

## The Verbal and Non-Verbal Trichotomies in Wolf-Themed Memes

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### Abstract

*This study investigates wolf-themed memes using Peirce's semiotic framework to explore how meaning is constructed through verbal and non-verbal elements. The research highlights the importance of understanding these memes in the context of digital culture, where they serve as a medium for emotional expression and commentary. A qualitative content analysis revealed that qualisign and index were the most prominent semiotic elements in wolf-themed memes, emphasizing the role of visual and emotional tones in shaping meaning. The findings demonstrate how textual and visual components work together, with minimalistic choices effectively encapsulating complex themes. By applying a semiotic perspective, this research offers insights into the layered meanings behind wolf-themed memes and their cultural relevance as a form of communication. These results underscore the value of semiotics in interpreting internet memes, revealing their potential as symbolic tools for self-expression and digital interaction.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The internet meme is a form of visual entertainment, which can manifest in many different formats, such as a still image, an animated GIF or even a video. They are not meant to be beautiful or realistic. According to Börzsei (2013), meme is more focused on the message, not the visual. Knobel and Lankshear (2005) also stated that memes are often multimodal, however: to single images there are often additional texts, images and even sound or animation added to enhance the meme's contagious qualities.

The possible sources of a meme are limited only by the number of things there are in the world for us to discuss (Allen, cited in Shifman 2013): it can be cinema, video games, celebrities, as well as politics. In one image, a meme can be used with a certain topic, or mixed with other memes. This flexibility allows memes to evolve quickly, drawing from popular culture, shared experiences, or trending events. Memes can connect seemingly unrelated subjects in humorous or critical ways by remixing ideas, enhancing their relatability. This adaptability

makes memes not only a powerful form of communication but also a reflection of the constantly shifting dynamics of online culture.

Werewolf memes have become a significant trend in online culture over the years. Their popularity has evolved through various phases, from early Reddit memes to newer interpretations on platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Reynolds (2023) observed that even prominent brands like Drumstick have joined the trend, emphasizing widespread appeal and adaptability of wolf-themed memes. These memes often serve as a humorous way for netizens to expose their personal vulnerabilities or social awkwardness, evolving beyond the original "Courage Wolf" and "Insanity Wolf" memes that emphasized strength and chaos. A prominent turning point in the evolution of wolf-themed memes came with Moon Moon, an iconic character embodying clumsiness, which further pushed the trend into new directions. This meme trend spans several subgenres, reflecting shifting cultural contexts and audience interactions.

The presence of wolves in meme culture can be traced back to 2009, when a T-shirt design featuring "Three Wolf Moon" unexpectedly went viral. The T-shirt became an ironic symbol of humor, with netizens adding it to photoshopped images of celebrities and turning it into a cultural meme phenomenon. These early successes laid the foundation for wolves to remain part of the internet's humor lexicon. Since then, wolves have often represented themes of solitude, introspection, or exaggerated drama in meme culture. Their strong yet misunderstood image resonates with audiences, making them a versatile symbol for humor and relatable content.

A resurgence in werewolf-themed memes emerged in April 2022, when the FurryFandom Facebook fan page reposted artwork titled "Voices," created by WolfRoad on DeviantArt in 2015. This post not only revived interest in wolf-themed memes but also introduced them to broader communities beyond the original furry fandom. The viral nature of these memes facilitated further adaptations, with users remixing and reposting WolfRoad's art on other fan pages, expanding its reach beyond niche communities. The werewolf meme gained traction across various platforms, including Reddit, Twitter, and Facebook, sparking diverse forms of creative engagement.

This research examines the interpretation of wolf-themed memes, focusing on uncovering the underlying messages conveyed through visual and textual elements. It explores how these memes convey complex emotions and ideas.

Memes are frequently analyzed in semiotics because they contain signs and symbols that can be studied to reveal explicit and implicit meanings. Semiotics, a branch of linguistics, is the study of signs and symbols. Semiotics explores the existence and interpretation of signs within society (Yakin & Totu, 2014). Umberto Eco (1978), in his book *A Theory of Semiotics*, describes a sign

as “everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else.”

Charles Sanders Peirce, a key figure in the pragmatist movement, introduced the terms “semiotics”. In his work published between 1931 and 1958 (as cited in Yakin and Totu 2014), Peirce described semiotics as a form of logic focused on understanding human thought processes. His theory is rooted in the interaction between the mind and signs, emphasizing a three-part model known as the triadic or trichotomy system.

