



The Meaning Of “Fear Of Loss” In The Lyrics Of Lizzy McAlpine's Song “Staying”

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Abstract

Background. This study analyzes the meaning of fear of loss in the lyrics of Lizzy McAlpine's song “Staying” using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, which includes the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth.

Aims. This study aims to reveal how fear of loss is described through song lyrics as media texts and how this meaning can be linked to the emotional experiences of listeners, especially the younger generation.

Methods. The method used is descriptive qualitative research, with data collection techniques that include secondary and primary data, documentary studies of song lyrics supported by interviews, and validity tests through source triangulation.

Result. The results of this study indicate that the lyrics of Lizzy McAlpine's song “Staying” describe the meaning of fear of loss through three levels of Roland Barthes' semiotics. At the denotative level, the lyrics describe a relationship that is still physically ongoing but accompanied by emotional exhaustion and doubt.

Conclusion. At the connotative level, this song represents the fear of loss that drives the narrator to persevere and delay the breakup even though the relationship has become fragile. At the mythical level, the fear of loss is normalized so that remaining in a painful relationship is considered more acceptable than letting go. In addition, the interview results show that the meaning of the fear of loss in this song aligns with listeners' emotional experiences, in which the fear of loss drives individuals to delay separation and maintain closeness as a form of temporary security.

Keyword: Fear of loss; Song Lyrics; Meaning; Music; Staying.



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INTRODUCTION

Popular music has an emotional power that can influence how people understand and express themselves. In the context of media communication, music serves not only as entertainment but also as a means of self-reflection and the conveyance of social meaning to

listeners. This is relevant to the younger generation, who use music as a space to express their feelings, experiences, and emotional identities (Monika et al., 2025).

In line with (DeNora, 2000), music can serve as a source of identity formation and emotional regulation, because music is not only entertainment but also part of daily life that influences feelings, experiences, and how individuals manage their emotions. This phenomenon shows that popular music is not only consumed passively, but also actively interpreted by listeners who are able to shape and interpret meaning according to their own experiences (Browne, Ray; Mukerji, Chandra; Schudson, 2022).

In current developments, music has an increasingly important role in our lives. Music is not only positioned as a form of entertainment but also as an emotional medium that can influence how a person understands, processes, and expresses their emotions. This is in line with the view that, in popular culture, meaning is not only generated by the creator, but also through the interaction between the text and the audience as producers of meaning (Storey, 2008).

In line with this view, (Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008) state that *"music can trigger strong emotions in listeners through various psychological mechanisms."* This statement explains that music works through various psychological mechanisms that enable the emergence of strong emotional responses in listeners, so that the experience of listening to songs is not passive, but involves complex affective processes.

Music is an auditory sign system, but to reach its audience, music is manifested through visual forms such as musical scores, which allow music to be analyzed as a semiotic text. Thus, music can be viewed not only as a work of art, but also as a symbolic communication medium that depicts certain emotions and cultural meanings (Sobur, 2013).

One form of her emotional expression can be found in the song "Staying" by Lizzy McAlpine. This song is part of the sixth track on the album *Older*, which was released on October 4, 2024, and has been listened to more than 99 million times as of December 2026 on Spotify (McAlpine, 2024). This work belongs to the alternative/indie genre and is known for its reflective and emotional lyrics. Narratively, "Staying" depicts someone struggling to survive in an emotionally exhausting relationship, even though they realize that the relationship is no longer healthy.

The song "Staying" expresses these feelings through lyrics that reveal the emotional tension between the desire to hold on and the need to let go, and reflect the dynamics between love and the loss of identity. Although studies on fear of loss have been extensively researched

in psychology, research examining this phenomenon from the perspective of media text analysis remains very limited. In fact, song lyrics, as a form of symbolic communication, have great potential to reveal the emotional dynamics and social ideologies behind popular music narratives.

The concept of fear of loss refers to feelings of anxiety, fear, and helplessness resulting from the possibility of losing someone or something of high emotional value. Radomsky & Rachman (2023) explain that fear of losing control or someone valuable is often a common factor in various psychological conditions, including anxiety and emotional attachment. Individuals who experience fear of loss tend to maintain unhealthy relationships because they feel that losing someone means losing a part of themselves (Radomsky & Rachman, 2022).

