



## Construction of Political Reality in The Caricature Entitled Qiblatul Maut and Ittabi'uni By Osamahajjaj: A Semiotic Study of Roman Jakobson

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### ملخص

بالرسم الكاريكاتوري نستطيع استنتاج الرسالة التي يرغب المؤلف في نقلها. هدف هذه الدراسة هو الكشف عن بناء الواقع السياسي الذي يريد أسامة حجاج أن ينقله في الكاريكاتير "قبلة الموت" و"اتبعوني". تستخدم هذه الدراسة نوعًا من البحث النوعي والأسلوب المستخدم هو أسلوب تحليل المحتوى. تتألف مصدر البيانات من مصدر بيانات أولية ومصدر بيانات ثانوية. المصادر الأولية هي كاريكاتورين من حساب أسامة حجاج على إنستغرام. بينما تتكون المصادر الثانوية من مقالات الأخبار والمجلات والكتب ذات الصلة بالدراسة. تم جمع البيانات من خلال الملاحظة العميقة للكاريكاتيرات، ثم سُجّلت المسائل ذات الصلة بنظرية سيميائية لرومان ياكوبسون. يتم تحليل البيانات في ثلاث مراحل، وهي تقليل البيانات، وعرض البيانات، والاستنتاجات. نتائج البحث هي: (١) شكل بناء الواقع السياسي في صورة انتقاد سياسي لجو بايدن ومحاولة للسخرية من الولايات المتحدة التي تدعم حكومة إسرائيل، (٢) يفي كاريكاتير أسامة المعنون "قبلة الموت" و"اتبعوني"

بتحليل سيميائي رومان ياكوبسون في شكل المرسل، المستقبل، الرمز، الاتصال، السياق، والرسالة.

**الكلمات الرئيسية:** كاريكاتور، أسامة حجاج، السيميائية، نقد سياسي

#### Abstract

In a caricature we can conclude a Message the author wants to convey. The purpose of this study is to reveal what are the constructions of political reality that Osama Hajjaj intends to convey in caricatures "قبلة الموت" and "اتبعوني". This research uses a type of qualitative research, and the method used is content analysis. A data source consists of a primary data source and a secondary data source. The primary data sources are two caricatures from Osama Hajjaj's Instagram account. While secondary data sources consist of news articles, journals, and books relevant to the study. Data were collected through in-depth observation of caricatures, and then matters relevant to Roman Jakobson's semiotic theory were recorded. Data analysis is carried out in three stages: data reduction, data exposure, and conclusions. The results of the research are (1) the form of political reality construction in the form of political criticism of Joe Biden as well as an attempt to satirize the United States, which is pro with the Israeli government, (2) Osama's caricature entitled "قبلة الموت" and "اتبعوني" meets Roman Jacobson's semiotic analysis content in the form of addresser, addressee, code, contact, context, and message.

**Keywords:** Caricature, Osama Hajjaj, Semiotic, Political Criticism

#### Introduction

Recently, social media has become one of the most widely used platforms for political communication. Social media connects people with politicians, state officials, activists, and political organizations (Alyusi, 2016). Due to the widespread use of social media in channeling political aspirations, there are various forms of construction that are tried to be built by various parties and circles (Voorveld, 2019). The use of social media has opened up a wider realm for pouring political discourse or also reconstructing an existing discourse (Garimella et al., 2018). According to Marian D. Irish and James W. Prothro, political construction is an expression that must be conveyed by the public. Because in a democracy, public opinion is the main opinion that must be listened to (Riau et al., 2020).

Likewise, many caricature media have emerged in the mass media, especially social media. Caricature is one of the media that can reconstruct a discourse very well and is even considered as a media that attracts people's attention (Mudarman, 2023). The existence of caricatures is created as entertainment, while in fact the messages contained in a caricature can be deeper than the usual message (Putri et al., 2021). This is because a caricature creator usually puts hidden messages that require detailed analysis to understand (Latjuba et al., 2021). However, Waluyanto said that caricatures are more effective in conveying messages when compared to media that convey messages in writing or verbally (Yuniati, 2021).



In a good caricature, we will find elements of critical thinking that provoke us to understand more deeply (Aritonang, 2023). Such is the case with the various caricatures created by Osama Hajjaj. Osama is a Jordanian caricaturist who actively shares his work on social media. His works tend to contain criticisms of the phenomena that occur in the Middle East. Not infrequently, the caricatures that Osama shares cause controversy because they are considered too blunt and dangerous. He has even received death threats for his satirical works (R, 2011).

