

An Analysis Of Social Awareness And Moral Values In The Song “Another Day In Paradise” By Phil Collins

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Abstrak

Lagu bukan sekadar bentuk hiburan, melainkan juga berfungsi sebagai sarana komunikasi, kritik sosial, dan pendidikan moral. Penelitian ini menganalisis kesadaran sosial dan nilai-nilai moral yang terkandung dalam lagu *Another Day in Paradise* karya Phil Collins. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi representasi kesadaran sosial dan nilai-nilai moral yang tercermin dalam lirik lagu tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan semiotika berdasarkan teori Roland Barthes. Sumber data utama adalah lirik lagu *Another Day in Paradise*, sedangkan data pendukung diperoleh dari jurnal dan buku yang berkaitan dengan sastra, semiotika, moralitas, dan studi musik. Analisis difokuskan pada makna denotatif dan konotatif yang terdapat dalam lirik lagu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lagu ini secara kuat menggambarkan ketimpangan sosial, kemiskinan, tunawisma, dan sikap acuh tak acuh masyarakat terhadap individu-individu yang terpinggirkan. Selain itu, lagu ini memuat nilai-nilai moral seperti empati, welas asih, kemanusiaan, rasa hormat, dan tanggung jawab sosial. Liriknyanya mengkritik orang-orang yang mengabaikan penderitaan sesama saat mereka sendiri hidup nyaman dalam kondisi sosial yang istimewa. Melalui bahasa simbolis dan narasi yang menggugah emosi, lagu ini mendorong pendengar untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran dan kepedulian terhadap masalah-masalah sosial. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa *Another Day in Paradise* bukan hanya sebuah komposisi musik, melainkan juga karya sastra yang menyampaikan kritik sosial dan refleksi moral. Lagu ini menunjukkan bagaimana musik dapat memengaruhi pemahaman pendengar mengenai realitas sosial serta mendorong kesadaran moral dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.

Kata Kunci: kesadaran sosial, nilai-nilai moral, semiotika, lirik lagu, Phil Collins

Abstract

Songs are not merely forms of entertainment because they also function as media for communication social criticism and moral education. This study analyzes the social awareness and moral values contained in the song *Another Day in Paradise* by Phil Collins. The purpose of this research is to identify the representation of social awareness and moral values reflected in the lyrics of the song. This study applies a qualitative descriptive method with a semiotic approach based on Roland Barthes' theory. The primary data source is the lyrics of *Another Day in Paradise* while supporting data are obtained from journals and books related to literature semiotics morality and music studies. The analysis focuses on denotative and connotative meanings found in the lyrics. The findings reveal that the song strongly portrays social inequality poverty homelessness and society's indifference toward marginalized individuals. Furthermore the song contains moral values such as empathy, compassion, humanity, respect and social responsibility. The lyrics criticize people who ignore suffering while living comfortably within privileged social conditions. Through symbolic language and emotional narration the song encourages listeners to develop awareness and concern toward social problems. This study concludes that *Another Day in Paradise* is not only a musical composition but also a literary work that communicates social criticism and moral reflection. The song demonstrates how music can influence listeners' understanding of social realities and encourage moral consciousness in everyday life.

Keywords: social awareness, moral values, semiotics, song lyrics, Phil Collins

A. Introduction

Although research on moral and social values in song lyrics has been widely conducted most previous researchers have focused on children's songs for early character formation (Survia, 2025) contemporary pop songs for teenagers (Rohmiyati et al., 2023; Riskiningtyas, 2022) or social awareness in traditional songs (Taj, 2025). Research into social awareness in songs is often linked to the preservation of traditional culture such as Punjabi folk songs by (Taj, 2025). Meanwhile analysis of modern songs often focuses on only one aspect either the moral value (Riskiningtyas, 2022) or the social/gender critique (Damayanti, 2023). There has not been much research that fully integrates *Social Awareness* and *Moral Values*, moral responsibility of listeners in a single analysis of popular western song lyrics using Roland Barthes' Semiotic analysis (Denotation Connotation Myth). From the book of (Hariyanto & Prasetyawati, 2025) states that modern society is currently experiencing a decline in moral awareness and social empathy.

Furthermore by relevantly reflecting (Leo's, 2023) perspective on Roland Barthes's semiotic approach this study not only examines the literal meaning (denotation) but also uncovers the connotative meaning and social myths about poverty hidden behind the aesthetics of the song's lyrics. This is where the novelty of this research lies compared to previous research. Most research on morality in songs focuses on children's songs (Survia, 2025) motivational songs for teenagers (Rohmiyati, 2023) or modern pop/K-Pop (Damayanti, 2023; Riskiningtyas, 2022). This research fills the gap in how past literary texts still function as moral "alarms" for contemporary society.

In contrast to these studies this study focuses on the song "Another Day in Paradise" by Phil Collins. This song was chosen because it uniquely combines a sharp sociological critique of the phenomenon of homelessness (*social awareness*) while simultaneously voicing an ethical challenge to human indifference (*moral values*). There is still limited research that specifically examines *classic* Western pop or soft rock songs from the 80s/90s such as "Another Day in Paradise." This song is unique because it clearly highlights the issues of homelessness and global systemic poverty not just love or self-motivation. The song "Another Day in Paradise" was released in 1989 but the issues of social inequality and the indifference of modern humans depicted in it are increasingly relevant to today's social reality.

