

Research Article

Deconstruction of Meaning And Themes in Rini's Song Aphrodite: a Semiotic Approach by Roland Barthes

Raisa Irdina Shakila ^{1*}, Nazwa Maisya Nasution ², Jundiah Fatihatul Jannah ³, Triamanda Salsabila ⁴, and Fikry Prastya Syahputra ⁵

¹ Universitas Sumatera Utara; email : raisashakilaaa@gmail.com

² Universitas Sumatera Utara; email : nazwamaisya27@gmail.com

³ Universitas Sumatera Utara; email : jundiahfatihatuljannah@gmail.com

⁴ Universitas Sumatera Utara; email : triamanda445@gmail.com

⁵ Universitas Sumatera Utara; email : fikryprastya@usu.ac.id

* Author : Raisa Irdina Shakila

Abstract: This study examines the semiotic and mythological representation of song lyrics, taking RINI's "Aphrodite" as an example. Based on Roland Barthes' semiotics theory, this study examines the application of Greek mythology, specifically the character of Aphrodite, to convey love, beauty, and lust in the song. Qualitative descriptive approaches are used to examine the denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings inherent in the lyrics. The findings indicate that the song showcases Aphrodite both as a reference to Greek mythology and as an idealized figure of love and beauty in contemporary popular music. By way of metaphor, symbolism, and lyrical storytelling, RINI relates a story that intertwines personal emotion and cultural myth, demonstrating how antiquity's myths remain active in shaping contemporary creative work. The study emphasizes the use of music as a medium for rearticulating classical mythology in relation to depicting modern romantic ideals.

Keywords: Song lyrics, Aphrodite, Semiotics, Greek Mythology, Theme

1. Introduction

Literature is an oral or written work with a variety of excellent characteristics, including reliability, artistry, beauty, content, disclosure and more [8]. Literature is widely used as a platform to convey messages to readers. Each literary work has its own theme. not infrequently the theme in literary works, it is difficult to identify, because it is implied. There are various themes of each song. Theme is the meaning of a story. Theme is the same as the problem/idea that is used as the starting point for the author in creating the work or literary work.

Semiotics, as a discipline, is an analytical framework designed to investigate and understand how signs function in communication and representation. These signs are not limited to linguistic forms, but encompass a wide spectrum of expressions, including songs, dialog, musical notation, logos, images, facial expressions, and body movements. Semiotics is rooted in a set of theories that aim to explain how these signs are able to represent various entities, ideas, states, situations, emotions, and conditions. As such, semiotics seeks to decipher the meaning contained in each sign and interpret how that meaning is constructed. Through semiotic analysis, we can gain insight into how communicators, both consciously and unconsciously, construct complex and layered messages. This process allows us to understand how signs interact and contribute to the creation of meaning [4].

Songs are one of the things that cannot be separated from some people. Song is a tune and sound consisting of melody, lyrics, music arrangement, and notation. The song is not just a lyric song that arranges words into a sentence, but it is also a representation of the emotional composer and intent to express personal feelings like love, struggle, difficulty, jealousy, feel-

Received: May 21, 2025

Revised: June 04, 2025

Accepted: June 18, 2025

Online Available: June 20, 2025

Curr. Ver.: June 20, 2025



Hak cipta: © 2025 oleh penulis.

Diserahkan untuk kemungkinan

publikasi akses terbuka

berdasarkan syarat dan ketentuan

lisensi Creative Commons

Attribution (CC BY SA) (

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

enses/by-sa/4.0/)