According to Chandler (2002), Peirce divides signs into three components: the representamen, the object, and the interpretant. The representamen, similar to Saussure’s “signifier,” refers to the physical aspect of the sign. The object is what the sign represents, while the interpretant is the meaning derived from the representamen about the object. Peirce calls the dynamic interaction between these three elements “semiosis”.

In memes, meanings are conveyed through both verbal and non-verbal elements, such as images and text. When each element is viewed as a distinct code, the combination of verbal and non-verbal expressions creates a unique semiotic system (Mukhammadovna, 2024). This study uniquely contributes to meme analysis literature by focusing on wolf-themed memes as a case study, revealing how explicit and implicit meanings emerge from the interplay of verbal and non-verbal signs. The text often conveys emotions, attitudes, and social commentary, while also evoking ideas and associations. Meanwhile, the images—usually rich in color and expressive detail—function as non-verbal signs that deepen and complement the message. By applying Peirce’s semiotic framework to this specific meme genre, this research uncovers nuanced layers of interpretation, providing valuable insights into how meaning-making in internet memes operates. This analysis emphasizes the role of semiotics in bridging visual and textual elements, offering a deeper understanding of memes as cultural artefacts.

Several studies have explored the semiotic analysis of visual media and memes. Tomlinson (2021), examined menstrual memes, finding that they challenge negative discourses about menstruation and inspire social action through contestive humor or serious tones. Pangestu (2023) identified 30 dominant elements, including qualisigns, sinsigns, indices, 9 icons, and fewer instances of legisigns and symbols, demonstrating public opinions on the pandemic’s impacts. Wicaksono and Heriyati (2023) revealed that visual and non-verbal signs in the poster effectively communicate key information, including where to watch the film. Lastly, Merlina (2020) found that logos convey distinct meanings. These studies highlight semiotic theory’s broad capability to analyze various media, yet their focus remains broad or generalized.

This study addresses the research gap by concentrating on a specific subgenre of memes—wolf-themed memes—and applying Peirce’s semiotic

framework to uncover the nuanced interplay between verbal and non-verbal elements. The objective is to provide a detailed analysis of how wolf-themed memes construct layered meanings through their semiotic elements, contributing a unique perspective to meme analysis literature.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the qualitative content analysis method is employed to analyze the interpretation of wolf-themed memes. Content analysis, as defined by Cole (in Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), is a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages. Through content analysis, it is possible to distil words into fewer content related categories. It is assumed that when classified into the same categories, words, phrases and the like share the same meaning (Cavanagh, 1997).

The main data in this study are memes with wolf depicted in the picture. The data were taken from various Pinterest accounts that are well-known for sharing memes. The selection criteria for the datasets were guided by two factors: (1) a high number of likes, indicating greater popularity and cultural resonance, and (2) a rich combination of visual and textual elements, ensuring the memes had sufficient complexity for semiotic analysis. By focusing on memes with high engagement and diverse semiotic components, this study ensures that the data are representative of contemporary meme culture and offer meaningful insights into the use of wolf-themed imagery to communicate nuanced messages.

This research uses documentation technique to collect data on wolf-themed memes. In qualitative research methods gathering and categorizing data should be selected to save time and increase the significance of the research (Dabi, 2014). The selected data source was from various Pinterest account, that uploading wolf-themed meme content. The selection process began with identifying the memes. To ensure data relevance, criteria were set based on high engagement and rich visual or textual elements for semiotic analysis. Screenshots were taken to preserve both text and imagery accurately.

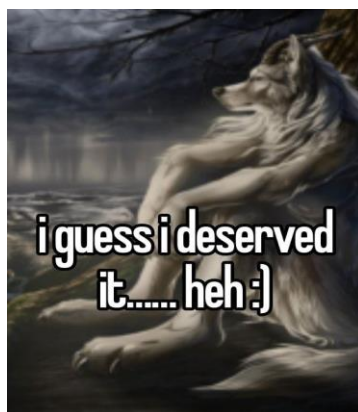
The data analysis technique involves several steps, beginning with applying Peirce's Trichotomy to analyze the wolf-themed memes. The next step involves breaking down the representamen, object, and interpretant in each meme, providing a deeper understanding of how meaning is constructed. Finally, the analysis explores the contributions of verbal and non-verbal signs within the memes, examining how text and imagery work together to convey messages.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data were obtained from various Pinterest accounts, prioritizing those with the highest number of likes and a rich combination of visual and textual elements to ensure relevance. To maintain validity, the study applied

Peirce's semiotic framework consistently across all datasets, ensuring that each meme was analyzed systematically based on established theoretical criteria. Reliability was achieved through repeated reviews of the data and cross-checks with existing literature to confirm the consistency and accuracy of interpretations.

