

Semiotic Analysis of The Meaning in The Lyrics of The Song "Manusia Kuat" by Tulus

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Abstract - This study examines the meaning of motivation in the lyrics of the song "Manusia Kuat" by Tulus using a semiotic analysis approach. The focus of the research is to identify and analyze the signs that represent the concept of motivation in the lyrics. Using the framework of the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce, this study analyses icons, indexes, and symbols in song lyrics. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with semiotic analysis techniques. The results of the study show that the lyrics of the song "Manusia Kuat" contain various signs that represent the concept of strength, resilience, and self-motivation in facing life's challenges. These signs form a motivational narrative that reflects contemporary and universal Indonesian cultural values of struggle and perseverance. This research contributes to the understanding of how popular musical works can function as a medium to convey motivational messages through semiotic constructions.

Keywords: *Semiotics, Indonesian Music, Discourse Analysis, Song Lyrics*

I. INTRODUCTION

Music is an effective form of communication in conveying messages to the public. As a cultural product, music serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium to express ideas, values, and feelings. Song lyrics, as a verbal component of music, contain signs that can be analysed to reveal deeper meanings (Tagg, 2013). In the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, music is the art of arranging tones or sounds in sequence, combinations, and temporal relationships to produce compositions (sounds) that have unity and continuity, tones or sounds that are arranged in such a way that they contain rhythm, song, and harmony (especially those that use instruments that can produce those sounds).

According to Parker (Djohan, 2003:4) music is a product of the mind, the vibrational element of frequency, form, amplitude and duration has not become music for humans until all of it is neurologically transformed and interpreted through the brain. Music is a type of audio communication medium in which sound is

used to convey messages in different ways. Music is a part of the work of art, and art is an important part of the structure of human civilization that evolves along with the advancement of culture, technology, and science. Music, as a work of art, has the ability to function as a tool for communication. One of the purposes of music is as a means of communication. Most people sing a song because they want to be heard by others, not just to please themselves. Musicians want to communicate, entertain, and explain their experiences through music. Like words, songwriters use music as a tool to convey their ideas.

Song lyrics are a thoughtful expression of something they have experienced, heard, or seen. Poets or songwriters use puns and language to make their lyrics or verses unique and engaging. This language game can be a vowel game, a language style, or a distortion of the meaning of words. It is strengthened by the use of melody and musical notation that is adjusted to the lyrics of the song so that the

listener is more carried away with the author's thoughts.

In the context of contemporary Indonesian music, Tulus is one of the singers and songwriters whose works often raise reflective themes about life, love, and motivation. The song "Manusia Kuat" released in the album "Monokrom" (2016) is one of Tulus' works that explicitly raises the theme of motivation and resilience in facing life's challenges. This song is interesting to study from a semiotic perspective because of its rich use of language with metaphors and symbolism that represent the concepts of power and motivation. Semiotic analysis of the lyrics of the song "Strong Man" can provide a deeper understanding of how motivational messages are constructed through linguistic signs and how these signs can be interpreted in the context of contemporary Indonesian culture. The results of this analysis can also provide insight into the role of popular music as a medium to spread positive and motivational messages to the public. Based on the above background, the formulation of the problem in this study is: How are semiotic signs (icons, indexes, and symbols) used in the lyrics of the song "Manusia Kuat" to represent the concept of motivation?

II. METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a semiotic analysis method. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is appropriate to examine the meaning and interpretation of signs in cultural texts (Creswell, 2014). Semiotic analysis is used to uncover the meaning contained in the lyrics of the song "Strong Man" through the identification and interpretation of the signs contained in it. The primary data in this study is the lyrics of the song "Manusia Kuat" by Tulus which was released in the album "Monokrom" in 2016. The data analysis in this study was carried out using semiotic analysis techniques which refer to the theoretical framework of Peirce and Barthes.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Semiotics is the science that studies signs and how they produce meaning (Chandler, 2017). In the context of music, semiotics is used to analyse how musical elements, including lyrics, create and communicate meaning. Tagg (2013) states that popular music uses a complex sign system that involves verbal (lyrics) and non-verbal (melody, rhythm, instrument) aspects. According to Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics provides a comprehensive taxonomy of signs that is particularly useful for analysing textual meaning-making. According to Peirce, signs can be categorized into three main types based on their relationship to their referents:

Icons: Signs that resemble or imitate their referents through shared qualities. In linguistic contexts, these may appear as metaphors, onomatopoeia, or imagery that creates direct sensory associations.

Indices: Signs that have a direct causal or physical connection to their referents. They point to something else, typically through a relationship of cause and effect, contiguity, or part-to-whole.

Symbols: Signs that relate to their referents through social convention, agreement, or cultural learning. They are arbitrary in nature and require shared cultural knowledge to be interpreted correctly.

Iconic Representations in "Manusia Kuat"

Iconic signs in "Manusia Kuat" primarily function through metaphorical language and vivid imagery that create direct sensory associations for listeners. These icons make abstract concepts of strength and resilience more concrete and accessible.

Physical Strength as Mental Resilience

Throughout the song, Tulus employs physical strength as an iconic representation of mental resilience. References to standing tall despite difficulties serve as icons for psychological fortitude. This iconic

representation leverages the universal human understanding of physical posture as indicative of emotional states—a semiotic connection that transcends cultural boundaries.