ing, and so on [7]. They play a significant role in human life, serving as a medium for excitement, enthusiastic expression, and indeed social conservation. Songs can be found in different shapes and genres, each with its claims one of a kind characteristics and messages. All through history, melodies have been utilized to communicate feelings, share stories, and indeed spread imperative messages to society. Song lyrics can actually appear at any time when we think about something, it's just that what we think about is not accompanied by a tone or rhythm. Inspiration itself can be obtained from experiences in everyday life. According to Rahadiyan and Zid, the language used in songs is short, brief but rhythmic, composed of diction that is imaginative and full of meaning. Because of the short and brief nature of the language, listeners may be able to find out the meaning through the lyrics of the song. Therefore, songs are powerful tools for communication as they can convey ideas in a concise yet effective manner. To communicate deeper meanings, some lyrics use metaphors, symbolic phrases or figurative language. Music becomes more meaningful and personalized as a result of the listener's ability to interpret it in different ways thanks to these lyrical devices. Song lyrics are a medium for humans or poets to express their ideas, ideas or thoughts which are then sung through tone, rhythm and melody. In addition, song lyrics are created by a person or poet as a means to convey certain messages personally [6].

RINI, a notable musician in the R&B/Soul genre, is one of the best at fusing literary storytelling with emotional depth. In the world of R&B/Soul music, Rini emerged as one of the standout artists with her ability to create songs that are rich in emotional nuances and poetic lyrics. One of his most notable works is the song "Aphrodite," which was released on the album "After the Sun." In particular, the song uses Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty and love, as the main symbol in the lyrics, drawing inspiration from Greek mythology. Because mythology offers a wealth of symbolic significance that may be interpreted in a variety of ways, many artists have drawn inspiration from it for their creations. By referencing Aphrodite, RINI gives the song a deeper meaning and elevates it above the level of a simple love ballad. The use of mythology in song lyrics often serves as a way to explore universal themes such as love, beauty, and desire. Because they represent universal human feelings and problems, mythological characters have been incorporated into literature, art, and music for generations. Since the goddess Aphrodite represents the force of attraction and love, she serves as a fitting metaphor for the feelings conveyed via music.

Although much research has been done on the analysis of themes in songs, there is still room for progress in the understanding of how themes in song lyrics, especially those containing mythological elements, can affect the way listeners understand them and how they are relevant to the modern world. Most research concentrates on general themes such as love, struggle or loss, but there is little research investigating how mythological characters, such as Aphrodite in the song RINI, add meaning and enrich the listener's emotional experience. Furthermore, there is not much analysis comparing how the same themes can have different nuances when delivered in different musical genres, such as R&B/Soul compared to pop or rock. Therefore, further understanding is needed to gain more insight into the function of themes in song lyrics and how it impacts the audience. To fill this knowledge gap, this study aims to analyze the representation and symbolic meaning of the goddess Aphrodite in the lyrics of RINI's song 'Aphrodite' and its implications for listeners' understanding and emotional experience.

In a song, there must be a theme that wants to be highlighted. In RINI's song "Aphrodite", he presents Aphrodite as the theme or character in the song. Aphrodite is a goddess in Greek mythology who is known as the goddess of love and beauty [3]. As such, he aligns his work with the long tradition of artists exploring the human experience using mythology. Many songs, poems and artworks throughout history deal with themes of love and beauty, as represented by Aphrodite. Mythology is a set of stories used by the ancient Greeks to make sense of the world. For the Greeks, mythology was linked to religion. Many scholars believe that most Greeks thought the stories were true. Others think that Greek scholars considered the stories to be fiction. Greek mythology served as a system for the ancient Greeks to understand their world and the powers that formed it. Myths explain human behavior, natural events, and even the beginnings of civilization. Through fairy tales, the Greeks were able to convey their beliefs and make meaning of their experiences thanks to these myths.

2. Review of Literature

Songs are one way to express feelings. Not infrequently in a song there is an implied meaning. In a study by Neng Tika Harnia (2021) titled "*Semiotic Analysis of the Meaning of Love in the Lyrics of the Song 'Tak Sekedar Cinta' by Dnanda*", it is explained that love in a relationship requires honesty and openness in order to maintain and preserve the bond between partners. This research discusses three main points of Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, namely the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth contained in the lyrics of the song 'Tak Sekedar Cinta' by Dnanda.