Some of his works that really caught people's attention were the caricatures entitled "قبلة الموت" and "اتبعوني" because they were considered too transparent in expressing political criticism of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and American president Joe Biden. However, this has become the main attraction of Osama Hajjaj's caricature works, which are considered bold and explicit in expressing criticism. Therefore, it is important to clearly reveal how political criticism is incorporated into caricatures by Osama Hajjaj.

In a caricature we can infer a message that the author wants to convey (Bau et al., 2020). In the interpretation of caricatures, each person has a different point of view considering that in caricatures there are texts, signs, symbols, characters, and storylines that are trying to be depicted (Astuti et al., 2019). Based on the background that has been previously stated, in this study researchers chose to take the object of the two most famous caricatures from Osama Hajjaj's Instagram. Namely the caricatures with the titles "قبلة الموت" and "اتبعوني".

To uncover the meaning of the symbols displayed in the two caricatures, researchers used the semiotic theory developed by Roman Jakobson. This theory comprehensively discusses various types of signs used in communication, both through words and through non-verbal expressions (Nugraha, 2022; Taufiq, 2016). Roman Jakobson semiotics is an approach used by Jakobson to understand and analyze signs in the communication process (Jia, 2019). Based on (Jakobson, 1960), there are 6 main factors that interact and contribute to the communication process and message understanding. The six elements are addresser, context, contact, code, message, and addressee.

Addressee and addressee maintain the psychological and physical relationship between communication implementers that allows both to enter and remain in communication (Zuckerman, 2020). The message is an intention that the addresser wants to convey to the addressee (Nugraha, 2022). Meanwhile, code is defined as a system of rules used to generate and understand messages (Khoer, 2019). In a non-verbal context, codes are symbols, conventions, or norms used in communication to convey certain meanings. The contact is a medium that connects the addresser and addressee in a communication (Sobur, 2006). And the last is context, which is the situation or environment in which a communication occurs.

Research on the construction of political reality in caricatures has been conducted by several previous researchers. The first is research by Nurul Istiqamah and I Sofyan entitled "Political Social Criticism in Caricatures" (Itiqomah & Sofyan, 2017). The second is research by Retty Rizkyaningtyas, et al entitled "Caricatures in Al-Riyadh Online Newspaper (Semiotics Study) (Rizkyaningtyas et al., 2018). The third is a



study by Wesam Mohamed Ahmed entitled "Semiotics of Elections in Political Caricature of Online Newspaper: A Case Study of 2018 Presidential Egyptian Elections" (Mohamed Ahmed, 2020). The fourth is a research by Alexey Kozlov and A Vasilenko entitled "Parody and Caticature in The Satirical Weeklies: Conventions of Perception and Conflict of Interpretations" (Kozlov & Vasilenko, 2021). The last is a study by S Himawan entitled "Caricature of Religious Social Criticism in Our Comics" (Himawan, 2023).

From the five previous studies above, the research found some similarities and differences. The similarity lies in the focus of the analysis carried out, namely the political reality contained in a caricature. Meanwhile, the difference lies in the theory of analysis used and the object of the caricature being analyzed. So the position of this research is to add research related to the construction of political reality found in caricatures related to the latest phenomena.

The background of the problem that has been presented encourages the focus of this research on efforts to reveal the form of political reality that Osama Hajjaj wants to convey through the caricatures "قبلة الموت" and "اتبعوني". These caricatures have the power to visualize and communicate complex and profound political messages. In "قبلة الموت", Hajjaj may want to highlight how violence and political conflict in the region can impact everyday life, while in "اتبعوني", there may be an attempt to criticize political leadership or highlight the influence that leaders have on society. Through the visual and symbolic elements in these caricatures, Hajjaj may be attempting to construct a narrative about the political reality he wants to convey to the audience. An in-depth analysis of the social, political and cultural contexts behind these works will help in revealing the messages hidden behind the artworks.

## Method

This research uses qualitative research and the method used is the content analysis method (Yusanto, 2020). Data sources consist of primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data sources are two caricatures from Osama Hajjaj's Instagram account. Meanwhile, secondary data sources consist of news articles, journals, and books relevant to the study. Data was collected through in-depth observation of the caricatures, then noting relevant things with Roman Jakobson's semiotic theory.

The data were collected in several ways, namely, (1) interviews, which were conducted with the aim of identifying the characters in the caricatures studied. The interviews were conducted through direct messages on the Instagram account of Osama Hajjaj, the creator of the caricatures studied by the researcher, (2) in-depth observations of the caricatures, and (3) the recording of things related to Roman Jakobson's semiotic theory. Data analysis was carried out in three stages; data reduction includes relevant data in the form of symbols and news articles, presentation of data by presenting organized information and interpretation of the symbols present in caricatures, drawing conclusions, namely configuring and drawing conclusions from the data found. All data is validated by triangulation method (Miles & Huberman, 1992).



