

## **“WHAT’S IN A NAME?” AS THE PRIME SIGNIFIER OF DRAMA *ROMEO AND JULIET***

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This essay has distinguished perspective in its purpose although there are many research on “What’s in a name?”. It tries to identify the prime signifier of drama Romeo and Juliet. There must be one statement could be inferred as the drama’s prime signifier. After being read couple times, the writer concluded that drama Romeo and Juliet’s prime signifier is in popular statement “What’s in a name?”. The inference is based on sign analysis. The conclusion has been got is that “name” is the index for anything being the obstacles of Romeo and Juliet’ love. This name ignorance was proved by their decision of daring to die. Besides, this statement can be the miniature of all themes talked in the drama.*

**Keywords:** *Drama Romeo and Juliet, prime signifier, index, “What’s in a name?”*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Drama Romeo and Juliet is William Shakespeare’s drama written in 1594-1596 (Gill, 1992:xxxii). This drama is one the most well-known drama in the world. This classic and elite drama is popular with its artistic love story. Gill (1992:xxx) says that this drama has combined art with real life. The sentences in this drama are almost completely poetic. Besides, this story is presented closely to the real life.

Many researchers have analyzed Romeo and Juliet drama. They used varied perspective in exploring and analyzing this drama. Yet, what is going to be found here is on the prime signifier of this drama. It is important to find the prime signifier because this Shakespeare’s drama has high art of language. That’s why, it is worth-trying to search the prime signifier of this Romeo and Juliet story. By finding the main signifier,

the reader would map this drama on the understanding either of the content or of the theater performance.

### **METHOD**

Prime Signifier is one study of Language Semiotics. This study may go to Saussure’s theory on element of sign meaning and Pierce’s theory on three kinds of sign. Below is the explanation.

As being quoted by Fiske (1990:44), Saussure explained that *sign* consists of *signifier* and *signified*. *Signifier* is the form of sign material while *signified* means concept that is represented by the signifier. Both definitions turn on the significance by process of signification. Pierce, as quoted by Fiske (1990:46), divided sign into three, namely *iconic*, *symbolic*, and *indexical*. *Iconic* is a sign that is identical to what has been signed. *Symbolic* means a sign that is

not identical to what has been signed so that it is arbitrary and conventional. While *Indexical* means a sign that is linked automatically to what has been signed.

&lt;&lt; | 2

By utilizing both theories as the foothold, Wardoyo (2005:4) stated that there was an approach can be used to get the sign which refers to all signs in a text or story. The approach is done by finding the prime signifier. The prime signifier can be *icon*, *symbol* or *index*. If it has been found, according to Wardoyo, a researcher must explain why the prime signifier can refer to all signs in a text.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After reading drama text of *Romeo and Juliet*, the writer got the inference that story Romeo and Juliet is centralized in love relationship between Romeo and Juliet where they are not apathetic either to the border of relationship between two big families (Montague and Capulet) or the border of lives. This story is reflected in a speech said by Juliet on her house's balcony when she was met by Romeo, namely "What's in a name?" (Act 2 Scene 2 Line 43). The speech has been *index* for the whole signs in the text.

The inference above functions also as the conclusion for the analysis. It means this article uses Deductive method. The thinking process of analysis in this essay uses the inference first than the reasons of the answer. It is sometimes needed as being said by Leighton (2006:109-136) that it needs to select the cases that are able to be analyzed by using Deductive method. This is what happens to this drama analysis by the writer. Reading it many times made it possible to take the inference on what the writer wanted to find. Then the inference is in harmony with the analysis method used. It is called a

scientific possibility in a research or a writing.

In Act 1 Scene 1, it is told that the waiters of Capulet family fought against the waiters of Montague family. It is told too that the conflict between two big families had long been happened. This matter indicated that there were obstacles that would be faced by Romeo, as the son of Montague family, and Juliet, as the daughter of Capulet family, in tying their love. This matter was seen in Act 1 Scene 1 line 88-89; "By thee, old Capulet, and Montague, Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets". In this quote, Prince, as Verona prince, arbitrated the fight and wanted the two families not in doing hullabaloo. Such conflict was the obstacle for both of them in tying love relationship. Moreover this conflict had been largely known by Verona society.

In Act 1 Scene 2, it is mentioned that Paris County asked permission to Capulet to marry Juliet. Yet, Capulet doubted to wed their daughter because she was still very young. So Capulet encouraged Paris to snatch Juliet's heart first. Then Capulet had a plan to held a party where Juliet would be acquainted and dance with Paris. This matter was written in Act 1 Scene 2 Line 7-22. According to the previous acts, this matter was in opposition to the fact that later Juliet would get married with Romeo although she was still very young. That's why what can be *index* from this story is that Juliet wanted to get married with a single reason, it was because of love. Meanwhile, her love would not consider status that can be symbolized by word "name".

