



## Semiotic Analysis Of Visual Signs Found in Main Bosses' Cutscenes Of *Elden Ring* Video Game

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**Abstract.** This study examines the interpretation of verbal and visual signs in the cutscenes of the video game *Elden Ring*. Semiotics, the study of signs and their meanings, provides the framework for analyzing these cinematic elements. Video games often embed narrative clues within visual and verbal signs, but players frequently overlook them, particularly during cutscenes, which interrupts gameplay to deliver critical story content. This research focuses on the main boss cutscenes in *Elden Ring*, which integrate environmental storytelling and visual signs to convey the lore of *The Lands Between*. Utilizing Peirce's theory of signs and Barthes' theory of meaning, the study identifies and classifies visual signs—icons, indices, and symbols—within the cutscenes to interpret their narrative significance. The data is derived from eight main boss cutscenes recorded during gameplay and supplemented by external visual references. A qualitative approach was employed, encompassing data collection through documentation, detailed visual analysis, and descriptive presentation of findings. Results indicate that *Elden Ring*'s cutscenes are rich with embedded signs that enhance the storytelling experience, though their nuanced meanings often require active interpretation and community discussion. This research underscores the importance of cutscenes in contributing to the depth and immersion of the game's narrative.

**Keywords:** Cutscenes, *Elder Ring*, Narrative analysis, Semiotics, Visual signs

**Abstrak.** Studi ini meneliti interpretasi tanda-tanda verbal dan visual dalam adegan-adegan video game *Elden Ring*. Semiotika, ilmu yang mempelajari tanda dan maknanya, menyediakan kerangka kerja untuk menganalisis elemen-elemen sinematik ini. Video game sering kali menyematkan petunjuk naratif dalam tanda-tanda visual dan verbal, tetapi pemain sering kali mengabaikannya, terutama selama cutscene, yang menyela permainan untuk menyampaikan konten cerita yang penting. Penelitian ini berfokus pada *cutscene* bos utama di *Elden Ring*, yang mengintegrasikan penceritaan lingkungan dan tanda-tanda visual untuk menyampaikan pengetahuan tentang *The Lands Between*. Dengan menggunakan teori Peirce tentang tanda dan teori Barthes tentang makna, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi dan mengklasifikasikan tanda-tanda visual - ikon, indeks, dan simbol - di dalam cutscene untuk menginterpretasikan signifikansi naratifnya. Data berasal dari delapan cutscene bos utama yang direkam selama bermain game dan dilengkapi dengan referensi visual eksternal. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan, meliputi pengumpulan data melalui dokumentasi, analisis visual yang terperinci, dan presentasi deskriptif temuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa cutscene *Elden Ring* kaya akan tanda-tanda yang meningkatkan pengalaman bercerita, meskipun maknanya yang penuh nuansa sering kali membutuhkan interpretasi aktif dan diskusi komunitas. Penelitian ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya cutscene dalam memberikan kontribusi pada kedalaman dan imersi narasi game.

**Kata kunci:** Analisis naratif, *Cutscenes*, *Elden Ring*, Semiotik, Tanda visual

### 1. BACKGROUND

This study delves into semiotics, particularly the interpretation of signs and their meanings in the boss cutscenes of the video game *Elden Ring*. Semiotics, as Saussure defines it, is the study of signs, encompassing verbal and visual elements (Chandler, 2007). In video games, these signs often serve as narrative clues, but players frequently overlook them in favor of gameplay. This research focuses on identifying and analyzing visual signs in cutscenes,

emphasizing their narrative importance in a game where environmental storytelling prevails. Using Peirce's theory of signs and Barthes' theory of meanings (as cited in Chandler, 2007), the study examines eight main boss cutscenes, including those of Godrick and Rennala, to uncover their contributions to the lore and player experience. Data collection involved gameplay recordings and external visuals, with analysis conducted qualitatively and presented descriptively with supporting images. This study highlights how *Elden Ring* utilizes environmental and cinematic storytelling to enhance its narrative depth.

## **2. THEORETICAL STUDIES**

This study draws insights from related literature, including undergraduate theses and international articles, to explore verbal and visual communication. Indah Sekar Pertiwi's (2022) research on emoji use in online classrooms highlights their pragmatic role in expressing emotions and enhancing digital communication. Raudhatu Rahma Rais' (2020) study on visual behavior in student speaking performance underscores the impact of visual elements on effective communication. Similarly, Ariza Rafli's (2022) psycholinguistic analysis of verbal and visual peculiarities in *Jane Wants a Boyfriend* demonstrates how visual signs convey character traits.