**Figure 1. @jordlan377 in Pinterest**  
(<https://pin.it/4THZxVXwq>)



The image above shows a lone wolf sitting at the edge of a misty lake, surrounded by thick fog and dark, overcast clouds. The wolf's expression appears with sad and melancholy atmosphere. The object here is the concept of personal reflection or self-blame. The wolf symbolizes a lone, introspective character, often depicted in popular culture as a strong animal. The sad posture of the wolf suggest feelings of regret or acceptance of an unfortunate situation. The memes conveys a humorous but somewhat bittersweet reflection on self-responsibility or accepting consequences.

The result of the trichotomy relation can be further analyzed in the following table:

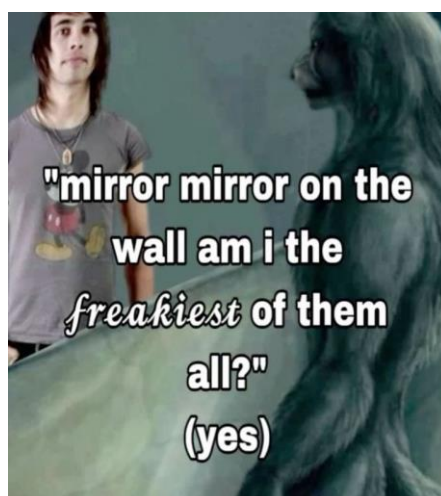
**Table 1. Trichotomy analysis**

No.	Trichotomy	Sign-Vehicles
1.	<b>Representamen</b>	<p><b>Qualisign:</b> The solemn expression of the wolf, seated at the edge of the lake surrounding by fogs, creates a tone of sadness. The misty surroundings evokes a sense of melancholy.</p> <p><b>Sinsign:</b> The word "heh" signifies a sense of reluctant resignation, emphasizing a feeling of being compelled to accept the current situation with no alternative.</p>
2.	<b>Object</b>	<p><b>Index:</b> The gray and black color palette conveys a vague and subdued atmosphere, projecting an</p>

		impression of passivity and surrender. As Thinard (2019) explains, gray often symbolizes age, authority, monotony, intelligence, illegality, and vagueness. Specifically, gray refers to something blurred or undefined, further supporting the subdued tone.
3.	<b>Interpretant</b>	<p><b>Rheme:</b> The word "<i>deserve</i>" is defined as something that should happen to you, whether good or bad, as a consequence of your behavior. In this context, it can be interpreted either way—positive or negative—since there is no specific explanation provided about the circumstances.</p> <p><b>Decisign:</b> The wolf's expression mirrors the look of introspection often seen in humans when they are deep in thought or reflecting on themselves.</p>

The caption, "*i guess i deserve it... heh :)*", serves as a verbal sign that establishes a lighthearted yet ironic tone. Lowercase letters and the smiley emoji gives it a casual and self-blaming feel, further emphasizing the irony. This verbal element is complemented by the non-verbal sign of the lone wolf, whose miserable expression and introspective body language reinforce the representamen, projecting a feeling of melancholy. Despite wolves typically being seen as powerful animals, the wolf's downtrodden pose adds a humorous twist, which can be interpreted as ironic. The verbal and non-verbal elements align with the object's concept of personal reflection, creating a layered and relatable message.

**Figure 2. @zombhrts in Pinterest**  
(<https://pin.it/2rWqz3T8f>)



The meme depicts a wolf facing a mirror, but its reflection is a long-haired man in a Mickey Mouse shirt. The object of humor lies in the unexpected contrast between the wolf's wild appearance and the man's mundane one. This incongruity can be interpreted as a commentary on societal expectations and the pressure to conform to certain norms.

