



The Meaning of Romanticism in the Lyrics of "Albi Ya Albi" by Nancy Ajram: Semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure

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Abstract

Song lyrics are a form of language expression that contains emotional and symbolic meaning so that it can represent the experience of romance in a complex way. In modern Arabic popular music, Nancy Ajram's song Albi Ya Albi features a romanticism that not only portrays love as a simple feeling, but also presents inner conflict, longing, emotional uncertainty, and the need for validation of feelings. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the form of signifiers and signifiers and explain the construction of the meaning of romanticism in the lyrics of the song using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with data sources in the form of lyrics of the song Albi Ya Albi in Arabic. Analysis techniques are carried out through repeated reading, marker identification, sign interpretation, grouping of romantic meanings, and structural analysis of the relationship between markers and signs. The results show that the meaning of romanticism in songs is built through five main patterns, namely inner conflict, emotional helplessness, gradual awareness of love, emotional continuity, and emotional validation. The findings suggest that romanticism in songs is represented as ambivalent, reflective, and relational emotional experiences in the context of modern Arab popular culture. This research contributes to the study of semiotics, the lyrical analysis of Arabic songs, and the study of romanticism in popular music by showing that Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics is able to uncover the systematic construction of romantic meaning through the relationship between linguistic forms and emotional meanings.

Keywords: Semiotics Ferdinand de Saussure; Romanticism; Lyrics of Arabic songs; Nancy Ajram

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INTRODUCTION

Music and song lyrics serve not only as a form of entertainment with aesthetic value, but also as a symbolic form of expression that reflects human emotional experiences in a variety of social and cultural contexts (Indah et al., 2025). In linguistic and literary studies, song lyrics are viewed as a system of signs that carries multiple layers of meaning and allows for diverse interpretations, since each linguistic element within the lyrics may convey both denotative and connotative meanings that are interconnected (Erlangga et al., 2024). Furthermore, the presence of metaphors, symbols, and poetic expressions in song lyrics frequently makes their meanings difficult to understand directly (Barus et al., 2025). The meaning of song lyrics can vary from one listener to another because each individual interprets them through the lens of their own experiences, cultural background, and psychological state, resulting in meanings that are diverse (Siregar, 2024). This condition

indicates that song lyrics function not merely as a form of entertainment, but also as a medium for conveying meanings, emotions, and messages to listeners (Fatiya et al., 2024). Therefore, an analytical approach is required to systematically describe the relationship between linguistic forms and their meanings, so that the interpretations produced are not merely subjective, but are also grounded in a clear scientific framework.

Romanticism emerges as a prominent theme in the song lyrics, portraying the complexity and multidimensional nature of human emotions (Sheryl Azzahra Salsabillah et al., 2024). In literary and popular culture studies, romanticism is not merely viewed as a portrayal of joy within romantic relationships, but also encompasses emotional experiences such as internal struggles, longing, uncertainty, anxiety, and the desire for emotional affirmation from others (Sadiyyah et al., 2025). The representation of romanticism in song lyrics is often expressed through poetic language and figurative diction that portray emotions implicitly, requiring a deeper interpretation to fully grasp the meanings conveyed (Girsang, 2026). In the context of modern Arabic music, the song *Albi Ya Albi* by Nancy Ajram is one of the interesting works to study because it displays ambivalent and reflective romanticism. The lyrics of the song show an internal dialogue between the individual and his own feelings that describe doubts, emotional awareness, longing, and the gradual process of acceptance of love. Thus, the song not only represents love as a simple emotion, but also as a complex psychological experience in modern Arab popular culture.

