

Investigating Symbols and Messages in The Song and Music Video Of Paramore’s “Brick By Boring Brick” Using Peirce’s Triadic Analysis

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Abstract

This semiotic analysis used Peirce’s triadic theory to interpret the symbols contained in the lyrics and music video of Paramore entitled “Brick by Boring Brick”. The research applied descriptive qualitative method to reach the needed results. There are sixteen signs interpreted either in general interpretation or referred to fairy tales. By interpreted those signs we gain the intended message that the songwriter wanted to deliver, those signs mentioned symbols like “Taste and smells” which meant the essence of the world. Also “Brick by boring brick” which referenced to the fairy tale of “Three little pigs” and fourteen more symbols interpreted in this research. The message which the songwriter tried to spread was for people to stopped dreaming a life just like in fairy tales which was always end in a beautiful ever-after and started learning to live in the reality. A life like in fairy tales are not real and better stopped trying to impress people and start improving instead.

Keywords: Semiotics, Symbol, Paramore, Brick by Boring Brick, Fairy Tale, Music Videos

INTRODUCTION

Human’s most effective way to communicate nowadays is through the language medium. It transfers the information in the fastest and the exact way. But it certainly is not the only way to communicate in history. There are some ages when human use sign to communicate in the ice age around 10.000 to 40.000 years age. A sign is likely in the form of a thingamajig, idiom, gestures, or images. A language used as a sign system to make communication enabled. Nowadays, sign is used in many aspects of life, such as drawings, paintings, and photographs.

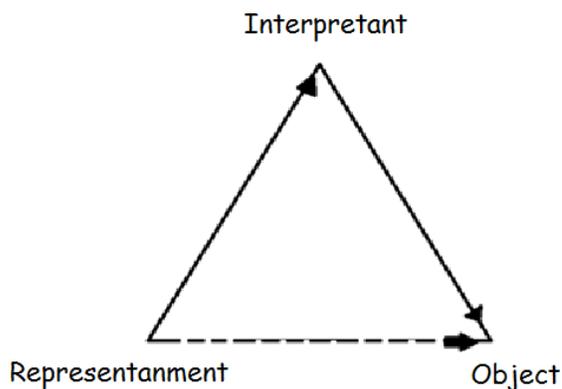
Poem is a composite of verbal which intended to deliver experiences, sentiment, or design in a creative and realistic way, recognized by usage of lingo selected for its sound and evocative capacity and by usage of techniques of literature such as meter, metaphor, and rhyme.

Music is an art form that systematically uses sound through the continuity of time. Music plays a

role in all societies and exists in different styles, depending on the characteristics of the geographic region and historical era (Danesi, 2004, p. 170). A song, ultimately with sign or symbol can be interpreted in a thousand ways. Any factor could affect the perception of the listener, such as the psychology, mood, sensation, moment, situation, education, social, and many more. The gap that the researcher find in choosing this research is because the researcher saddened, that the researcher could not find any research regarding this song. This song has a many good aspects from the music itself or just the lyrics. Even though some other elitist in rock and metal music brand Pop-punk as a trash genre. Nevertheless, the works still astounding for much younger audiences. It might not as hard as the Sex Pistols and Green Day but it represents the taste of later millenials and gen z. That Paramore’s works can be a subject to be analyzed and still make an impact to the society. Especially this song “Brick by Boring Brick” In order to accomplish the goal of this research. The researcher listed three research questions to helped him organized the needed data to reach the goal. The questions are; (1) what symbols are used in the Paramore's song and music video entitled "Brick by Boring Brick?", (2) what does the meaning of the symbols in the Paramore's song and music video entitled "Brick by Boring Brick", and (3) what does the message that the artist wanted to convey in the Paramore's song and music video entitled "Brick by Boring Brick”?

Theoretically, the researcher expects that this research will increase the study of literature and might cause some ascendancy for the readers which semiotics attract for investigate the sign or symbol that applied on any kind of media such as song whether it is from the sound or voice and the imagery.