Roland Barthes' Theory (1957) assumes to expand Saussure's concept through his theory in *Mythologies*, explaining that signs do not stop at linguistic meaning, but develop in three layers of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation is the literal meaning of a sign; connotation contains emotional and cultural meanings, while myth reflects the social ideology that lives in society. This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of cultural texts, including song lyrics, to see how meaning is formed and reproduced in specific social and emotional contexts (Barthes, 1972).

There have been several previous studies conducted by other researchers, one example being that conducted by (Salsabila et al., 2025) Regarding the song "Nina" by Feast, it shows that Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is effective in interpreting emotional messages and social values in popular music. However, the study has not explained the meaning of the fear of loss, thereby revealing a significant research gap.

Researchers identified a gap in the study of popular music semiotics and sought to fill it by analyzing the meaning of fear of loss in the lyrics of Lizzy McAlpine's song "Staying" through Roland Barthes' theory. The researcher sought to bring something new to the study of emotional meaning in popular music, specifically through Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis of Lizzy McAlpine's song "Staying."

The research question of this study is to analyze Roland Barthes' three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth in the lyrics of Lizzy McAlpine's song "Staying" in order to reveal the meaning of fear of loss contained therein. Additionally, this study aims to explain the correspondence between the results of semiotic analysis and the meaning and emotional experiences of the younger generation as listeners of the song "Staying." Thus, this study is expected to enrich the understanding of how the meaning of fear of loss is constructed through

song lyrics and linked to the emotional experiences of the younger generation.

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This study is theoretically expected to expand the application of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory in media text studies, particularly in popular music. Through an analysis of Barthes' three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth, this study aims to contribute to understanding how signs and symbols in song lyrics can form emotional meanings, such as fear of loss. Additionally, this research enriches communication studies of media texts by interpreting music as a form of self-reflection and emotional expression among younger people.

This study aims to provide an understanding that music is not only a form of entertainment but also a medium of emotional communication that can describe human experiences and feelings. Through Lizzy McAlpine's song "Staying," this study hopes to help listeners and fans of popular music understand how song lyrics can describe feelings of fear or loss.

Recent studies in media communication and cultural studies increasingly view popular music as a semiotic medium that conveys emotional and social meanings. Music is not only entertainment but also a symbolic communication system that shapes identity, emotional expression, and listeners' interpretation of personal experiences (DeNora, 2000; Storey, 2008).

In communication research, song lyrics are often analyzed as cultural texts that contain signs and symbols which can be interpreted using semiotic approaches. One widely used framework is Roland Barthes' semiotics, which interprets meaning through three layers: denotation, connotation, and myth. This framework allows researchers to reveal hidden emotional meanings and ideological messages within cultural texts such as music lyrics.

Previous studies applying Barthes' semiotics to song lyrics mainly focus on general emotional themes, such as:

1. Self-improvement and personal reflection in song lyrics (e.g., analysis of the song "*Diri*" by Tulus).

2. Expressions of love and affection in music as emotional communication (e.g., analysis of *“Rumah ke Rumah”* by Hindia).
3. Longing, loss, and symbolic meanings of separation in songs (e.g., *“Gala Bunga Matahari”* by Sal Priadi).

These studies demonstrate that semiotic analysis is effective for interpreting emotional and symbolic meanings in popular music, particularly through the interplay among lyrics, cultural context, and listeners’ interpretations. However, most existing research tends to analyze general emotional narratives such as love, longing, or self-reflection, without focusing on specific psychological emotions such as fear of loss as a central analytical concept.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Popular music can be understood as a symbolic medium of communication that reflects the emotional experiences and cultural realities of society. Song lyrics function as semiotic texts that contain linguistic and symbolic signs to convey meaning, identity, and the psychological dynamics of the listener (Sobur, 2013). The song *“Staying”* by Lizzy McAlpine, with its reflective and personal lyrics, describes the inner struggle in relationships. Here are the lyrics to *Staying*:

Table 1. Lyrics to the song *“Staying”* by Lizzy McAlpine

Lirik <i>“Staying”</i> Original	Lirik <i>“Staying”</i> Terjemahan
<i>Whisper to me, baby I'm too far gone to care I wish I could have said what I meant when it was right there Now I'm laying in bed with you And you're fallin' asleep How can you look so peaceful When you know I'm gonna leave?</i>	Berbisiklah padaku, sayang Aku sudah terlalu jauh untuk peduli Saya harap saya dapat mengatakan apa yang saya maksudkan ketika hal itu terjadi di sana Sekarang aku sedang berbaring di tempat tidur bersamamu Dan kamu tertidur Bagaimana kamu bisa terlihat begitu damai Kapan kamu tahu aku akan pergi?
<i>What happens when you love me dry? I give myself to help you get by I keep on lying and sweating at night Hold me until someone sends me a sign Mm-mm, mm, mm-mm, mm-mm</i>	Apa yang terjadi jika kamu mencintaiku sampai kering? Saya memberikan diri saya untuk membantu Anda bertahan hidup Aku terus berbohong dan berkeringat di malam hari Pegang aku sampai seseorang mengirimiku tanda Mm-mm, mm, mm-mm, mm-mm

