

Semiotic Analysis of John Fiske: The Meaning of the Song "Senja Kala Itu" by Gading Suryadmaja

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Senja Kala Itu, Semiotic, Jhon Fiske, The Meaning, Gading Suryadmaja</p>	<p>The song "Senja Kala Itu" by Gading Suryadmaja, featured in the album <i>Terlahir Kembali</i>, evokes a nostalgic sentiment surrounding childhood experiences, particularly the relationship between a child and a father. This study aims to uncover the symbolic meanings embedded in the song through a semiotic approach, as proposed by John Fiske. Fiske, renowned for his semiotic theory emphasizing the production of meaning through texts and social contexts, serves as the analytical framework for examining the song's lyrics. In this analysis, "Senja Kala Itu" is viewed as a text rich in signifiers representing memories and implicit emotions. A qualitative approach is employed, utilizing semiotic analysis based on Fiske's theory. The analysis of the lyrics, which depict the twilight atmosphere of childhood, identifies symbols such as twilight, roads, and the notion of 'home,' each carrying dual meanings in both social and personal contexts. Twilight, symbolizing the passage of time, becomes a metaphor for longing and nostalgia for a past that cannot be reclaimed. The father's role as an authority figure and reminder of time, as depicted in the song's lyrics, reflects a relationship characterized by affection, yet also by a sense of obligation. The portrayal of the father's command to return home, coupled with the yearning for the past, constructs a broader narrative on childhood experiences, temporal boundaries, and personal growth. The findings of this study reveal that the song transcends mere nostalgia for childhood; it conveys messages about time, responsibility, and power relations within the family. By applying Fiske's semiotic theory, this analysis demonstrates how the signs within the song's lyrics function to construct meaning, reflecting social dynamics and offering a new understanding of generational and temporal relationships.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The song "Senja Kala Itu" by Gading Suryadmaja, which appears in the album "Terlahir Kembali," presents a narrative imbued with emotional depth through lyrics that evoke nostalgia. This song specifically illustrates the bond between a child and a father, set against the backdrop of twilight, which serves as a symbol of time and irreplaceable feelings. In this context, the song not only recounts childhood memories but also harbours more complex symbolic meanings related to life's journey, responsibilities, and family dynamics. This study elevates the song as an object of inquiry through a semiotic analysis approach based on John

Fiske's framework, which enables the unveiling of meanings from the symbols contained within the song's lyrics (Kaish et al., n.d.; Nurbani & Adim, 2024).

"Senja Kala Itu," created by Gading Suryadmaja and featured in the album "Terlahir Kembali," offers an emotional portrait of childhood experiences, particularly concerning the relationship between a child and a father. With lyrics that depict a twilight atmosphere filled with memories, this song transports its listeners back to a past replete with nostalgia and longing. In the twilight setting, which symbolises the passage of time, the song seemingly invites listeners to savour each moment that has elapsed, illustrating the many things that cannot be repeated in life's journey. Thus, "Senja Kala Itu" is not merely a song but also a reflective space on time, change, and the relationships that flow within the rhythm of life.

In art studies, songs are often understood as forms of communication that involve various symbols and signs (Lukietta, 2022). Each word and note chosen by the songwriter serves not only to express feelings but also to convey messages related to life experiences and social culture (Nurjanah et al., 2025). "Senja Kala Itu" can be viewed as a text rich in signifiers that represent memories, feelings, and social values inherent in the relationship between a child and a parent. However, a comprehensive understanding of the meanings contained within the song's lyrics necessitates an approach, one of which is the use of semiotic theory capable of dissecting these symbols and signs (Erlangga et al., 2024).

