

**SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE LYRICS OF THE SONG "RUANG BARU"
BY BARSENA BESTANDHI: A REPRESENTATION OF HOPE AND
HEALING OF WOUNDS FROM ROLAND BARTHES' PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract

Music is not just entertainment, but a mass communication medium rich in signs and meanings. This study aims to analyze the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings contained in the lyrics of Barsena Bestandhi's song "Ruang Baru" using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. This song, popular as the original soundtrack for the Indonesian version of the film My Annoying Brother, raises the themes of separation, acceptance, and the hope of reunion. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with an interpretive approach. The results show that: (1) Denotatively, the lyrics depict the cycle of nature (dry season, rain, rivers) as an analogy for the journey of life; (2) Connotatively, "Ruang Baru" represents a phase of post-traumatic emotional maturity, where individuals no longer view separation as an end, but rather a transition; (3) The myth constructed is the concept of "restorative destiny," where human suffering is validated as a temporary process towards eternal happiness.

Keywords: *Semiotics, Roland Barthes, Song Lyrics, Ruang Baru, Barsena Bestandhi, Representation of Hope.*

Abstrak

Musik bukan sekadar hiburan, melainkan media komunikasi massa yang sarat akan tanda dan makna. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis makna denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos yang terkandung dalam lirik lagu "Ruang Baru" karya Barsena Bestandhi menggunakan analisis semiotika Roland Barthes. Lagu ini, yang populer sebagai original soundtrack film My Annoying Brother (versi Indonesia), mengangkat tema perpisahan, penerimaan, dan harapan akan pertemuan kembali. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan interpretatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: (1) Secara denotatif, lirik menggambarkan siklus alam (kemarau, hujan, sungai) sebagai analogi perjalanan hidup; (2) Secara konotatif, "Ruang Baru" merepresentasikan fase kedewasaan emosional pasca-trauma, di mana individu tidak lagi memandang perpisahan sebagai akhir, melainkan transisi; (3) Mitos yang dibangun adalah konsep "takdir yang memulihkan", di mana penderitaan manusia divalidasi sebagai proses sementara menuju kebahagiaan yang abadi.

Kata Kunci: Semiotika, Roland Barthes, Lirik Lagu, Ruang Baru, Barsena Bestandhi, Representasi Harapan.

I. INTRODUCTION

Music cannot be viewed simply as a series of entertaining notes. From a communication science perspective, music is a complex mass medium in which song lyrics function as literary texts that convey messages, ideologies, and representations of the creator's feelings to a wide audience (Cahya & Sukendro, 2022). This phenomenon confirms the vital role of song lyrics as a means of aesthetic and emotional communication, bridging the feelings between creator and listener, enabling a profound exchange of meaning (Astriani, 2025).

In the contemporary Indonesian music industry landscape from 2020 to 2024, there is a strong thematic trend toward representations of sadness, vulnerability, and loss as the primary narrative (Alexander & Utami, 2024). This trend resonates strongly with today's listeners, particularly Generation Z. The viral phenomenon of sad songs on social media platforms demonstrates a strong emotional connection between song lyrics and the collective experiences of listeners, particularly Generation Z, who are vulnerable to mental health issues and seek emotional validation through music (David, 2023).

One of the works that emerged amidst this trend was the song "Ruang Baru" by Barsena Bestandhi. This song became the public spotlight after being used as the original soundtrack for the film *My Annoying Brother* (Indonesian version). After releasing "Like the Sea to the Sky" and "Die One Doesn't Grow Again", Barsena Bestandhi returns with a new song, namely "Ruang Baru". Written by Barsena himself with Hendro Djasmore—a figure who often writes songs for Indonesian film soundtracks, one of which is "Dawai"—, "Ruang Baru" sings about the hope behind separation. "Ruang Baru" was intended to be the original soundtrack for "My Annoying Brother" (a feature film produced by CJ ENM, Lifelike Pictures, and BASE Entertainment), a Korean film adaptation of the same name starring Vino G. Bastian, Angga Yunanda, Caitlin Halderman, and Kristo Immanuel. Barsena and Hendro were inspired to write a song about separation, without the element of sadness in its tone and message. "Ruang Baru" was released simultaneously on all digital streaming platforms on September 13, 2024. The film "My Annoying Brother" was released in Indonesian cinemas starting October 24, 2024. The official lyric video, posted by Barsena Bestandhi on YouTube, had garnered over 25.4 million views as of January 28, 2026.

