Comparison of visual meanings on the cover of Agatha Christie's Crooked House novel in 1986, 2000, 2009, and 2017

Ayu Zulkadinityas*[1], Iwan Gunawan[2], Ardianti Permata Ayu[3]
Department of Visual Communication Design, Faculty of Art and Design, Institut Kesenian Jakarta[1],
Jl. Cikini Raya No. 73, Kompleks Taman Ismail Marzuki, Cikini, Menteng, Jakarta Pusat 10330, Indonesia
Department of Visual Communication Design, Faculty of Creative Industries, Universitas Media Nusantara Citra[2]
Jl. Panjang Blok A8, Green Garden, Kota Jakarta Barat, DKI Jakarta, 11520, Indonesia
Department of Interior Design Interior, Faculty of Civil Engineering & Planning, Universitas Gunadarma[3]
Jl. Akses UI No.16, Tugu, Kec. Cimanggis, Kota Depok, Jawa Barat 16451, Indonesia
Correspondence author: azulkadinityas@gmail.com

Abstract:

Changes in book cover design are a common practice among publishers, particularly for best-selling novels. This phenomenon is evident in *Crooked House* by Agatha Christie, which has undergone four distinct cover redesigns in 1986, 2000, 2009, and 2017. These design variations form the foundation of this study. The research aims to analyze the use of visual signs on the covers of *Crooked House* to identify, interpret, and compare the meanings conveyed through each visual element across different editions. A qualitative research method was employed, utilizing Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, which consists of three core components: representamen (sign), object, and interpretant. The study also examines stylistic variations and design trends in each cover edition to explore how visual differences influence the transmission of meaning and the representation of the novel's narrative essence. The findings indicate that, despite their visual diversity, each cover conveys a consistent underlying meaning and impression related to the novel's thematic content. The variations among editions are influenced by contextual factors such as prevailing design trends of each era and the distinctive artistic styles of individual illustrators. These contextual elements shape the visual expression of the covers while preserving the core semiotic identity of the novel.

Introduction

A book cover is one of the most essential components in shaping a book's overall identity and appeal. According to Irene (2017), a book cover serves three primary functions: as a binder and external protector for the book's contents, as a medium for delivering informational and thematic messages, and as the main visual element that attracts readers' attention. Similarly, Yusuf (2022), in his discussion on *Deepublishstore.com*, asserts that beyond its protective function, a book cover plays a crucial role in engaging target audiences and stimulating interest in purchasing and reading. The cover thus becomes the first point of interaction between potential readers and the book itself. This is further supported by Aprilia and Gratianus (2018), who emphasize that book covers are designed to visually convey the ideas and atmosphere of the story through illustrations, thereby influencing readers' emotional responses and interest.

The design of a book cover is therefore never arbitrary. It is strategically aligned with the narrative and thematic content of the book. In the context of novels, cover designs are often constructed through visual signs—symbols, images, and other semiotic elements—that collectively

communicate meaning. Each visual element functions as a signifier intended to evoke specific associations related to the narrative.

Aisyah and Rinjani (2023) found that illustration is one of the most influential factors in attracting readers. Consumers are generally drawn to books based on their cover illustrations rather than by reading the synopsis or content preview. Image selection, color composition, and typography all serve as key determinants of reader engagement. Research in visual communication design confirms this strong correlation between cover aesthetics and marketing success (Musliadi et al., 2025). This phenomenon is evident in the covers of Agatha Christie's novels, published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama, which have become notable for their distinctive design variations. Among these works, *Crooked House* stands out as one of Christie's personal favorites, as mentioned in its preface. The novel holds an average rating above 4 out of 5 on *Goodreads.com* (2024) and remains one of the most popular titles in Christie's repertoire. Christie's worldwide success (over one billion copies sold in English and another billion in translation) has earned her the title "Queen of Crime." Such enduring popularity is closely tied to the strong visual identity established through her novels' cover designs.