<p><i>Maybe I would be okay if I let this go forever</i> <i>Send it into space and watch the planets turn</i> <i>Maybe I will, someday, let this go forever</i> <i>Hold me until I find the nerve (oh, oh-oh, oh)</i></p>	<p>Mungkin aku akan baik-baik saja jika membiarkan ini berlangsung selamanya Kirimkan ke luar angkasa dan saksikan planet-planet berputar Mungkin suatu hari nanti, aku akan membiarkan ini berlangsung selamanya Pegang aku sampai aku menemukan keberanian (oh, oh-oh, oh)</p>
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Source: <https://genius.com/Lizzy-mcalpine-staying-lyrics>

To examine the meaning of fear of loss in the song, this study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, which emphasizes three levels of meaning, namely denotation, connotation, and myth, as analytical tools in revealing the emotional meaning in the song lyrics. The concept of fear of loss is understood as an emotional condition related to the fear of losing relationships, identity, and emotional stability, which often drives individuals to remain in unhealthy relationships (Radomsky & Rachman, 2022)

This is in line with the concept of attachment anxiety described (Mikulincer, Mario; Shaver, 2007) that *"attachment anxiety involves a hyperactivation of the attachment system and an intense fear of rejection or abandonment."* This means that individuals with attachment anxiety tend to experience intense fear of rejection and loss, causing them to remain in relationships despite experiencing emotional distress. This theoretical foundation serves as a basis for understanding fear of loss as a form of emotional communication in popular music, while also leading to a discussion of relevant previous studies.

Previous research conducted by (Rahma et al., 2024) entitled "Representation of the Meaning of Self-Improvement in the Lyrics of Tulus' Song 'Diri'". This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory with a qualitative approach to analyze three levels of meaning, namely denotation, connotation, and myth in the song lyrics. The results show that in the denotation level, the lyrics of "Diri" describe the motivation to improve oneself by forgiving the past and accepting one's current situation. At the connotation level, the lyrics evoke emotional meanings about the process of self-maturation through acceptance, contentment, and gratitude. Meanwhile, at the myth level, the lyrics of "Diri" emphasize the belief that the process of self-improvement begins with the courage to make peace with wounds and rebuild self-confidence. Although this study has the same focus on Barthes' semiotic analysis and the object of song lyrics, this study focuses more on the theme of self-improvement, while that study focuses on the meaning of fear of loss that is present in emotional experiences through the lyrics of the song "Staying" by Lizzy McAlpine.

The second previous study was conducted by (Iubikrea et al., 2022) Entitled “Music as a Medium for Communicating Love (A Semiotic Analysis of the Lyrics of the Song ‘Rumah ke Rumah’ by Hindia).” This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to analyze the signs, denotative and connotative meanings, and myths in the song's lyrics. The results show that the song “Rumah ke Rumah” represents a form of emotional communication that expresses love from various phases of the poet's life. The symbol of “home” is interpreted as a place of comfort and affection, referring not only to romantic love but also to affection for family and parents. At the connotative level, this song describes regret, longing, and love that continues to transform. Meanwhile, at the mythical level, love is interpreted as a universal form of affection that transcends romantic relationships. Although this study explores the broad meaning of expressions of love, the emotional aspects of loss or fear of losing a loved one have not been the main focus.

The third previous study was conducted by (Husnusyifa & Mujianto, 2024) with the title “Semiotic Analysis of the Meaning of the Song ‘Gala Bunga Matahari’ by Sal Priadi.” This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, employing a descriptive-interpretative qualitative method, to explore the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings in the song's lyrics. The results show that the symbols of sunflowers, plant language, and milk have meanings related to longing, hope, and the desire to reunite with someone who has left. At the mythical level, this song describes the idea of life after loss, where sadness turns into beauty and acceptance. This song is considered successful in conveying an emotional message about love, loss, and eternity in a symbolic form. However, this study focuses more on the aspects of longing and acceptance, without further examining the dynamics of fear of loss itself as a form of human inner conflict.