Practically, the researcher hopes that Paramore’s Brick by Boring Brick could become a wisdom word to any person whom may or may not stimulated by this song.



Semiotics

Semiotics is the investigation of how sacred intepretation is fabricated and transmitted. Its inceptions established in the academic research of the way signs and symbols (figuratively and literally) generate interpretation. It is one of the methods of look at the reality. Saussure defines semiotic/ semiology is the science which studies the role of signs as part of social life. The sign is the whole due from the association of the signifier with the signified. Signified and Signifier are all psychological (form

rather than substance) (Saussure, 1974, pp. 65-66) Saussure's model of the sign refers only to a concept and not to a thing.

Barthes adopted from Hjelmslev the notion that there are different sequences of signification (meaning's level) in system of semiotics. The first level is denotation. At this sequence there is a sign which consists of a signifier and a signified. Connotation is a second level which uses the denotative sign as its signifier and adheres to it another additional signified. According to Peirce, the triadic nature of thinking is exemplified in the process through which the concept of the self is, itself, created a sign [in the form of a representamen] is something that represents someone in some way or ability. It is directed at someone, that is, an equivalent sign is created in that person's mind, or it may be a more developed sign. The sign can be recognized as the interpreter that created the first sign. The sign represents something, its object. It represents that object, not in all aspects, but refers to a concept, which sometimes called as the ground of the representamen (Peirce C. S., 1931, p. 2228).

The role of meaning in communication is very important for conveying information. Messages can be verbal (oral, written) and non-verbal (images, gestures), and they contain a certain meaning, depending on how the communicator spreads it. Meaning is the essence of communication. In communication, both the source of information and the recipient try to choose the correct way to explain their respective meanings. One of them is using words like messages to express ideas in a certain way (attitude) through the use of codes. The word meaning is often used in the context of various fields and conversations. Therefore, the concept of meaning can be equated with definition, information, intention, implication, content, and thought. These different meanings are simply equated with the meaning of the words, because their existence has never been carefully identified and correctly selected (Chaer, 1994, p. 286).

METHOD

This study used qualitative research and applies descriptive research. Qualitative research method, according to Sugiyono (2009, p. 9) is a research method based on the post-positivism philosophy, It is used to check the condition of natural objects, (different from experiments) where researchers are the key tool, data collection techniques are carried out through triangulation (combination), data analysis is inductive/qualitative, and the results emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

The primary data which used in this research is the single “Brick by Boring Brick” the fourth song in the album “brand new eyes” by Paramore, wrote by Hayley Williams, the vocalist of Paramore, and Josh Farro, ex-lead guitar of Paramore. Released in September 29, 2009 by Fueled by Ramen. The music video was released later is directed by Meiert Avis and finished in October 8, 2009 in Los Angeles, and took from Fueled by Ramen account in YouTube.

The secondary data will add some vision and establish the supposition to reach the best conclusion in this research. The secondary could be an article which talks about this song, the artist’s statements, and some popular fairy tales. The data collected by listening to the song four times and watch the music video two times. After collected then the collected symbols divided into contextual symbols according to Kirszner and Mandell (2013). The data analyzed by Peirce’s triadic analysis, expanding the signs or symbols into representment, object, and interpretant.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on Kirszner and Mandell (2013) there are three types of symbols: universal symbol, conventional symbol,

and contextual symbol. The researcher will put focus on contextual symbol which distributed into five categories. Those five categories are: symbolic object, symbolic setting, symbolic sense, symbolic action, symbolic character . Here is the following findings from the lyrics:

Setting: **Fairy tale.**

Sense: **Taste and smell, clock struck twelve, and brick by boring brick.**

Object: **Wings of butterflies, ground, clouds, deep hole, castle, magic, and mirror on the wall.**