From international articles, Navridis (2015) outlines human-robot communication requirements, emphasizing verbal and visual integration, while Jacob et al. (2016) explore the role of nonverbal elements in communication effectiveness, debunking myths about visual dominance. These studies collectively emphasize the critical role of verbal and visual elements in communication across diverse contexts. Their methodologies and findings inform the current study's focus on interpreting visual signs in video game cutscenes, providing theoretical grounding and comparative frameworks for analysis.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze visual signs in *Elden Ring's* boss cutscenes, focusing on two main theoretical frameworks: Peirce's Theory of Signs and Barthes' theory of meaning. Data was sourced from the researcher's gameplay, focusing on key boss cutscenes, which were recorded and uploaded to YouTube. Additional images of a character, Maliketh, were used for visualization. Data collection involved documenting cutscenes, taking screenshots, and organizing the material. Analysis followed Peirce's framework to identify and interpret visual signs, with meanings explained informally using Barthes' theory. Findings were presented through descriptive text and visual aids.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

##### The Synopsis of *Elden Ring*

*Elden Ring* is an action RPG set in the Lands Between, a vast world ruled by demigods. The Greater Will, a mysterious entity, bestowed the Elden Ring, a magical artifact, inside the Erdtree. The story begins when Ranni the Witch's group kills the immortal prince, Godwyn, causing the Elden Ring to shatter and the world to fall into chaos. The player, as the Tarnished, is called back to restore the Elden Ring and become the Elden Lord.

##### Identification of Visual Signs in *Elden Ring* Main Boss Cutscene

**Table 1. Identification of Types of Signs**

Cutscene	Types of Signs		
	Symbol	Icon	Index
Godrick, The Grafted	Royal emblem	-	The prayer
Renalla, The Queen of The Full Moon	-	The full moon	-
Morgott, The Fell King	The horns	-	The throne
Fire Giant	The offering	-	The eye pattern
Maliketh, The Black Blade	-	The black blade	-
Godfrey, The First Elden Lord	-	-	The lion
Radagon	The Elden Ring	-	The crucified body of Marika
Elden Beast	-	-	The golden veins

The result of identification and classification of the visual sign above was analysed using Peirce's triadic model and Barthes' theory of meaning and was discussed in the sub-chapter below. The findings were explained in informal descriptive manner.

##### Analysis the Meaning of Visual Signs

##### 1. Analysis the Meaning of Visual Signs in Godrick's Cutscene

In *Elden Ring*, Godrick the Grafted's cutscene reveals key visual signs of betrayal. Godrick is shown praying to a dead dragon, signifying his loyalty to the dragon communion and his defiance of the golden order, which is considered blasphemous in the *Elden Ring* world. This prayer, an index sign, represents his betrayal of the Erdtree's teachings. Further, the cutscene reveals Godrick's monstrous form, with multiple limbs attached to his body, emphasizing his unholy actions. Another key visual sign is the royal emblem on his weapon, a symbol of the golden lineage, linking him to a royal bloodline. This emblem, featuring a standing lion, symbolizes legacy and strength, further emphasizing Godrick's conflicted identity.



**Figure 1. Visual of the sign royal emblem**

**Source :** <https://youtu.be/BjESWjGzX0k&t=52s>

The royal emblem on Godrick's weapon signifies his royal status but also highlights his betrayal by joining the dragon communion. Combined with his prayer to the dead dragon, these signs reveal his rejection of the golden order and royalty in pursuit of power.

## **2. Analysis the Meaning of Visual Signs in Rennala's Cutscene**

In Rennala's cutscene, the full moon represents her majestic power and her title as the Queen of the Full Moon. The moon serves as an icon, highlighting her presence and indicating she is about to unleash her full power against the tarnished. This sign is a qualisign, with the full moon symbolizing her strength, and the meaning is connotative, linking her nickname to the visual representation. The significance of the full moon is a probability, not definitive, but strongly connected to Rennala's character.

## **3. Analysis the Meaning of Visual Signs in Morgott's Cutscene**

Morgott, the Fell King, is marked by two key visual signs in his cutscene: the horns and the missing throne. The horns, symbolizing curse and impurity, signify Morgott's status as an exiled demigod, a visual law in the Lands Between. The missing throne, which Morgott lacks despite being the second eldest, highlights his exclusion from royalty and his status as an outcast. These signs are connotative, linking Morgott's curse and exile to the cultural context of the world. Despite this, Morgott remains loyal to the Erdtree, contrasting with his siblings who fight for power.

## **4. Analysis the Meaning of Visual Signs in Fire Giant's Cutscene**

The Fire Giant, the fourth boss in *Elden Ring*, sacrifices his broken leg to the Fell God in a desperate attempt to fight the Tarnished. This offering, a legisign, symbolizes the Fire Giant's devotion to the Fell God, an ancient deity. The leg offering signifies a sacrifice, and the Fire Giant's power grows as a result, marking a shift in the battle. The second visual sign

is the third eye on the giant's chest, which opens and reveals a fiery cyclone pattern. This symbol, tied to the Fell God, reflects the cultural context of *Elden Ring* and further highlights the giant's connection to the deity.



**Figure 2. Symbol of the Fell God in the Fire Giant's Third Eye**

Source: <https://youtu.be/BjESWjGzX0k&t=7m40s>

The eye pattern on the Fire Giant, featuring fiery cyclones resembling Jupiter's north pole, is a legisign symbolizing the connection with the Fell God. As the eye opens after the sacrificial ritual, it marks the Fire Giant's transformation. This sign is a dicent, observable in the cutscene, revealing the Giant's link to the Fell God. The meaning is connotative, adding socio-cultural context to the sign. Overall, the two visual signs in the cutscene are interconnected, expanding the broader meaning of the event.

