

## **The Meaning of Color in Lucifer's Character Design in The Sandman (2021) Television Series**

**Geugeu Rimbawati, Yully Ambarsih Ekawardhani**

Desain Department of Universitas Komputer Indonesia (UNIKOM)

Jl. Dipati Ukur No.112-116, Lebakgede, Kecamatan Coblong,

Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat 40132

[geugeu.7532010@mahasiswa.unikom.ac.id](mailto:geugeu.7532010@mahasiswa.unikom.ac.id)

### **ABSTRACT**

There are many different depictions of Lucifer, therefore it's intriguing to see if the color representation of Lucifer corresponds with the persona that has been known. Lucifer is an antagonistic character in the television series adapted from Christian mythology. The study uses qualitative research to obtain the meaning of colours in the costumes used by Lucifer's characters followed by its narrative flow. Data is obtained through interviews and literature. This research aims to get the meaning of the colour of the costume used by the character Lucifer in the 2021 television series: The Sandman. The results of the research found that there are three costume colours used, namely, White, Red and Black, from the three colours obtained the meaning of angels, evil, destruction, darkness, death, and anger. the meaning of the colours found can add to and develop knowledge in visual communication design, especially in film, and art.

Keywords: Colour; Character; Costume; Lucifer; Narrative

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Christian mythology, biblical writings, or theological terminology, the devil is the personification of evil and the leader of the fallen angels is often associated with the name 'Lucifer' (Latin for, "bringer of light") (Kohler, 2006). Lucifer is the fallen angel who rebelled against God's authority and was cursed for all eternity. (Flinn, 2007). One important factor contributing to Lucifer's surge in popularity is the deepening of his character in TV series and graphic novels. In recent times, Lucifer's popularity has soared, captivating audiences in various ways. One contributor to this phenomenon has been the portrayal of Lucifer in television series, particularly in the context of "The Sandman", Neil Gaiman's acclaimed graphic novel adapted as a television series of the same name. To shape the narrative, character design has played an important role, among other things, in Lucifer's success as a

## **The Meaning of Color in Lucifer's Character Design in The Sandman (2021) Television Series**

---

character. The character of Lucifer in The Sandman has a similar narrative to his mythology, where he is a former fallen angel who is unable to escape from hell. In the television series, Lucifer is depicted as an angel named Samael before his fall, as revealed in the dialogue between minutes 09:54-10:13.

The use of colour in character design is a powerful storytelling tool in visual media. Colours such as in eyes, hair, accessories, and costumes can determine how the character is visualized. Costume designers choose colours to convey information about a character's personality, emotions, and narrative role. In the book *Naratology of Film* by Peter Versaten (2009), explains how narratology can influence the elements in the process of forming a film or television series. That includes costumes which are still included in the *mise en scene* category. Colour can be one aspect of narratology that voices the characteristics, background, and narrative of an object or subject. This study investigates how the colour choices in Lucifer's costume design contribute to the depth and development of the character throughout the series. As Lucifer appears in episodes 4 and 10 of the series (The Sandman television series), the focus of this study is on Lucifer's character design as depicted in those episodes. This approach ensures objectivity and a clear and concise scope of analysis.

In previous studies, research focused on the overview of Lucifer in literature or popular culture. As in the research conducted by Rawan Nasser (2019) on the historical visualization of Milton's Satan. In their research, there is also how the visualization of Lucifer's character is inspired by Milton's Satan. The article "Decoding Lucifer: Challenging the Retro-Fittings in the History of Satan" (Babu, 2020), is specifically carried out to see the obstacles of lifting the retro angle of the history of Satan passed by several popular culture products that raise the character of Lucifer by Neil Gaiman.