Character: **Prince, the protagonist, and the dwarf.**

Action: **Shovel, the protagonist, grandma and the big bad wolf.**

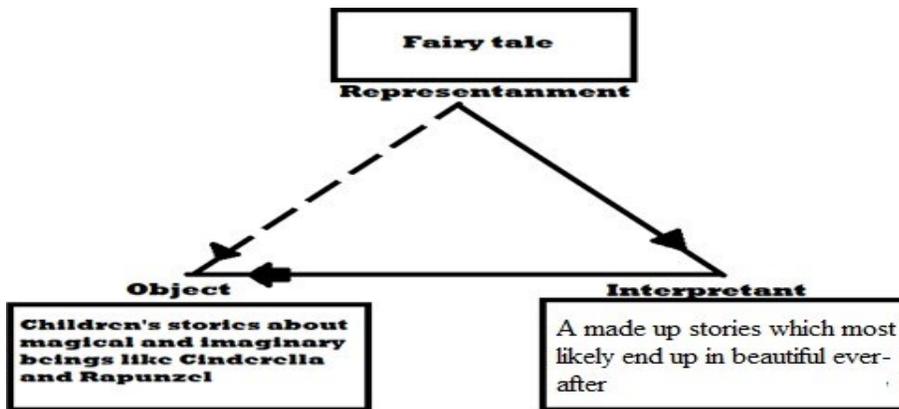
Discussion

According to Peirce (1931, p. 2249) in Chandler (2007, p. 39) all words, sentence, books, and other conventional signs were symbol. Symbol was a sign which referred to the object that it denoted by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas. Brick by boring brick told a story about a young woman in seek or process to become a more mature woman. The discussion part would focus on the symbols meaning and message. In order to uncover the meaning of those symbols, the researcher utilize Peirce’s triadic theory to understand the meaning of those words. According to Chaer (1994, p. 286), meaning is the essence of communication. In communication, both the source of information and the

recipient try to choose the correct way to explain their respective meanings. Pierce (1931, p. 2228) explained reprsentment (R) was the sign itself. What the sign represents something at the very least refers to the concept then it was the object (O). And when the sign can be recognized as the interpreter that created the first sign was the interpretant.

Setting

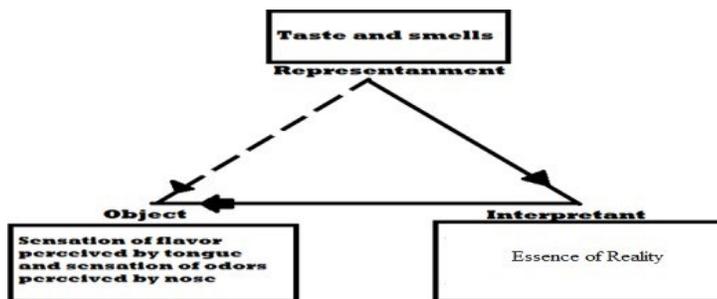
Fairy tale



Fairy tale submitted to be a representantion (R), children’s stories about magical and imaginay beings revealed as an object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into A made up stories which most likely end up in beautiful ever-after as the Intepretant (I).