Based on these three studies, it can be concluded that semiotic studies of song lyrics in Indonesia generally highlight emotional meanings such as loneliness, love, and longing. All three use Roland Barthes' theory, discussing denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings, but the focus remains limited to general emotional expressions, without exploring more specific emotional aspects such as fear of loss.

Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by examining how the meaning of the fear of loss is conveyed through denotative, connotative, and mythical signs in the lyrics of Lizzy McAlpine's song “Staying” using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. This study not only interprets the emotional meaning of the text, but also explains the correspondence between the meaning in the song lyrics and the emotional experiences of the younger generation regarding the fear of loss depicted in the song. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on

analyzing fear of loss as a form of human emotion in the face of loss, an aspect that has not been discussed in depth in previous studies.

Although numerous studies have examined song lyrics using Roland Barthes' semiotics, several gaps remain in the literature:

1. Limited focus on the concept of "fear of loss." Previous studies have mostly explored themes such as love, longing, and self-development, but have not specifically analyzed how the fear of losing someone is constructed in song lyrics.
2. Lack of integration between semiotic analysis and psychological perspectives. Existing research rarely connects semiotic interpretations of song lyrics with psychological theories of fear, attachment, and emotional dependency.
3. Insufficient exploration of listener experiences. Many semiotic studies focus only on textual interpretation, while the relationship between song meaning and listeners' emotional experiences—especially among younger generations—remains underexplored.
4. Limited analysis of contemporary global indie music texts. Previous research often focuses on Indonesian songs, leaving international alternative/indie music texts such as Lizzy McAlpine's work relatively unexplored.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive, qualitative approach because it aligns with the research objective of interpreting the meaning of fear of loss in the lyrics of Lizzy McAlpine's song "Staying." Social science research using a qualitative approach is conducted to reveal the uniqueness, dynamics, and depth of the social reality being studied (Kurniasih et al., n.d.). Creswell (2018) explains that qualitative research is used when researchers want to understand the hidden meanings behind human experiences and interpret phenomena that cannot be explained through numerical data (John W. Creswell & Cheryl N. Poth, 2018).

According to Creswell, this approach allows researchers to explore data in depth through an interpretive process because meaning in qualitative research is not always immediately apparent, but rather is shaped by context, experience, and the subject's perspective. Therefore, this method is appropriate for analyzing linguistic and emotional symbols in popular music texts, allowing researchers to explore the meanings that emerge from song lyrics as a form of emotional expression related to the experiences of younger generations.

The research approach used is semiotics, which examines the signs and meanings found

in texts. In this context, the researcher uses Roland Barthes' semiotics theory as the main analytical framework. Barthes (1957) explains that signs consist of two elements, namely form (signifier) and concept (signified), which then develop into three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation indicates the literal meaning of a sign, connotation reflects emotional or cultural meaning, while myth marks a second level of meaning that reflects social ideology in society (Barthes, 1972). Through this theory, researchers attempt to reveal how the meaning of fear of loss is depicted in song lyrics.

The subject of this study is the lyrics of the song "Staying" by Lizzy McAlpine, which are analyzed as media text. The object of this study is the concept of fear of loss, which will be analyzed at three levels of meaning according to Roland Barthes: denotative, connotative, and mythical.

Data collection methods were carried out using three main techniques, namely:

1. The observation was conducted by analyzing the lyrics of the song "Staying" in depth to identify linguistic and symbolic signs related to the theme of fear of loss.
2. Primary interviews were conducted with psychologists, music experts, Native Americans, and listeners of Lizzy McAlpine's song "Staying." Informants were selected purposively, considering individuals who had an interest in alternative or indie music and were able to express their emotional experiences with the song.
3. Documentation was carried out by collecting and reviewing various secondary sources such as articles, journals, books, notes, interviews, and visual documentation in the form of photographs of interviews and audience responses.

To ensure the quality and validity of the findings, this study used triangulation techniques as described by (John W. Creswell & Cheryl N. Poth, 2018) explains that triangulation is an effort to verify the validity of data by comparing various sources or methods, making research findings more credible. He states that: "Triangulation is the process of verifying evidence from different individuals, different types of data, or different data collection methods in descriptions and themes."

Triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of the song lyrics analysis with data from interviews with psychologists, music experts, Native Americans, listeners of the song "Staying," and other relevant supporting documents. Furthermore, the data analysis process followed the qualitative analysis steps proposed by Creswell.

