.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Akhmad Rosyi Izzulhaq, Adrika Fithrotul Aini, and Alifia Zuhriatul Alifa, "Terapi Ruqyah Menggunakan Media Air Sebagai Pengobatan Alternatif: Kajian Living Qur'an Di Desa Kedungrejo Sidoarjo," *Al Fawatih Jurnal Kajian al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 4, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.24952/alfawatih.v4i2.6828>.

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad Nasiruddin Akmal, "Ruqyah Menggunakan Ayat-Ayat Al-Qur'an: Analisis Metode Dan Praktik Ruqyah di Desa Cikurubuk," *Jurnal Budi Pekerti Agama Islam* 2, no. 5 (June 2024): 34-44, <https://doi.org/10.61132/jbpai.v2i5.511>.

<sup>32</sup> Lajnah Pentashihan mushaf Al-Qur'an, "Qur'an Kemenag," Qur'an Kemenag, 2022, <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>.

<sup>33</sup> Moh Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-mishbah: pesan, kesan dan keserasian al-Qur'an*, Edisi baru (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2009), 294.

<sup>34</sup> Moh Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-mishbah: pesan, kesan dan keserasian al-Qur'an*, 309.

<sup>35</sup> Moh Quraish Shihab, 309

The presence of QS. An-Nūr: 21 in this scene is not merely a quotation, but a moral legitimization that identifies bullying behavior and the practice of reviving the dead as *khuṭuwāt asy-syaiṭān*. Quraish Shihab's interpretation in *Tafsir Al-Misbah* emphasizes that *Al-Munkar* is an act that is despicable in terms of religion and custom. Herlina also shouted the word *Munkar* three times. This shows that the terror that occurred was a systemic consequence of human injustice itself.

The scene then shows Ustaz Ghani reciting the verse of *Al-Kursiy* (Q.S. Al-Baqarah:255), followed by Herlina (1:13:59-1:14:25).

اللَّهُ أَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۝ لَا تَأْخُذْنَهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا تَنْوِمُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ أَلَا يَرْدِنِيهُ  
يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا حَلَّ فِيهِمْ وَلَا يُجِيظُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ وَسَعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يُؤْدِهُ حَفْظُهُمَا  
وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah, there is no god but Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of all existence. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. No one can intercede with Him except by His permission. He knows what is before them and what is behind them. They do not know anything of His knowledge except what He wills. His Throne (His knowledge and power) encompasses the heavens and the earth. He does not feel any heaviness in maintaining both. He is the Most High, the Most Great.<sup>36</sup>

This verse describes the majestic nature of Allah, which is vastly different from that of kings or rulers in this world. It is called *Al-Kursiy* because 17 attributes refer to Allah and can dispel any doubts and negative thoughts that may arise about Allah's protection and sustenance.<sup>37</sup> Allah is so detailed in describing His attributes that it shows that His power and protection encompass everything He has created. Shihab, in his *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, emphasizes that anyone who recites the verse of *Al-Kursiy* is protected by Allah and kept away from the disturbance of Satan.<sup>38</sup>

Shihab illustrates that people who are accustomed to goodness will feel uncomfortable when they hear bad words. When they hear bad words, their hearts will be troubled and their minds will be confused. The opposite is also true. Anyone whose morals have been corrupted will be greatly disturbed when they hear divine words (verses from the Qur'an). The next argument is a hadith quoted from Bukhari and Muslim that the devil runs away while farting so as not to hear the call to prayer. When the call to prayer is over, they will return with whispers about things that humans have forgotten.<sup>39</sup>

Herlina's use of the *Al-Kursiy* verse represents a paradoxical symbol of divine power in horror narratives. On one hand, this verse is positioned as a means of exorcism to subdue supernatural entities through the 17 attributes of Allah's majesty, which are untouched by the weaknesses of creatures. On the other hand, the fact that Herlina can recite it shows a cinematic strategy to create theological terror that moral deviation can make someone feel disturbed or even challenge the divine words.

Finally, Herlina is stopped by the efforts of four adult men: the Kiai, who recites verses from the Qur'an while pressing Herlina's forehead with his thumb; two ustaz, who hold

<sup>36</sup> Lajnah Pentashihan mushaf Al-Qur'an, "Qur'an Kemenag."

<sup>37</sup> Shihab, *Tafsir al-mishbah*, 547–48.

<sup>38</sup> Shihab., 550.

<sup>39</sup> Shihab., 550.