The discussion around the use of colour in depicting characters shows that colour plays an important role in character visualisation. This is particularly relevant for mythical or supernatural characters, such as those explored in this study. By understanding the role of colour in fictional characters, researchers can discover the influence of colour visually on characters in film. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to identify colour and analyse the meaning of colour in the character of Lucifer and how it manifests in the character's narrative (with narratology) in the 2021 film The Sandman. The benefits of the research are that it can



# **The Meaning of Color in Lucifer's Character Design in The Sandman (2021) Television Series**

---

develop knowledge related to colour in the field of visual communication and be used as a reference in making visual communication design works, especially film, and art.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach. The method can analyse image and text data, and can reveal meaning. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research methods can be used to process a variety of open data, image and text analysis, information representation, and personal interpretation of findings. Researchers can interpret these problems through personal interpretations supported by existing theories and expert opinions. This research investigates the colour of the Lucifer character, the character analysis is based on the costume used by the character (Yully, 2018). By using qualitative, researchers can see the colour aspect of Lucifer's character costume with the meaning of the colour itself.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Lucifer Character in The Sandman Television Series (2021)**

In the 2021 film The Sandman, Lucifer's appearance begins in episode 4 when the character Dream (the series' protagonist) wants to find his sacred equipment that the Devil has taken. Lucifer appears wearing a long white garment that almost covers his entire body. Lucifer, welcomes Dream and her friends inside his tower. In this scene, Lucifer can be seen as the leader of the demons (and corresponds to how other characters in this scene refer to Lucifer as the Lord of Hell). As in the story, Lucifer must fight Dream (in the series called by Morpheus) in a game of old pride and Morpheus' heirloom. This is where the character of Lucifer changes into a black costume with leather and latex-like materials. Then at the end of episode 10, the character of Lucifer reappears, wearing a flowing red dress.

The visualisation of Lucifer in the 2021 Sandman television series refers to the original work, a graphic novel by Neil Gaiman. The graphic novel became a reference for the costume designer and the television series staff (such as the director, producer, and Neil Gaiman himself as the story writer). The costume designer of the Sandman (2021) television series, Giles Deacon, received creative input and perspective on Lucifer's character from Neil Gaiman, producers Allan Heinberg, Sara Arthur, and Lucifer's actor Gwendoline. Giles



Copyright (c) 2024 Geugeu Rimbawati, Yully Ambarsih Ekawardhani

## The Meaning of Color in Lucifer's Character Design in The Sandman (2021) Television Series

Deacon often designed costumes and outfits for Gwendoline, thus understanding the silhouette of the actor and how to give Lucifer's transformation to the costume Gwendoline would wear (Tewksbury, 2022). Giles Deacon stated about the process of designing the costumes for Lucifer, "Neil was amazing in his openness from a design perspective but gave great and insightful guidance on the androgyny of the fallen angel and gave a touch of Bowie's louche (American artist and musician David Bowie)." (Tewksbury, 2022). In addition, the depiction of Lucifer was also inspired by the character of Satan in John Milton's poem Paradise Lost. In this case, Porter (2013) expressed his interest in the character of Lucifer because Gaiman engaged in an intertextual dialogue with Milton about the devil and more generally, the depiction of Hell in Christianity.



Figure 1. The Sketch of Lucifer' White (left) and Black (right) Costumes by Fashion Designer Giles Deacon

Source: <https://www.netflix.com/tudum/articles/the-sandman-lucifer-costume-design-giles-deacon-gwendoline-christie>



Figure 2. The Sketch of Lucifer' Red Costumes by Fashion Designer Giles Deacon

Source: <https://www.netflix.com/tudum/articles/the-sandman-lucifer-costume-design-giles-deacon-gwendoline-christie>



# The Meaning of Color in Lucifer's Character Design in The Sandman (2021) Television Series

---

## Colours in Lucifer's Costume Design in The Sandman Television Series 2021

Colour theory plays an important role in character design, Feisner (in Fredriksson 2017) argues that colour is so attractive to our eyes that we see the colour of an object before the details conveyed by its shapes and lines. According to Chapman (2010) colour plays an important role in projecting a character's personality, not only due to cultural symbolism, but also for aesthetic reasons. A change in the saturation, shade, or hue of a colour can cause drastic changes in its perception.

With the emergence of the Lucifer character based on Western Christian beliefs, the meaning of colour can be seen through the perspective of the culture/belief. Laleno (Personal Communication, Bandung, 14 August 2023) explains how the use of colour symbols in Christian beliefs a symbolic form of something can be, but of course the meaning must also be seen in the context of the location where this colour is used. For example, white symbolizes purity then this colour is usually used by priests on their vestments (priest's robes). White is the most common liturgical colour used in the celebration of Mass on major feast days, such as Christmas and Easter, as well as the celebration of important events in the life of Jesus, such as the Ascension of Jesus and the Assumption of Lady Saint Maria into Heaven.