In this context, Indonesian pop music increasingly addresses philosophical and existential issues, transforming popular culture into a space for reflection (Ulfah Ulfah & Dwi Wahyu Chandra Dewi, 2025). This song is unique because it is an adaptation of a Korean film, so the lyrics face the challenge of maintaining the emotional essence of the original story while remaining relevant to the connotative meanings of local listeners (Nuryana et al., 2025).

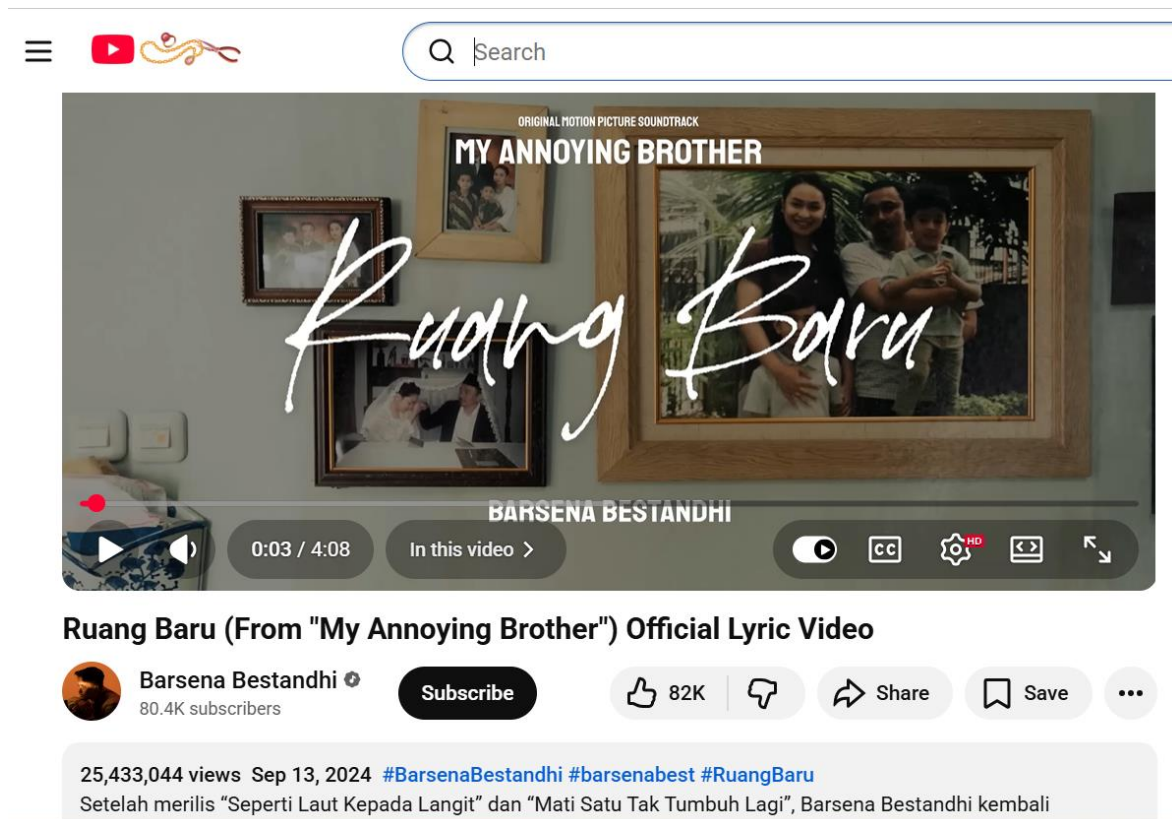


Figure 1. YouTube Video of the Song "Ruang Baru" by Barsena Bestandhi – Source:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n14UJdnCg5A>