The denotation meaning in the lyrics of this song describes the feelings of the songwriter who feels lonely due to a dishonest partner. The researcher also tries to explain the essence of love through the repetition of the word 'love' as an expression of his feelings towards his partner. Meanwhile, the connotation meaning in the lyrics of 'Tak Sekedar Cinta' shows the dilemma of an individual who is trapped in a relationship with a dishonest partner. Nevertheless, she continues to try to be sweet and maintain the atmosphere, as if all problems do not exist, while living her days with him. Furthermore, the myth that can be taken from the song lyrics is related to love in the context of romantic relationships. It shows the importance of honesty and sincerity from both parties in order to establish a harmonious relationship.

Besides that, in a study title "*Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes Pada Lagu 'Sun Goes Down' Karya Lil Nas X*" by Finna Nazmi Luthfiyah and Sabri (2023), the researchers also analyzed that through Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, Lil Nas X's song 'Sun Goes Down' contains three layers of meaning, namely denotative, connotative, and myth. The denotative meaning of the song describes the expression of despair experienced by the lyrical character, but accompanied by the presence of motivation that keeps him strong and convinced that life is still worth living. At the connotative level, the song reflects personal experiences of facing ridicule and feelings of insecurity, such as in the verse about skin colour and physical shape, which shows the inner struggle of the lyricist until he is finally able to rise. Meanwhile, the mythological meaning in this song implies that hope and rescue can come from anyone, even from strangers, emphasizing the importance of the role of others in facing life crises.

The similarity between the two studies with this research is that they both explore the meaning of song lyrics using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. Researchers try to explore the connotative, denotative, and mythical meanings contained in the song. In addition, the above research uses qualitative methods in collecting data just like in this research. Researchers both collect text on song lyrics and describe a meaning as a whole from the point of view of the person who experiences it. By employing a qualitative approach, the research offers an in-depth analysis, emphasizing the complexity of the phenomenon and how multiple factors interact. The findings suggest that while existing frameworks provide a strong foundation, they must be continuously refined to remain relevant.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This research uses a qualitative descriptive analysis approach to explore and interpret the meaning contained in the lyrics of RINI's song "Aphrodite", released in 2018. This approach was chosen because it allows an in-depth understanding of the song lyrics, particularly in relation to the mythological representation of Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty and love in Greek mythology. The main objective of this research is to reveal how Greek mythology, particularly the figure of Aphrodite, is used as a symbol and metaphor in song lyrics to convey messages about love, beauty, and desire.

3.2. Data Sources

The main data source for this research is the song "Aphrodite" by RINI, released in 2018. This song is accessed through digital music streaming platforms, namely Youtube and Spotify. This research focuses on analyzing the lyrics of the song as the main text, paying attention to how the lyrics represent the mythology of Aphrodite.

3.2. Data Sources

The data collection process in this research involved a series of systematic steps designed to ensure comprehensive textual analysis:

- Repeated Listening: The song "Aphrodite" was listened to repeatedly through streaming platforms such as YouTube and Spotify to understand the lyrics, rhythm, and overall

tone of the song. This step is important to analyze how the musical composition supports the meaning of the song.

- Official Lyrics Retrieval: The official lyrics of "Aphrodite" were obtained from verified sources such as Genius and other lyric databases to ensure the accuracy of the textual analysis.
- Lyrics Analysis: Each lyric line was analyzed semantically and pragmatically, focusing on references to Aphrodite, mythological elements, and other symbolism.
- Findings Contextualization: Song lyrics were compared to classical representations of Aphrodite in Greek mythology to identify similarities and differences, and to explore whether the song depicts Aphrodite in a traditional or modern way.

This research does not involve field data collection or interviews with artists or listeners. The main focus is on the textual analysis of the song lyrics and the interpretation of the themes contained therein.