Herlina's right and left hands; and Sapto, who pulls out the nail from his child's crown. (1:17:14-1:17:30) The verse recited was Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 284:

اللَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَمَا تُبَدِّلُوا مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوْ تُخْمُوْهُ يُخَاسِبُكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ فَيَعْلَمُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ  
وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Whether you disclose what is in your hearts or conceal it, Allah will judge you for it. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. Allah is All-Powerful over all things.<sup>40</sup>

This verse legitimizes that everything that is hidden—whether it be the injustice of the bully or Sapto's hidden motives—is under God's reckoning. Thus, the Qur'an in the film *Munkar* is not only present as an element of preaching, but is commodified into an exorcism mantra that confirms God's dominance over supernatural anomalies created by human doctrinal deviations.

### b. Symbol

A symbol is a sign that is associated with an object based on conventional agreement.<sup>41</sup> For example, the red and white flag represents Indonesia.

#### 1) The ghost of Herlina as a symbol of the devil's arrogance

This is shown in several scenes that give clues about arrogance and evil, such as when the ustazah leaves her homework to study the interpretation of Q.S. al-Isrā': 37 (19:48-19:53), which reads:

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرْحَّاً إِنَّكَ لَنْ تُخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجَنَانَ طُولاً

Do not walk on this earth with arrogance, for you will not be able to pierce the earth, nor will you be able to soar as high as the mountains.<sup>42</sup>

Shihab explains this verse by quoting Al-Biqa'i, who said that arrogance is the main obstacle to knowledge that leads to goodness and a chronic disease that breeds ignorance.<sup>43</sup> Allah forbids anyone from walking on earth with arrogance because humans are weak creatures who cannot live without help from anyone or anything. It is said that you will not be able to pierce the earth no matter how hard you strike it, and no matter how high you raise your head, you will not be able to reach the height of a mountain.<sup>44</sup>

There is also the word *Asalamualaikum*, which in Islam is used to wish goodness upon others. However, in this film it has a different meaning because it is uttered by Herlina, whose body has been possessed by a demon. This word first appears in the film in the first minute, when the screen is still black. In the following scenes, the expression on Herlina's face (after being possessed) when she utters this phrase is not a friendly one, but rather one full of

<sup>40</sup> Lajnah Pentashihan mushaf Al-Qur'an, "Qur'an Kemenag."

<sup>41</sup> Kartika and Supena, "Analisis Semiotika Charles Sanders Peierce dalam Novel 'Pasung Jiwa' Karya Okky Madasari."

<sup>42</sup> Lajnah Pentashihan mushaf Al-Qur'an, "Qur'an Kemenag."

<sup>43</sup> Muhammad Quraish Shihab, *Tafsîr Al-Mîshbâh : Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian al-Qur'an*, Cetakan V, Surah Ibrâhim, Surah Al-Hijr, Surah An-Nâhl, Surah Al-Isrâ' 7 (Jakarta: Lentera Haiti, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> Shihab, *Tafsîr Al-Mîshbâh*, 466-467.

secrets and ulterior motives. As shown in scenes 21:51-22:00, 24:40-24:41, 30:23-30:26, 40:21-40:27.

Another scene shows Ranum and Herlina, who is possessed, taking turns reading verses from the Qur'an. Before becoming possessed, Herlina was unable to read the Qur'an. However, after she returned from the hospital, she was suddenly able to read the Qur'an fluently. Ranum, shocked by this change, shows her surprise. Herlina then looks at her with satisfaction because she can keep up with and even surpass Ranum. The verses recited alternately are QS. Shād: 78-83 (36:12-38:06), which read:

وَلَنْ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ. قَالَ رَبِّي فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمٍ يُبَعْثُرُونَ . إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمُعْلَوْمِ. قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ . إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمُعْلَوْمِ . قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ لَأَغْوِيَنِيمُ أَجْمَعِينَ . إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُحْلَصِينَ .

Verily, My curse shall remain upon you until the Day of Reckoning. (Satan) said, 'O my Lord, grant me respite until the Day they are resurrected.' (Allah) said, "Verily, you are among those who are postponed until the appointed time (of the Hour)." (Satan) said, "By Your glory, I will surely mislead them all. Except for Your chosen servants (because of their sincerity) among them.<sup>45</sup>

This verse is a continuation of the previous verse, which tells of Satan's reluctance when God commanded him to prostrate himself before Adam. Satan refused because he felt he was superior, being made of fire, while Adam was made of clay.<sup>46</sup> Then God decided to curse him until Judgment Day. Satan responded as verses 79 and 82 show that his arrogance was not only towards Adam but also towards God's command. The proof is that he did not ask for forgiveness and instead asked for an extension of life until the Day of Reckoning arrived to mislead mankind<sup>47</sup> In another verse that also tells this story (Al-Hijr 36-38), Satan uses the word *Rabbi* (my Lord), which shows that he acknowledges His greatness and providence, but this acknowledgment does not encourage him to repent because his soul is already full of malice and corruption.<sup>48</sup>