More than just a love song, "Ruang Baru" implies moral values about sincerity and acceptance of fate, which serve as important social messages (Harizki, 2024). However, these philosophical meanings are often hidden behind natural metaphors that require critical reading. Therefore, this study is crucial to dissect how the verbal signs in the lyrics work. As semiotic analysis methods focus on denotative and connotative sign analysis, this approach will help listeners and researchers understand the more complex layers of meaning behind the song's lyrics (Ishar & Irawan, 2023). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe the

denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings contained in the lyrics of "Ruang Baru" and to understand how this song communicates a message of hope to its listeners.

Given the complexity of the meanings hidden behind the metaphors in this song's lyrics, descriptive analysis alone is insufficient. Therefore, a theoretical scalpel capable of unraveling layers of meaning from the surface to its ideological roots is needed. Based on this need, this study will utilize Roland Barthes's semiotic framework, which will be explained in depth in the following section.

The primary theoretical foundation for this research is Roland Barthes's semiotics. In his fundamental book, **Elements of Semiology**, Barthes developed a two-order model of signification, consisting of denotation and connotation, to unravel myths in culture (Barthes, 2020). This framework is highly relevant for the analysis of media texts because it explains how literal meaning (denotation) shifts into cultural meaning (connotation).

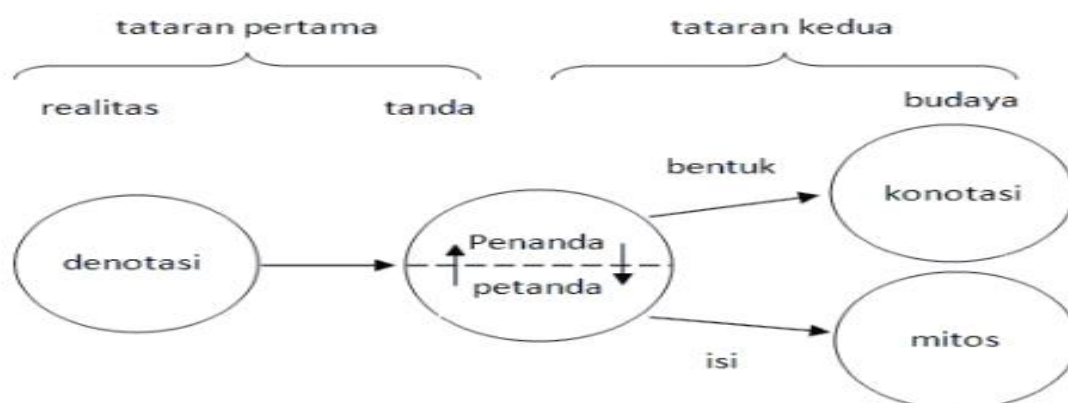


Figure 2. Barthes' Two-Stage Signification

In practice, understanding the dichotomous relationship between signifier and signified serves as the primary foundation for uncovering the reality constructed by songwriters (Septiana, 2024). Barthes emphasized that signs are never neutral; they are always ideologically charged. The application of Barthes's semiotics has proven effective not only in written texts but also in visual and audio-visual cultural products such as films and their soundtracks, where meaning is often "hidden" to appear natural (Fitriani & Wiharja, 2023). Furthermore, the use of Roland Barthes's analytical tools allows researchers to go beyond surface meanings and, instead, to explore cultural myths naturalized by society (Dzakiyyah & Khoiroh, 2024).