3.4. Data Analysis

In this data analysis, a semiotic approach was used to understand how meaning is constructed and conveyed through the lyrics of the song "Aphrodite" by RINI. The first step was to identify relevant signs in the lyrics, especially words and phrases that refer to Aphrodite or related concepts such as beauty, love and desire. Next, the analysis focuses on the relationship between the signifier and the signified. For example, the name "Aphrodite" as a signifier is analyzed to understand the signifier or the concepts associated with it in the context of the song. The analysis also involves identifying and interpreting symbolism in the lyrics, such as metaphors and mythological representations, to understand how these symbols interact with the representation of Aphrodite. This approach is supported by the data analysis conducted, by organizing the data and explaining it in units, synthesizing, ordering in patterns, selecting the important and learning, and deriving conclusions.

4. Results & Discussion

In a literary work, whether it is a poem, a film or a song, there has to be a theme in it. Themes in literary works serve an important purpose that makes them unique and meaningful. Firstly, the theme serves as the common thread that holds the story together. The theme also provides readers with moral or philosophical messages that encourage them to think more deeply about what is happening in the story and give them deeper meaning. A strong theme also creates emotional resonance, making the reader feel close to the story. Theme also helps to understand and analyse the work as it reflects the social and cultural context of the time of writing.

In addition, the theme becomes an important bridge between the creator of the work and the audience. Through themes, writers or musicians can convey their thoughts, life experiences, and even social criticism implicitly. This makes the work not only entertaining, but also educating and shaping public awareness. In the context of music, themes also help create the identity of the song. Songs that have strong themes are usually more memorable to listeners because they have deep and memorable meanings. Research into songs also often reveals hidden messages or symbolism that is not immediately apparent from literal lyrics. This is why semiotic approaches such as Roland Barthes' are very relevant to be used in exploring these meanings. In addition to touching on the beauty of the lyrics, the semiotic approach also expands the understanding of the cultural context behind a piece of music.

Similar in one of his singles on After The Sun, Aphrodite, RINI portrays his lover through the character of Aphrodite, a goddess of Greek mythology. This is certainly in line with Roland Barthes's theory of semioticity. Semiotic theory provides an explanation of signs that can be used to describe objects, concepts, states, situations, feelings, and conditions.

In search of meaning and theme in the song, the researcher adds the lyrics of the song *Aphrodite* below:

“Aphrodite”

You're that goddess
 Aphrodite
 Well known for her love and beauty
 You took me and you bathe me in
 Your waters, your fountain
 Left me yearning for more, for more
 And I can't take it anymore
 If I can have this dance tonight
 I promise that you won't forget
 I've been searching all my life
 For something that I won't regret
 Could it be that you're the one I'm looking for?
 Aha
 Let me tell you one thing for sure
 You're the only one I want more of
 'Cause every time you strip away my pride
 Humble me down to my knees
 You're exactly what I need, you're exactly
 If I can have this dance tonight
 I promise that you won't forget
 I've been searching all my life
 For something that I won't regret
 Could it be that you're the one I'm looking for?
 Aha
 Why won't you take me away?
 Bring me to your sacred place
 Won't you ooh
 If I can have this dance tonight
 I promise that you won't forget
 I've been searching all my life
 For something that I won't regret
 Could it be that you're the one I'm looking for?
 Aha

From the lyrics of the song, we can relate to the intentional representation approach where RINI wants listeners to feel and understand the female figure described as Aphrodite.

No	Lyric Sentences	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
1	You're that goddess Aphrodite	Aphrodite is the goddess of love and beauty in Greek mythology.	The beloved is seen as perfect. She has a goddess-like physical and emotional appeal.	Patriarchy, the concept of an idealised beauty that must be honoured, and romantic love as the goal of life
2	Well known for her love and beauty	Aphrodite is widely known as the goddess of love	Aphrodite is a representation of women who possess	In society's culture, beauty is often considered a power

