

Denotative, Connotative, and Mythical Meanings in Freddie Mercury's "Love Me Like There's No Tomorrow"

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Abstract

Article information

This research analyzes the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings within the lyrics of Freddie Mercury's song, "Love Me Like There's No Tomorrow," utilizing Roland Barthes's semiotic theory. The research is grounded in the understanding that human suffering can be a source of artistic creativity, and that songs function as a rich form of oral literature. The research problem centers on uncovering the implicit meanings within the lyrics, which depict a romantic relationship nearing its end. The objective is to analyze the three layers of meaning and their connection to Freddie Mercury's biography. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, collecting data through library research and lyric interpretation, followed by analysis using Barthes' semiotic framework. The findings reveal profound meanings expressing psychological vulnerability, urgency, and a confrontation with mortality. These meanings reflect Mercury's emotional journey and personal experiences. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the song's complex meanings and their relationship to the artist's personal life, enriching semiotic studies of song lyrics.

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Introduction

Humans are living beings who inevitably face various problems and life's challenges. Nietzsche (1883:90) argued that the suffering and challenges experienced by humans can become sources of creativity and art. Teeuw (1984) viewed songs as a form of oral literature, rich in aesthetic elements, imagination, and a strong social function within society.

Freddie Mercurys song, Love Me Like Theres No Tomorrow, from the band Queen, specifically explores a relationship on the brink of separation and the complexities of emotions within the songs lyrics. Freddie Mercury died on November 24, 1991, due to complications from HIVAIDS, although this information was not publicly disclosed in 1985 when the song was released. Mark Blake (2010) interprets this song as an expression of Freddie's anxiety about the passage of time and uncertain relationships.

This research used semiotic analysis, which examines signwords, images, objects, etc.their interrelationships, and how they convey meaning. Specifically, Ronald Barthes semiotic theory will be employed, encompassing three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation refers to the literal meaning of the song; connotation refers to the figurative or additional meaning attached to a word, influenced by context and experience, and myth refers to the implied cultural or ideological meaning that shapes our understanding of a word

or concept.

The aim of this research is to uncover the meaning behind the lyrics of Freddie Mercurys Love Me Like Theres No Tomorrow, using Ronald Barthes semiotic analysis of denotation, connotation, and myth applied to the song.

Method

This research employed qualitative procedures and methods, as described by Creswell (2014), who states that the qualitative approach is used to understand the meaning individuals ascribe to social problems. The research procedures involved a literature review for data collection, focusing on Freddie Mercury's song, "Love Me Like There's No Tomorrow." Data analysis utilized a descriptive analysis method (Whitney, 1960), which involved interpreting the deeper meanings within the lyrics through a semiotic analysis by Ronald Barthes. This analysis revealed the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings within the lyrics of Freddie Mercury's "Love Me Like There's No Tomorrow."

Results and Discussion

This research analyzes the lyrics of Freddie Mercury's song Love Me Like There's No Tomorrow using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, focusing on three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. The analysis examines 20 lyrical excerpts to uncover the embedded meanings within the song.

1. Uncertainty and Disconnection in Relationships (Stanza 1)

Extract 1. you had to kill the conversation. (Stanza 1, Line 1)/Extract 2. You always had the upper hand. (Stanza 1, Line 2)/ Extract 3. Got caught in love and stepped in sinking sand. (Stanza 1, Line 3)/Extract 4. You had to go and ruin all our plans. (Stanza 1. Line 4)/Extract 5. Packed your bags and you're leaving home. (Stanza 1. Line 5) /Extract 6. Got a one-way ticket and you're all set to go. (Stanza 1. Line 6)

Denotation: These lyrics literally describe concrete actions such as ending a conversation, leaving home, and buying a one-way ticket.

Connotation: They evoke emotional coldness, power imbalance, and a sense of being trapped in a destructive relationship.