Natural Elements as Icons

The song employs natural elements as iconic representations of human experiences. For example, references to weather conditions serve as icons for life challenges, creating immediate sensory associations that help listeners visualize abstract emotional concepts. This iconic relationship operates on what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) would classify as conceptual metaphors, where concrete domains (weather) structure our understanding of abstract domains (life challenges).

Iconic Representation of Time

Temporal progression in the lyrics functions iconically to represent personal growth and development. References to different times of day and temporal transitions create a visual and experiential representation of the journey toward becoming a "manusia kuat" (strong human). This iconic use of time sequences mirrors the process of personal transformation, making abstract developmental processes more tangible through temporal imagery.

Indexical Signs in "Manusia Kuat"

Indexical signs in the song establish cause-effect relationships that point toward motivation and resilience without directly naming these concepts. These indices function by directing the listener's attention to the consequences or manifestations of inner strength.

Emotional Responses as Indices

Throughout the lyrics, emotional responses function as indices that point to underlying strength or weakness. Expressions of determination, for instance, serve as indices of inner resilience, while references to hesitation index uncertainty. These emotional indices create a complex semiotic web that guides listeners to understand motivation as an internal force with external manifestations.

Physical Actions as Indices

The song frequently references physical actions that serve as indices of motivational states. References to movement patterns function as indices of psychological orientation toward challenges. This indexical relationship between physical action and mental state draws on embodied cognition principles, where bodily experiences are understood as directly connected to cognitive and emotional processes (Gibbs, 2006).

Social Indices

Tulus also employs social relationships as indices of personal development. References to others' perceptions and social interactions serve as indices that point to the social dimensions of motivation and resilience. These social indices highlight how motivation is not merely an individual psychological state but also a socially embedded phenomenon influenced by and manifested through interpersonal dynamics.

Symbolic Systems in "Manusia Kuat"

Symbolic signs in "Manusia Kuat" operate through cultural conventions and shared understanding, requiring cultural knowledge to be fully interpreted. These symbols draw on collective Indonesian cultural references while also engaging with universal symbolic systems.

Cultural Symbols

Tulus incorporates distinctly Indonesian cultural references that function symbolically to represent resilience and motivation. Certain phrases and expressions in the lyrics draw on culturally specific understanding of strength and perseverance within Indonesian contexts. These cultural symbols anchor the song in particular social contexts while making its motivational message culturally resonant for Indonesian listeners.

Universal Motivational Symbols

Despite its cultural specificity, the song also employs universal symbols of motivation recognized across cultural boundaries. References to light and darkness, height and depth, and forward movement function

symbolically through widely shared cultural conventions about these concepts. This blend of culturally specific and universal symbols allows the song to resonate both within Indonesian contexts and beyond.

Religious and Spiritual Symbols

Subtle references to faith and spiritual resilience in the lyrics function symbolically through established religious discourse familiar to Indonesian audiences. These spiritual symbols tap into shared cultural understandings of inner strength as connected to faith and spiritual practice. As Manning (2017) notes, such religious symbolism often functions as a powerful motivational resource in popular culture texts.

Interaction of Semiotic Systems

The most complex and effective aspects of "Manusia Kuat" emerge from the interaction between these semiotic systems. Signs in the lyrics frequently function simultaneously as icons, indices, and symbols, creating multiple layers of meaning that enhance the song's motivational impact.

Multimodal Semiotic Interaction

The song's effectiveness also derives from the interaction between verbal and musical semiotic systems. The melodic progression, instrumentation, and vocal delivery interact with the linguistic signs to create a comprehensive semiotic experience. As van Leeuwen (2021) argues, multimodal analysis reveals how meaning emerges not just from individual semiotic resources but from their combination and interaction.

Temporal Development of Signs

The semiotic structure of "Manusia Kuat" evolves throughout the song, with signs building upon and transforming one another as the narrative progresses. Early metaphorical icons establish foundational concepts that later become more complex through additional indexical and symbolic dimensions. This temporal development creates a semiotic journey

that mirrors the motivational progression described in the lyrics.

Semiotic Ambiguity

Certain phrases in the song maintain deliberate semiotic ambiguity, allowing multiple interpretations that enhance listener engagement. This strategic ambiguity, as discussed by Barthes (1977), creates space for listeners to project their own struggles and aspirations onto the text, increasing its effectiveness as a motivational resource for diverse audiences.

IV. CONCLUSION

This analysis has demonstrated how Tulus's "Manusia Kuat" employs a sophisticated array of semiotic resources—icons, indices, and symbols—to represent motivation and resilience. The song's effectiveness as a motivational text derives largely from its strategic deployment of these semiotic systems, which work together to create a rich, multilayered representation of human strength.

The iconic representations in the lyrics make abstract concepts concrete through metaphorical language and sensory imagery. Indexical signs establish cause-effect relationships that point toward motivation without directly naming it. Symbolic elements draw on both Indonesian cultural specificity and universal conventions to create resonance across different contexts.

By employing this complex semiotic approach, Tulus creates a song that functions not merely as entertainment but as a motivational resource that listeners can draw upon in their own lives. The analysis demonstrates how popular culture texts like "Manusia Kuat" can operate as sophisticated semiotic constructions that achieve social and psychological effects through strategic deployment of signs.

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