		and beauty in Greek mythology.	both physical and emotional perfection. This corollary also shows that beauty and love are attributes that make one appreciated and remembered.	that can influence one's relationships and social status.
3	You took me and you bathe me in your waters, your fountain	The singer describes the experience of being in something that flows or washes, such as water or a spring.	Implies that the singer submits to the person's influence, indicating a great deal of dependence or influence in the relationship.	In Greek mythology, Aphrodite was born from the sea, so the 'water' in the lyrics could refer to the divine power of love and beauty.
4	Left me yearning for more, for more, and I can't take it anymore	The singer feels nostalgic or wants more from the person, and these feelings feel so strong that it is hard to contain them.	Illustrates that these feelings are so strong that the singer almost loses control or becomes obsessed with the figure. As well as showing a deep longing in the relationship between physical (passion) and emotional (inner connection).	In Greek mythology, Aphrodite symbolises not only beautiful love, but also a burning passion that is hard to control.
5	If I can have this dance tonight, I promise that you won't forget	-	The singer wants to leave a deep impression, showing ambition to be remembered and desired by the person.	-
6	I've been searching all my life for something that I won't regret	-	The singer has been looking for the ideal love for him.	-
7	Why won't you take me away? Bring me to your sacred place	The singer asks to take him away to a sacred place or a place of special significance.	This request conveys a sense of longing and vulnerability, as the singer asks to be brought into an intimate space.	In Greek mythology, Aphrodite has a sacred love temple that symbolises fertility, love and passion. The lyrics reflect the desire to experience divine or passionate love, like approaching Aphrodite's temple of love.

Beyond this interpretation, the lyrics also reflect a sense of longing that is not only romantic, but also existential. The singer's repeated requests to be taken to a sacred place indicate a search for deeper meaning, fulfillment, and an escape from ordinary reality.

Although the song does not explicitly mention lust or sexuality, Aphrodite's word choice, atmosphere, and symbols point towards passion and physical attraction. The song tells of a relationship that is more than platonic admiration in a poetic way. This aligns with Roland Barthes' semiotic theory which divides the sign into 3 elements: denotation, connotation and myth. According to Callista, denotation is defined as a word that contains its true meaning. While connotation is simply defined as a word that contains a figurative meaning or not the actual meaning. Myth is something that must be done, not something that must be proven.

From the above research, researchers can examine 7 song lyrics that imply that the figure of Aphrodite can define the beauty of the lover. The song denotatively refers to Aphrodite as the goddess of love and beauty, and also describes the singer's admiration and attraction to the alluring figure. On a connotational level, the lyrics show passion, sensuality and emotional longing that reflect the desire for a close and intimate relationship. On the mythic level, the

song reinforces cultural stories of idealised love and intoxicating attraction, corresponding to the image of Aphrodite as a symbol of passion, eternal beauty and emotional strength in relationships.

This analysis not only enriches our understanding of song lyrics, but also shows how deeply mythology is embedded in our cultural consciousness. Such representations are not simply aesthetic choices, but narrative acts that bring historical narratives into modern expression. RINI's choice to depict her lover as Aphrodite can also be read as a glorification of transcendent love. By likening her lover to a goddess, RINI conveys that love is not just a feeling, but a spiritual force to be honored.

The incorporation of Aphrodite in contemporary song lyrics highlights the ongoing influence of mythology on modern art and storytelling. While her origins are rooted in ancient Greek mythology, her portrayal has transformed to align with current ideals of romance and beauty. In these songs, Aphrodite is frequently characterized as both elusive and captivating—a symbol of the quest for ideal love or aesthetic perfection. These reinterpretations demonstrate how mythological characters maintain their relevance by being adapted to resonate with today's narratives. This shows that mythology remains flexible and able to adapt to the times. When figures like Aphrodite are used in modern music, they serve not only as aesthetic symbols, but also as reflections of the aspirations and anxieties of modern man.

Moreover, references to Aphrodite in lyrics often employ vivid imagery and symbolism that amplify the songs' emotional resonance. For instance, analogies likening a lover's allure to divine beauty or portraying love as an all-consuming force reflect Aphrodite's mythological attributes. Such poetic techniques not only enrich the lyrical artistry but also strengthen their thematic ties to the goddess's legacy.