Myth: This stanza challenges cultural myths that communication always leads to resolution, love is inherently positive, and home is always a safe refuge.

2. The Awareness of the End and the Importance of Final Moments (Stanza 2 & 4)

Extract 7. But we have one more day together, so. (Stanza 2 & 4, Line 1)/ Extract 8. Love me like there's no tomorrow. (Stanza 2 & 4, Line 2)/Extract 9. Hold me in your arms, tell me you mean it. (Stanza 2 & 4,

Line 3)/Extract 10. This is our last goodbye and very soon it will be over. (Stanza 2 & 4, Line 4)/Extract 11. But today just love me like there's no tomorrow. (Stanza 2 & 4, Line 5)

Denotation: The lyrics literally state that there is only one day left together.

Connotation: They express a mixture of sadness and a quiet hope to cherish the limited time remaining.

Myth: This section reinforces cultural beliefs that the final moments in a relationship hold unique significance, even amid emotional complexity.

3. Powerlessness and the Reality of Loneliness (Stanza 3)

Extract 12. I guess we drift alone in separate ways. (Stanza 3, Line 1)/Extract 13. I don't have all that far to go. (Stanza 3, Line 2)/Extract 14. God knows I learnt to play the lonely

man. (Stanza 3, Line 3)/Extract 15. I've never felt so low in all my life. (Stanza 3, Line 4)/Extract 16. We were born to be just losers. (Stanza 3, Line 5)/Extract 17. So I guess there's a limit on how far we go. (Stanza 3, Line 6)

Denotation: These lyrics describe separation and individual paths.

Connotation: They convey feelings of loneliness, acceptance of separation, and adaptation to solitude.

Myth: This stanza challenges the myth that true love endures effortlessly and that loneliness is always negative.

4. Future Uncertainty and the Limitation of Time (Stanza 5)

Extract 18. Tomorrow god knows just where I'll be. (Stanza 5, Line 1)/Extract 19. Tomorrow who knows just what's in store for me. (Stanza 5, Line 2)/Extract 20. Anything can happen but we only have one more day Together, yeah. (Stanza 5, Line 3)

Denotation: The lyrics literally express uncertainty about the singer's future whereabouts.

Connotation: They evoke feelings of vulnerability, surrender to fate, and a desire to cherish shared moments.

Myth: This stanza challenges the belief that individuals control their destiny, that the future is predictable, and that love is always eternal.

The findings demonstrate that "Love Me Like There's No Tomorrow" deeply explores themes of separation and the awareness of limited time. The semiotic analysis reveals a complex interplay of emotions and ideologies embedded within the lyrics.

Furthermore, this research aligns with research by Ammour Melissa (2024) and Fadhil Maulana Rais & Dani Fadillah (2025), who also employed semiotic approaches to uncover deeper lyrical meanings, albeit focusing on different aspects such as gender representation and analysis of the song HOPE. This underscores the effectiveness of semiotic theory in examining popular music and cultural narratives.

In conclusion, the song not only narrates a personal story of love and parting but also critiques and reflects on cultural myths surrounding love, communication, home, loneliness, and fate.

Conclusion

Twenty lines of lyrics were analyzed, revealing meanings at the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotatively, the lyrics depict clear and direct actions or situations related to separation, such as the end of conversations, broken commitments, and emotional withdrawal. This direct meaning emphasizes the factual narrative of a relationship nearing its end. Connotatively, the lyrics go beyond surface meaning to explore emotional depth, expressing feelings of fear, longing, heartbreak, and internal conflict. These meanings reflect the emotional turbulence accompanying letting go and the psychological struggle between desire and inevitability. At the mythical level, the lyrics challenge and reflect cultural assumptions about love, communication, and the natural cycle of relationships. Myths surrounding romantic ideals, emotional endurance, and the acceptance of loss are embedded in the song's language. The analysis reveals how the lyrics uphold the idea that love and separation are both essential parts of the human emotional journey.

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