These characteristics show that the song *Albi Ya Albi* has a strong potential as an object of study to understand the construction of the meaning of romance in song lyrics. The lyrics show a conflict between the desire to love and the effort to protect oneself from emotional pain, which reflects ambivalence in romantic relationships. In addition, there are expressions of longing, uncertainty about one's own feelings, and the need for emotional recognition or validation from loved ones. These elements indicate that the romanticism expressed in the song is constructed not merely in a simple manner, but through the interplay of interconnected linguistic signs (Agusetyaningrum & Suryadi, 2022). The interpretation of romanticism in song lyrics has often been considered subjective, as it is influenced by individual experiences, leading to varied and inconsistent meanings (Perdana & Tasnimah, 2022). This condition shows the need for an analytical approach that is able to explain the mechanism of meaning formation in a systematic and structured manner. Thus, a semiotic analysis is required to reveal how the interaction between signifiers and signifieds constructs the meaning of romanticism within song lyrics (Ariyanto et al., 2025).

This study applies Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory, which emphasizes the relationship between the signifier and the signified as the primary basis for the formation of meaning. Unlike other approaches, this perspective emphasizes how meaning is produced through the relationship between linguistic elements within a sign system (Farhan & Sukendro, 2025). Unlike Roland Barthes's approach, signs are understood not only through their literal meanings, but also through their connotative meanings and the cultural myths embedded within them. Barthes argues that every sign contains ideological elements, social values, and constructs that are formed and developed within society (Antika et al., 2020). However, Saussure's approach allows for a more structural analysis of the relationship between linguistic forms and the concept of meaning (Ditya et al., 2026). To date, studies that apply Saussurean semiotics to contemporary Arabic song lyrics remain limited, especially those that examine how romantic meaning is constructed within the lyrics. In fact, the linguistic features of modern Arabic song lyrics, characterized by a profusion of metaphors and emotional expressions, often give rise to differing interpretations between literal and emotional meanings (Rizki, 2022). In this context, Saussure's signifier model can be applied to demonstrate how the concept of romanticism

is systematically formed through the interrelation of linguistic signs within song lyrics (Hasni et al., 2025).

In general, previous research in the study of song lyrics and semiotics can be grouped into two main tendencies. First, research that emphasizes the emotional representation of romantic relationships of couples who are in love such as: Passion (passion), intimacy (intimacy), and commitment, as seen in the study by Erlangga et al. (2021). However, the research tends to be descriptive and has not systematically explained the mechanism of meaning formation through language structure. Second, semiotic studies based on Roland Barthes' theory that focus on connotative meanings and cultural myths, as seen in the research conducted by Barus et al. (2024), Antika et al. (2020). Meanwhile, Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics-based research, such as Rizki (2022), is still limited to identifying markers and signifiers without examining the construction of the meaning of romanticism thoroughly in song lyrics. Thus, the study of the construction of the meaning of romanticism in contemporary Arabic song lyrics through Saussure's semiotic approach is still relatively limited.

Based on these gaps, this study offers novelty by applying Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics to analyze the construction of the meaning of romanticism in the lyrics of contemporary Arabic songs, especially *Albi Ya Albi* by Nancy Ajram. Therefore, the research questions asked in this study are: (1) how the form of markers and signs in the lyrics of the song *Albi Ya Albi*, and (2) how the relationship between the markers and the signs builds a construction of romantic meaning that reflects emotional conflicts, longing, uncertainty, the process of love awareness, and the need for validation of feelings.

METHOD

Research Design

The research design used in this study is qualitative descriptive with Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach. The selection of this research design is grounded in the objective of the study, which emphasizes the interpretation of meaning within song lyrics as textual data. Therefore, the study adopts an interpretive approach rather than employing experimental or survey-based methods (Pranata & Deni, 2024). A descriptive qualitative approach is considered suitable because it enables a systematic examination of linguistic signs and emotional meanings within song lyrics, while also offering flexibility in interpreting contextual meanings that cannot be measured quantitatively (Maslia & Patriansah, 2024). According to Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic perspective, language is understood as an organized system of signs that emerges from the relationship between the signifier, namely the linguistic form or expression, and the signified, which refers to the idea or meaning associated with that expression (Fitriani & Pratama, 2024). Therefore, the analysis is carried out by examining the relationship between markers and signs in each lyrical element to explain how the meaning of romanticism is structurally constructed. Thus, this research is an interpretive textual study that specifically focuses on the analysis of meaning through Saussure's semiotic model, so as to not only describe meaning, but also to reveal the mechanism of its formation systematically.