These stages were implemented through a data reduction process to focus on elements related to the meaning of fear of loss, followed by the presentation of data in the form of

narrative descriptions based on Roland Barthes' three layers of semiotic meaning, namely denotation, connotation, and myth, until finally drawing meaning to understand the emotional message and cultural context implied in the lyrics. Through the application of triangulation and qualitative analysis, according to Creswell, this study seeks to produce deep and valid meanings regarding how song lyrics are used as a medium of emotional expression and to highlight the theme of fear of loss in the context of popular music and the experiences of the younger generation.

RESULT

Based on the results of the study, there are three verses in the song “Staying” that were analyzed and interpreted using Roland Barthes' theory to understand the meaning of Fear of Loss in the song's lyrics, as follows:

Table 1. The meaning of the lyric “Staying.”

Lyric	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning	Myth Meaning
<p>Stanza 1 <i>Whisper to me, baby</i> Bisikkan padaku, sayang</p> <p><i>I'm too far gone to care</i> Aku sudah terlalu jauh untuk peduli</p> <p><i>I wish I could have said what I meant when it was right there</i> Seandainya aku bisa mengungkapkan apa yang aku maksud saat itu juga</p> <p><i>Now I'm lying in bed with you</i> Sekarang aku terbaring di tempat tidur bersamamu</p> <p><i>And you're falling</i></p>	<p>It depicts a narrator lying in bed with his partner. He asks his partner to whisper to him, then says that he is too tired and too far gone to care. He regrets not expressing his true feelings when he had the chance. As his partner falls peacefully asleep, the narrator wonders how he can look so peaceful, knowing he is leaving.</p>	<p>Sharing a bed indicates that the couple is still physically close but emotionally distant. The narrator actually feels tired and emotionally detached, even though he is still by his partner's side. His regret at not expressing his true feelings shows that there are things he is keeping bottled up. While his partner appears calm and asleep, the narrator feels that his mind is already on the verge of separation.</p>	<p>It shows that physical closeness can hide emotional distance and the fear of truly letting go. A person may appear to still be with their partner, but emotionally, they are already on the verge of separation. The myth that arises is that many people choose to stay in fragile relationships because they are afraid of facing loss, so separation is postponed and kept as an emotional burden, rather than being openly expressed.</p>

<p><i>asleep</i> Dan kamu mulai terlelap</p> <p><i>How can you look so peaceful?</i> Bagaimana bisa kamu terlihat begitu tenang</p> <p><i>When you know I'm gonna leave?</i> Ketika kamu tahu aku akan pergi?</p>			
<p>Stanza 2</p> <p><i>What happens when you love me dry?</i> Apa yang terjadi jika kamu mencintaiku sampai kering?</p> <p><i>I give myself to help you get by</i> Saya memberikan diri saya untuk membantu Anda bertahan hidup</p> <p><i>I keep on lyin' and sweatin' at night</i> Saya terus berbohong dan berkeringat di malam hari</p> <p><i>Hold me until someone sends me a sign</i> Pegang aku sampai seseorang mengirimiku tanda</p>	<p>Describing a narrator who feels that he has been loved to the point of emotional exhaustion and continues to sacrifice himself to help his partner survive. He admits to lying often and experiencing anxiety at night. The narrator also asks to be hugged while waiting for a sign to come and show him what he should do next.</p>	<p>There is an unequal relationship in which the narrator continues to give and suppress her exhaustion for her partner. Lies and discomfort at night hint at inner turmoil, while requests to be hugged while waiting for a sign indicate doubt and emotional dependence.</p>	<p>Showing a self-sacrificing, demanding relationship is considered a valid form of love, so enduring suffering is seen as preferable to leaving. The fear of loss makes a person choose to delay the breakup and continue to endure, even though the relationship is emotionally painful.</p>
<p>Stanza 3</p> <p><i>Maybe I would be okay if I let this go forever</i> Mungkin aku akan baik-baik saja jika</p>	<p>Describing a narrator who says that he might be okay if he lets the relationship end forever. He describes the act as</p>	<p>The narrator wants to distance himself from the relationship he is in, but at the same time he is not ready to face separation. The</p>	<p>Expressing the desire to leave but staying put is understood as something natural in love. The fear of loss makes a person</p>