Illustrations function as visual signs that convey meaning to the viewer. The meanings embedded in book covers arise from cultural, personal, and contextual experiences. Yasir (2020) argues that differences in social and cultural backgrounds can lead to varying interpretations of the same sign. Thus, meaning is not fixed within a word or image but emerges through cognitive and interpretive processes unique to everyone. Studies utilizing Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics continue to be the primary method for analyzing these complex interpretive layers in visual design (Patra Suwanda & Rohmawati, 2025).

Changes in book cover designs often occur over time, as publishers adapt to new artistic trends and market preferences. This is evident in the *Crooked House* covers published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama, which underwent four design revisions in 1986, 2000, 2009, and 2017—each reflecting distinct illustrative and stylistic characteristic. These variations influence how visual meanings are constructed and interpreted (Hartono & Jati, 2024). Illustrators, through their personal creativity and stylistic tendencies, mediate how a story's themes are represented visually. Consequently, a single narrative may yield multiple visual interpretations depending on context and artistic approach. The evolution of illustration in the digital era further enables this diversity of artistic approaches (Putri & Nugroho, 2022).

Previous research related to this study was analysed the visual and verbal meanings of the cover of Agatha Christie's *Five Little Pigs* using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach (Nofia & Bustam, 2022). This approach focused on denotative and connotative meanings, supported by colour theory and visual elements. However, this study was limited to one edition and did not discuss changes to book cover design across different publication periods or visual contexts.

This study, in contrast, focuses on a comparative analysis of four editions of *Crooked House*, published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 1986, 2000, 2009 and 2017, using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. As well as interpreting visual signs related to the novel's narrative, this study examines how illustration styles and book cover design trends in each era influence the construction of visual meaning. Therefore, this study addresses the research gap by offering a longitudinal and contextual analysis that integrates semiotics, illustration and design trends.

Given these dynamics, the present study investigates how the four cover editions of Agatha Christie's *Crooked House* visually represent similar narrative meanings through differing illustrative elements. Specifically, it examines how illustration style and design trends influence the interpretation of visual signs. The analysis applies Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to explore how illustrators construct signs that communicate the novel's narrative essence to readers.

Based on the background described above, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do variations in visual signs across the four editions of Crooked House (1986, 2000, 2009, and 2017) represent similar meanings of the narrative?

2. How do the illustrated visual signs on the Crooked House book covers represent the narrative and story content through the relationship between representamen, object, and interpretant?
3. How do differences in illustration styles and the influence of book cover design trends in each era affect the interpretation of visual signs across the four editions of Crooked House?

Through this framework, each cover design is examined to uncover the meanings encoded within its visual elements and to demonstrate that visual communication operates as a system of signs that mediate between text, image, and reader. The continuous role of semiotics in visual communication analysis for conveying complex messages in art and design is consistently emphasized in recent scholarship (Puspitasari, 2025).

Methods

This study employs a comparative semiotic analysis to explore the similarities and differences in meaning across the four cover editions of *Crooked House*. A qualitative research design was adopted to allow for an in-depth understanding of the visual and semiotic dimensions of the covers. According to Moleong (as cited in Sandu & Ali, 2015), a qualitative approach facilitates the interpretation of implicit meanings embedded in research objects, making it particularly suitable for semiotic analysis.

The study draws upon Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model of semiosis, which comprises the representamen (sign), object, and interpretant. This framework enables the researcher to systematically interpret how meaning is produced through visual signs and how these meanings are reinterpreted across different cover editions.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and literature review. Visual observation was applied to four editions of the *Crooked House* book covers published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama (1986, 2000, 2009, and 2017) which focuses on visual elements and their meanings using Peirce's triadic semiotic approach.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four informants selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance and expertise related to the research objectives. The informants were chosen to represent academic, professional illustrator, community-based, and reader-oriented perspectives. Informants were selected based on criteria such as reading experience with Agatha Christie's novel and familiarity with visual communication, literature, or graphic design.

The first informant, Bawuk Respati, is a writer and academic in the field of art studies with a strong interest in literature and visual analysis, providing theoretical and interpretative insights into visual meaning. The second informant, Staven Andersen, is a senior illustrator and the designer of the fourth edition cover of *Crooked House,* offering direct insight into the creative process, visual decision-making, and design trends influencing the cover. The third informant, M. Fadli, is the founder of the *Detectives ID* community and a crime fiction writer, representing an experienced reader and narrative practitioner within the mystery genre. The fourth informant, Fanny Azzahra, is a student at the Institut Kesenian Jakarta (IKJ) with a strong interest in mystery novels, representing young readers with visual literacy and design awareness.