Data Source

The data source in this study is in the form of all the lyrics of the song *Albi Ya Albi* popularized by Nancy Ajram and analyzed as a single text so that the object of the research focuses on the text of the song lyrics as a corpus of data. The lyrics of the song use Arabic as the original language of the song and are obtained from trusted online sources, such as official music platforms and credible lyric sites that present the lyrics in full. This study belongs to the category of library research, employing a textual and interpretive approach in which the analysis is conducted through document analysis of the song lyrics (Teguh et

al., 2025). The song *Albi Ya Albi* was chosen for its relevance in depicting various dimensions of romanticism, as expressed through emotional elements such as inner conflict, emotional vulnerability, awareness of love, and validation of feelings. These aspects make the song an appropriate subject for analysis using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach. Since the research data consists of Arabic song lyrics, the researcher translated them directly into Indonesian as part of the data interpretation process. To ensure linguistic accuracy and contextual appropriateness, the researcher used a digital Arabic dictionary and compared several translation versions obtained from various sources, including online lyric websites and translations available on digital music platforms. Through this process, the data used in this study has undergone systematic verification and contextual adjustment in accordance with the overall meaning of the song's lyrics.

Research Instruments

The primary tool used in this study was the researcher as a human instrument, who played a role in identifying linguistic signs in song lyrics, determining signifiers, and interpreting the relationship between signifiers and signifieds in order to uncover the romanticism expressed in the song lyrics (Dayu & Syadli, 2023). Untuk mendukung proses analisis agar dilakukan secara sistematis dan konsisten, penelitian ini menggunakan instrumen pendukung berupa lembar analisis dalam bentuk tabel pengkodean data yang digunakan untuk mengorganisasi dan mengklasifikasikan data secara terstruktur. The table contains several components, namely: (1) Arabic lyrics, (2) transliteration, (3) Indonesian translation, (4) signifier, (5) signified, and (6) romanticism meaning category. The use of this table allows the analysis process to be conducted in a more structured, transparent, and traceable manner, thereby making it easier for readers to understand the relationship between signifier and signified in constructing the meaning of romanticism. Additionally, Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory and the concept of romanticism are used as a conceptual foundation in the interpretation process to strengthen the validity of the research findings.

Data Collection

The data collection method used in this study involved a documentary analysis of the lyrics to the song "*Albi Ya Albi*," popularized by Nancy Ajram. Data were obtained from reliable online sources, such as official music platforms and credible lyric websites, and were then fully documented in Arabic text as the primary corpus for this study. All lyrics were transcribed in full to preserve the authenticity of the text's structure, followed by a selection process to identify lines containing romantic elements and relevant to the research focus. Therefore, not all lyrics were analyzed; only the sections containing romantic meanings were included. Since the data was in Arabic, the researcher translated it directly into Indonesian using an Arabic digital dictionary and by comparing several translation versions from various sources to ensure linguistic accuracy and contextual meaning. Thus, the data collection process was carried out systematically through documentation, data selection, and translation verification so that the data used met the needs of the research analysis.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique in this study was carried out in stages using the Ferdinand de Saussure semiotic approach. The analysis began with the reading of the lyrics of the song *Albi Ya Albi* by Nancy Ajram repeatedly to understand the context of the meaning, language structure, and relationship between lyrics in the overall text of the song. Furthermore, the identification of lyrical lines that are relevant to the focus of the research is determined, then signifiers are determined in the form of words, phrases, or sentences that represent the emotional experience of the lyric characters. After that, the