Herlina, who was possessed, also showed her arrogance when Ustaz Ghani ordered the devil to leave Herlina's body and threatened to destroy it if it did not leave. Herlina then stared at Ustaz Ghani with a challenging look and said, "Try it." Ustaz Ghani then began reciting the verse of Al-Kursiy while gripping Herlina's head, and what happened next was that Herlina continued reciting the verse of Al-Kursiy along with Ustaz Ghani. (1:13:50-1:14:30)

At the end of the film, Kiai Darrus delivers a speech that goes: "*The devil is a creature of Allah whose faith is more perfect than ours; they have worshipped Allah for longer. However, it was their arrogance that made them refuse to bow down to Adam, and they vowed to mislead Adam's descendants into evil. All of Adam's descendants will be tempted and seduced, and most will be tempted except those who are sincere, who do all their deeds sincerely, expecting nothing in return but seeking only the pleasure of Allah SWT.*" (1:20:42-1:21:41)

<sup>45</sup> Lajnah Pentashihan mushaf Al-Qur'an, "Qur'an Kemenag."

<sup>46</sup> Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbâh : Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian al-Qur'an*, 125.

<sup>47</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al Misbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, V, Surah Ash Shâffât, Surah Shâd, Surah Az-Zumar, Surah Ghâfir, Surah Fushshilat, Surah Asy-Syûrâ, Surah Az-Zukhruf (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2012), 12:169-72.

<sup>48</sup> Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbâh : Pesan, Kesan, dan Keserasian al-Qur'an*, 128.

In this film, the devil is depicted praying, touching and reading the Qur'an, and being able to say greetings. So far, the devil is only known to come from the jinn.<sup>49</sup> whose main job is to tempt and nurture misguided humans with all his tricks.<sup>50</sup> The depiction of the Devil praying, touching the Quran, and fluently reciting verses from Al-Kursiy creates a profound theological horror.

Theoretically, this indicates the subversion of sacred symbols or desacralization in the Indonesian horror film industry. It is commonly known that demons interfere during prayer to whisper things that humans have forgotten and to instill doubt during its performance.<sup>51</sup> As for reciting the Qur'an, Satan deceives humans by encouraging them to recite the Qur'an repeatedly without tartil, then showing it off and reciting the holy book loudly so that others will know.<sup>52</sup> The Qur'an itself is known as *syifa'* (medicine) for both the physical and spiritual<sup>53</sup> and used in the practice of *rukyah*<sup>54</sup> so it is very strange that the devil would pray and recite the Qur'an fluently.

The form of desacralization in this film is also shown when sacred activities such as reciting the Qur'an and saying greetings (*Assalamualaikum*) are separated from their spiritual values and turned into instruments of intimidation. Herlina's secretive and challenging gaze when saying greetings or reciting verses shows that the devil in this film is not afraid of symbols of divinity, but rather uses them to demonstrate his superiority over humans. This triggers anxiety among the community.<sup>55</sup> that symbolic piety is insufficient without sincerity as its foundation.

## 2) Rejecting destiny can be detrimental to oneself.

While Herlina was being prayed for by Kiai Darrus, there was a flashback. Sapto, Herlina's father, could not accept his daughter's death. He asked the doctor to hide the fact, saying that he was afraid his wife would not be able to accept it. Sapto then went to a shaman to bring his daughter back to life. The shaman said "*mugi dendam puniko tuntas*" (hopefully that grudge will be settled). When he returned home, Sapto explained to his wife that Herlina had to be returned to the Islamic boarding school immediately, because there was an alternative treatment that could heal her wounds. She also had to be isolated so that she could recover quickly.

At the end of the film, it is revealed that Sapto lost Herlina and his wife because of his actions. While daydreaming in the living room, Sapto is suddenly approached by a shaman carrying the nail that had been in Herlina's head. The shaman stares at Sapto intently and

<sup>49</sup> Muh. Imam Sanusi Al Khanafi, "Tafsir Tematik: Manaqib Iblis Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu al-Quran dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (December 2023): 192–207, <https://doi.org/10.19109/jsq.v3i2.21461>; Nuramin Nuramin, "Analisis Terhadap Penafsiran Imam Al-Alusy tentang Jin, Iblis, dan Setan," *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas* 1, no. 3 (July 2021): 334–58, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v1i3.13429>.