The colours in the character of Lucifer in The Sandman (2022) television series give the character a visual identity (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). The colours are dominant in his hairstyle, wings, and costume. In terms of hairstyle, Lucifer has blonde hair. In Western culture, blonde hair has been associated with beauty and vitality for example in ancient Greece, the ideal male warrior would have the characteristics of blonde hair, handsome, tall and strong (Nolasco, 2017). When looking at cultures outside Northern Europe where blonde hair has a "rarity value", this may imply that blonde hair is a sign of specialized purity (Six, 2014).

The colour black dominates its appearance on large wings shaped like bat wings. This shape and colour combination is often associated with Lucifer, commonly known as the Devil or Satan. As mentioned, bat have an association with darkness and death (Bruce, 1996:63). In the iconography of the early Christian era, bat's wing were used to represent demons, to distinguish them from the bird wings seen on angels. European/Western prejudice against bats may have something to do with this (Lawler, 2018). Other colours on Lucifer's costume include an unchanging accessory-a golden ring with a turquoise green eye stone. The golden

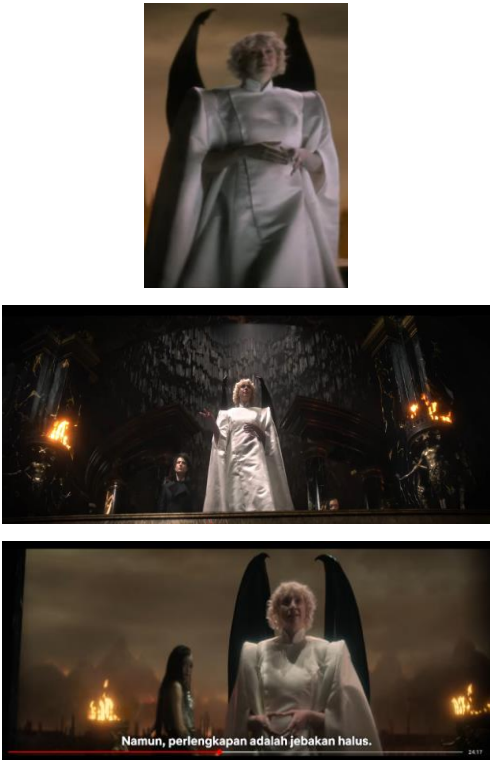


## The Meaning of Color in Lucifer's Character Design in The Sandman (2021) Television Series

ring is commonly associated with the halo or golden circle that appears above the angel's head. Tosca green or pale green eye stones are often associated with Satan, evil, and death (Cooper, 1993).




As explained earlier, there are three costumes that Lucifer wears and all three have different dominant colours. In Figure 1, Lucifer is seen wearing a white outfit, in Figure 2 Lucifer is wearing a black outfit, and the last one is red. These transformations are sequential according to his appearance in the storyline of The Sandman 2021 television series. An analysis of the use of colour in each costume can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Colour Analysis in Lucifer Costume Design.

No	Color Identification	Color Meaning	Explanation
1	<p><b>WHITE Costume</b></p>  <p>Figure 3. Scene sequence of The Sandman episode 4 showing the character of Lucifer frame 18:40-18:46</p> <p>Source: Screenshoot serial The Sandman</p>	<p>White signifies purity, transformation, light, new life, redemption. In Christianity white also signifies light, integrity, joy, glory, enlightenment, and ascension. Angels are also symbolised by the colour white (Cooper, 1993).</p>	<p>In his appearance, Lucifer wears a white-coloured garment, such as a combination of Kasula (or <i>planeta</i> outerwear worn by priests, shaped like a robe or long coat) with kimono sleeves and a modern style. It appears to be made of thick, hard material to mould Lucifer's character into a square, sharp-angled silhouette. This is based on an interpretation of history, Lucifer was once an angel, white clothing can symbolise Lucifer's angelic side and the image of modesty. As well as shouting out his other name "the bringer of light."</p> <p>As an emotional resonance, while wearing this costume, Lucifer shows his image as a former angel and his personal growth. This white colour gives an impression of charisma, elegance, and nobility.</p>