interpretation of signified is carried out as the concept of meaning represented by each marker based on the relationship of the sign in the context of the overall lyrics of the song. The interpretation is based on Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of semiotics which views meaning as the result of the relationship between markers and signifiers, so that the analysis is not only based on general emotional readings, but also on the structural relationships between signs in the song text (Putri, 2025). The results of the interpretation were then classified into patterns of romanticism that tend to share similar meanings. These patterns were derived inductively from the lyric data based on the recurring meanings in the relationship between signifier and signified in each piece of data analyzed. The final stage involves synthesizing all interpretation results to draw conclusions regarding the construction of romanticism in the songs. To enhance data validity, this study employs repeated readings of the lyrics, translation verification by comparing multiple sources, and comparison with relevant prior research, ensuring the analysis is conducted systematically, consistently, and grounded in Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic analysis of the lyrics of the song *Albi Ya Albi* by Nancy Ajram, it was found that the meaning of romanticism in the song does not only represent the expression of love in a simple way, but is built through complex emotional dynamics. The romanticism in this song is formed through five main patterns, namely inner conflict, emotional helplessness, gradual awareness of love, emotional continuity, and emotional validation. These five patterns show that the experience of romanticism in songs develops gradually through the inner struggle of the lyricist character against feelings of love that arise beyond his control. Thus, the romanticism in this song is not described as a completely happy feeling, but rather as an ambivalent and sustained emotional experience.

Table 1. The relationship between Lyrics, Markers, Signs, and Categories of Romantic Meaning

Arabic Lyrics	Transliteration	Translation	Markers	Signs	Category Makna Romanticism
هلق وقتا مش حب أرجع	Misy waqta hellaq irjâ hab	This isn't the right time to fall in love again	Not the time	Rejection of feelings of love due to impossible conditions	Inner conflict
شو يعرف ما صار له هالقلب	Maa ba'rîf syuq shorluh hal-alb	I don't know what's happening to my heart	I don't know	Confusion about one's own emotional state	Inner conflict
في ما هلق, بإيدي ومنا	Hillaq maa fiyii, Wa mannab eedayyii	I can't do it now, I just can't	Out of my control	Inability to control feelings of love	Emotional helplessness
لو في ما قلاك	Lau fiyyii ma illak	I don't know what to say to you	If I could	Limitations in expressing feelings	Emotional helplessness
حبيبتك معفولة	Ma'quulih habbaytak	Could it be that I'm falling in love with you?	I love you	Awareness of the emergence of feelings of love	Awareness of love
في بعيني وبس أنت	Ba'yuunii fintaw bas	In my eyes, there is only you	Only you	Full emotional focus on one individual	Awareness of love
ليالي ليالي, بسهر عم ليالي	Layaali layaali, A'm bishar layaali	Night after night, I stay	Recurring nights	Continuation of feelings that persist	Emotional continuity

Arabic Lyrics	Transliteration	Translation	Markers	Signs	Category Makna Romanticism
		awake all night long			
من وأشتقك أحس ما دون	Wisytaqlik min duun maa his	And I miss you without even realizing it	Unconsciously	The appearance of feelings of longing unconsciously and continuously	Emotional continuity
حسيت طمني بشي؟	Thominnii hassiitib syii?	Tell me, do you feel it too?	Feeling something	The need for reciprocity or acknowledgment of feelings from others	Emotional validation

Based on the table, the results of the analysis show that the meaning of romanticism in the song *Albi Ya Albi* is built through five main interrelated patterns, namely inner conflict, emotional helplessness, gradual awareness of love, emotional continuity, and emotional validation. The five patterns are formed through the relationship between markers and signs that represent the emotional dynamics of lyrical characters in facing the experience of love. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that romance in songs does not present as a simple emotional expression, but rather as a complex and gradually evolving inner experience. Further description of the five patterns of romance is explained as follows.