**Table 2. Trichotomy analysis**

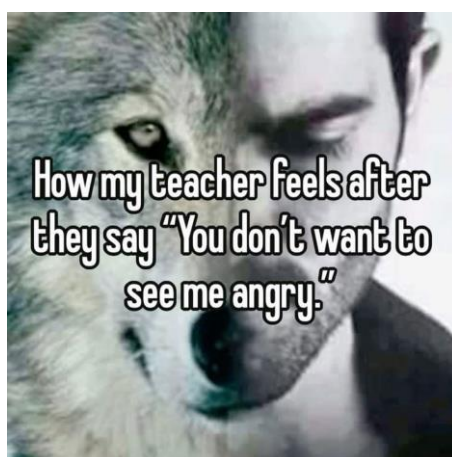
No.	Trichotomy	Sign-Vehicles
1.	<b>Representamen</b>	<p><b>Qualisign:</b> The image of the wolf facing the mirror already suggests self-reflection, reinforced by the caption "Mirror, mirror on the wall," which evokes introspection.</p> <p><b>Legisign:</b> The phrase "<i>mirror, mirror on the wall</i>" originates from the fairy tale <i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</i> (1937), where it is famously uttered by the witch to seek validation of her beauty. This well-known phrase carries cultural familiarity, evoking themes of self-reflection and the desire for affirmation. In the meme's context, it is repurposed to humorously explore deeper notions of identity and uniqueness.</p>
2.	<b>Object</b>	<p><b>Index:</b> The imagery of a wolf facing a mirror is a concept of self-reflection. As Oermann (2005) explains in her book, "A mirror provides more than the reflection of an objective image of a person...".</p> <p><b>Symbol:</b> The phrase in the meme is widely recognized as a quote from fairy tale that carries a specific meaning; a rhetorical question often used to seek validation someone's worth.</p>
3.	<b>Interpretant</b>	<p><b>Rheme:</b> The word "freakiest" is commonly used today to describe a person with unusual hobbies or behavior. As defined in the Cambridge Dictionary, it refers to "a thing, person, animal, or event that is extremely unusual or unlikely, and not like any other of its type." This term is frequently used by younger generations, making its meaning less familiar to older audiences, who may interpret it in various ways based on their own cultural or linguistic understanding.</p>



The meme's verbal and non-verbal signs create a layered interpretation that balances humor, irony, and self-reflection. The verbal phrase, "*mirror mirror on the wall am I the freakiest of them all?*", referring the familiar fairy-tale trope with a humorous twist, setting an ironic tone and inviting reflection on being "*freaky*" or uniquely different, contrasting the first data, where the humor lies in the overreacting to minor mistakes.

The non-verbal imagery of a human-like wolf gazing into a reflective surface beside a person in alternative attire, drawing parallels between the two. The wolf, often symbolizing strength or solitude, mirrors the individuality of the human, suggesting that unconventional traits transcend boundaries. Thus, the elements blend humor and introspection, celebrating the uniqueness.

Figure 3. @YoWsgMama in Pinterest  
(<https://pin.it/1ObQ6ndKf>)



The image presents a man, half-human and half-wolf, with a somber expression. This visual representation conveys a sense of duality and transformation. The wolf, often associated with wildness, ferocity, and instinct, contrasts sharply with the human aspect, typically symbolizing rationality and civilization. The meme suggests that anger can unleash a person's inner beast, transforming them into something unrecognizable. The wolf represents the primal, uncontrolled emotions that can take over when someone is enraged.

In contrast to the second data, this meme has both icon and decisign, suggesting a stronger connection to real-life experiences. A more detailed analysis is presented in the table below:



**Table 3. Trichotomy analysis**

No.	Trichotomy	Sign-Vehicles
1.	Representamen	<b>Qualisign:</b> The image of half-human and half-wolf conveys the duality of identity and the process of transformation.
2.	Object	<b>Icon:</b> The wolf is the icon of anger.  <b>Index:</b> The contrast between the human gaze, which appears to restrain anger, and the wolf's piercing stare signals the transformation of anger.
3.	Interpretant	<b>Decisign:</b> The imagery of human transform into wolf is confirming the fact that someone do switching their behavior if they are feel anger.

This meme uses verbal and non-verbal signs to exaggerate how teachers can seem when angry humorously. The text, *"How my teacher feels after they say 'You don't want to see me angry,'"* captures a teacher issuing a dramatic warning. The image, showing a split between a wolf and a human face, adds a layer of visual humor by portraying the teacher as a mix of angriness side (the wolf) and calmness side (the human). Together, the text and imagery to create a playful interpretation, making the teacher's warning feel both dramatic and funny by suggesting a hidden, fearsome side beneath their professional demeanor.