<sup>50</sup> Sanusi Al Khanafi, "Tafsir Tematik," 200.

<sup>51</sup> Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Alī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Perangkap syetan*, 1st ed., trans. Kathur Suhardi (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 1998), 199.

<sup>52</sup> al-Jawzī, *Perangkap syetan*, 205.

<sup>53</sup> Muhammad Husni and Yuliza Anggraini, "Syifa' dan Dawa': Kajian Fungsi Al-Qur'an sebagai Obat," *Istinarah: Riset Keagamaan, Sosial dan Budaya* 6, no. 2 (December 2024): 225, <https://doi.org/10.31958/istinarah.v6i2.13965>.

<sup>54</sup> Muhammad Nasyiruddin Akmal, "Rugyah Menggunakan Ayat-Ayat Al-Qur'an."

<sup>55</sup> "Film Munkar Dapat Kecaman dari Warganet, Disebut Bikin Takut Salat," Narasi Tv, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://narasi.tv/read/narasi-daily/film-Munkar-banjir-kritikan-bikin-takut-sholat/4>.

says, "Don't pull it out until it's finished," as he drops the nail. Sapto's eyes, which were following the movement of the falling object, realized that the shaman's clothes had changed into a red robe. The next second, Sapto realized that the person in front of him was Herlina.

### 3) Everything has its consequences.

In this case, Obi, Siti, and Dilla's actions were unjustifiable because they felt superior and bullied Herlina, who was a new student. The next mistake was made by Herlina's mother, who was careless while driving and crash her daughter, who had accidentally fallen while being chased by her bullies. Sapto was also at fault because even though he entrusted his daughter to study religion at the Islamic boarding school, he himself raised his daughter with the help of a shaman.

The following is the verse read by Siti when she possessed Herlina, which was also used as an argument to retaliate against the seniors who bullied her (30:59-31:15). She also recited this verse when she was confronted by Ustaz Ghani, who questioned her presence. Herlina replied that she was called to retaliate against those who committed injustice (1:13:42-1:13:49). Ustaz Ghani also recited this verse when giving a lecture at the mosque to the female students (23:52-24:26). The verse is Q.S. Asy-Syūra:40, which reads:

وَجَرَوْا سَيِّئَةً مِّثْلَهَا فَمَنْ عَفَ وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّلَمِينَ

The response to evil is evil of equal measure. However, whoever forgives and does good (to those who do evil), their reward is with Allah. Indeed, He does not like the wrongdoers.

Wahbah Zuhaili explains this verse in his commentary by quoting a hadith narrated by Imam Muslim, Abu Daud, and at-Tirmidzi, which means, "The sin of two people who insult each other is borne by the one who started it first, until the one who was insulted first retaliates by exceeding the limits and going to extremes." Then he (the Prophet) recited the verse, "And the recompense for an evil deed is an evil deed like it." <sup>56</sup>

Allah does not encourage humans to always retaliate against evil deeds. However, Allah emphasizes that retaliation is permissible because it is only fair if the crime and the punishment are equal. Then, in the next sentence, Allah encourages forgiveness. God promises a far greater reward, as narrated in the hadith by Imam Ahmad, Muslim, and at-Tirmidzi, which means, "God does not grant a servant the attitude of forgiveness except that it increases his glory."<sup>57</sup>

Proportionate punishment is a person's right to defend themselves, therefore *qishash* and fines are prescribed. Furthermore, Allah also mentions that He does not like oppressors (those who initiate evil and those who retaliate beyond limits). Allah will punish these people with severe and painful torment.<sup>58</sup>

Then Ustaz Ghani recited QS Shād:84-85 (31:39-32:07)

فَالْفَلْقُ وَالْحَقُّ أَفْوَلُ { لَا مُلَكَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكَ وَمَنْ تَبَعَكَ مِنْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

<sup>56</sup> Wahbah Az Zuhaili and Abdul Hayyie Al-Kattani, *Tafsir Al-Munir: Aqidah Syari'ah Manhaj*, 1st ed., Fushshilat-Qāf (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2013), 13:99.

<sup>57</sup> Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir*, 13:99-100.

<sup>58</sup> Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir*, 13:100.

(Allah) said, "Then, the truth (is My oath) and only the truth do I speak. I will surely fill Hell with you and those who follow you among them all.<sup>59</sup>

Then it ends with the last verse of Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 286 (32:41-32:43)

أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكُفَّارِينَ ....