Barthes's concept of multilevel signification applies not only to conventional literary texts but is also highly relevant when applied to popular cultural products. In this context, song lyrics occupy a strategic position as an object of semiotic study due to their unique function in mass communication, as will be explained below.

Song lyrics are a unique form of communication because they combine linguistics and musicality. As stated by (Rejeki, 2025), song lyrics have significant power to influence the emotional dynamics of listeners and broaden their understanding of music's role as a medium for self-expression. This power lies in word choice. The language or stylistics used in song lyrics play a crucial role in creating an aesthetic effect and strengthening the message conveyed to the listener (Fahrudin, 2023).

The emotional message in a song is often not conveyed literally, but rather veiled behind poetic metaphors that require deeper understanding to fully grasp the message (Indraswari & Sofyaningrum, 2025). For example, metaphors about nature are often used to describe human inner turmoil.

Extensive research on the semiotics of song lyrics has been conducted previously, providing a roadmap for this study. A previous study by Utami et al. (2025) on the song "Rex Orange County" demonstrated that Barthes's analysis is highly relevant for unraveling the layers of emotional meaning in popular Western song lyrics. Meanwhile, in the context of Indonesian music, research by Ratnادهिता et al. (2025) on the song "Kupu-Kupu" demonstrated that animal and nature metaphors are often used to represent the complex phases of love.

Regarding the theme of longing, which is the focus of the song "Ruang Baru," Rustandi et al. (2020) found in their analysis of "Hanya Rindu" that the meaning of longing is often associated with distance, time, and emptiness. This contrasts with the dynamics of typical romantic relationships, where Widyananda & Ashfaq (2023) highlight the power relations within dating relationships. The song "Ruang Baru" is actually closer to the findings (Banjarnahor, 2022) in the lyrics of Toba Batak songs, where music serves as a medium to convey noble values such as sacrifice and affection within a family context, given that the song is the soundtrack to a film about brotherhood.

Based on the literature review above, it is clear that although numerous studies on song semiotics have been conducted, a specific analysis of the song "Ruang Baru," which

combines the context of the film adaptation (soundtrack) with the myth of post-traumatic recovery, remains largely unexplored. This is the research gap that this study will address.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

Based on the conceptual framework established in the literature review (introduction), this research requires a systematic methodological approach to address the research problem formulation. This section will outline the research design, object limitations, and procedural steps taken by the researcher in analyzing the data from the lyrics of "Ruang Baru."

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive interpretive approach. This approach was chosen because the research objective is to understand the meaning behind the text, not to measure numerical data. The object of this research is the lyrics of the song "Ruang Baru," popularized by Barsena Bestandhi. The units of analysis are stanzas, lines, and specific words containing metaphorical elements.

The data analysis technique uses Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis model through three stages (Barthes, 2020):

1. Sign Identification: Inventorying the song lyrics per stanza.
2. Signification Analysis: Classifying findings into denotative and connotative meanings.
3. Myth Analysis: Connecting connotative meanings to the cultural context and prevailing ideologies in society.

By applying qualitative analysis methods with Barthes's semiotic approach, as previously described, this study successfully identified a number of significant verbal signs. The following is a comprehensive description of the results of a heuristic and hermeneutic reading of the lyrics of the song "Ruang Baru," starting from a denotative level analysis to the disclosure of cultural myths.

III. RESEARCH RESULTS

By applying qualitative analysis methods with Barthes's semiotic approach, as previously described, this study successfully identified a number of significant verbal signs. The following is a comprehensive description of the results of a heuristic and hermeneutic reading of the lyrics of the song "Ruang Baru," starting from a denotative analysis to the unraveling of cultural myths. In this section, the researcher examines the lyrics of Barsena Bestandhi's song "Ruang Baru." The analysis is divided into several segments based on the

verses containing the most dominant signs. The complete lyrics of "Ruang Baru" are as follows. "New Space"

