

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF MEANING OF LOVE IN *LAST NIGHT ON EARTH* BY GREEN DAY

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Abstrak

Dalam lirik lagu, penulis bebas mengekspresikan imajinasi mereka untuk membuat representasi kehidupan. Setiap lirik lagu mengandung makna tersendiri sesuai dengan kreativitas penulis lagu, banyak lagu yang tercipta karena pengalaman pribadi dengan orang yang dicintai. Penelitian ini mengkaji makna cinta dalam lirik lagu Green Day yang berjudul *Last Night on Earth* dengan menggunakan teori semiotika Roland Barthes. Dalam analisis semiotika ini, Roland Barthes membongkar makna denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos mengenai makna cinta yang terkandung dalam tema lagu tersebut. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, makna denotasi dari lagu tersebut adalah kekuatan cinta meskipun jarak memisahkan keduanya. Makna konotatif berkaitan dengan bagaimana penulis menuliskan pesan kepada istrinya untuk tetap menjaga cintanya. Mitos tersebut berkorelasi ketika penulis lagu kehilangan semua yang dimilikinya karena dilalap api, namun ia tidak akan berhenti untuk mengirimkan cintanya kepada sang istri. Kesimpulannya, Green Day membuktikan bahwa masih ada cinta sejati dalam dirinya untuk istri pria tersebut meskipun ada jarak dan kondisi yang buruk.

Kata Kunci: Green Day, *Last Night on Earth*, Cinta, Semiotika, Roland Barthes.

Abstract

*In song lyrics, the authors are free to express their imagination to make a representation of life. Each lyric contains its own meaning according to the creativity of the songwriters; many songs were created because of their personal experience with the loved ones. This research examines the meaning of love in the lyrics of Green Day's song *Last Night on Earth* using the semiotic theory of Roland Barthes. In this semiotic analysis, Roland Barthes exposes meanings of denotation, connotation, and myth regarding the meaning of love contained in the theme of the song. By using qualitative method, denotative meaning of the song is the power of love even though the distance separates the two. The connotative meaning relates to how the writer wrote a message to his wife to keep his love. The myth is correlated in when the songwriter loses everything he has because it was engulfed in flames, but he will stop at nothing to send his love to his wife. In conclusion, Green Day proves that there is still true love in him for the man's wife despite any distance and bad condition.*

Keywords: Green Day, *Last Night on Earth*, Love, Semiotics, Roland Barthes.

Introduction

Music is a type of art whose way of expression is through harmonious words. The art of music has been known to humans since it was in the womb, without realizing it, in its development, it is accompanied by music as a balance to life (Fitri, 2017; Hidayat, 2014; Iswari, 2015). Starting from babies being listened to music before going to bed until people reach adolescence, listening to music is habituated as dynamic points regarding people's circumstances and moods. Moreover, music is a way of expressing and expressing feelings and thoughts that contain the values and norms of a culture so that it can reflect the culture of the supporting community (Iswari, 2015; Nathaniel & Sannie, 2018). Therefore, listening to music is not only for entertainment, but also for understanding of reflection of certain culture.

In a song, there is a lyric as part of the music with messages conveyed to the listeners (Hidayat, 2014). Lyrics are text or song words as part of the language elements in music (Fitri, 2017; Harnia, 2021; Nathaniel & Sannie, 2018). However, not all people who enjoy a song can understand the meaning in the lyrics of the song. Even some people enjoy the song because they like the type of music that was popular at that time regardless of the meaning contained therein (Fitri, 2017; Hidayat, 2014; Rustandi et al., 2020). Everyone interprets each song lyric differently; the meanings then become plural as those touch matter of own understanding related to different backgrounds. Sometimes perceptions may vary, and indeed, it brings conflict, but those differences indicate the world as a place of diversities (Fitri, 2017; Sobur, 2009).