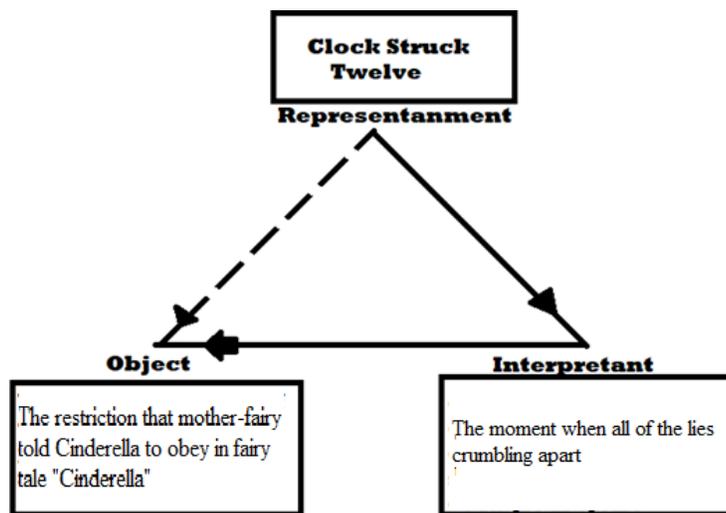
Sense

Taste and Smell



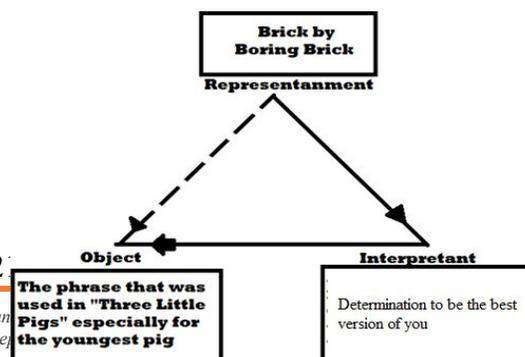
Taste and smells submitted to be a representanment (R), sensations of flavor and odors revealed as an object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into the essence of reality as the Intepretant (I). Humans have five senses, which are sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. The first three can be impaired permanently since very young age. The last two can get impaired from a young age but would not impaired permanently. thus make them the essence of the world.

Clock struck twelve



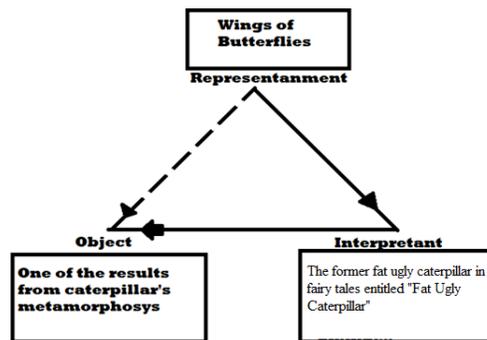
Fairy tale is most likely just a fabricated story which told from one generations to another generations most often to the children to teach them about a moral or messages that they want their children hold as a motivation or a caution to challenge the real world problem. Clock struck twelve submitted to be a representanment (R), the restriction which mother-fairy told Cinderella revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into the moment when all of the lies crumbling apart as the interpretant (I). It is one the crucial details in “Cinderella”. When the fairy gave her some luxury such as the gown and the carriage, she gave her a caution that it will be start vanishing after twelve o’clock.

Brick by boring brick



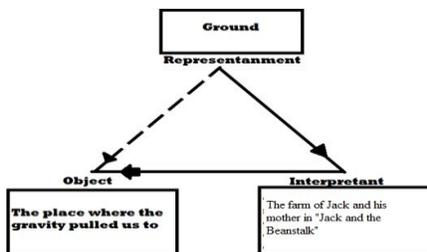
Brick by boring brick submitted to be a representanment (R), the phrase which used in three little pigs revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into determination to be the best version of you and your work as the intepretant (I). The researcher only ever found this phrase used in “Three Little Pigs”. Despite having the same uses of the home. The quality is different. Life is not a race that you have to keep up with other people but costing the quality of your life.

Wings of Butterflies



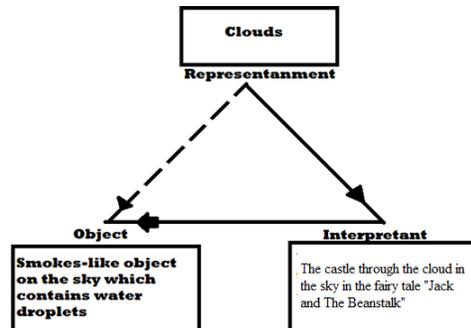
Wings of butterflies submitted to be a representanment (R), the results of metamorphosys revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into the former fat ugly caterpillar as the interpretant (I). The catepillar ate a lot, while the other caterpillar had going through their Metamorphosys state. Got mocked and everything until his turn to became Butterfly come. Later those who mocked him amazed by the ugly caterpillar glorious wings.