The interviews aimed to enrich and validate the semiotic interpretations derived from visual analysis of the *Crooked House* cover. Interview questions focused on informants' interpretations of visual signs, the relationship between illustration and narrative content. Interview data functioned as a part of a data triangulation strategy to validate the semiotic interpretations derived from visual analysis. The interview data functioned as part of a data triangulation strategy to validate the semiotic interpretations derived from visual analysis. This process ensured that the interpretations were grounded in both theoretical analysis and contextual understanding, rather than subjective visual interpretation. The interviews support the findings comparing visual meanings with expert and reader perspectives, particularly in relations to narrative context and design trends across different

publication periods. Documentation involved collecting digital records of the covers from online databases and publisher archives. In addition, a literature review was undertaken to support theoretical grounding, drawing upon books, academic journals, and credible web sources related to illustration, semiotics, and visual communication. Research on visual analysis methods frequently emphasizes the need for comprehensive data triangulation, combining visual, contextual, and interview data for robust interpretation (Andersen & Pratama, 2023).
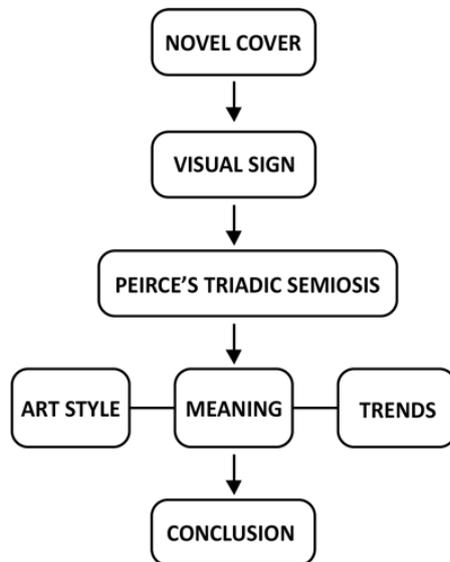
Figure 1 Research Analysis Framework

Ilustration

Illustration is a branch of visual art expressed in two-dimensional form. According to Sri (2013), illustrations may take various forms, including sketches, paintings, graphic works, or photographs. Although often associated with painting, illustration primarily functions as a medium to visualize concepts, emotions, or narratives. Nurhadiat (as cited in Irene, 2017) categorizes two-dimensional fine arts into several stylistic genres, including surrealism, romanticism, naturalism, realism, expressionism, cubism, impressionism, abstraction, and classicism.

Soedarso (as cited in Ardiyani & Asidigisianti, 2022) identifies seven types of illustration based on their purpose and visual characteristics: naturalistic, decorative, cartoon, caricature, pictorial story, book illustration, and fantasy. Each type serves a different communicative function—ranging from realistic representation to imaginative abstraction.

Alan Male (2007, as cited in Aprilia, 2018) distinguishes between literal and conceptual illustrations. Literal illustrations depict subjects realistically, even when representing fictional narratives, whereas conceptual illustrations employ metaphorical or symbolic imagery to convey abstract ideas. Styles such as realism, impressionism, and decorative art fall under literal illustration, while surrealism and abstraction belong to conceptual illustration. Recent studies on illustration further explore the hybridity of styles, particularly in digital media, where realistic and conceptual elements often merge (Saito, 2018).

Illustration techniques can be broadly categorized into manual (traditional) and digital methods. Traditional techniques require direct hand skills on physical media such as paper or canvas, using dry tools (e.g., pencil, charcoal, crayon) or wet media (e.g., watercolor, oil paint, gouache, ink). Digital techniques, on the other hand, employ software such as Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, CorelDRAW, or Procreate, offering flexibility in editing and manipulation. Today, digital illustration dominates due to its adaptability and efficiency in visual production.