**Figure 4. @that1lilaveryyy in Pinterest**  
(<https://pin.it/2vZ4Tj3Fv>)



The meme depicts a wolf wearing a cowboy hat, showing a smirk expression, exuding a sense of confidence and swagger. The object here is asserting dominance and control like hunting a prey. The red eyes and the text "RUN" serve as a clear warning to potential adversaries. It implies that the wolf can unleash its inner power and causing harm if provoked.

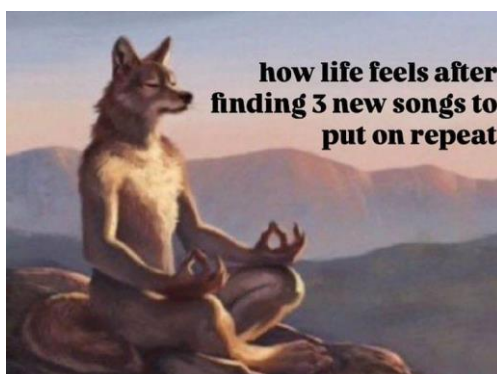
Compared to the third data, this meme has a rheme that makes it challenging for the general audience to interpret its meaning without understanding the specific context. More detailed analysis:

**Table 4. Trichotomy analysis**

No.	Trichotomy	Sign-Vehicles
1.	Representamen	<p><b>Sinsign:</b> The text “RUN” and emojis is a warning, implying that if something unusual occur, people should stay alert.</p> <p><b>Legisign:</b> The phrase “<i>eyes turn red</i>” in digital society means a signal of danger. As Brandon (2024) states, “<i>the glowing eyes effect ... meant to enhance an image by multiplying the emotion felt.</i>”</p>
2.	Object	<p><b>Icon:</b> The Stetson hat worn by the wolf is iconic and immediately associated with cowboys, evoking imagery of the Wild West.</p> <p><b>Symbol:</b> The wolf wearing a cowboy hat, reinforced with the text, implies that the wolf is preparing to hunt new prey. Furthermore, the phrase “<i>eyes turn red</i>” then signifies a predatory or intense transformation.</p>
3.	Interpretant	<p><b>Rheme:</b> interpreted in various ways. Its meaning is more familiar to individuals who frequently use social media, where it might carry specific connotations. However, for those less exposed to this context, the phrase could be understood differently, leading to varied interpretations.</p>

The verbal and non-verbal signs deliver a playful yet dramatic portrayal of power and intimidation. The text, “*when my eyes turn red RUN* 🤩👹🐺❤️,” uses bold words and evocative emojis (devil, skull, wolf, black heart) to set a tone of danger, blending menace with a sense of humor. The visual of a smirking wolf wearing a cowboy hat brings an unexpected twist, presenting the wolf as not just wild, but also charismatic. These elements create a layered meaning: the verbal sign suggests transformation and threat, while the non-verbal sign injects irony, contrasting the traditional image of wolves as wild and uncontrollable. The meme humorously exaggerates themes of power and danger, appealing to audiences who enjoy a mix of humor and dramatized self-expression.

**Figure 5. @mmqmixo in Pinterest**  
(<https://pin.it/3Nkc68ZU1>)



The image represents a meditating wolf in sitting in a cross-legged, meditative pose, with its eyes closed and hands in a classic “zen” gesture conveying an expression of peace. It is set in a quiet mountain landscape with no one else around. The object of the meme refers to the experience of finding joy and relaxation in something simple, like discovering new music to enjoy. The interpretant here lies in the humorous exaggeration of how music consumption affects mood. It conveys that something so simple like discovering new songs can evoke sense of happiness, humorously likened to achieving spiritual peace.