The semiotic approach offers a distinct perspective in analysing artistic works, including songs. In semiotic studies, a text (in this case, song lyrics) is regarded as a system of signs that not only generates meaning through words but also through the relationships between signs and the social contexts in which they exist (Pah & Darmastuti, 2019). John Fiske's semiotic theory, which emphasises the importance of meaning production through the interplay of text and social context, is pertinent for examining this song. Fiske asserts that meaning is not solely found within the text itself but also in how the text interacts with its readers or listeners (Rini & Fauziah, 2019).

In this regard, the lyrics of "Senja Kala Itu" do not merely serve to express the creator's personal feelings but also reflect broader social values, such as intergenerational relationships, parental roles, and awareness of the passage of time. The symbols present in this song—such as twilight, roads, and the command to "return home"—become gateways to understanding the meanings contained within the relationship between a child and a father. Twilight, often associated with melancholic feelings and the passage of time in many cultures, becomes a powerful metaphor within this song. Similarly, the depiction of "pulang" (returning home) not only refers to the physical act of going back but also carries emotional meanings of loss, longing, and the responsibilities that arise in every phase of life. Consequently, this song can be understood as more than just an expression of nostalgia for childhood; it serves as a reflection on growth, family roles, and the values passed down through generations. By employing Fiske's semiotic approach, this research aims to explore the implicit meanings behind these symbols and how this song reflects the social dynamics present within society.

Based on the aforementioned background, the research questions for this study are: How do the symbols in the lyrics of "Senja Kala Itu" shape meaning through John Fiske's

semiotic approach? What social and personal meanings are embedded within this song, particularly concerning the relationship between a child and a father, as well as the childhood experiences depicted? How does "Senja Kala Itu" illustrate the dynamics of time, responsibility, and power relations within the family context? The objective is to unveil the symbolic meanings contained within "Senja Kala Itu" through John Fiske's semiotic approach. This involves analysing the symbols in the song's lyrics that represent memories, feelings, and social relations within the family context.

Furthermore, it aims to present a new understanding of the relationships between generations, time, and responsibility through an analysis of the song's lyrics. John Fiske's semiotic approach serves as the primary foundation for analysing the lyrics of "Senja Kala Itu." Semiotics, as a discipline that studies signs and the meanings contained within a text, provides a perspective on how meanings are constructed and interpreted. In his book "Television Culture" (1987), Fiske posits that the meaning of a text is not fixed but is shaped through the interaction between the text and the social context in which it exists. Fiske emphasises that readers or audiences play an active role in the meaning production process, considering how they interpret signs within their social and cultural contexts.

In this case, the lyrics of "Senja Kala Itu" are regarded as a text rich with signifiers that function to convey meaning. Fiske's semiotic analysis allows for the identification and deconstruction of how symbols such as twilight, roads, and the command to "return home" work to generate meaning, both in personal and social contexts, and how they reflect social experiences in everyday life. Fiske's semiotic approach also underscores the importance of cultural codes that shape how we interpret texts. In the lyrics of "Senja Kala Itu," the symbols employed not only represent the personal meanings of the songwriter but are also linked to broader social constructs regarding time, family, and individual roles within society. For instance, twilight does not merely indicate a specific time of day but can be interpreted as a metaphor for transition or the end of something greater, such as childhood or relationships with parents.

Thus, this study will utilise Fiske's theory to analyse how meaning is formed within the lyrics of this song, as well as how these elements relate to social dynamics, family values, and intergenerational relationships within society. This approach not only provides an understanding of the text of the song itself but also opens insights into the ways meanings are constructed through the interaction between text and social culture. Research on songs within the semiotic context has been extensively conducted; however, most studies focus on specific music genres or merely highlight musical aspects without examining the meanings embedded within the lyrics (Jr, 2022; Ningsih & Matondang, 2024). This study offers novelty by examining "Senja Kala Itu" as a semiotic object, employing Fiske's theoretical approach to unveil the symbolic meanings within the song's lyrics. Additionally, this research contributes to the understanding of how songs can depict social and personal relations within the context of Indonesian culture, particularly in the relationship between children and fathers, which involves values such as obligation and affection.