You are our protector. So, help us in facing the disbelievers.<sup>60</sup>

#### 4) Mosques as Places of Refuge and Centers of Terror

In this film, the mosque becomes a symbol of a sacred place that is the center of activity. However, this place also becomes a place of terror perpetrated by Herlina. Obi and Dilla die there as a result of Herlina's actions, and Siti is haunted by female students who are praying together. The mosque in this film then becomes a symbol of sacredness that has been tainted by injustice because even though Obi and Dilla were both worshipping, they still committed evil by bullying Herlina.

#### c. Index

An index is a sign that has a natural relationship with what it represents, such as a cause-and-effect relationship. For example, smoke is an index of fire.<sup>61</sup>

##### 1) Terror against Herlina inside the Islamic boarding school compound

Herlina's father saw that his daughter's death was not just an accident, because he saw burn marks on her left hand. These marks were left by the heat of an iron when Obi and his friends tortured Herlina. Her father, who could not accept Herlina's death, took her to a shaman to be brought back to life. After that, Herlina came back to life with a mission to terrorize those who had hurt her and those close to her. This terror was inevitable because if Herlina had not been bullied and died at that time, there would have been no Herlina brought back to life by the shaman to kill her senior and her mother who hit her during her escape.

This film seems to affirm retributive justice (a life for a life), in which the violence experienced by Herlina causally results in similar violence for the perpetrators. This cause-and-effect relationship sends a warning message about the dangers of bullying, which, if not resolved fairly, will give rise to an uncontrollable cycle of destruction.

##### 2) The female students were gathered at the mosque.

After Obi and Dilla passed away, Ranum and Siti reported to Ustaz Ghani and Ustaz Jefri that Herlina was the mastermind behind all the chaos that had occurred. After that, Umi Yayuk and Umi Indri decided to call all the female students to gather at the mosque to take shelter and sleep there together. This also served as an indicator of Obi and Dilla's deaths, which were haunted by Herlina when they were left alone without their friends. Therefore, Umi Yayuk and Umi Indri decided to gather them in the mosque so that no one would be separated and there would be no more casualties.

<sup>59</sup> Lajnah Pentashihan mushaf Al-Qur'an, "Qur'an Kemenag."

<sup>60</sup> Lajnah Pentashihan mushaf Al-Qur'an, "Qur'an Kemenag."

<sup>61</sup> Kartika and Supena, "Analisis Semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce Dalam Novel 'Pasung Jiwa' Karya Okky Madasari."

The decision by Umi Yayuk and Umi Indri to gather all the female students in the mosque after the deaths of Obi and Dilla is an index of the failure of the pesantren authorities to manage security and structural violence. Causally, gathering the masses in this sacred space was a panicked response to the collapse of the pesantren order that had previously been covered up (as Umi Yayuk insisted on maintaining the pesantren's image). The teachers failed to anticipate the bullying at the outset, so the gathering of female students was a direct result of the neglect of seniority and violence that was allowed to grow within the institution. The mosque became the last bastion that showed how fragile human authority is when faced with the metaphysical consequences of the injustices they ignored.

#### D. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the film *Munkar* (2024) integrates verses from the Qur'an not merely as decorative elements, but as fundamental narrative and semiotic factors that drive the story structure. Through the application of Vladimir Propp's narrative functions, 24 key functions were identified that build the film's plot, five of which strategically place Qur'anic verses as instruments of conflict resolution and sources of authority for the protagonist. Theoretically, the integration of Propp's approach and Peirce's semiotics in this study proves that sacred texts in religious horror cinema function as magical agents as well as indexical signs that confirm the causal relationship between moral transgressions (bullying) and supernatural punishment. Based on the above results, this study identifies a cinematic reinterpretation of the entity of the devil. The depiction of the devil as capable of performing acts of worship such as praying and reading the Qur'an is a symbolic construction that subverts the traditional understanding of the boundary between holiness and evil. This phenomenon shows the desacralization of sacred symbols for the sake of horror films. This indicates the commodification of Qur'anic verses, where sacred texts are reduced to instruments that trigger horror, which sociologically reflects the blurring of boundaries between religious authority and the power of the entertainment industry in contemporary popular culture. As a follow-up, it is recommended that future researchers conduct comparative studies to map the patterns of representation of Quranic verses in the horror genre more broadly. An audience reception approach is also needed to examine how the reinterpretation of religious values affects the theological perceptions of society. Further studies need to evaluate the ethical implications of using sacred texts in the entertainment sphere, to ensure that cinematic creativity remains grounded in responsible socio-religious values.

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