Hm-hm-hm-hm

Hm-hm-hm-hm

Like a long drought

I long for the rain

Time has passed

Waiting for you to come home

Revisiting memories

Beautiful times, happy smiles

That may never come again

Like a river that branches

Meeting in the same sea

So are we humans

There are separations and meetings

Cries and laughter

Sadness and happiness

Impermanent, only temporary

Gently wipe away my tears

Realize that time will pass

Past longing will become one

Smile with me

Wait patiently

We will meet

In a new space

Hm-hm-hm-hm hm-hm-hm

Hm-hm-hm-hm hm-hm-hm

Gently wipe away my tears

Realize that time will pass

Past longing will become One

Smile with me

Wait patiently

We'll meet

In a new space

We'll meet

In a new space

Oh-uh-uh-uh

Hm-hm

Source: LyricFind

Songwriter: Barsena Bestandhi / Hendro Djasmoro

New Space Lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

First Verse Analysis: Representation of Emptiness and Longing

The first verse of this song opens the narrative with a strong natural metaphor. The use of the analogy of the seasons bridges the listener's understanding of the psychological state of the "I" in the song.

Lyric Excerpts: "Like a long drought / I long for the rain to fall" "Time that passes / Waiting for you to come home"

Table 1. Significance of Signs in the First Verse

Penanda (Signifier)	Petanda Denotatif (Denotative Signified)	Petanda Konotatif (Connotative Signified)
Kemarau panjang	Musim kering dengan curah hujan rendah.	Kondisi jiwa yang hampa, kesepian yang menyiksa.

Hujan	Air yang jatuh dari langit.	Kehadiran sosok yang dicintai, "penyejuk" hati.
Menunggumu pulang	Menanti seseorang kembali ke rumah.	Penantian akan kembalinya rasa aman.

Denotatively, Barsena describes a meteorological situation in which the land is experiencing drought. However, connotatively, Barthes sees "drought" as a cultural code for suffering. These lyrics construct the feeling of "longing" as a vital need, just as the land needs water.

Thus, the first stanza establishes the atmosphere of spiritual emptiness experienced by the character "aku." However, the song's narrative does not stop at a mere lamentation of sadness. Moving into the next stanza, Barsena begins to shift the listener's focus from emotional expression to a deeper philosophical contemplation of human destiny, using the following hydrological analogy.

Analysis of the Second Stanza: Philosophy of Destiny Through the Metaphor of Water

The second stanza deepens the song's philosophical message by using the metaphor of flowing water.

Lyric Excerpts: "Like rivers that branch / Meet in the same sea" "So too are we humans / There are separations and meetings"

Table 2. Significance of Signs in the Second Stanza

Penanda (Signifier)	Petanda Denotatif (Denotative Signified)	Petanda Konotatif (Connotative Signified)
Sungai bercabang	Aliran air yang terpisah jalur.	Pilihan hidup yang berbeda, perpisahan fisik.
Laut yang sama	Muara akhir sungai.	Takdir akhir, keabadian, atau titik temu di masa depan.

Connotatively, "a branching river" represents the divergence of life's paths. However, "sea" symbolizes a calming finality. The connotation is: "This separation is only temporary, because we are bound to the same ultimate goal."

The metaphor of the river and sea in the second verse above emphasizes the belief in reunion. This belief culminates in the chorus, where the solution to all longing and separation is finally introduced through a central concept that becomes the song's title. The metaphor of the river and sea in the second verse above also emphasizes the belief in reunion. This belief

culminates in the chorus, where the solution to all longing and separation is finally introduced through a central concept that becomes the song's title.

Chorus Analysis: The Concept of "New Space" as the Culmination of Meaning

The chorus is the core of this song's message, where the title "New Space" is mentioned.