## The Meaning of Color in Lucifer's Character Design in The Sandman (2021) Television Series

<p>2</p>	<p><b>BLACK Costume</b></p>   <p>Figure 4. Scene sequence of The Sandman Episode 4 showing the character of Lucifer frames 15:15 and 21:14</p> <p>Source: Screenshoot serial The Sandman</p>	<p>Black signifies primordial darkness; evil; destruction; corruption; and humiliation. In Christianity, black also signifies the Prince of Darkness; Hell; death; and evil arts. (Cooper, 1993) As a character, the colour black can give traits of firmness, decisiveness, depth, and depression. As a symbol, black represents doom, darkness, terror, cruelty, anger, gloom (Sanyoto, 2009).)</p>	<p>In episode 4 minute 21:42, we see the first change in the costume used by the character Lucifer. Lucifer wears a black latex and leather costume. The material looks slippery but has a texture like sharp scales and reflects light. Lucifer wears this black costume when he comes face to face with the main character, Dream, in the game. Lucifer is a warrior to represents himself in the old game. The impression of the second suit is violent, unfriendly, and dark, portraying Lucifer's demonic side and stating Lucifer as someone who has a connection with evil and hell..</p>
<p>3</p>	<p><b>RED Costume</b></p> 	<p>Red signifies war, sexual arousal, power, blood lust, anger, guilt, and revenge. In Christianity, red is also the colour of martyrdom and cruelty. It also signifies power, the passion of Christ, and when combined with the colour white denotes the Devil; purgatory; and death. (Cooper, 1993) The colour red can give the impression of vigour, passion,</p>	<p>Later in episode 10, Lucifer wears a flowing gown or long maxi dress costume with a material that looks light, hangs loosely and gracefully. His red outfit shows his ambition (in the narrative to get revenge and control everything). Large sleeves can symbolize hidden plans/intentions (which can be related to the English idiom: "having something up your sleeve"). While wearing this red costume, Azazel</p>

# The Meaning of Color in Lucifer's Character Design in The Sandman (2021) Television Series


 <p>Figure 5. Scene sequence of The Sandman Episode 10 showing the character Lucifer frames 41:46 and 42:08</p> <p>Source: Screenshoot serial The Sandman</p>	<p>anger, courage, positivity, aggression, defiance. As a symbol, it can symbolise primitive lust, anger, courage, friendliness, sex. (Sanyoto, 2009)</p>	<p>(another character from the series) hints at how powerful Lucifer is to lead the soldiers of hell into battle.</p>
--	---	---

Table 2. Narrowing down the meaning of colour.

White	Black	Red	Parsing Meaning
Purity, transformation, light, new life, redemption, integrity, joy, glory, ascension and angels.	primordial darkness, evil, destruction, corruption, humiliation, Prince of Darkness, Hell, death, evil arts, decisiveness, profundity, depression, terror and anger.	war, sexual passion, strength, blood lust, anger, guilt, revenge, martyrdom, cruelty, misery, Satan, purgatory; death, vigour, positivity, aggression, defiant, courage, friendliness.	angels, evil, destruction, darkness, death, anger.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis of the three costume colours used by Lucifer in Table 1 are white, black and red. All three costumes use cape and long dress models with long sleeves and close the neck. Using hard material to form sharp angles. Based on the analysis in Table 1, the use of colours in the costumes worn by Lucifer's character is found, namely, white as a symbol of the image of an angel and the bearer of light, red as a symbol of ambitious, full of tactics and the leader of hell. The black colour is a symbol of violence, unfriendliness, and darkness, depicting evil and hell. The meanings of the colours obtained were based on 2 meanings; angel, evil, destruction, darkness, death and anger. Based on this, this research found that the colours found in Lucifer's costume depict the same characteristics in his mythology.