Several previous studies relevant to this investigation include research on the semiotics of songs and music, utilising Roland Barthes' semiotic theory that discusses how signs within

songs and texts function to generate meaning (Ardelia & Agriyani, 2023; Kuntanto, 2024; Saleh et al., 2023). Furthermore, studies employing the paradigm proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure regarding signs (signifier and signified) also serve as vital foundations in semiotic analysis (Kholid & Ahmad, 2024). On the other hand, John Fiske's works focusing on the relationship between text and social context, as well as the production of meaning in mass communication, significantly contribute to explaining how songs can be understood as social texts reflecting cultural and societal dynamics.

METHOD

This study utilises a qualitative approach with a semiotic analysis method to reveal the symbolic meanings contained within the song "Senja Kala Itu" by Gading Suryadmaja (Creswell, 2018; Mack et al., 2005; Suryadmaja, 2013, 2023). The semiotic theory employed in this research refers to John Fiske's perspective, which emphasises that meaning in texts is not solely shaped by the signs themselves but is also influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which the texts are received (Pah & Darmastuti, 2019; Rini & Fauziah, 2019; Saleh et al., 2023). Consequently, this song is treated as a text containing various symbols and signs that require analysis to identify the meanings embedded within it, both from social and personal perspectives. The analysis process begins with data collection in the form of song lyrics, which are then analysed with a focus on symbolic elements.

The analysis is conducted through three stages: denotative analysis to identify literal meanings, connotative analysis to explore deeper meanings, and ideological analysis to understand the social values reflected in the song (Ishar & Irawan, 2023; Nabila et al., 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2020; Suryadmaja, 2025). By employing Fiske's semiotic theory, this research aims to explain how meaning in the lyrics of "Senja Kala Itu" is produced and understood through the interaction between the text and social context. The results of the analysis are expected to reveal broader messages regarding the relationships between generations, time, and responsibility within family life. Furthermore, this study also seeks to demonstrate how the symbols within this song reflect the social dynamics present in society and how the song shapes an understanding of the role of time and memories in human life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In conducting the analysis of the song lyrics, various symbols and signs were found to be interconnected in constructing a complex meaning that not only refers to nostalgia for childhood but also contains messages related to the dynamics of time, family relationships, and social responsibilities. Each symbol present within the lyrics plays a crucial role in creating a broad and layered meaning. Through the analysis of the song lyrics that create imagery of childhood nostalgia, family relationships, and the influence of time in shaping memories, this research identifies various signs that interact to convey the messages within the following lyrics:

SENJA KALA ITU

Senja Kala Itu dari ujung jalan

Kau panggil namaku agar lekas pulang

*Telah habis waktu bermain, dan kau bilang:
Aku harus menjemputmu pulang
Anakku kau harus cepat pulang*

*Senja Kala Itu meninggalkan ruang rindu
Akan masa yang tak 'kan kulupakan
Rindu kau berseru di persimpangan jalan
Rindu kau suruh aku untuk pulang
Rindu kau panggil namaku 'tuk pulang*

The most striking primary symbol in the lyrics of "Senja Kala Itu" is twilight. In this analysis, twilight is not merely a time indicating the transition between day and night; it also symbolises a transitional phase in life, between childhood and adulthood. In this context, twilight can be viewed as a sign of inevitable change, suggesting that childhood is about to come to an end. Within the framework of Fiske's semiotic theory, twilight can be regarded as a sign referring to the reality that all things will undergo change (Rizky & Kusnarto, 2024; Siagian et al., 2021). The use of twilight as a symbol indicates an emotional transition, where feelings of longing and nostalgia arise alongside the passage of time.