## Results and Discussion





This sub-chapter will present the forms of criticism of a caricaturist named Osamah Hajjaj in his Instagram account on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The researcher used two caricatures entitled *قبلة الموت* and *اتبعوني*. Both caricatures represent the cooperative relationship between Israel, America, and its allies. Osama Hajjaj's Instagram account has 83,800 followers and has posted 2,984 caricatures. Osama is known as a political cartoonist who regularly reviews political events in the Middle East and on a global scale. As a political critic, he has even faced threats and imprisonment due to his controversial criticism of some parties (Maktabi, 2011).

### 1. Political Criticism In Caricature "قبلة الموت" On @Osamahajjaj Account



Figure 1. Caricature "قبلة الموت"

Picture 1 above is an illustration from the Instagram account @osamahajjaj with the title "قبلة الموت" or "Kiss of Death." The caricature was published on Thursday, October 19, 2023, by a Jordanian cartoonist named Osama Hajjaj. The post caught the attention of Instagram users by garnering 8,599 likes and 351 comments. The illustration visualizes Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and American President Joe Biden kissing. Depicting a form of cooperation between the two countries. Researchers interpret political criticism in this caricature with the following details:

No	Symbol	Information	
1.		Addresser	Osama Hajjaj
		Code	Benjamin Netanyahu and Joe Biden hug and kiss
		Context	Situational
		Contact	Mass media
		Message	Satire
		Adresser	Joe Biden
2.		Addresser	Osama Hajjaj
		Code	Palestinians who are victims of Israeli bombardment
		Context	Situational
		Contact	Mass media
		Message	Satire
		Addresser	Joe Biden
3.		Addresser	Osama Hajjaj
		Code	Genocide
		Context	Situational
		Contact	Mass media
		Message	Satire
		Addresser	Joe Biden
4.		Addresser	Osama Hajjaj
		Code	Building ruins
		Context	Situational
		Contact	Mass media
		Message	Satire
		Addresser	Joe Biden

The table above shows the main points of Roman Jakobson's theory in the caricature "قنبلة الموت". Osama Hajjaj as the creator of the caricature acts as the sender (addresser). While the addressee is the American president, Joe Biden. Then 4 codes were found that have a relationship with the cooperation between the state of Israel, America, and its allies. The contact used to convey his criticism is social media, more precisely Osamah Hajjaj's Instagram account.

Each symbol in the image is grouped into context categories that correspond to the symbol or code seen. This caricature can be analyzed in situational context, where each element of the image refers to a particular situation or circumstance. In picture a, there is a context behind the illustration of Netanyahu and Joe Biden's hug and kiss, which is situational context, showing the American president's support for Israel. In picture b, there is a context of the suffering of the Palestinian people who were injured, even lost their lives due to attacks from Israel. In picture c, there is a social context that refers to one of Israel's tools to attack Palestine, namely genocide. In picture d, there is a




situational context that refers to the houses in Palestine destroyed by Israeli attacks.

The message conveyed in the caricature above is an insinuation to the American President, Joe Biden. Through his caricature, Osamah satirizes the American president who is silent and even gives support to Israel. This is shown with the symbol of Benjamin Netanyahu and Joe Biden hugging and kissing. Then, Osama illustrates the victims of the Israeli attack with the rubble of the building and Netanyahu and Joe Biden on it. In the caricature there is also a long puff of smoke in the sky, referring to the genocide sent from Israel to Palestine. And finally, there is a picture of a building destroyed by an Israeli attack. All the messages conveyed through this caricature are an allusion to the American President, Joe Biden, who supports Israel in attacking the Palestinian state. One group that often criticizes the government is called the opposition. In the political context, opposition groups include political parties that are in the outer circle of the governing coalition, student groups, civil society, and other groups. (Aritonang, 2023). From this explanation, it can be concluded that political criticism in caricatures is a form of resistance to disagreement from the opposition to the ruling party. Where Osama Hajjaj becomes the opposition, and Joe Biden becomes the ruling party.