<p>aku membiarkan ini berlalu selamanya</p> <p><i>Send it into space and watch the planets turn</i></p> <p>Kirimkan ke luar angkasa dan saksikan planet-planet berputar</p> <p><i>Maybe I will, someday, let this go forever</i></p> <p>Mungkin suatu hari nanti aku akan membiarkan ini berlalu selamanya</p> <p><i>Hold me until I find the nerve (oh, oh-oh, oh)</i></p> <p>Peluk aku sampai aku menemukan keberanian (oh, oh oh, oh)</p>	<p>sending it into space and watching the planets spin. He also states that one day he will let go of everything, but for now he still asks his partner to hold him until he finds the courage.</p>	<p>image of sending the relationship into space reflects an attempt to distance himself from the pain, while the request to be held shows that he still needs a sense of security and emotional closeness to withstand his fear of loss.</p>	<p>choose to delay the breakup and continue seeking closeness, even though they realize that the relationship should be let go. From this perspective, staying for the sake of security or affection is considered more acceptable than facing loss directly.</p>
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DISCUSSION

This discussion aims to understand the meaning of the fear of loss in the song “Staying” through Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. The analysis was carried out in stages, following the structure of the song's first, second, and third verses. Each verse. This approach was chosen because the lyrics of Staying show emotional developments that unfold gradually, from initial anxiety and emotional sacrifice to attempts to break free. The structure of the discussion per verse is also adjusted to the previously compiled table of analysis results, so that this section serves as an in-depth explanation of the research findings.

The meaning of the fear of loss in this song is further examined through interviews with listeners, psychologists, music experts, and Native Americans, which are then linked to Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and the concept of fear of loss in psychological studies, serving as a form of data triangulation.

Thus, this study aims to explain the correspondence between the results of semiotic analysis and the meaning and emotional experiences of the younger generation as listeners of the song “Staying,” as well as to enrich the understanding of how the meaning of fear of loss is

constructed through the lyrics of the song and linked to their emotional experiences.

FIRST STANZA

Denotative meaning of the song “Staying”

Denotatively, the first stanza describes a relationship that is still physically ongoing, marked by closeness, but accompanied by unease that is not directly expressed. The narrator is beside his partner, but realizes that there is an emotional distance and that a separation is imminent.

This meaning aligns with the explanation provided by Informant 8, a music expert, who stated that the narrator in this song may not necessarily have experienced actual loss. According to him, the narrator is in a state of fantasy and imagines loss based on experiences he has seen happen to other people. This fear makes the narrator question whether he should persevere or let go of the relationship he is in (Interview, December 2025).

Informant 8 also described this song as conveyed through soft, low, and intimate tones and melodies, resembling a calm whisper yet emotionally exhausted. The narrow, unobtrusive melody creates the impression that the narrator lacks the energy to express his emotions openly, so the anxiety feels restrained rather than conveyed directly (Interview, December 2025).

Connotative meaning of the song “Staying.”

In terms of connotation, the first stanza describes a relationship that is still physically close but emotionally distant. The narrator is in a silent closeness, harboring exhaustion and regret over feelings that cannot be expressed, accompanied by anxiety over the possibility of separation that continues to loom.

This situation aligns with Informant 2's experience as a listener, who interpreted the first verse as a condition in which a person remains in a relationship even though they feel emotionally exhausted because they are not yet ready to face loss (Interview, December 2025).

Informant 9, a psychologist, explained that this song is dominated by the fear of loss accompanied by sadness and anxiety. He interpreted the narrator's relationship as no longer warm. The narrator was uncertain but remained in the relationship because of his emotional bond with his partner (Interview, December 2025).

This explanation is in line with (Radomsky & Rachman, 2022) which states that fear often manifests itself in the form of hidden anxiety about the possibility of losing emotional

control, even before the feared situation actually occurs.

Myth meaning of the song “Staying.”

The myth section shows the view that physical togetherness is often considered necessary to maintain a relationship, even though the relationship is no longer emotionally intact. Staying in a relationship full of doubt is perceived as normal, because separation is considered more frightening. The fear of loss causes emotional conflicts to be suppressed and the decision to separate to be continuously postponed, so that the relationship continues even though it is emotionally fragile.

SECOND STANZA

Denotative meaning of the song “Staying.”

Denotatively, the second verse describes the narrator who continues to give and tries to maintain the relationship, despite feeling emotionally exhausted. Lyrics such as “I give myself to help you get by” and “I keep on lying” indicate self-sacrifice and dishonesty towards one's own feelings. According to Informant 8, a music expert, these feelings of exhaustion and depression are also reinforced by the melody, which remains calm without any emotional outbursts. The notes feel suspended and do not reach a conclusion, giving the impression that the narrator's emotions continue to be held back and have not yet found clarity, in line with their inner state of uncertainty (Interview, December 2025).