**Table 5. Trichotomy analysis**

No.	Trichotomy	Sign-Vehicles
1.	Representamen	<p><b>Qualisign:</b> The image of the wolf in a meditation pose on the mountain conveys a sense of calmness and inner peace, resonating with the feeling of pleasure embodied by the pose.</p> <p><b>Legisign:</b> The text refers to an internet meme trend where people often share personal experiences that bring them great pleasure.</p>
2.	Object	<p><b>Icon:</b> The meditation pose itself is an icon for inner peace, universally recognized as a technique to clear the mind.</p> <p><b>Index:</b> The meditative pose directly points to the enjoyment and pleasure that comes with discovering new songs, symbolizing the peaceful and satisfying experience of this discovery.</p>
3.	Interpretant	<p><b>Decisign:</b> The meme makes a truth-like assertion that discovering good music can indeed be a</p>

		moment of happiness, validating the joy and fulfillment found in this experience.
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The text *"how life feels after finding 3 new songs to put on repeat"* serves as a verbal sign that expresses the universal joy of discovering enjoyable music in a relatable, casual tone. With the non-verbal cues of a calm wolf in a serene mountain setting, the meme evokes a sense of peacefulness and satisfaction. The verbal sign directly relates to the object, representing the emotional relief and contentment of immersing oneself in favorite songs on repeat. Meanwhile, the wolf's meditative pose humorously contrasts its usual association with wildness, amplifying the meme's humor by portraying an unexpected scene of tranquility.

**Figure 6. @yawndwae\_ in Pinterest**  
(<https://pin.it/5O6fR6RzU>)



The image shows a wolf howling dramatically, head thrown back, with a torn shirt emphasizing intense frustration over a trivial typo in digital communication. The meme highlights a small mistake as the object, while the interpretant is the humorous overreacting to something so minor.

**Table 6. Trichotomy analysis**

No.	Trichotomy	Sign-Vehicles
1.	Representamen	<p><b>Qualisign:</b> The image of the wolf howling while tearing his shirt conveys a dramatic reaction over the mistakes.</p> <p><b>Legisign:</b> The word <i>"FRR"</i> in social media is acronym for <i>"For Real"</i>. As it stated in Social Media Glossary Later.com, it is a slang term that is commonly used to express agreement, confirmation, or sincerity.</p>

2.	Object	<p><b>Index:</b> The text “me when” is directed to the visual image of wolf that implies the reaction of the mistakes.</p> <p><b>Symbol:</b> Wolf’s howling in the image symbolizes an inner frustration of mistakes. This aligns with Joslin’s observation in Harrington and Mech (1979) that howling between packs may serve as a means of communication, expressing emotions or establishing connections.</p>
3.	Interpretant	<p><b>Decisign:</b> The meme creates a truth-like assertion that even a single letter typo can significantly alter the meaning.</p>

The text “me when I accidentally type ‘GRR’ instead of ‘FRR’” humorously portrays an exaggerated reaction to a minor typo. Set in a moonlit forest, the wolf’s tense posture amplifies the drama, contrasting with the trivial nature of the mistake. “GRR” suggests aggression, while “FRR” (slang for “for real”) implies sincerity, creating a humorous disconnect. The meme format “me when” invites relatability, encouraging viewers to laugh at the absurdity of such an intense response to a simple error. The howling wolf visually exaggerates the frustration, turning a small mistake into an overly dramatic and comedic moment. Contrasting the fifth data, where the wolf give a hint of humor in calm expression.

Figure 7. @souljuhbruh in Pinterest  
(<https://pin.it/CDsNdWijN>)



The image portrays a wolf howling under a full moon, standing alone at the edge of a cliff. It reflects a sense of emptiness and isolation, rooted in the idea that no one truly understands its real nature. At the same time, the meme

introduces a humorous twist, exaggerating the idea of something hidden inside – something so deeply buried that others can't even begin to notice it.

This meme has a similarity with sixth data, where the wolf is howling to express the feeling. However, the difference is in the atmosphere, for more detailed analysis:

**Table 7. Trichotomy analysis**

No.	Trichotomy	Sign-Vehicles
1.	Representamen	<p><b>Qualisign:</b> The image of a wolf howling under the moonlight, with its distinct posture, conveys an emotional atmosphere of being isolated.</p> <p><b>Sinsign:</b> The wolf howling under the moon, reinforced by the text, implies unresolved feelings of being isolated.</p> <p><b>Legisign:</b> The wolf and full moon share a deep connection, often portrayed in cultural and natural contexts. Scientifically, the full moon has been shown to influence nocturnal prey activity, as its brightness increases their visibility to predators (Lockard in Sabato et al., 2006)</p>
2.	Object	<p><b>Index:</b> The wolf's howl and posture signifying distress or a deep inner revelation.</p> <p><b>Symbol:</b> The dark-themed emojis emphasize feelings of emptiness, aligning with their frequent placement at the end of sentences to mark emotional tone. As Cramer et al. (in Dainas &amp; Herring, 2020)) explain, emojis can function similarly to punctuation, helping to clarify sentence boundaries while reinforcing the emotional depth of the message. This use of emojis enhances the emotional impact of the text, underlining a sense of melancholy or sadness.</p>
3.	Interpretant	<p><b>Rheme:</b> The text "No one truly knows the real me..." can be freely interpret in bad or good way because there are no specific explain.</p>