Romanticism in Inner Conflict

Inner conflict is the most dominant romantic pattern in this song. This can be seen in the lyrics "مش وقتا هلق أرجع حب" which shows a rejection of love because the lyric characters feel that they are not in the right condition to fall in love again. The conflict is strengthened through the lyrics "ما بعرف شو صار له هالقلب" which represents emotional confusion towards the change in feelings experienced. Both lyrics show that the romance in the song develops through an emotional struggle full of doubt and self-denial.

Romanticism as Emotional Helplessness

Emotional helplessness is evident in the lyrics "ولو في ما قلّك" and "هلق ما في، ومنا بايدي". Both lyrics show that the lyrical characters do not have full control over their feelings or the ability to express them freely. Romanticism in this section is described as an emotional condition that is difficult to control, thus showing the limitations of oneself in dealing with feelings of love.

Romanticism as a Gradual Awareness of Love

The awareness of love is seen through the lyrics "حبيتك معقولة" and "وبس أنت في بعيني". Both lyrics show the process of acknowledging the presence of love, where the lyricist begins to realize that his emotional attention is only focused on one individual. Romanticism in this part develops through emotional awareness that arises gradually.

Romance as Emotional Continuity

Emotional continuity is evident in the lyrics "أشتقك من" and "ليالي ليالي. عم بسهر ليالي". The repetition of the word "ليالي" is a sign that the feeling is going on continuously over a long period of time. Meanwhile, the phrase "وأشتقك من دون ما أحس" shows that longing arises unconsciously, thus showing that the emotion of love continues to take place in the inner state of the lyric character.

Romance as Emotional Validation

Emotional validation is seen in the lyrics "طمني حسيت بشي؟" which shows the need for lyrical characters to gain certainty about feelings from other parties. The lyrics

represent that romance is not only personal, but also requires recognition and emotional response from loved ones.

Thus, the findings of this study show that the meaning of romanticism in the song *Albi Ya Albi* is built through the relationship between inner conflict, helplessness, awareness of love, emotional continuity, and emotional validation. The five patterns are interrelated in forming a romanticism that is ambivalent, emotional, and develops gradually in the lyrical characters.

Discussion

The results of the study show that the meaning of romanticism in the song *Albi Ya Albi* by Nancy Ajram is not represented as a simple and harmonious form of love, but as a complex, ambivalent, reflective, emotional, and relational emotional experience. The romanticism in this song is built through emotional dynamics that show the inner conflict between the desire to love and the inability to fully accept those feelings. This is seen through a pattern of inner conflict and emotional helplessness that suggests that love is not always present as a source of happiness, but can also present doubt, emotional instability, and fear of the consequences of feelings of love. In addition, the pattern of gradual love awareness and emotional continuity shows that the experience of romanticism develops slowly through an emotional process that takes place continuously within the lyrical character. Meanwhile, the pattern of emotional validation shows that romanticism in songs is also relational because it requires recognition and emotional responses from the other party. Thus, the romanticism in this song is represented as an emotional experience that develops gradually through inner conflict, doubt, and the need for emotional certainty, thus revealing the complexity of the representation of love in modern Arab popular culture.

In Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic perspective, the meaning of romanticism in songs is shaped through the relationship between signifiers and signifieds, which together structurally create a system of meaning (Ulfah Ulfah & Dwi Wahyu Chandra Dewi, 2025). Markers in the form of words, phrases, and sentences within song lyrics function not only as linguistic elements, but also as representations of the emotional condition experienced by the lyrical characters (Syaharani, 2024). Phrases such as "وقتاً مش", "بايدي من", and "دون من" show that the meaning of romanticism is constructed through the relationship of signs that represent emotional conflict, helplessness, and the continuity of feelings of love. Thus, this study shows that Saussure's semiotic approach is not only able to identify the relationship between markers and signifiers, but can also be used to uncover the construction of emotional meaning in song lyrics more systematically.