Act 1 Scene 5 mentions that Romeo loved Juliet at the first time he saw her. This was what happened to Juliet too. The proof of Romeo's falling in love was in his

confession as follow (Act 1 Scene 5 Line 43-52);

*“O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!*

*It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night*

*As a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear:*

*Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!*

*So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,*

*As yonder lady o’er her fellows shows.*

*The measure done, I’ll watch her place of stand,*

*And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.*

*Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!*

*For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night.”*

It is mentioned in the quote above that Romeo was very charmed about Juliet’s beauty. This matter was proved from symbolisms used by Romeo in that quote. While Juliet’s love to Romeo is proved as follow:

*“My only love sprung from my only hate!*

*Too early seen unknown, and known too late!*

*Prodigious birth of love it is to me,  
That I must love a loathed enemy.”*

The quote says that Juliet admitted that she felt in love with her family’s enemy. But she didn’t want to fade her love feeling to Romeo.

This falling in love each other could be *index* that they didn’t count on their family status. This thing is also symbolized

by Juliet’s speech when she didn’t heed name in “What’s in a name?”

Besides, their ignorance with status was when Romeo did dare to come in Capulet’s party with his friends. Their ignorance is also seen or *index*-ed from their conversation in the middle of the party.

Act 2 Scene 2 is a drama scene where the prime signifier is mentioned, namely in line 43-51;

*Juliet : .....*

*What’s in a name? That which we call a rose*

*By any other name would smell as sweet;*

*So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call’d*

*Retain that dear perfection which he owes*

*Without that title, Romeo, doff thy name;*

*And for thy name, which is no part of thee,*

*Take all myself.*

*Romeo : Call me but love, and I’ll be new baptis’d;*

*Henceforth I never will be Romeo.*

The conversation above can be said as index for the whole signs and story of drama Romeo and Juliet. That quote (line 49 and 51) says that either Juliet or Romeo didn’t heed their own name because name or status, for them, can be obstacle for their relationship of love. Name here means status too.

Meanwhile, the things above include in a speech in line 43, namely “What’s in a name?”. The speech contains annihilation to all worldly status which is symbolized by “name”. Worldly status is as *signifier* and name functions as *signified*. While what was

truly intended by both of them was love, in essence, which didn't regard on status of life.

Their understanding on such love arrived at the point of ignoring parents' advice. They also arrived at the point of ignoring common system in society about marriage. Besides, it is further than that if they became ignorant of dead or alive. They have got their blind concept of love. For them, true love meant they were ready to follow having suicide pleasingly if one of them had died first. They were pleased to be dead together as long as they were still in love each other. No matter what would happen, they kept maintaining their love until death. Such things are the cause aspects of speech *index* of "What's in a name?" if it is related to signs in drama scene before and after.

In Act 2 Scene 6, it is mentioned that Juliet was married with Romeo in a church by Friar Laurence. Friar Laurence said (line 35-37):

"Come, come with me, and we will make short work;

For, by your leaves, you shall not stay alone

Till holy church incorporate two in one."

As a pastor, Friar Laurence truly dared very much to marry two teenagers without their parents' knowledge. This matter inferred that Romeo and Juliet's propaganda "What's in a name?" succeeded when they took a big pastor to marry them.

Story in this drama was heating up when Tybalt asked Romeo to duel but Romeo refused. Who replaced him duel was Mercutio. Finally, either Mercutio or Tybalt were killed. This happening sparked another chaos as story in the beginning. The impact of it was the alienation of Romeo (Act 3 Scene 1). The further consequence of this

incidence was that Juliet must worry about Romeo and about their relationship (Act 3 Scene 2).

Although that case made their relationship precarious, Romeo didn't lose his ideas. When Juliet's father devised a forced marriage between Juliet and County Paris (Act 3 Scene 4), Romeo was making love with Juliet in her own bedroom. After the dawn broke, Romeo permitted to go home. Conversation at that time reflected two lovers that drunk of love, ignoring others in which this situation also concluded directly on "What's in a name?". The conversation is as follow (Act 3 Scene 5 Line 1-11).

*Juliet : Will thou be gone? It is not yet near day:*

*It was the nightingale, and not the lark,*

*That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear;*

*Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree:*

*Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.*

*Romeo : It was the lark, the herald of the morn,*

*No nightingale. Look, love, what envious streaks*

*Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east*

*Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day*

*Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.*

*I must be gone and live, or stay and die.*

Five lines of Juliet's speech reflected her unwillingness to separate with Romeo although at that time Romeo was like being in a 'tiger cage' because he was still at his

family enemy's house. Juliet expressed her will so beautifully by saying "Nightingale" as the symbol that it was still night, as being known that Nightingale is one small beautiful bird that has favor of singing beautifully at night. This excessive expression was said by a girl (Juliet) to a boy (Romeo) in the midst of their family's watch. Then Romeo answered Juliet's expression by saying "Lark" as the symbol that it had been morning, as being known too that Lark is one bird that likes singing in the morning.