The phrase "Senja Kala Itu meninggalkan ruang rindu" implies that twilight triggers a yearning for a past that has already elapsed. Twilight, as a symbol of time that is nearly spent, evokes a sense of sadness regarding memories that cannot be repeated. However, behind this, twilight also embodies the beauty that emerges as the day draws to a close, creating a space for reflection and reinterpretation of the time that has passed. In this regard, twilight is not solely about the visual beauty of sunset but also about the loss and regret associated with a past that cannot be reclaimed.

The next symbol identified in this song is the road, found in the phrase "dari ujung jalan." The road not only indicates a physical location but also serves as a metaphor for the journey of life. From Fiske's semiotic perspective, the road is a sign that points to an individual's journey through life, encompassing choices, challenges, and experiences that shape who one is (Apriliani & Humaira, 2022). The road connects the freedom of childhood, filled with laughter and joy, to the realities of life that are more structured, where responsibilities and obligations begin to emerge.

The use of the word 'jalan' (road) in these lyrics can also be considered a symbol of life experience itself—something that must be traversed and endured, even though one cannot predict what will happen at the end of that road. In this song, the road becomes a sign of the physical and emotional journey leading to home, depicting the concept of returning, a return to the fundamental values present within family life. This road not only leads the child home but also illustrates the change in the individual's perspective on life that continues to evolve over time.

The road depicted also refers to the differing perspectives between children and parents. For children, the road represents a space of freedom filled with enjoyment. However, for parents, the road serves as a reminder that children must return home to fulfil their

obligations and responsibilities. In this regard, the road becomes a symbol of separation between the carefree world of childhood and the adult world filled with rules and responsibilities.

The symbol of 'pulang' (returning home) present in the lyrics of this song plays a vital role in shaping the overall meaning of the song. Within Fiske's semiotic theory, returning home functions as a sign to depict the obligations and responsibilities that must be undertaken, particularly within familial relationships. The act of returning home is not merely a physical movement back to the house but also serves as a reminder of the social structure and norms that must be adhered to.

The phrase "Anakku, kau harus cepat pulang" indicates that there is an authority figure reminding the child about time constraints and responsibilities that must be fulfilled. Although the child may not always appreciate this command, in this analysis, the act of returning home reflects the discipline that needs to be instilled in the child's life to cultivate a sense of responsibility. The act of returning home is not only related to the time that has elapsed for playing but also signifies the child's return to broader social obligations and roles that must be fulfilled.

The symbol of returning home also touches on the theme of time that cannot be reversed. In this context, returning home serves as a marker that childhood is about to end, and the child must learn to accept the reality that time continues to pass. Returning home becomes a reminder that although the freedom of childhood may seem delightful, ultimately, there comes a moment when the child must confront the more mature realities of life. Although the figure of the father is not explicitly mentioned in the song's lyrics, the authority role represented in this song is clearly felt. The phrase "kau suruh aku untuk pulang" suggests the presence of a figure with authority to remind and guide the child (Estrada & Marianti, 2023). In this context, while this voice may function as the voice of the father, in this semiotic analysis, we can view it as a symbol of a larger authority figure within the family—namely, the father figure who plays a role in enforcing discipline and structure in the child's life.

The father, although not directly represented in the lyrics, is present in the form of power that guides the child towards obligations. In society, the role of the father is often associated with stricter authority compared to that of the mother (Yunita, 2019). However, in this song, the father emerges more as a symbol reminding the child of the responsibilities that must be accepted and that there are time constraints that need to be adhered to (Andrianikus, 2021). This message reflects the power dynamics present within families, where parents, in this case, function as guides in the child's life, even though such actions may not always be welcomed by the child.

The longing expressed in the lyrics "Rindu kau panggil namaku 'tuk pulang'" serves as a symbol that reinforces the theme of nostalgia within this song. Longing is not merely the feeling of something lost but also a sentiment tied to past memories. Longing signifies that although childhood has passed, the recollection of those moments remains binding and evokes emotions. In this regard, longing becomes a symbol of emotional attachment to parents and home, which, despite being filled with rules, remains the safest and most familiar place for the child. Longing serves as a bridge connecting the past with the present, creating

an understanding of how childhood memories continually shape a person's identity throughout their life.