Method

This study uses the lyrics of the song *Last Night on Earth* as the object of this research using semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes' theory to examine the meaning of denotation, connotation and myth. The research method used qualitative methods to describe written texts. The data collection technique used is literature study through the verses in the song. The steps of the research include collecting data, reading data sources, understanding data sources, analyzing the data, and quoting it into paper.

Results and Discussions

Love in the Matter of *Last Night on Earth*

Green Day is a band that was founded in 1987. Fronted by Billie Joe Armstrong, Mike Dirnt, and Tré Cool, this band became a musical stage decoration and was popular from the late 90's to early 2000's. This band is a band that is identically known for the punk rock genre from the 90's, unexpectedly releasing a romantic love song in the 21st Century Breakdown album entitled *Last Night on Earth* (GeniusMedia, 2020). The vocalist named Billie Joe Armstrong wrote this song for his beloved wife. When he sees the moonlight, he sees peace of mind like seeing his beloved wife and longing for his wife's presence. The lyrics are as follows:

Verse 1

I text a postcard, sent to you, did it go through?
Sending all my love to you
You are the moonlight of my life every night
Giving all my love to you

Chorus 1

My beating heart belongs to you
I walked for miles til' I found you
I'm here to honor you
If I lose everything in the fire
I'm sending all my love to you

Verse 2

With every breath that I am worth here on earth
I'm sending all my love to you
So if you dare to second-guess,
You can rest assured that all my love's to you

Chorus 1

Chorus 1

Chorus 2

My beating heart belongs to you
I walked for miles 'til I found you
I'm here to honor you
If I lose everything in the fire
Did I ever make it through? (GeniusMedia, 2020)

The first verse tells about a man who sends a message to his wife by postcard, but he did not get a reply that made him miss his wife more. He wondered whether his wife had received the letter or not, he writes and sends his love through beautiful handwriting (GeniusMedia, 2020). What is interesting about this verse is when the writer imagines his wife like the moonlight that illuminates every lonely night. The meaning of moonlight is sincere love and will never be replaced by anything, just like a dove symbolized as the purity of love.

The chorus is about the power the sincere of love that unites two heart in two different places. No matter how far the two hearts are, love will always find those who look for it, though it may be impossible (GeniusMedia, 2020). Even when the songwriter said he would be engulfed in flames during war, he would still send his sincere love to his wife, because of the role of the wife that no one else could replace.

In the second verse, the songwriter explained that as long as he is still breathing on earth, he will always prove his love (GeniusMedia, 2020). If the wife is having a doubt of his love, he said that all of his love is already assured for her. Nothing will compare his love to her in any matter. Indeed, he wrote this song to guarantee that his love will always belong to his wife.

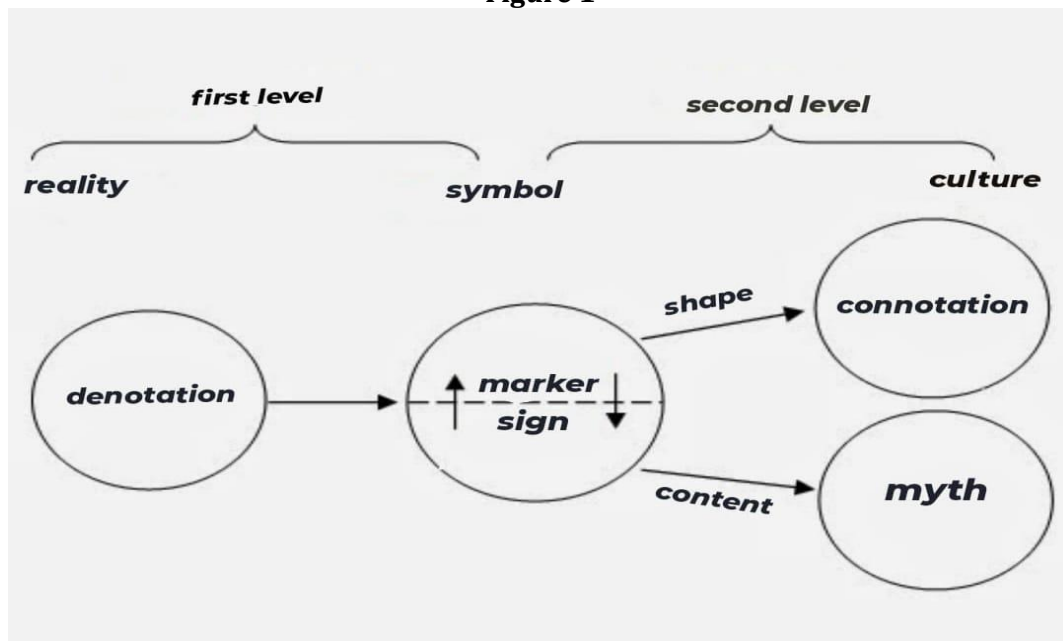
From the explanation of the lyrics above, nothing will be able to hinder his sincere love to his wife. Long distance, bad conditions, destiny, and doubt will never stop him to love her. The longing will always prolong since he will always miss her, as the man will always remember moonlight as reflection of presence of the woman (GeniusMedia, 2020). He will always send messages to show that the love is already become the honor in which its matter is nobler beyond any empirical aspects of love.