Yet, there is more important thing can be taken from the quote, namely they both called each other by using "Love", not using their own name or common call between two lovers. This call actually reflected their conversation in Act 2 Scene 2 Line 43-51, namely what important for them was only love, not other things. Thus, the quote above can be sign for the prime signifier would be taken.

After Juliet knew that she was going to be married with County Paris, she asked suggestion to Friar Laurence about how would be her next step so that she could always be there with Romeo. By following Friar Laurence's suggestion to drink drug coma (Act 4 Scene 1 Line 66 and 76), so she just drank the drug (Act 4 Scene 3 Line 58 and 59). Then in Act 4 Scene 4 Line 5, it is told that Nurse was told to wake Juliet up for wedding preparation. But Juliet didn't move at all so that she was stated as a dead girl.

The actions above indicated that Juliet did totally love Romeo. It was proved from not obeying her parents, even she didn't count on her mother's worries who loved her very much. Drinking the drug is the evidence. She didn't care about her family. For her, family was categorized as 'name' which can deter her from her way of love. Therefore, that happening also added

the cause for "What's in a name?" as the *index*.

Romeo's firm attitude for his love was also reflected from his act of drinking drug death that he had got from an apothecary (Act 5 Scene 1). Finally this act caused him dead right beside Juliet's body. This was done by him because Friar Laurence was failed in sending information of Juliet's affectation of being dead (Act 5 Scene 2). After Juliet woke up, she found Romeo died beside him and she found Romeo's drug death over there too. It triggered an act of her to drink the drug (Act 5 Scene 3 Line 169). Finally, both of them died at the same site. Romeo's act above also impressed that he didn't care about 'name' too. He dared to suicide just for her love.

Their death also emphasized "What's in a name?" as the proof for Romeo and Juliet's daring to die. They dodged from their obstacles just for their love, even it was death as their decision. 'Name' that functions as the symbol for everything deterred their love must be beaten by them. Then finally death was the conclusion for them to beat the 'name'/obstacles. Even for them, life can be obstacle/'name' too. Thus, the ending for this drama story could also be the sign for the prime signifier.

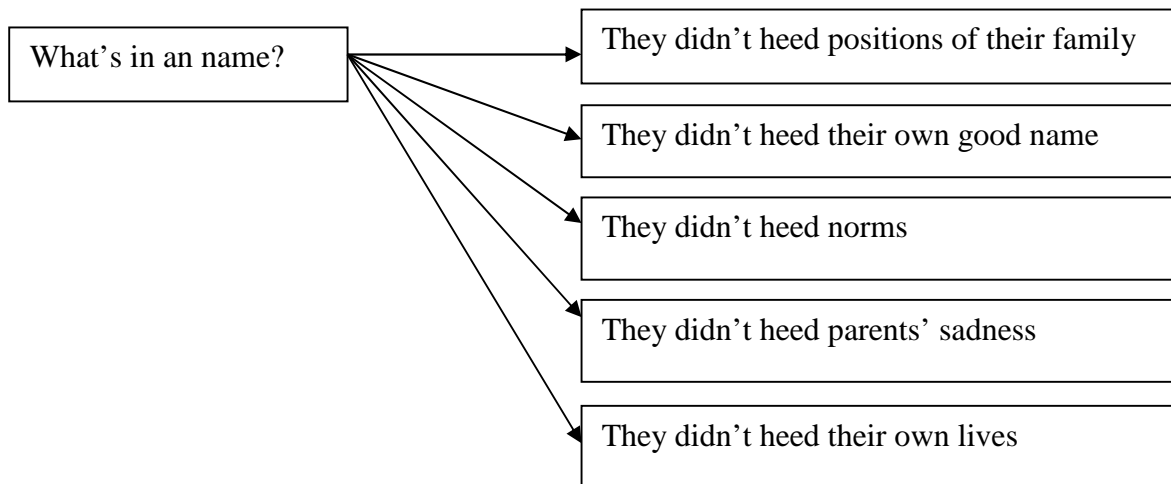
## CONCLUSION

The analyzed signs above disembody on prime signifier "What's in a name?". *Name* here is not only symbolizing the status and the identity of Romeo and Juliet but also reflecting (*index*) main acts, main stories, main signs in this drama Romeo and Juliet.

The signs to be the object of index are that Romeo and Juliet didn't heed both family position that are in opposition. They also didn't heed system and norm of marriage. Besides, their own good names,

their own parents, and even their lives were not considered. For being clearer, below is the chart of the conclusion.

<< | 6



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