Semiotics

Visual semiotics is a subfield of semiotic study that focuses on how meaning is constructed and communicated through visual elements. According to Kris (2003), visual semiotics examines how images function as signs that engage viewers' perception and cognition. The application of visual semiotics is particularly vital in analyzing persuasive communication in the public sphere (Fahrozi & Nurlaili, 2024). Peirce's model of semiosis divides this process into three interrelated components: representamen, object, and interpretant.

In the first stage, the representamen (sign) is perceived through sensory experience. The sign then refers to an object—an idea or phenomenon associated with that representation—before leading to an interpretant, which is the mental understanding or meaning derived from the sign. This triadic process is dynamic and continuous, creating what Peirce described as *unlimited semiosis*, wherein interpretations generate new representations and meanings in an ongoing cycle.

In essence, Peirce's model illustrates how meaning is not fixed but constructed through interaction between the visual sign, the referenced object, and the interpreter's cognitive and cultural context. This framework serves as the foundation for analyzing how *Crooked House* covers convey layered meanings through their evolving visual forms. Recent semiotic analysis often highlights the interpretant's role in linking visual signs to broader cultural and social narratives (Fadhillah & Suprayitno, 2021).
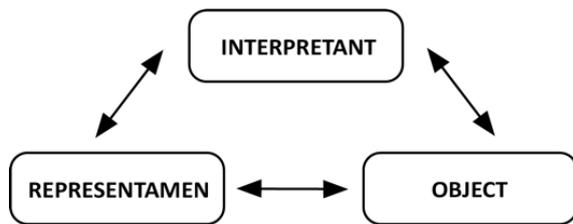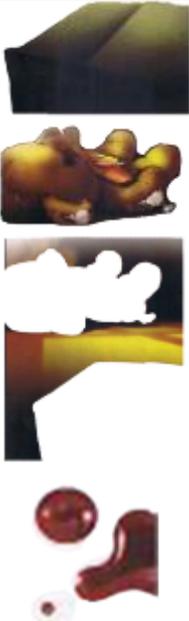

Figure 2 Model Semiosis Triadik Peirce

Result and Discussion

Meaning of Peirce's Triadic Semiosis

This section analyzes the cover design of *Agatha Christie's Crooked House* by examining each visual object or sign using Peirce's triadic model of semiosis—representamen, object, and interpretant. The process of meaning-making is presented in Table 1, which outlines the semiotic interpretation of each edition of the novel's cover (1986, 2000, 2009, and 2017).

Tabel 1. *The Meaning of Peirce's Triadic Semiosis Cover of the Novel Crooked House*

Year	Visual Sign	Representamen	Object	Interpretant
1986		Ballet shoes, bottles of strong medication (digoxin), an old house, an elderly homeowner, and a nursery rhyme reference *"There Was a Crooked Man"*	Ballet shoes and medicine bottles (digoxin) symbolize the coexistence of innocence and danger; the old house and elderly homeowner refer to the domestic setting of hidden peril; the dog and nursery	The cover conveys the dark underside of innocence. Josephine, though a child, embodies manipulation and deceit, revealing that an apparently normal family environment conceals latent danger. The visual narrative merges naivety

Year	Visual Sign	Representamen	Object	Interpretant
			rhyme *"There Was a Crooked Man"* allude to distorted morality within the family.	with threat, portraying domestic life as fragile and morally ambiguous.
2000		Charles Hayward (detective), Sophia Leonides (lover), Josephine (child murderer), mansion pillars, torn note with the rhyme, and a crow	Charles Hayward (detective), Sophia Leonides (lover), and Josephine (child murderer); mansion pillars symbolizing the family's structure; a torn note containing the nursery rhyme; and a crow as a harbinger of death and mystery.	The visualization of three characters emphasizes psychological tension and interpersonal conflict. Their expressions and body language evoke suspicion and emotional strain. The crow strengthens the atmosphere of foreboding and mortality, suggesting that mystery and deception dominate the relationships within the Leonides family.
2009		Josephine's notebook, a teddy bear, a room interior, and blood	Innocence intertwined with manipulation and violence. The damaged doll reflects Josephine's emotional instability, while blood imagery emphasizes tragedy and murder.	The imagery reflects the interplay of innocence, manipulation, and violence. The broken doll symbolizes Josephine's psychological instability and moral corruption, while the notebook represents her control over secret knowledge. Blood imagery reinforces the tragedy of murder, and the illuminated background heightens focus and dramatic tension.

