

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

After analyzing two American propaganda posters during World War II, in this chapter I would like to draw some conclusions. First of all, these two posters are addressed to American women during World War II. In both posters, the visual signs of the women are in a large size and placed in the middle of the posters, becoming the center of attention. There are also many textual signs referring to women, such as “MISS,” “SISTER,” and “WOMEN.” Thus, both the visual signs and the textual signs of women are very dominant.

Both of the women in the posters are shown as professional workers who support the war effort during the Second World War. However, the women are pictured as having different professions. In the first poster, the woman works as a stenographer, while in the second poster the woman works as a factory worker. In spite of the importance of both roles, these jobs have a different significance during World War II. At first glance, working as a stenographer seems not to be as hard as working as a factory worker. However, a stenographer during the war holds a big responsibility concerning the lives of many people. Their job is

delivering messages or orders from headquarters to soldiers in the battlefield. Thus, stenographers have to do their jobs in a meticulous and accurate way since they determine the lives of thousands of soldiers.

Physically, working as a factory worker is more tiring, difficult and dangerous for women. In the second poster, the woman is accompanied by a man wearing similar clothing as hers. The use of this image shows that America's women are needed and have capabilities to do historically man-sized jobs, namely, as factory workers. I think this implies the equality between men and women.

Not only the visual signs, but the textual signs from both posters also contain loads of meaning. Basically, the textual signs have the meaning of persuading and encouraging American women to support the war effort. It can be clearly seen from the textual signs "KEEP 'EM FLYING, MISS U.S.A." from the first poster and "GOOD WORK, SISTER" from the second one.

However, after doing the analysis, I find that the second poster does not only contain an encouraging meaning, but also acknowledgement and praise of women's involvement in supporting the war effort. This meaning is implied explicitly in the textual sign "AMERICA'S WOMEN HAVE MET THE TEST." In my opinion, this additional meaning is closely related to the year when both posters were published.

The "VICTORY WAITS ON YOUR FINGER" poster was created in 1942, only a year after World War II began. At that time, the government urgently needed women's help in replacing men who went to the battlefield. Thus, the propaganda poster focuses more on persuading American women to apply for jobs related to the war. It is still unknown whether the women could do it well or not.

The second poster, on the other hand, was published in 1944, a year before the war ended. At that time, it can be said that America and the Allies had a bigger chance of winning compared with the enemies. In addition, the women's capabilities had been proved to be one of the important factors in ensuring the victory. As a result, the government published the propaganda poster containing acknowledgement and praise of the importance of women's roles during the war. The use of the V-shaped sign in the background of the poster also strengthens this meaning.

Having analyzed both the visual and textual signs of the posters, I find the idea of women's empowerment in the posters. Both posters have the effect of empowering women's positions in professional fields. Although the purpose of the posters is originally to persuade women to replace men in some job areas during the World War II only, these posters also affect women's roles after the war.

The propaganda posters, especially the second one, have a message which is really motivating and encouraging for the women who were originally regarded as inferior to men in the workplace. Besides helping in building women's confidence, those posters also result in new opportunities for women to have careers in the fields which were exclusive for men before the war. During those years, the women gained new skills that could be used even after the war ended.

This also raised the idea of equality between women and men in that era. Women gained self-confidence that they had the same ability as men and were also entitled to equal treatment in society. This idea further developed into Second Wave Feminism, which started in the 1960s. The Feminist movement is the

reason that opportunities for women have grown regarding women's roles in society today. Thus, it is clear that the propaganda posters have a significant impact on women's roles after the war.

Propaganda posters have the function of persuasion. A propaganda poster should be straight to the point in conveying the messages. In my opinion, the two propaganda posters that I analyze are successful in delivering the message. Considering the fact that originally the women were reluctant to enter workplaces, the persuasion of the posters was also successfully delivered and accepted by American women at that time. Some experts even stated that America produced some of the most successful propaganda in history. In my opinion, this can be achieved because both the visual and the textual signs in the posters are closely connected and support each other in conveying the message. Each signifier and signified has its own significant meanings, which helps the viewers to find the main message of the posters.

Furthermore, during the writing process of this thesis, I came to a realization that semiotic analysis is very interesting and challenging. Semiotic analysis is not only limited to linguistic theories, but also related to other theories from many fields. In this thesis, I use psychological, historical and cultural theories, in addition to semiotic theories. It is both interesting and challenging to gather data from many sources and arrange them into a logical and structured analysis. Doing this analysis really broadens my knowledge about World War II, especially the history related to women's roles in that era.

Moreover, I realize that understanding semiotics is extremely important in the making of any visual media. By using suitable signifiers and signifieds, we

can deliver a solid meaning which will finally compel the viewers to give their attention. Besides, semiotics also helps me in understanding the meaning of visual media. I realize that we should not only see the surface meaning, but also pay attention to the unseen meaning. We have to be more critical in accepting signs and their messages as they can easily influence our thoughts and actions.

My suggestion for other researchers taking Semiotics is that they have to choose a suitable data source to be analyzed and make sure the theories which are used support the signification of the data. In addition, they also have to look for enough theories and arrange them in a certain way so that the analysis will be logical and well structured. Last but not least, it is best if they choose a topic which is interesting for them and keep being spiritfull during the process.

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