Lyrics: "Gently wipe away my tears / Realize that time will pass" "Past longing will become one / ... We will meet / In a new space"

Table 3. Significance of Signs in the Chorus

Penanda (Signifier)	Petanda Denotatif (Denotative Signified)	Petanda Konotatif (Connotative Signified)
Usap air mata	Gerakan membersihkan air mata.	Penyerahan diri (<i>surrender</i>), penerimaan, penghiburan.
Ruang Baru	Lokasi fisik yang berbeda.	(1) <i>State of mind</i> baru (ikhlas); (2) Alam baka/akhirat; (3) Hubungan yang diperbarui.

"New Space" is the primary signifier. In a psychological context, it connotes a phase of maturity—a new "space" of the heart where one has made peace with the past.

The analysis of the linguistic signs above has successfully mapped the denotative and connotative meanings contained in the lyrics. However, an understanding of Barthes's semiotics is incomplete without addressing the ideological aspects behind it. Therefore, the following discussion will examine the "myth" being constructed and naturalized by this song.

Myth Analysis (Cultural Ideology)

According to Barthes's analysis, myth is a way for culture to justify certain values. In "New Space," the myth constructed is the Naturalization of Sadness and the Romanticization of Fate. The song places sadness on a par with natural phenomena (rivers, rain), creating the myth that sadness is a natural process that "must" be experienced. Furthermore, the myth of Transcendental Hope is embedded, offering the spiritual promise that love overcomes death and time, providing psychological comfort to listeners.

Overall, the discussion above demonstrates how the lyrical structure of "Ruang Baru" dynamically influences the listener's psychology. Based on a series of findings and data interpretations, several key conclusions can be drawn that synthesize the essence of this research. Barsena Bestandhi doesn't use complex words, but her choice of diction effectively evokes the listener's Theater of Mind. From Roland Barthes' perspective, this song

successfully becomes a modern myth about resilience. It teaches listeners that it's okay to cry (wipe away tears), but not to give in to despair, because there is a "New Space" waiting.

This semiotic reading of "Ruang Baru" reveals broader dimensions when combined with existing literature. When compared with research by Ratnadhita et al., 2025, which analyzed the song "Kupu-Kupu," there are similarities in the use of natural metaphors. Ratnadhita found that animal and natural metaphors are used to describe the dynamic phases of romance. However, significant differences were found in this study. Barsena doesn't use natural metaphors ("river," "sea," "drought") to depict playful romance, but rather to illustrate the human existential cycle. Nature in "Ruang Baru" is not merely an aesthetic backdrop, but rather a representation of the absolute law of destiny, a finding that deepens our understanding of the function of natural metaphors in Indonesian pop song lyrics.

Furthermore, in the context of representing the emotion of longing, this finding enriches the perspective offered by (Rustandi et al., 2020) on the song "Hanya Rindu." While Rustandi concluded that longing is constructed as painful "emptiness" and "physical distance," an analysis of "Ruang Baru" reveals a shift in meaning. The longing in this song doesn't stop at pain (the connotation of drought), but moves toward spiritual meaning. The awaited "rain" is not merely the physical presence of a lover, but a symbol of spiritual healing. Thus, this song offers a more constructive coping mechanism than typical songs about longing, which tend to be fatalistic.

These findings also offer a counterthesis to the study (Widyananda & Ashfaq, 2023) on power relations in romantic relationships. Many pop songs often depict a power imbalance between those leaving and those left behind. However, a semiotic analysis of "Ruang Baru" reveals the absence of such a power relationship. Through the lyrics "As are we humans/There are separations and meetings," Barsena positions both parties as equal subjects in the face of time. Neither dominates; both are subject to the flow of life. This is a novel finding, demonstrating the existence of an egalitarian narrative in dealing with separation in contemporary pop music.