Year	Visual Sign	Representamen	Object	Interpretant
2017		A slanted house, dry trees, a female figure, and winding paths. The Leonides' crooked house, decay of morality, and Josephine's isolation	The Leonides' "crooked" house, symbolic of moral decay; barren trees representing death and desolation; the female figure denoting Josephine's isolation; and red paths indicating the exposure of hidden truths	The composition conveys moral collapse and psychological alienation. The distorted architecture suggests instability within the family, while the barren trees and red paths evoke destruction and the leaking of long-concealed secrets. The minimalist style intensifies abstraction, turning the narrative into a metaphor of guilt and moral erosion.

The findings reveal that each cover design reinterprets the novel's themes according to contemporary visual trends and contextual aesthetics. The use of objects as semiotic anchors in crime fiction covers is a recurrent theme in visual culture research (Chandra & Dewi, 2023).

- 1986 Edition: The visual cues (pill bottles, ballet shoes, and domestic imagery) symbolize death, childhood innocence, and familial tension. The design emphasizes realism and narrative clarity, typical of the 1980s Indonesian book market.
- 2000 Edition: The focus shifts toward character portrayal, visualizing emotional strain and suspicion through expressionist realism. This aligns with early 2000s trends emphasizing psychological storytelling through portraiture.
- 2009 Edition: Symbolism becomes dominant. The broken doll, notebook, and blood highlight trauma and secrecy, reflecting the minimalist-digital design trends of the late 2000s.
- 2017 Edition: Abstract visual metaphors such as the slanted house and red pathway emphasize moral decay and isolation, consistent with the minimalist-surreal global aesthetics of the 2010s.
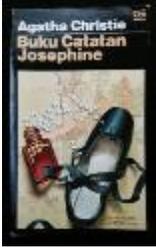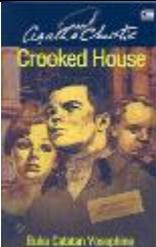
Across all editions, the cover designs evolve from literal representation (1986) to conceptual and metaphorical interpretation (2017). The recurring imagery of distortion and imbalance corresponds with the title *Crooked House*, which metaphorically conveys instability, corruption, and hidden danger. The recurring use of "crooked" also reflects a cinematic device similar to the *Dutch Angle*, evoking tension and unease, consistent with the novel's psychological tone.

Despite variations in form, all four designs communicate a unified narrative of mystery, moral deterioration, and tragedy within the Leonides family. The addition of the title *Crooked House* in the later editions functions as a semantic anchor, reinforcing the connotations of distortion, moral imperfection, and suspense inherent in the visual composition.

Comparison of Image Styles and Cover trends

Book covers are intentionally designed to communicate narrative meaning through visual language. Each edition of *Crooked House* reflects not only the illustrator's personal style but also the prevailing visual and commercial trends of its publication period. Table 2 summarizes these stylistic and contextual variations. The analysis of illustration style and its evolution is essential for understanding historical trends in visual communication (Lee, 2020)

Tabel 2. *Comparison of Illustrator Image Styles and Crooked House Novel Cover Trends*

Design	Edition	Illustrator	Illustration Style	Cover Trend	Alignment with Trend
	1986	Nanang S.	Realist illustration emphasizing clarity and seriousness; muted tones of brown, black, and pale yellow evoke mystery and gloom. Slight compositional imbalance mirrors the "crooked" theme.	1980s Indonesian covers often employed metaphorical illustrations.	*Moderately aligned.* Symbolic but retains narrative realism.
	2000	Dwi Koendoro	Realist expressionism with strong line work and warm yellow-brown tones; emphasizes emotional intensity.	Early 2000s globalization brought expressive, psychologically charged visuals influenced by film poster design.	*Highly aligned.* Emotional realism reflects contemporary design psychology.
	2009	Satya Utama Jadi	Realist-symbolic digital painting focusing on key objects; contrasts of light and shadow intensify drama.	Late 2000s trends favored minimalist symbolic design and emotional atmosphere.	*Aligned.* Symbolic focal objects fit the minimalist visual shift.
	2017	Staven Andersen	Minimalist-surreal illustration using limited color palettes and symbolic abstraction.	2010s global design emphasized simplicity, conceptual symbolism, and flat graphics.	*Aligned.* Adopts modern minimalism while retaining thematic symbolism