Discussion

The song "Senja Kala Itu" by Gading Suryadmaja, through John Fiske's semiotic approach, reveals the complexities of the symbols contained within the song's lyrics. Through Fiske's semiotic theory, which prioritises the production of meaning through signifiers, these lyrics successfully depict social relations, personal memories, and family dynamics. This discussion will expand the analysis of the symbols within the song, such as twilight, roads, returning home, father, and longing, to gain a deeper understanding of how these symbols function within social and psychological contexts, as well as their roles in shaping individual identity and intergenerational relationships.

One of the most significant symbols in "Senja Kala Itu" is twilight, which functions not only as a marker of time but also as a representation of transitions in life. Twilight, with its dimming hues, illustrates a moment of transition filled with emotion. From Fiske's semiotic perspective, twilight is not merely a temporary sign associated with the physical change of time from day to night; it also symbolises the transition between two phases of life: the freedom of childhood and the responsibilities of adulthood.

Twilight carries broader meanings in social and psychological contexts. For children, twilight marks the end of playtime and the onset of more structured routines. However, behind this symbol also lies a sense of loss for the freedom that is soon to end. In this regard, twilight does not merely refer to limited time but also to the nostalgia for a childhood that cannot be repeated. Twilight as a symbol also plays a role in shaping meanings about the limitations of time, which is a central theme in this song. The nostalgia that arises from this passage of time indicates how we often long for a past that we perceive as simpler, freer, and more meaningful. Twilight, which triggers this longing, effectively connects past memories with the reality of time's passage. In this case, twilight serves as a sign that every moment in life has an endpoint, and this sentiment is reflected in the lyric "Senja Kala Itu meninggalkan ruang rindu," which illustrates how childhood memories filled with joy and freedom are now beginning to fade, replaced by greater responsibilities.

The symbol of the road in the lyrics of "Senja Kala Itu" is a powerful metaphor that reflects the journey of life, both physically and emotionally. Within John Fiske's semiotic theory, the road can be viewed as a sign connecting the present with the past, as well as referring to the life choices that must be made. The road in this song does not merely depict the physical space that must be traversed to return home but also reflects a more abstract and philosophical journey—the journey of life itself. For a child, the road is a place where they enjoy freedom and joy. However, for adults, the road serves as a reminder of the more serious realities of life, filled with challenges and obligations. Therefore, the road becomes an important symbol that illustrates the differing perspectives between the carefree nature of childhood and the adult world filled with responsibilities.

Furthermore, the road depicted in the lyrics leads to home, which is a symbol of safety, a place where individuals return after traversing various phases of life. This road, in a certain sense, becomes a connection between the individual and the values instilled by parents, as

well as the social obligations that must be fulfilled. This road also marks the shift from freedom to obligation, from childhood to a world that is more responsibility-laden. The road serves not only as a connector between physical places (home) but also as a symbol of the process of growth and individual maturity.

The symbol of returning home plays a crucial role in this song, as it touches on themes of obligation, discipline, and responsibility, which are at the core of family dynamics. In the lyrics of this song, the command to return home depicts the presence of an authority figure within the family who regulates and ensures that children fulfil their obligations, even though at that moment, such commands may feel burdensome to the child. Returning home is not merely about going back to the house; it also becomes a symbol of character formation and understanding of social roles.

Within Fiske's semiotic theory, returning home serves as a sign connecting individuals with social and familial structures. Returning home serves to remind the child of the time constraints and responsibilities that need to be fulfilled. This act of returning home carries a deeper meaning—namely, a return to origins, to the norms and values accepted within the family and society. In this context, returning home becomes a sign of the importance of discipline, maturity, and recognition of broader social roles. Emotionally, returning home also conveys a longing for a safe and loving place. However, for children, returning home can symbolise the loss of the freedom they enjoyed while playing. This creates tension between the desire to remain free and the obligation to return home. Nevertheless, the act of returning home ultimately reflects the learning process and acceptance of a more mature and responsible life.