Ground



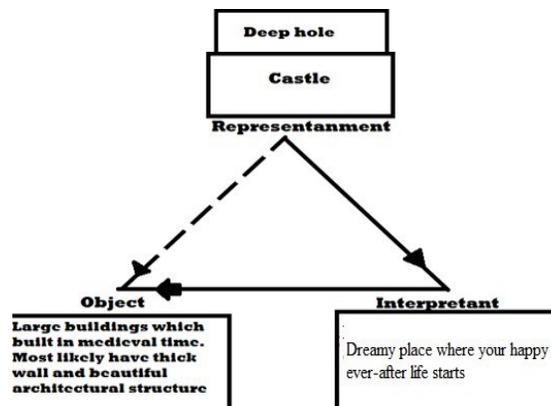
Ground submitted to be a representanment (R), the place where gravity pulled us to revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into the farm of Jack and his mother as the interpretant (I). In the fairy tale of “Jack and The Beanstalk”, the ground is monotonous, filled with reality and earthly problems. But in the end he comes home and ends up living on the ground rather than on top of the beanstalk.

Clouds



Clouds submitted to be a representanment (R), the smokes-like object on the sky revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into the castle through the cloud in the sky as the interpretant (I). Still with the same reference from above. The top of the beanstalk was on the clouds in the sky because no other mortal could see the top of the beanstalk. It has a palace that was much better than his house on the ground. A better mom that accept him and even spoiled him rather than his real mom who cannot control her word. A place without judgement, no hardwork, and no worries about stomach being empty. But it is never a safe environment since the giant husband was never approved that Jack live in his palace.

Deep Hole



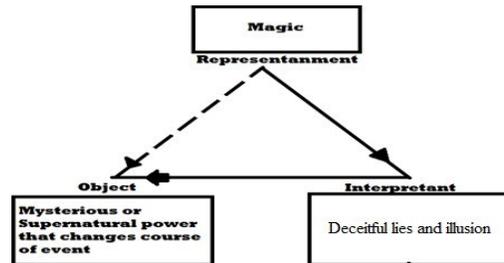
Deep hole submitted to be a representanment (R), the empty hollow space revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into a storing place for something that you don't wanted to see as the interpretant (I). Hole is the result of the shoveling. Doing it for a longer time makes it more deep and much harder to get back to the surface. The deeper it gets, much harder that our human senses could detect it.

Castle submitted to be a representanment (R), large building from medieval with beautiful architectural structure revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into dreamy place where the happy ever-after life started as the interpretant (I).

Castle has always filled with luxurious stuff that any mortals could have dreamed having lots of. It is the place that many young girls always dreamed to live in, but now almost impossible to have since

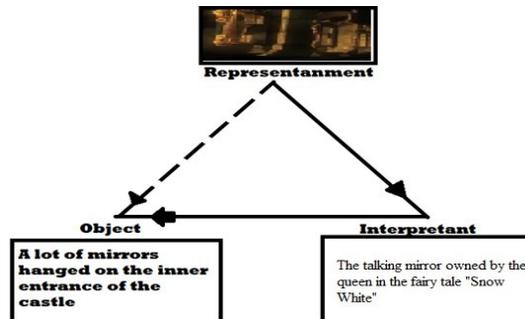
only a few monarchs left in the world. But even the rarity cannot stop them dreaming about it.

Magic



Magic submitted to be a representanment (R), the mysterious powers which can change course of event revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into deceitful lies and illusion as the interpretant (I).