The stylistic evolution illustrates the transition from manual realism in the 1980s to digital minimalism in the 2010s. The 1986 cover foregrounded symbolic realism; the 2000 edition embraced emotional portraiture; the 2009 cover employed symbolic digital illustration; and the 2017 version adopted surreal minimalism. Each illustrator integrated their distinctive artistic identity while adapting to global visual trends.

Evolution of Crooked House Novel Cover Design

The chronological development of *Crooked House* cover designs demonstrates the interplay between semiotic interpretation, illustration style, and design trends. Table 3 synthesizes the visual evolution across the four decades.

Tabel 3. T*imeline of the Evolution of Crooked House Novel Cover Design*

Edition	Main Visuals	Meaning & Interpretation	Mood	Illustration Style	Design Context
1986	Ballet shoes, medicine bottles	Innocence mixed with danger; the dark side of domestic life.	Mysterius	Realist-symbolic	Independent interpretation with limited adherence to trends.
2000	Character portrait	Emotional and psychological tension among family members.	Dramatic, expressive	Realist-expressionism	Aligned with trends emphasizing emotional visual storytelling.
2009	Notebook, teddy bear	Emotional trauma, weakness, and secrecy	Mysterious, dramatic	Realist-symbolic (digital)	Consistent with late-2000s minimalist symbolic design.
2017	Slanted house, girl silhouette, red path	Moral decay and tragedy within the family.	Suspenseful, tense	Surrealist-minimalist	Reflects global minimalist conceptual design trends.

Based on the findings presented above, it is evident that each edition of *Agatha Christie's Crooked House* cover (1986–2017) demonstrates both visual continuity and conceptual evolution. Comparative analysis of the four Gramedia editions reveals a progressive shift in meaning, aligned with the development of design trends and evolving visual storytelling approaches. This evolutionary trend in visual style reflects broader changes in the cultural perception of illustration (Nakamura, 2019).

The 1986 edition employs literal and illustrative visual cues such as pill bottles, ballet shoes, and the depiction of a domestic house. These elements symbolize death, childhood innocence, and the family setting as a space of hidden danger. The composition conveys the impression of an ordinary family concealing dark secrets. The drawing style (realistic and narratively detailed) reflects the manual illustrative conventions of the 1980s. This edition stands apart from the dominant visual-metaphor trend of the period, emphasizing instead symbolic yet narratively clear imagery. The illustrator, Nanang S., visualized his own interpretation through symbolic realism, combining personal imagination with direct narrative reference to the novel's content.

In the 2000 edition, the visual focus shifts from objects to character portraiture. The depiction of three figures—each rendered with intense and mysterious expressions, alongside torn paper motifs—reflects themes of secrecy and psychological conflict within the Leonides family. The meaning thus transitions from physical clues to representations of emotion, suspicion, and interpersonal tension. This stylistic change aligns with the rise of realist expressionism and early digital transitions of the 2000s. The illustrator Dwi Koendoro employs bold linework and dramatic lighting, producing expressive realism that evokes emotional depth. Although following the global trend of emotionally charged cover design, Koendoro retains his distinctive illustrative identity, ensuring a personal stylistic imprint within the composition.

The 2009 edition introduces a distinctly symbolic approach. The central imagery (teddy bears, notebooks, and drops of blood) embodies themes of trauma, evidence, and death. The resulting

interpretation suggests shattered innocence, emotional instability, and the exposure of hidden truths. Executed in a digital symbolic-realist style, the design reflects late-2000s Indonesian trends that emphasized single-object compositions and minimalist dramatic tension. The illustrator Satya Utama So focuses on the psychological atmosphere rather than literal depiction, employing photographic realism and controlled lighting to build emotional resonance. This edition marks the transition toward conceptual illustration, where symbols become the primary conveyors of meaning.