Furthermore, this study confirms and surpasses the findings (Alexander & Utami, 2024) on the trend of sad songs in Indonesia from 2020 to 2024. Although "Ruang Baru" falls into the category of songs with a sadness theme, its lyrics do not fall into the glorification of suffering or toxic positivity. A unique finding in this study is the concept of "Productive

Sadness." The lyrics "Wipe my tears slowly/Realize that time will pass" teach emotional validation (crying is okay) along with a cognitive awareness of time. This contrasts with the narrative of despair often found in standard melancholy songs, indicating emotional maturity in Barsena's lyric writing.

This analysis aligns with, but differs from, the research (Banjarnahor, 2022) on Toba Batak songs that explore the theme of family sacrifice. Considering that "Ruang Baru" is the soundtrack to a film about brotherhood (*My Annoying Brother*), the value of sacrifice is indeed present. However, while traditional songs often emphasize material or physical sacrifice, "Ruang Baru" emphasizes "ego sacrifice." Letting a loved one go to the "muara" (death/separation) is the highest form of sacrifice. This demonstrates the universality of the value of sacrifice, which can be translated into the urban pop genre without losing its emotional essence.

New Findings: The Myth of "Ruang Baru" as Third Space One of the most original findings of this research is the identification of the concept of "Ruang Baru" as Third Space from a semiotic perspective. Unlike the purely theological concept of "Heaven" or the purely secular "Future," "Ruang Baru" is a hybrid of the two. In analyzing Barthes' myth, Barsena creates a new mythology in which reunion requires neither a specific geographical location nor a specific time. "Ruang Baru" is a state of mind—an imaginary space constructed by memory and sincerity. It provides unique psychological comfort for secular listeners who may doubt the concept of the afterlife but still need hope.

New Findings: Time as a Healer, Not an Enemy Another novelty in this research lies in the perspective on "Time." Many popular cultural narratives, as perhaps implied in the study (Fahrudin, 2023) or other ballads, position time as an enemy that separates lovers or ages. In contrast, this semiotic analysis of the lyrics finds that time ("Time that passes") is mythologized as a healing agent. Time does not take, but "delivers" (like a river). This paradigm shift is important because it teaches audiences to reconcile with temporality, a message highly relevant to the mental health of modern society.

Furthermore, this research highlights the function of lyrics as a more specific therapeutic communication than the general findings (Rejeki, 2025). While previous research viewed music as a medium for expressing love, "Ruang Baru" functions as a self-counseling medium. The lyrical structure, which begins with anxiety (verse 1), continues with

rationalization (verse 2), and ends with resolution (chorus), mimics the structure of a psychological therapy session. This finding confirms that contemporary lyricists are increasingly aware of their role as "cultural therapists" for their listeners.

This analysis also found that "Ruang Baru" desacralizes death without diminishing its respect. By likening death or eternal separation to "meeting in the same sea," the lyrics transform a frightening (taboo) phenomenon into a beautiful natural phenomenon. This is a powerful form of visual euphemism. In contrast to the often critical and harsh findings of "Effect of the Greenhouse" (Harizki, 2024), Barsena chooses a gentle and contemplative approach to discussing a weighty issue like death, making it more receptive to a wider audience.

Finally, the discovery of the myth of "Romantisasi Takdir" in this song demonstrates how Indonesian pop culture still strongly upholds spiritual values in dealing with trauma. Although wrapped in a modern arrangement, the core message is transcendental surrender. This suggests that amid the onslaught of modernity and individualism often discussed in contemporary sociology (David, 2023), Indonesian listeners still long for a narrative that connects them with a power greater than themselves (God/Fate). The song succeeds because it validates this spiritual need through secular and poetic language.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, this study concludes: First, Transformation of Meaning: Denotatively, the lyrics are dominated by natural metaphors (drought, rivers). Connotatively, these signs transform into psychological representations; "New Space" is a symbol of self-acceptance and post-traumatic maturity. Second, Myth Construction: This song constructs the cultural myth that "Time Heals." The ideological message conveyed is the optimism that every separation is merely a temporary "pause" towards a meeting in a more eternal dimension.

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