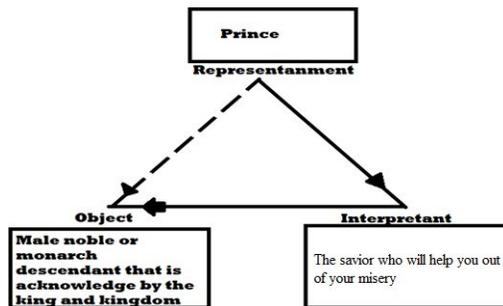
Magic can make something that was never there to be there. Change the appearance of something into another thing. And something that was so little became so big. But the actual thing is that never change or never real. It is all trick and manipulation that only works for the sensorical receptor.



Mirror on the wall submitted to be a representanment (R), a lot of mirrors hanged in the inner entrance of the castle revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into the talking mirror that the queen had as the interpretant (I). The mirror will always reflect the truth, there might be some distortion but it is true. That you cannot be something that you do not and force the audience to believe that just because you wanted them to.

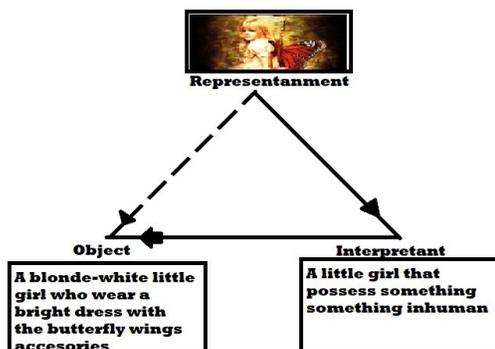
Character

Prince



Prince submitted to be a representanment (R), male noble or monarch descendant revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into the savior who will help you out of your misery as the interpretant (I). The researcher interprets that it symbolizes the savior from the misfortune the girls dealing with right now. That no matter your status are, no matter how poor you are, and no matter how reality hits you hard, there will always be someone that will save you, that their face and figure are so dreamy and will fill your life with richness and luxury.

The Protagonist



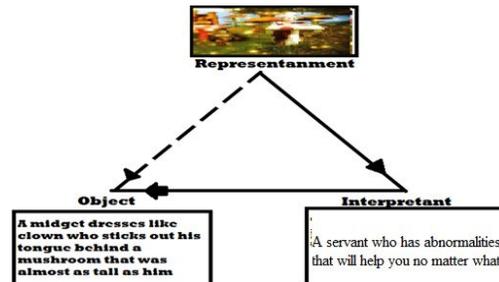
The protagonist submitted to be a representanment (R), the blonde-white little girl who wear a bright dress with butterfly wings accesory revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into a little girl who posses something inhuman as the interpretant (I).

The main protagonist of the music video embodied a blonde-white little girl wearing bright one-piece dress also wearing butterfly wings. Girls used those kinds of accesories only when they are in a costume party. But for this music video, the researcher interprets that this girl wearing something that was not hers or intended for her. We get that “Wings of butterflies” symbolizes beauty or something that can make other people praise you. Thus she possess the beauty that she should not have just to get people praise for her.

Near the end of the story, Hayley Williams, who is the frontwoman of the band, sit and wait near a hole that was made by Josh Farro, the lead guitar of Paramore (At that time). She dressed in white one-piece dress and has dyed her hair to blonde (Which was red before “Brand New Eyes”). It

also represents “The Protagonist” but older and more mature. Means she portrayed the future of the protagonist.

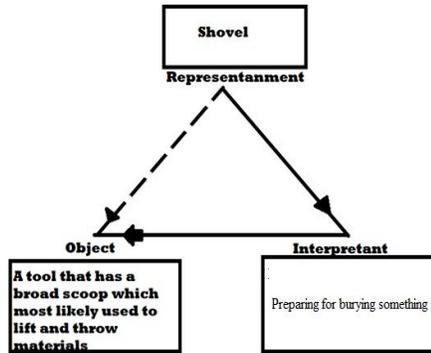
The dwarf



The dwarf submitted to be a representanment (R), the midget in clown clothes who sticks out his tongue revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into a servant who has abnormalities that would always helped as the interpretant (I).