The 2017 edition adopts a minimalist-surreal aesthetic, featuring a slanted house, winding red paths, and the silhouette of a girl. These visuals function as abstract metaphors for familial moral decay, unresolved crimes, and isolation. The design utilizes dominant negative space, a restrained color palette, and flat illustrations—characteristics consistent with the global minimalist design movement of the 2010s. Through abstraction, this edition captures the essence of the novel's psychological tension while aligning with contemporary visual simplification and conceptualization trends. The shift towards conceptual abstraction highlights the growing importance of metaphor in visual communication (Rendell, 2020).

Across all four editions, *Crooked House* covers consistently communicate the underlying narrative of darkness, moral deterioration, and psychological tension within the Leonides family. Despite differing in visual form, each design reinforces the central motif of "crookedness"—imbalance, distortion, and hidden danger. The recurrence of these motifs reveals that, while visual execution evolves, thematic meaning remains coherent across decades.

The transformation from realistic and literal cues (1986) to symbolic and conceptual metaphors (2017) demonstrates not only a stylistic evolution but also a deepening of interpretive complexity. This shift reflects both the advancement of illustration technology in Indonesia and broader global trends in visual communication design—moving from direct narrative depiction to more interpretive, conceptually driven semiotic strategies. The relationship between technological progress and the shift in aesthetic preferences in visual media is a significant area of research (Kim, 2021).

Conclusion

This study of four *Crooked House* cover editions (1986, 2000, 2009, and 2017) reveals that the construction of visual meaning has undergone significant transformation in response to shifts in illustration styles, technological development, and graphic design trends. Although each edition presents distinct visual signs, all consistently refer to the central theme of a tragic murder within the Leonides family, perpetrated by the young girl Josephine.

From a Peircean semiotic perspective, the 1986 edition's concrete representations such as pill bottles, ballet shoes, and domestic imagery serve as signs of poison, innocence, and hidden familial tension, interpreted as domestic mystery. The 2000 edition shifts toward human figures and torn paper, signifying psychological conflict and emotional strain. The 2009 edition employs damaged dolls and notebooks as signs of trauma and evidence, reflecting shattered innocence and the revelation of dark truth. Finally, the 2017 edition's abstract imagery, including slanted houses, red lines, and silhouettes, which functions metaphorically to represent moral corruption and isolation. Consequently, meaning evolves from literal-concrete (1986) to conceptual-metaphorical (2017), demonstrating a progressive deepening of interpretation.

The artistic style across editions also aligns with contemporaneous visual trends. The 1986 design employs narrative realism with symbolic undertones, characteristic of the detailed manual illustrations of the era. The 2000 edition utilizes realist expressionism, resonating with early-2000s emotional visual communication. The 2009 cover adopts symbolic realism through digital techniques, reflecting the minimalist emphasis of the late 2000s. The 2017 edition embraces surreal minimalism, consistent with the flat, conceptual, and metaphoric design movements of the 2010s.

From a compositional standpoint, the evolution proceeds from multi-object narrative complexity (1986) to hierarchical character dramatization (2000), to single symbolic focus (2009), and ultimately to conceptual minimalism with extensive negative space (2017). This trajectory represents an increasingly refined visual communication strategy—transitioning from literal storytelling to abstract symbolism—while mirroring the broader media shift from manual to digital production and the adaptation to a globalized, visually literate audience.

Integrating the analyses of Peirce's triadic semiosis, visual style, and contemporary trends, it can be concluded that *Crooked House* cover designs evolved from literal realism (1986) to psychological expressivism (2000), to symbolic minimalism (2009), and finally to conceptual surrealism (2017). Across all editions, the semiotic core remains consistent: the imagery evokes danger, darkness, weakness, trauma, and emotional tension. The recurring title "Crooked House" serves as a semantic anchor, reinforcing the themes of distortion, imperfection, and moral decay. Ultimately, this evolution reflects how cover design functions not only as an aesthetic response to contemporary visual trends but also as a deepening semiotic vehicle that mirrors the progression of illustration, publishing technology, and cultural perception of *visual* meaning over time.

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