The findings of this study support the research of Erlangga et al. (2021) who stated that romantic song lyrics represent the romantic relationship of couples who are in love such as: Passion (passion), intimacy (intimacy), and commitment. In the song *Albi Ya Albi*, romance is also built through complex emotional dynamics such as doubt, helplessness, longing, and the need for validation of feelings. Nevertheless, this study expands the study because it not only describes romantic emotions in general, but also describes how the meaning of romanticism is constructed through the relationship between markers and signs in the structure of lyrical language. In contrast to the research of Barus et al. (2024) which uses the Roland Barthes approach and emphasizes connotative meanings and cultural myths, this study focuses more on the structural relationship between markers and markers in building the meaning of romanticism. In addition, this study is also different from the study of Rizki (2022) which is still limited to identifying markers and signs without examining the construction of the meaning of romanticism thoroughly in song lyrics, because this study synthesizes the relationship between these signs into five main

patterns of romanticism, namely inner conflict, emotional helplessness, gradual awareness of love, emotional continuity, and emotional validation.

This research contributes to the fields of semiotics, lyric analysis, Arabic literary studies, and popular music studies. In the field of semiotics, the findings demonstrate that Ferdinand de Saussure's theory can be effectively applied to systematically reveal the construction of emotional meaning in popular song lyrics through the interaction between the signifier and the signified. In the context of Arabic lyric and literary studies, this research highlights that popular Arabic song lyrics function not merely as entertainment, but also as a reflection of intricate emotional and psychological experiences. Furthermore, this study enriches the discourse on popular music by illustrating that romanticism in contemporary Arabic songs is portrayed through emotional dynamics that are reflective, progressive, and relational within the framework of Arabic popular culture.

Future studies may expand this research by examining and comparing multiple songs by Nancy Ajram alongside other Arabic pop songs in order to identify variations in the representation of romanticism across different cultural and musical settings. Furthermore, future researchers may apply alternative semiotic frameworks, such as those proposed by Roland Barthes or Charles Sanders Peirce, to gain broader interpretive insights into the meanings of romanticism conveyed in popular Arabic song lyrics. Therefore, this study makes a theoretical contribution to the development of semiotic analysis in the lyrics of popular Arabic songs, particularly in revealing how romantic meanings are constructed through structural and emotional interactions between signifiers and signs. Furthermore, these findings indicate that the romanticism in the song "Albi Ya Albi" is portrayed as an ambivalent, reflective, and relational emotional experience, evolving gradually through the inner dynamics of the lyrical characters.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that the meaning of romanticism in the song Albi Ya Albi by Nancy Ajram is built through the relationship between signifiers and signifiers that represent complex emotional experiences. The relationship forms a romanticism construct that reflects inner conflict, emotional helplessness, gradual awareness of love, emotional continuity, and emotional validation. These findings suggest that romanticism in songs is not represented as a simple feeling, but rather as ambivalent, reflective, and relational emotional experiences in modern Arab popular culture. This research contributes to expanding Saussure's semiotic study of contemporary Arabic song lyrics by showing that the relationship between linguistic forms and emotional meanings can reveal the construction of romanticism in a systematic manner. However, this study was limited to the analysis of a single song and focused only on the lyrical text. Therefore, further research can compare some popular Arabic songs or use other semiotic approaches to gain a broader perspective. Thus, Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics proved relevant in revealing the meaning of romanticism in the lyrics of the song in depth.

AI USAGE STATEMENT

This study utilized artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools, including ChatGPT, Google Translate, DeepL, Dupli Checker and a digital Arabic dictionary to assist with the initial translation process, language editing, idea development, sentence paraphrasing, and improving the clarity of academic writing. All results generated with the assistance of these tools have been reviewed, edited, and re-verified by the authors to ensure the accuracy of meaning, translation quality, originality, and academic integrity of the manuscript. All analysis, interpretation, and research findings are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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