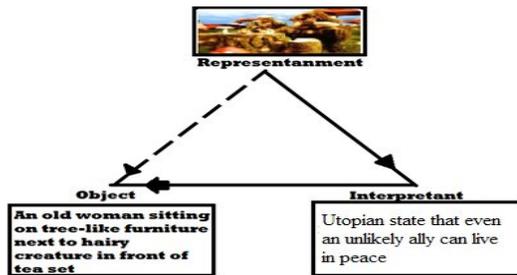
Action

Shovel



Shovel submitted to be a representanment (R), a tool with a broad scoop revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into prepared in buried something as the interpretant (I). Shovel in this lyrics most likely talk about the action of keep something hidden, maybe for now, maybe for the eternity.

Grandma and Big Bad Wolf



Grandma and big bad wolf submitted to be a representanment (R), an old woman sitting on a tree-like furniture next to hairy creature in front of tea set revealed as the object (O), and the researcher deciphered the symbol into utopian state with an unlikely ally lived in peace as the interpretant (I). This is the utopia of the protagonist in which in her own world. No bad thing will happen. Everything was in her control, that made a wild carnivorous animals could befriend a meaty defenseless old-woman. While in reality, the wolf will always take every chance and advantage to make his own stomach filled. No morality in attacking easy preys.

To sum it up. This song talk about a **protagonist** who dream and wanted a life just like in a **fairy tale**. That everything will be nice and fit into her utopia. She will have **castle** that will protect her from any laws and reality. She'd find the **big bad wolf** will befriend any kind of people and

creature like the old fragile and defenseless **grandma**. Where the dwarves will help her in any condition she is. And, if the reality could even hit her, she would have a **prince** that will save her anytime and anywhere she was. It is a state which she would have happy and lovely life, nothing could ever go wrong and she will never wrong or wronged.

But the thing is, it is too **magical** to have. Sometimes we hope for something that was way too far and impossible to have that we forgot what **taste and smell** of the real world feels like. So some people takes a shortcut, be something that they were not, acclaimed to be someone that they do not, and even takes someone's worth by force if they have to. It is like human wanted to have a fully functional **wings of butterflies**. Cause when the **clock struck twelve**, you are nothing but a liability. They should just keep building their own selves, find their own path, and develop what their worth are. Even if it needs to be **brick by boring brick**, and it will take a long time. It's more real than to be the answer to every question that you asked to **mirror on the wall**. So, better get your **shovel**, and start digging **deep hole** for your fantasy **castle** on the **clouds** before you hit the **ground** in ways that you never ever could imagine. Better do it yourselves than wait for the fantasy to be crumbling apart until it is too late to go back.

CONCLUSION

After all the discussion in the Chapter IV of "SYMBOL AND MESSAGE IN THE SONG AND MUSIC VIDEO OF PARAMORE'S "BRICK BY BORING BRICK" USING PEIRCE'S TRIADIC ANALYSIS" the writer can conclude that Hayley Williams tried to convey the message from her song in symbols that have a lot of fairy tale references. There are at least sixteen signs used in the song and music video, thirteen of them have direct and indirect references from various fairy tales. The meaning of those signs made up the moral value or message that the songwriter of this song wanted to convey. Hayley Williams finds that the society tries to set the kids especially girls, focus in becoming a princess, just like in fairy tales. Convince them to be powerless girls that all the misfortune which happening to them is just a phase and sooner or later a charming and beautiful prince will save them and take them to the dreamy palace to live a long and happy ever-after life. Williams wanted the girls to be more realistic and actually worked on their own happy ever-after ending and the prince will come later.

It is true that most of young women married in a very young age, that they rely their happiness to their husband or spouse to make it happen. They just wanted the result by doing nothing in particular but have high hopes that she will be in a palace someday. Hayley Williams wanted the girls to grow-up and take action.

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