The Emprises of Semiotic Analysis

Roland Barthes examines the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth through matters of humanity, making sense of things, signifying, and communicating (Barthes, 2007; Kusumawati et al., 2019). Symbols have arbitrary and independent properties, depending on the ideas and thoughts that are formed. Therefore, the process of meaning depends on the reader's comprehension in understanding a piece of writing. Roland Barthes explicitly practices Ferdinand de Saussure's semiology then developed it as a method for analyzing culture (Nathaniel & Sannie, 2018; Sobur, 2009).

Barthes indicated meanings consisting of denotation, connotation and myth in abundant signs in the world (Fiske, 2007; Fitri, 2017). The sign is reflection of life in the world. Fiske stated that the first signifying order is denotation which is the basis of Saussure's work (Fiske, 2007). This order describes the relationship between the signifier and the signified in the sign, and between the sign and its referent in external reality. Barthes himself calls this order by referring general assumption as the meaning is in line with the sign (Barthes, 2007; Fitri, 2017). The denotative meaning indicate sameness of them, while its dissimilarity is related to connotation aspect. Besides, how the meanings could be different is based on the third aspect that is myth.

Figure 1



Roland Barthes' Signification (Barthes, 2007)

Denotation is a word that matches its original meaning without any shift or change at all. The word comes from Latin word *de-notare* that means completely mark out (Etymonline, 2010b). Therefore, denotation include all meanings related to the term of words or sentences. Denotation can be interpreted as the level of signification that explains the relationship between the signifiers or between the sign and its reference to reality which produces an explicit, direct, and definite meaning (Fiske, 2007). In many aspects, denotative meanings are correlated with the idea of public common sense in which meanings are already known among people in society (Fiske, 2007; Kusumawati et al., 2019). It is since the meanings truly conform with realities, as there is no hidden meaning behind.

Connotation refers to figurative meanings of words. Etymologically, the word is derived from Latin word *con-notare* that explains secondary signification (Etymonline, 2010a). Here, the secondary aspect means another meaning beside the real one. It does not mean that the real meaning is incorrect, yet the secondary one enriches the meanings by shifting its intrinsic ideas. The use of connotation is often found in short stories, drama scripts, songs, or other works of art (Barthes, 2007; Rustandi et al., 2020). More than merely to beautify an expression in sentences, connotation works through cultural matters of everyday life. The meanings could be different depend on how people identify themselves in culture of society. Therefore, while denotation relates to things being in general, connotation plays into idea of being particular (Fitri, 2017; Harnia, 2021). Indeed, denotation works objectively, while connotation indicates deepened subjectivity. In addition, while denotation refers to congruent aspects between words and meanings, connotation implicitly shows wider networks of meanings in sentences.