## **5. Analysis the Meaning of Visual Signs in Maliketh's Cutscene**

Maliketh, the Black Blade, is the fifth boss in *Elden Ring*. In the cutscene, after Maliketh is defeated, he draws the Rune of Death in the form of a black blade. This blade symbolizes the Rune of Death, representing its physical manifestation. The black blade acts as an icon, directly linked to the rune's power.



**Figure 3. The Rune of Death**

Source: [https://static.wikia.nocookie.net/eldenring/images/e/e4/Rune\\_of\\_Death.png](https://static.wikia.nocookie.net/eldenring/images/e/e4/Rune_of_Death.png)

The Rune of Death appears as a great sword, with a handle, cross-guard, and blade, but its true form is magical and intangible. The black blade, which closely resembles the Rune of Death, is its physical manifestation, supporting the analysis of the sign's meaning.



Source: [https://static.wikia.nocookie.net/eldenring/images/3/3c/ER\\_Icon\\_weapon\\_Maliketh%27s\\_Black\\_Blade.png](https://static.wikia.nocookie.net/eldenring/images/3/3c/ER_Icon_weapon_Maliketh%27s_Black_Blade.png)

**Figure 4. The Black Blade**

The black blade is a qualisign, representing the Rune of Death with its design resembling the rune. The interpretant sees the blade as a physical manifestation of the rune, carrying its power to bring true death. This sign combines denotative and connotative meanings: the blade's design as the rune is the denotation, while the blade holding the rune's power is the connotation. In summary, Maliketh draws the blade from the Rune of Death's seal, releasing its physical form to wield its power.

## **6. Analysis the Meaning of Visual Signs in Godfrey's Cutscene**

Godfrey, the first Elden Lord, has a lion named Serosh behind him, which serves as a sign in his cutscene. Serosh suppresses Godfrey's power, making him weaker before its disappearance, which allows Godfrey to become stronger. The lion is a sinsign, representing a physical presence, and its interpretant reveals that it holds back Godfrey's power and anger. The meaning of this sign combines denotative and connotative elements, as it not only depicts a fact but also suggests a cultural aspect related to the suppression of power. In conclusion, the lion's presence has a significant impact on Godfrey's strength, making the sign a blend of myth and index.

## **7. Analysis the Meaning of Visual Signs in Radagon's Cutscene**

In Radagon's cutscene, two signs are significant: the crucified body of Queen Marika and the Elden Ring inside Radagon. The crucifixion symbolizes Marika's punishment and loss of control over her body, reflecting her weakened state. The Elden Ring, located inside Radagon's chest, represents his control over the power and body, signifying his dominance. The crucifixion is a sinsign, implying Marika's slow loss of control, while the Elden Ring is a

legisign, representing Radagon's power. Together, these signs form a chained semiosis, where the meanings of each sign support and reinforce one another.

### **8. Analysis the Meaning of Visual Signs in Elden Beast's Cutscene**

In the Elden Beast cutscene, the sign of golden energy flowing through its veins is a crucial visual element. After Radagon's defeat, the Elden Beast rises, revealing its massive, dragon-like form with golden energy coursing through its transparent body. This golden energy signifies the power it holds, indicating the immense strength of the Elden Beast and its connection to the Greater Will. The golden veins are a qualisign, with the golden color representing the golden grace. The interpretant is that this energy is the golden grace, the source of life in the Lands Between, flowing as the blood of the Greater Will. This sign is a myth, combining both denotative (golden energy) and connotative meanings (the Greater Will's blood), linking the Elden Beast to the mysterious force behind the Lands Between. In conclusion, this sign provides a key answer to the game's ancient mystery, subtly revealing that the Elden Beast is the physical manifestation of the Greater Will.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

In conclusion, visual signs in *Elden Ring* are varied, but the most dominant type is the index. This is because index signs are directly linked to the signified, either physically or causally, which aligns with the game's storytelling approach that often relies on subtle hints and actions leading to conclusions. While symbols and icons also appear, symbols in *Elden Ring* are fictional and influenced by real-world cultures, and icons are more prevalent in gameplay rather than cutscenes. The visual signs in the cutscenes are often interrelated, with the combination of multiple signs revealing a more complex meaning. Understanding these signs often requires additional research, as some of the game's story and symbolism are not fully explained within the gameplay itself but are clarified in interviews with the developers.

Furthermore, there are some suggestions that we can take for future researcher in the field of visual signs. After conducting the study, we have experienced some confusion regarding the story of the game. In order to tackle the confusion, we have researched many sources, that is eventually led us to private interview with the author of the game *Elden Ring*. We have found that the interview helped us understanding the story of the *Elden Ring* far more

than by just playing the game. There are even more unique facts about some signs that we are unfortunately unable to add because it is not related to the study. Another future researcher could try to find an article that include private interview with the author to help with the study as well.

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