Although the figure of the father is not explicitly mentioned in the lyrics of this song, the symbol of authority present in this song clearly represents that figure. In many cultures, fathers are often identified as authority figures within families, who regulate and ensure that children adhere to established rules. In the context of this song, although the mother is depicted more explicitly in the lyrics, we can interpret the father figure as a representation of the social control exercised within the family.

The father in these lyrics, although not introduced directly, is present in the form of an authoritative voice reminding the child of time constraints. The father functions as a figure directing the child to return home, and in this case, the father's role as an authority is not limited to rules but also serves as a reminder of important life values, such as responsibility and discipline. Here, the father figure becomes a symbol of the power present within the family to guide the child towards a more orderly and responsible life.

Furthermore, the relationship between the child and the father in these lyrics reveals the power dynamics within the family, where parents play a crucial role in shaping the character and mindset of their children. The father, although not explicitly represented in this song, becomes a symbol of the principles of authority that the child must confront throughout their life journey. The symbol of longing in this song reinforces the theme of nostalgia embedded within the lyrics. Longing serves as a sign of emotional attachment to the past—childhood filled with beautiful memories, albeit accompanied by parental rules. Longing also creates an understanding of how important the relationship between children and parents is,

where despite differences in perspectives and expectations, that relationship remains an emotional foundation connecting both.

Longing in the lyric "Rindu kau panggil namaku 'tuk pulang" illustrates how, although children may feel a loss of freedom, they remain attached to the values instilled by their parents. This longing becomes a bridge between a free past and a present filled with responsibilities. Thus, longing is not merely a symbol of feelings towards a past childhood that has passed but also a symbol of the emotional bond that cannot be severed between children and family, especially parents. Longing serves as a sign that, despite changes in life, childhood memories remain alive in memory, shaping identity and worldview. As time progresses, this longing becomes a reminder that, although time passes, emotional ties with parents and childhood remain, shaping who we become in the future.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the song "Senja Kala Itu" by Gading Suryadmaja is a cultural text rich with symbolic meanings. Through John Fiske's semiotic approach, this song not only narrates feelings of nostalgia but also conveys layers of meaning related to life experiences, social relations, and the concept of time from the perspective of Gading Suryadmaja. Twilight, as a symbol within this song, serves a dual function: besides depicting the transition of time, it also represents a deep longing for childhood and a desire to return to a state that cannot be repeated. Thus, the lyrics of this song provide insights into how past memories are processed through present perceptions. This research also reveals that the figure of the father within the song's lyrics plays a significant role as a symbol of authority and a reminder of time. The relationship between the child and the father is depicted through interactions filled with love and obligation, which also reflect social dynamics within the family. The command to return home articulated by the father becomes a symbol of the power structure within the family, yet simultaneously demonstrates care and affection. Through this symbol, the song illustrates how time and family relationships shape an individual's identity from childhood to adulthood. The semiotic analysis applied in this research also highlights how the text of this song utilises social context to enrich the meanings contained within it. Fiske explains that meaning production occurs not only through the signs within the text but also through the social relationships surrounding that text. In this regard, "Senja Kala Itu" utilises symbols that are very familiar to society, such as twilight and the journey home, which can easily be connected to collective experiences of time, memories, and family. This indicates how this song speaks not only about the individual but also about broader social experiences. "Senja Kala Itu" represents a semiotic depiction that illustrates the convergence of personal memories and social dynamics. By employing John Fiske's semiotic approach, this research demonstrates that songs not only function as media for expressing nostalgic feelings but also convey messages regarding time, family, and power relations. The meanings contained within this song provide new insights into intergenerational relationships and the ways in which we reflect on the past in our ever-evolving lives.

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