Verbal signs, "No one truly knows the real me...", expressing universal themes of hidden identity and emotional complexity while leaving room for interpretation. Non-verbal signs, including the werewolf image, full moon, and emojis, enhance the text by adding cultural and emotional depth. Emojis

function as modern symbols, complementing the verbal message with themes of confinement, beauty, and sorrow. These elements form a symbolic and iconic representation of inner struggles, engaging viewers emotionally and intellectually within a culturally resonant framework.

**Figure 8. @autumnpardons11 in Pinterest**  
<https://pin.it/omfULAxhS>



The image represent silhouette of a skull in black hood blending with a wolf in anger expression. This visual emphasizes the duality of a person's darker side. The interpretant lies in the metaphorical comparison of inner darkness to demons, with the warning that coming too close might awaken these hidden demon. This warning carries a subtle hint of dark humor.

**Table 8. Trichotomy analysis**

No.	Trichotomy	Sign-Vehicles
1.	Representamen	<p><b>Qualisign:</b> The imagery of the wolf, shrouded in shadows and infused with eerie green tones, evokes a sense of mystery, isolation, and inner turmoil. The visual quality of the skull overlay reinforces the idea of hidden danger or a darker nature beneath the surface.</p> <p><b>Legisign:</b> The text "<i>IT'S WHERE MY DEMONS HIDE</i>" is a lyric from the song by Imagine Dragons, which, according to Genius.com, represents the battle with one's insecurities and inner flaws. The phrase, when placed in the context of the meme, adds depth to the emotional experience, suggesting that the wolf's howling, along with its posture and surrounding imagery, can be interpreted as a</p>



		struggle with hidden, internal struggles or emotional pain.
2.	Object	<p><b>Index:</b> The dark coloration, skull-like overlay, and textual reference to "dark inside" and "demons" are indices of emotional pain or guardedness.</p> <p><b>Symbol:</b> In many cultures, the skull is a powerful symbol of death and mortality, often evoking deep reflection on the fragility of life. As mentioned by Lugdun.com, the skull also represents toughness, bravery, and the struggles between life and death. This symbolism is potent because of the universal recognition of the skull as a reminder of the inevitable and the sacrifices that individuals may endure.</p>
3.	Interpretant	<p><b>Rheme:</b> The text "IT'S WHERE MY DEMONS HIDE" can be interpreted in multiple ways, on one hand, it could evoke thoughts of mental health struggles, such as depression or inner turmoil, on the other hand, the phrase can also carry a humorous or exaggerated tone, transforming the "demons" into something less sinister and more comedic.</p>

The meme's verbal and non-verbal signs work together to deepen its emotional impact. While the image of the wolf alone might suggest mystery or danger, the phrase "IT'S WHERE MY DEMONS HIDE" adds emotional weight, tying the visual to themes of hidden trauma and internal struggle. The wolf's posture, along with the skull imagery and dark setting, intensifies the feeling of emotional isolation, transforming the visual into a symbol of guardedness and pain. The combination of text and imagery creates a layered interpretation, where the verbal sign enhances the visual elements, giving the meme a powerful emotional narrative.

**Figure 9. @sophied987 in Pinterest**  
(<https://pin.it/7tN9idSBD>)



The image of two wolves in a dark place, one leaning on a fence and the other crouching, represents the theme of support between friends. The object signifies the unspoken understanding and emotional support that exists in close friendships. The interpretant adds humor by exaggerating their relationship, they both rely on each other in their own way, creating a lighthearted yet relatable dynamic of friendship.

**Table 9. Trichotomy analysis**

No.	Trichotomy	Sign-Vehicles
1.	Representamen	<b>Qualisign:</b> The image of two wolves in a specific interaction—one leaning on a fence and another crouching embodies the visual of the text.
2.	Object	<p><b>Index:</b> The text "<i>me with that friend</i>" effectively visualizing the textual sign. It suggests that the meme is portraying a specific reaction or situation experienced with a particular friend.</p> <p><b>Symbol:</b> The phrase "<i>supports my delusions</i>" is symbolic, relying on cultural understanding of friendships that blur boundaries between encouragement and enabling behavior. This works only in societies where this specific humor is recognized.</p>
3.	Interpretant	<b>Decisign:</b> The meme highlights a connection to real-life experiences, emphasizing the idea that good friends always support each other.