Connotative meaning of the song “Staying.”

In terms of connotation, the second stanza depicts an unequal relationship, in which the narrator continues to give and suppress emotional exhaustion in order to maintain the relationship. Emotional dependence and doubt cause the narrator to base decisions on their partner, rather than on their own will.

This interpretation is in line with the opinion of Informant 1, a listener, who assessed that the narrator in this song is described as “very emotionally exhausted, but still holding on because of fear of loss and still hoping that their partner will change (Interview, December 2025). Informant 9, a psychologist, also explains that the lyrics “I give myself to help you get by” show a pattern of self-sacrifice that arises from anxiety about loss and emotional attachment, so that individuals prioritize the continuity of the relationship over their own needs (Interview, December 2025).

Theoretically, (Radomsky & Rachman, 2022) explains that when someone fears losing

control over their emotions and relationships, they tend to make various efforts to maintain a sense of security, even though these methods actually perpetuate conditions that are emotionally painful or harmful.

Myth meaning of the song “Staying”

In the myth section, the second verse reflects a love ideology that emphasizes self-sacrifice as a form of loyalty. Informant 10, a Native American, stated that lyrics such as “I give myself to help you get by” reflect a cultural pattern that normalizes self-sacrifice in relationships, where individuals feel the need to continue supporting their partners even if they have to sacrifice themselves in order to maintain peace (Interview, December 2025).

THIRD STANZA

Denotative meaning of the song “Staying”

The denotation in the third stanza reveals the narrator's dilemma more clearly, especially through his request to be embraced until he finds courage. This section describes recurring doubts, in which the narrator questions whether he can endure or must let go of the relationship.

Informant 8 described that musically, the song maintains a soft tone and does not reach a conclusion, leaving the listener with a feeling of suspense. This reinforces the impression that the narrator's emotional conflict remains unresolved and that a decision has not yet been made (Interview, December 2025).

Connotative meaning of the song “Staying”

In the third stanza, the connotation that emerges is an inner conflict between the desire to distance oneself from the relationship and the inability to face separation. The narrator tries to distance themselves from the pain, but still needs emotional closeness with their partner as a source of security.

This meaning is in line with the explanation given by Informant 9, a psychologist, who stated, “The lyrics ‘Maybe I will, someday, let this go forever / Hold me until I find the nerve’ describe the feeling that he does not yet have the courage to leave or let go of the relationship because he says ‘hold me’, but also does not yet have the courage to leave” (Interview, December 2025).

This is also in line with (Radomsky & Rachman, 2022) which explains that the fear of losing control over emotions and attachment can cause individuals to view separation as a major psychological threat, so that they tend to delay the decision to let go, even though the

relationship is painful.

Myth meaning of the song “Staying”

In terms of myths, this verse reinforces the view that leaving a relationship is often perceived as a failure to love. Informant 10, a Native American, said that in the American cultural experience, many individuals choose to stay longer than they should because leaving feels much harder than staying, even though the relationship is painful (Interview, December 2025).

Reflection

The discussion shows that the meaning of fear of loss in the song “Staying” is built gradually through the narrator's emotional development in each verse. This song does not describe the fear of loss as a sudden event, but as an emotional process that begins with hidden anxiety, continues with self-sacrifice, and ends with an inner conflict between holding on and letting go.

Through its lyrics, soft melody, and ambiguous narrative about relationships, “Staying” describes how the fear of loss causes individuals to delay separation, suppress emotional conflict, and maintain emotionally fragile relationships. The fear of loss makes emotional and physical closeness a form of temporary security, even though the relationship no longer provides comfort.

Therefore, the song Staying reflects the fear of loss as an emotional condition that traps individuals in relationships, not because of happiness, but because of the fear of facing loss itself.

The Relevance of Fear of Loss in the Lyrics of “Staying” to the Emotional Experiences of the Younger Generation

Based on the interview results, the meaning of fear of loss depicted in the lyrics of Staying Strong " resonates strongly with the emotional experiences of the younger generation. The fear of loss develops alongside emotional attachment in relationships, causing individuals to persevere even though they are aware of the emotional exhaustion and discomfort they feel.

Informant 2, a listener, revealed that many young people remain in anxious relationships because they are not ready to face separation or loneliness. The fear of loss is often greater than the desire to let go of a tiring relationship (Interview, December 2025).