## 2. Political Criticism in Caricature “اتبعوني” On *Osamahajjaj's* Instagram account



Picture 2 above is a caricature image on *osamahajjaj's* Instagram account on October 20, 2023. The caricature has garnered 2,575 likes and 45 comments. The above caricature illustrates how the international news media followed Netanyahu's thinking in the Israeli-Palestinian war. As for the form of interpretation of political criticism on the above caricature is as follows:

No	Symbol	Information	
1.		Addresser	Osama Hajjaj
		Code	Word "رؤيا" (ru'ya) which means "thought"
		Context	Social
		Contact	Mass media
		Message	Satire
		Adresser	Benjamin Netanyahu
2.		Addresser	Osama Hajjaj
		Code	Netanyahu as the pioneer of "رؤيا" (ru'ya) which means "thought"
		Context	Sosietal, Situational
		Contact	Mass media
		Message	Satire
		Addresser	Benjamin Netanyahu
3.		Addresser	Osama Hajjaj
		Code	International news media that follow
		Context	Social, Situational
		Contact	Mass media
		Message	Satire
		Addresser	International News Media: CNN, Fox News, NBC, SKY News, BBC

The table above shows the components of Roman Jakobson's theory of caricatures "اتبعوني". Osama Hajjaj became *addresser*, Benjamin Netanyahu and the international mass media became *addresse* in the caricature. In addition, there are three *codes* which is connected to the alignment of the international mass media towards Benjamin Netanyahu who is the leader of the state of Israel. As for *contact* What Osama uses to convey his criticism is social media in the form of instagram.

*Context* that exists in each symbol is categorized according to the symbol or Code displayed. Context contained in the above caricatures are Context Social, socioetal and situational. Symbol i contains Social Context, which is about a view that can lead public opinion. Symbol ii contains both societal and situational contexts. The situational context is that Benjamin Netanyahu has a social status as the leader of the state of Israel so that it makes him have power and social power. The Social Context is in him pointing to his opinion. It can be seen as Netanyahu's attempt to command something to what is in his opinion. Symbol iii contains Social and situational Context. Context Social is a news media that appears in the



caricature in international news media. The situational context is in covering information related to the Israeli-Palestinian war.

The caricature above contains a Satirical message. Through the caricature, Joe Biden satirized Netanyahu and the international news media especially in the case of reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian war. The international news media is more covering what Netanyahu means, as if dictated. Netanyahu is likened to a mother duck and international news media as a child who follows her direction from the mother.

Caricatures are not just sketches, but there are also elements of sharpness, expressiveness and critical thinking about a matter. Caricatures contain actual text (Itiqomah & Sofyan, 2015). The media is not fully objective, fair, and neutral in presenting a reality. This is because everyone has different constructions of reality based on their experiences, preferences, education, and certain social or social environments they have (Utomo, 2013). From the analysis that has been done of two caricatures of Osama entitled "قبلة الموت" and "اتبعوني", Facts were obtained which later became a factor in the making of the caricature. The fact is that US President Joe Biden's alignment with Israel, as well as the international media tend to follow the information provided by Netanyahu. It is very intriguing to see how the war is clearly very unbalanced, and America, which is a superpower and holds the largest power in the world, should mediate and try to resolve the long-standing war between Israel and Palestine. So, this caricature was made as a form of political criticism of what is happening in the relations of the United States, Israel and the international media.

## Conclusion

Caricature is one of the media that is able to reconstruct a discourse and is able to attract public attention. One of the political cartoonists is Osama Hajjaj. Osama Hajjaj is known as a political cartoonist who regularly reviews political events in the Middle East and on a global scale. In his caricature entitled "قبلة الموت" and "اتبعوني" describes the political situation between the United States and Israel in the event of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both caricatures are a form of political criticism of bin Laden as well as an attempt to satirize the United States which is pro with the Israeli government. Caricature "قبلة الموت" illustrates how close the relationship between Joe Biden who is the President of the United States and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. As for the caricature titled "اتبعوني" illustrates how the international media that follow Netanyahu is represented like a duck child following the direction of its mother. In the analysis of research using Roman Jakobson's theory of Semiotics, Osama's caricature entitled "قبلة الموت" and "اتبعوني" meets Roman Jakobson's semiotic analysis content in the form of addresser, addressee, code, contact, context, and message.

This research is expected to contribute to the development of linguistic research, especially caricature research with Roman Jakobson's semiotic analysis. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the object of study, such as comics, paintings, memes, or add new research related to caricatures. This research successfully reveals the implied meaning of two caricatures made by Osamah Hajjaj. He made caricatures that aim to criticize global phenomena, one of which is the Israeli-



Palestinian conflict. The weakness of this research is that it only reveals forms of political criticism. The researcher suggests that future researchers explain the factors and impacts of making these caricatures.

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