Then, myth is a representation to explain a natural reality. Derived from Greek word *mythos*, that word indicates speech done by mouth to speak various stories. In other words, myth

is a belief of something (Fitri, 2017; Kusumawati et al., 2019). In many cultures, it could be religious, but in literature, myth is understood as something interpreted as legendary. The way myth works is by naturalizing a history (Fiske, 2007). For example, the myth of the word "love" is the behavior of loving each other sincerely. However, the word "love" in the song tells of a feeling of emptiness without the presence of a lover. Love in this case is a hope prolonged to a certain person. The myth from the lyrics of *Last Night on Earth* is about the love itself. The love is not similar to the real meanings, but full of myth of hoped love. Love is known as best condition to give affection with presence of being (Rustandi et al., 2020). However, the love in this song is a belief that the songwriter assumes its truth will be forever for the other person.

This song is then analyzed through the aspects of denotation, connotation, and myth. The complete analysis is presented on the table below;

Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis on *Last Night on Earth*

| Song lyrics | Denotation meanings | Connotation meanings | Myth meanings |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p><i>Verse 1</i> I text a postcard sent to you</p> <p>Did it go through?</p> <p>Sending all my love to you</p> <p>You are the moonlight of my life every night</p> <p>Giving all my love to you</p> | <p>The songwriter explains about the letter he wrote and sent that expresses his affection for his wife, he is also made to wonder whether the letter has been received by his wife or not. The moonlight is symbolized as sincere and true love, a symbol of deep and eternal love and the unlimited capacity of the day for love. The presence of beautiful moonlight accompanying each lonely night makes him feel close with his wife even though it is blocked by distance, sincere love will never fade even though hindered by distance.</p> | <p>The feeling of longing that could no longer be suppressed made him ask for the presence of his wife who was somewhere else. He poured out what he felt at that time. The songwriter passes the night with the presence of moonlight that accompanies each lonely night.</p> | <p>Love does not have to meet in real life. The songwriter could only send a letter and hope that he will receive a reply. His waiting makes him to look forward to love that is sincere and will never be replaced. He will still uphold his love to show his full loyalty. It is since loyalty is similar to maintaining the purity of love and upholding affection rather than a mere ego.</p> |
| <p><i>Chorus 1</i> My beating heart belongs to you</p> <p>I walked for miles 'til I found you</p> <p>I'm here to honor you</p> <p>If I lose everything in the fire</p> <p>I'm sending all my love to you</p> | <p>The farther the distance, the greater the longing for someone who at this time can only be thought of without any face-to-face meeting. His wife is an encouragement for the writer to continue to live his days. The existence of the wife will never be replaced, as distance will not limit eternal love.</p> | <p>The words of "walked for miles", "I'm here to honor you", "lose everything", "in fire", and "sending love" means meaning of sacrifice for love. Love really needs sacrifice and struggle, even though someone has to feel suffering for it as seen in "walked for miles". If the sacrifice is for the people someone loves, then the suffering is not meaningless since it is about higher honor. Everything will be paid off though someone has to lose everything. "Sending love" means that love is not given, but sent. There is a process in it. It also indicates such distance that should be known by</p> | <p>Sincere love is only owned by people who dare to take risks. He or she has two choices, namely to have it all or lose it. Even though facing danger, when he or she is destined to be someone's, he or she will come back to the other no matter what the obstacle is. Even though it seems impossible love will always find its way. Distance will never stop people to love. It also indicates how love is actually not only finding, but also defending. It will always give power to those who love.</p> |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| | | the people who love in this song. | |
| <p><i>Verse 2</i> With every breath that I am worth here on earth</p> <p>I'm sending all my love to you</p> <p>So if you dare to second guess</p> <p>You can rest assured that all my love's for you</p> | <p>With all his breath on earth, he realizes the absence of the loved one. If there is any doubt from the woman, the man guarantees that he will remain faithful no matter what the circumstances.</p> | <p>He gave not only the breath, but also his whole soul as breath means the most crucial aspect of someone's life. "Second guess" means beyond guess itself, but doubt. If there is a doubt about love, then he will always make sure the woman that the love is totally for her at all cost. He also emphasized matter of rest-assured to show how his love is not about doubt but certainty. It is certain that it is love and it goes solely to the woman.</p> | <p>Certainly true love will find its identity and will fall in the right person. Doubt or indecision does not deserve to be a pepper in a relationship. Kind of doubt like that has often happened and is normal, depending on how people will survive and solve problems properly. Even doubt could strengthen the existence of love because that idea will arise faithfulness that will embrace the love more tightly.</p> |
| <p><i>Chorus 2:</i> If I lose everything in the fire</p> <p>Did I ever make it through?</p> | <p>The songwriter imagines if he lost everything he had because of being engulfed in fire. The idiom means when the songwriter goes to war and he never comes back and dies because of the fire that consumed him. Then, he imagines whether he can still prove his love in the future. He has a doubt since he has to keep his love through the tough day between life and death in matter of survival at war.</p> | <p>The songwriter imagines what if the fire of his love is dimmed by time and distance because they do not see each other so often. On the other hand, what if the fire of his love gets bigger because of the longing that never meets. The songwriter is faced with dilemma as whether he could get through this or not. Fire means burning one that could bring warmth and desolation either. He must be careful to maintain love so that it could never transform into hate. He must put further sincerity in love so that it will sustain as the truest one forever.</p> | <p>Even though at this time he could not prove his love because he is confronted by distance, his love is eternal which is only meant for his woman. "<i>Did I ever make it through?</i>" at the end of the lyrics indicates that the songwriter faces doubts and is made to wonder whether he can prove his love or not. However, nothing can stop him even if he is situated in far distance or facing the death itself. The myth of eternal love also makes him believe that love will be forever and after. It does not quite matter if he makes it through or not since his love will always be there for her. Anything bad will surely happen to the future. However, he believes that any bad thing will be defeated with his fullest of love. He even thinks that love will goes beyond death in the myth that he most embraces.</p> |

Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis on the lyrics of Green Day's song *Last Night on Earth* indicates a meaning of "longing" in carrying out a long distance in a relationship. The meaning of longing contained in the song teaches people to always be patient and try to behave as loyal as possible in the name of love (GeniusMedia, 2020). This is to provide certainty for feelings of love to fill, to belong to, and to color the lives of the other partner. It is done to shape hope that the other will maintain the integrity of the love that exists in both parties as partners. Therefore, everything about skepticism in a relationship is very necessary for establishing a better relationship. It is not done in the name of doubt, but in the idea of any loyalty that should be arisen from sincere love (GeniusMedia, 2020; Rustandi et al., 2020). It is done so that the relationship that has been built by a sense of trust does not disappear, because maintaining what people already have is better than starting something new.

The song also explains his desire to be together with his wife but is blocked by distance. It is the main idea that makes them separated from each other. Although one of them was doubtful by their partners, but the songwriter was still convincing that there was no doubt between them (GeniusMedia, 2020). In the analysis above, there are the meanings of denotation, connotation, and myth discussed to explain the hidden meaning in the lyrics of the song. Each indication is discussed further using views from a different angle so that the further meanings could be best understood from all point of views.

Conclusion

Based on the results of semiotic analysis on the lyrics of Last Night on Earth by Green Day by using Roland Barthes' theory, it can be concluded as follows. The denotative meaning is the songwriter wanted to convey a great feeling of longing for his wife through a postcard he wrote but never got a reply from his wife that he had been waiting for all this time. The connotative meaning is that the songwriter's feeling of loneliness and emptiness without the presence of his wife makes him wonder about the state of his wife who is far away, passing each night in silence makes him even more determined to send his affection. The inner conflict that the songwriter is experiencing makes him confused by time and circumstances. It is because he has many thoughts to try to overcome obstacles in order to give love to his wife. The problems of sacrifice, the fire of his love, distance, time, his wife's doubts, all of those make him think whether he deserves to go through all of this or not. His great determination made him sure that he would still give his love to his wife even though he had to give his soul as a collateral.

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