In addition, RINI's song 'Aphrodite' demonstrates how mythological elements can be used to express themes of love, longing and a deep search for meaning. Interpretation through semiotic theory provides a richer perspective and allows the audience to understand the hidden dimensions behind the poetic lyrics. Various musical genres portray Aphrodite in distinct manners. In pop music, she is typically depicted as an emblem of ideal love and attractiveness, whereas in rock or alternative genres, the focus may shift to her more complex and emotional aspects, such as obsession or sorrow. This variety highlights how artists have reimagined mythological figures like Aphrodite to align with their own artistic expressions.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Aphrodite's by RINI is a song that expresses deep love, longing, and desire by comparing his lover to the Greek goddess, Aphrodite. By using Greek mythology, RINI connects an ancient symbol of love and beauty to a modern romantic experience. It also shows that Aphrodite's role as the goddess of love is still relevant in today's love stories. While Aphrodite is often linked to beauty and desire, in this song, he represents someone who is emotionally and physically charming. This gives the song a poetic and meaningful touch, allowing listeners to feel its deep emotions. Using Barthes' semiotic theory, the song can be understood as more than just a romantic expression but it also becomes a representation of cultural myths about desire, love, and the influence of beauty. The use of denotation, connotation, and myth allows for multi-layered interpretations, revealing how the song draws from ancient mythology to explore timeless themes of desire and longing. The song constructs a narrative that reflects personal experiences of love and wider cultural ideals through these three components.

Referensi

- [1] Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, music, text* (S. Heath, Trans.). Hill and Wang.
- [2] Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- [3] English Journal of Indragiri: Studies in Education, Literature, and Linguistics. (n.d.). English Journal of Indragiri: Studies in Education, Literature, and Linguistics, 6(2), 275–284. <https://doi.org/10.32520/eji.v6i2.1989>
- [4] Fadhillah, H. N. (2023, July 7). Aphrodite, sang dewi seks hobi selingkuh di mitologi Yunani. National Geographic Indonesia. <https://nationalgeographic.grid.id/read/133831382/aphrodite-sang-dewi-seks-hobi-selingkuh-di-mitologi-yunani-kuno?page=all>
- [5] Fadilla, A. R., & Wulandari, P. A. (2023). Literature review analisis data kualitatif tahap pengumpulan data. Scribd. <https://www.scribd.com/document/675009746/LITERATURE-REVIEW-ANALISIS-DATA-KUALITATIF-TAHAP-PENGUMPULAN-DATA-3>
- [6] Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. SAGE Publications.
- [7] Kevinia, C., Syahara, P., Aulia, S., & Astari, T. (2022). Analisis teori semiotika Roland Barthes dalam film *Miracle in Cell No.7* versi Indonesia. *COMMUSTY Journal of Communication Studies and Society*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.38043/commusty.v1i2.4082>

- [8] Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- [9] MESSAGE in “A Thousand Years” song by Christina Perri. (n.d.). *Jurnal Scientia*, 12(2), 1498–1503. <https://doi.org/10.58471/scientia.v12i02.1409>
- [10] Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- [11] Mitita Jurnal Penelitian. (n.d.). *Data kualitatif: Tahap pengumpulan data*, 1(3), 34–36.
- [12] Moleong, L. J. (2017). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Revisi ed.). PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- [13] Nugroho, R. D., & Fatoni, Z. Z. A. (2021). Tema dan amanat lirik lagu dalam lagu Anata yang dipopulerkan oleh L`ArcenCiel. *AYUMI: Jurnal Budaya, Bahasa dan Sastra*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.25139/ayumi.v8i1.3917>
- [14] Renjani, A. P., Damanik, E. S. D., Nazhifah, F., Harahap, D. S., & Manik, P. F. (2022). The meaning used in Katty Perry song “Dark Horse”. *English Journal of Indragiri*.
- [15] Sudaryanto. (2015). *Metode dan aneka teknik analisis bahasa*. Sanata Dharma University Press.