This view is in line with Jelita, who stated that the fear of loss and feeling too emotionally attached made the decision to leave feel much harder even though the relationship

was unhealthy (Interview, December 2025).

Informant 3, a listener, added that the fear of loss is a natural feeling experienced by the younger generation. The fear of being abandoned by a loved one makes it difficult for individuals to make the decision to let go, even though they rationally understand that the relationship is no longer secure. (Interview, December 2025).

The results from all informants confirm that the song *Staying* represents the inner conflict of the younger generation, who are torn between exhaustion and the fear of loss. Regret, a tendency to remain silent, emotional dependence, and the need for security and validation are factors that drive individuals to remain in emotionally exhausting relationships (Interview, December 2025).

Informant 1, a listener, reinforced this finding by saying that fear of loss causes individuals to deceive themselves and choose to persevere in order to avoid the feeling of loss. The need for emotional support makes loss feel more frightening than the pain that is being experienced (Interview, December 2025).

These findings are in line with the explanation provided by Informant 9, a psychologist and member of the younger generation who views fear of loss as a form of anxiety about loss that has not yet occurred, influenced by attachment, the need for social validation, and emotional immaturity. This condition causes individuals to avoid conflict, communicate less, and delay decisions to end relationships (Interview, December 2025).

Overall, the emotional experiences of the younger generation, as obtained through interviews, are consistent with the meaning of fear of loss in the lyrics of *Staying*. Fear of loss drives individuals to delay separation and maintain emotional closeness as a form of seeking temporary security, as explained in psychological studies on fear of loss.

This research offers several novel contributions to the study of music, communication, and semiotics:

1. Conceptual novelty. The study introduces “fear of loss” as the primary analytical concept in the semiotic interpretation of song lyrics, expanding emotional analysis beyond common themes such as love or longing.
2. Theoretical novelty. It integrates Roland Barthes’ semiotic framework with psychological theories of fear of loss and attachment, creating an interdisciplinary perspective between communication studies and psychology.
3. Empirical novelty. The research analyzes the song “*Staying*” by Lizzy McAlpine, a contemporary indie music text that has rarely been examined in academic semiotic

studies.

4. Methodological novelty. The study combines semiotic textual analysis with interviews (listeners, psychologists, and music experts), allowing a comparison between textual meaning and real emotional experiences of young listeners.
5. Contextual novelty. It demonstrates how the fear of loss is socially normalized through cultural narratives in music, particularly among younger people who interpret the song as reflecting their relationship experiences.

State of the art: Semiotic studies of song lyrics using Roland Barthes commonly analyze emotional meanings such as love, longing, and self-reflection in popular music.

Research gap: Few studies specifically examine fear of loss as an emotional construct in song lyrics or link semiotic interpretation with listeners' psychological experiences.

Novelty: This study analyzes the fear of loss in Lizzy McAlpine's song "Staying" using Barthes' semiotics and listener interviews, providing an interdisciplinary perspective between semiotics, psychology, and media communication studies.

CONCLUSION

Based on Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis of the lyrics of Lizzy McAlpine's song "Staying," it can be concluded that the song constructs the meaning of Fear of Loss. At the denotative level, the lyrics describe a relationship that is still physically ongoing but accompanied by emotional exhaustion and unspoken doubts. At the connotative level, the song depicts a fear of loss that drives the narrator to persevere, delay separation, and remain emotionally dependent even though she realizes that the relationship has become fragile. Meanwhile, on a mythical level, "Staying" forms the meaning that persisting in a painful relationship is perceived as a more acceptable choice than facing loss, so that emotional suffering tends to be normalized.

Thus, the meaning of fear of loss in the song "Staying" is not only present as a textual element, but is systematically constructed through the lyrics, emotional nuances, and narrative of the relationship that develops in each verse.

The results of the second research question show that the meaning of fear of loss is consistent with the emotional experiences of young people as listeners. Fear of loss is understood as a psychological condition that drives individuals to delay separation, suppress emotional conflict, and maintain closeness as a form of temporary security. This finding is in line with the interview results, which show that emotional attachment, the need for validation,

and anxiety about loss are factors that reinforce individuals' tendency to remain in relationships that are no longer emotionally healthy.

Therefore, the song “Staying” not only functions as a musical work, but also as a medium that articulates the emotional experiences of the younger generation in facing the fear of loss in interpersonal relationships.

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