# The Meaning of Color in Lucifer's Character Design in The Sandman (2021) Television Series

---

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper and its research would not have been possible without the support of mentors and interviewees. The researcher expresses deep gratitude to Father Redemptus Febry Ferdinand Laleno, OSC, as Vicar of St Peter's Cathedral Bandung, for greatly enriching this research through valuable interviews. His valuable contributions and perspectives have provided insights into understanding colour analysis in Lucifer's character design. Furthermore, the author would like to thank the secretariat of St Peter's Cathedral Bandung for taking the time to be a resource person and for granting permission to discuss this research. This study has benefited greatly from the contributions and knowledge of many individuals. However, any errors that remain are my responsibility as the objectivity is very important in this study.

## REFERENCE

- Ambarsih, Y., Santosa, I., Azis Ahmad, H., & Irfansyah, I. (2018). Identified characters, dialogue of ethnicity in Indonesia animated film. Proceedings of the International Conference on Business, Economic, Social Science and Humanities(ICOBEST 2018).
- Babu, R. A. (2020). Decoding Lucifer: Challenging the Retro-Fittings in the History of Satan. *Drishti: the Sight* Vol.- XI, Issue II, November 2020-April 2021(pp.169). Assam: Drishtithesight.
- Bruce-Mitford. (1996). *The Illustrated Book of Signs & Symbols: Thousands of Signs and Symbols from Around the World*. (Miranda, E. Foa, & C. Decaire, Eds.) New York: DK Publising, Inc.
- Chapman, C. (2010). Color Theory for Designers, Part 1: The Meaning of Color. *Smashing Magazine*, 28 January 2010. Retrieved from: <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/01/color-theory-for-designers-part-1-the-meaning-of-color/>
- Creswell, W.J. (2014). *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc
- Cooper, J. (1993). *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbol*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.
- DWJ Books LLC. (2007). *The Encyclopedia of World Religions, Revised Edition*. (R. S. Ellwood, & G. D. Alles, Eds.) New York: Fact On File, Inc.
- Flinn, F. (2007). *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. New York: Fact on File, Inc.
- Fredriksson, E. (2017). *Combining Shape, Color and Postures for Ambiguous Character Roles* (Dissertation). Retrieved from <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-327036>



## **The Meaning of Color in Lucifer's Character Design in The Sandman (2021) Television Series**

---

- Kohler, K. (2006). *Heaven and Hell in Comparative Religion with Special Reference to Dante's Divine Comedy*. Montana: Kessinger Publishing.
- Lawler, Susan. (2018). From Devils to Superheroes: Our Complicated relationship with bats, 7 August 2018. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/from-devils-to-superheroes-our-complicated-relationship-with-bats-101093>
- Nasser, R. A. (2019). *How Fall'n! How Changed: The Visual History of Milton's Satan*. Beirut: American University of Beirut (Thesis Paper).
- Nolasco, Sócrates. (9 June 2017). *From Tarzan to Homer Simpson: Education and the Male Violence of the West*. Springer. p. 143. ISBN 978-94-6351-035-6
- Pastor Redemtus Febry, L, F, OSC. (2023). "Diskusi mengenai keberadaan warna dalam perspektif alkitabiah". Hasil wawancara pribadi: Agustus 2023, Gereja Katedral Santo Petrus Bandung
- Porter, Adam, 'Neil Gaiman's Lucifer: Reconsidering Milton's Satan', *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 25/2 (2013), 175–85
- Sanyoto, S. E. (2009). *Nirmana Dasar-dasar Seni dan Desain*. Yogyakarta & Bandung: Jalasutra.
- Six, A Lee. (2014). "Chapter Five: Spinning Straw into Gold: Blond Hair and the Autobiographical Illusion in the Fiction of Esther Tusquets", in Molinaro, Nina L.; Pertusa-Seva, Inmaculada (eds.), *Esther Tusquets: Scholarly Correspondences*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, ISBN 978-1-4438-5908-0.
- Tewksbury, D. (2022, November 3). <https://www.netflix.com/tudum/articles/>. Retrieved from Netflix Website: <https://www.netflix.com/tudum/articles/the-sandman-lucifer-costume-design-giles-deacon-gwendoline-christie>
- Verstraten, P. (2009). *Film Narratology*. (S. v. Lecq, Trans.) Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated.