The image depicts two wolves in a nocturnal setting, one leaning nonchalantly on a fence, the other crouched alertly in the shadows. This dynamic interplay of postures subtly conveys a sense of camaraderie and shared understanding. The text, with its playful use of the word "delusions," adds a hint of humor, acknowledging that these shared interests might be seen as eccentric by others. This combination of visual and textual elements creates a relatable and engaging message about the importance of supportive friendships, emphasizing that true companionship lies in accepting and embracing one another's unique passions.

**Figure 10. @HANNIGRAM in Pinterest**  
(<https://pin.it/3gjZGllBw>)



The image shows a muscular wolf with an angry expression, emphasized by red tones. The message hints at a desire for clear and direct communication. The humor lies in the suggestion that the frustration isn't necessarily tied to something like autism but rather a simple need for better clarity. This blend of humor, with its subtle nod to dark undertones, adds a layer of complexity to the meme.

This meme has similarity tones of dark humor with the eighth data, but there is a different in sense of reality. Here is a detailed analysis:

**Table 10. Trichotomy analysis**

No.	Trichotomy	Sign-Vehicles
1.	Representamen	<p><b>Qualisign:</b> The image of muscular angry wolf reinforced with bold text "NO, I have AUTISM" and the red color visually emphasizes the seriousness.</p> <p><b>Sinsign:</b> The text directly connects to real-life experiences of individuals with autism who require clear communication, which can be a unique event</p>

		<p>or circumstance. It refers to moments where misunderstandings lead to stereotyping or prejudice.</p> <p><b>Legisign:</b> The text "CLEAR LANGUAGE AND ACTION" function as a broader principle or law that people with autism may need to ensure effective communication.</p>
2.	Object	<p><b>Index:</b> The combination of the image and text signifies miscommunication and the need for clear dialogue in interacting with individuals with autism.</p>
3.	Interpretant	<p><b>Rheme:</b> The meme can be interpreted in different ways. While it humorously hints at struggling with communication, it also has the potential to mock people with autism, making it a complex and layered portrayal. The dual interpretation highlights the fine line between humor and insensitivity</p>

The meme uses a powerful image of a werewolf to convey a serious message about autism. The werewolf's snarling expression initially evokes fear and intimidation, mirroring the experience of autistic individuals who may feel misunderstood or judged due to their communication style. The text, "*NO I have AUTISM and require CLEAR LANGUAGE AND ACTION*," directly challenges the implied accusation of stupidity and asserts the need for clear communication and understanding. This combination of visual and textual elements creates a strong statement about the importance of respectful communication.

## CONCLUSION

This research analyzed the *wolf-themed* memes using Peirce's semiotic framework, which comprises three semiotic signs: representamen (qualisign, sinsign, legisign), object (icon, index, symbol), and interpretant (rheme, decisign, argument). Based on the study of 10 datasets, the findings revealed a distribution of semiotic elements: 9 qualisigns, 4 sinsigns, 7 legisigns, 9 indexes, 3 icons, 6 symbols, 6 rhemes, and 5 decisigns. Qualisign and index emerged as the most dominant element, highlighting the significance of visual and emotional tones in conveying meaning.

Verbal (text) and non-verbal (image) signs played a significant role in constructing the semiotic signs within the memes. Text provided explicit cues or cultural references, while images enriched the interpretation through

symbolism, emotional undertones, and implied narratives. Thus, these signs contributed to the memes' layered and often nuanced meanings.

This research highlights the effectiveness of Peirce's semiotic theory as a tool for deconstructing internet memes. Specifically, it demonstrates how wolf-themed memes—through minimalist visual and textual elements—convey complex ideas, emotions, and cultural commentaries. These findings emphasize the potential of memes as a powerful medium for emotional expression and digital communication, offering insights valuable to academics exploring the dynamics of visual communication in online media. Furthermore, the study reaffirms the relevance of semiotics in understanding how meaning is constructed and shared in contemporary online culture.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The author prepared this article under the guidance of their supervisor. The supervisor also provided edits and granted approval for its publication.

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