This perspective supports the idea that *Another Day in Paradise* functions as social commentary regarding inequality and humanitarian issues (Campbell et al., 2022). To understand the deeper meanings within *Another Day in Paradise* this study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols within language and culture. According to (Di Leo, 2023) semiotics examines how meanings are constructed through signs symbols and representations which Roland Barthes divides meaning into denotation and connotation.

Denotation refers to literal meaning while connotation refers to symbolic or cultural meaning associated with signs. Based on the explanation above this study focuses on examining how social awareness is represented in the song *Another Day in Paradise* identifying the moral values reflected in its lyrics and analyzing how the song communicates social criticism through semiotic meanings.

B. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method because the research focuses on interpreting meanings and analyzing symbolic representations within song lyrics. Qualitative research is suitable for literary studies because it emphasizes interpretation understanding and contextual analysis rather than numerical measurement. The primary data source in this study is the lyrics of the song *Another Day in Paradise* by Phil Collins. Supporting data are collected from journals, books and scholarly references related to literature semiotics music morality and social awareness. The researcher collected data through documentation techniques by reading and identifying lyrics related to social awareness and moral values. Important phrases sentences and symbolic expressions were selected for analysis.

This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory as the analytical framework. Barthes' theory divides meaning into two levels:

1. Denotative meaning which refers to literal meaning.
2. Connotative meaning which refers to symbolic cultural or emotional meaning.

The analysis process consists of several steps. First, the researcher identifies significant lyrics related to poverty humanity and social responsibility. Second, the researcher analyzes denotative meanings found within the lyrics. Third, connotative meanings are interpreted to understand symbolic representations and social criticism. Finally the researcher identifies moral values represented through the song lyrics. The validity of the study is supported by references from books and journals discussing semiotics morality literary theory and music studies.

C. Result and Discussion

1. Result

This section systematically unpacks the text of Phil Collins' "Another Day in Paradise" through the lens of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. Lyrics are treated as a system of signs that produce meaning on multiple levels and by identifying the intersections of linguistic signifiers this analysis evaluates how the text fosters social awareness and builds a framework of moral values. The analysis of *Another Day in Paradise* reveals that the song strongly represents social awareness and moral values through symbolic language emotional narration and social criticism. The discussion is divided into two main parts namely social awareness and moral values. The comprehensive analysis of Phil Collins' *Another Day in Paradise* reveals layers of social awareness, sharp cultural critique and profound moral values encoded within its lyrics. By examining these narrative elements the song transitions from a simple pop ballad into a poignant mirror of societal indifference.

1. Social Awareness

Another Day in Paradise functions primarily as a sonic documentary of homelessness systemic neglect and class disparity. The song juxtaposes the lived reality of the marginalized against the psychological insulation of the privileged.

a. The Reality of the Marginalized

The opening verses establish a stark visual and emotional landscape:

*"She calls out to the man on the street
He can see she's been crying
She's got blisters on the soles of her feet
Can't walk but she's trying"*

Denotative Meaning that the lyrics describe a physically injured and emotionally distressed homeless woman trying to catch the attention of a passerby. Connotative Meaning that the *"blisters on the soles of her feet"* serve as a visceral metaphor for the grueling unrelenting struggle of survival in poverty. Her effort to walk despite the pain symbolizes the resilience of marginalized groups who are forced to keep moving forward within a system that offers them no baseline support. Her tears represent the psychological toll of being rendered invisible by the public.

b. The Mechanics of Indifference

The narrative progression highlights society's active choice to ignore distress:

"He walks on doesn't look back

He pretends he can't hear her

Starts to whistle as he crosses the street

Seems embarrassed to be there"

Denotative Meaning that a man consciously ignores the woman's plea alters his behavior by whistling and quickly moves away from discomfort.

Connotative Meaning that this sequence masterfully captures the psychological defense mechanisms of the middle and upper classes. The act of *"whistling"* and *"pretending"* represents willful ignorance and the cognitive dissonance experienced by affluent individuals when confronted with structural failure. The man's shame is a cultural symptom and he is not disturbed by the *existence* of poverty but rather by the inconvenience of having his personal comfort zone interrupted by it.

c. The Paradigm of Privilege

The iconic chorus delivers the central ideological critique of the track:

"Oh think twice 'cause it's another day for

You and me in paradise"

Denotative Meaning that the listener is urged to pause and reflect because their daily life resembles a paradise compared to the light of the homeless.

Connotative Meaning that the word "paradise" is used with heavy irony. It does not imply a flawless utopian existence but rather the baseline safety of having shelter food and security as necessities that have been commodified into luxuries. By framing ordinary comfortable life as "paradise" Collins exposes the vast chasm of inequality that is what the privileged take for granted is an unattainable heaven for the displaced. The plea to *"think twice"* is a direct challenge to the passivity of the listener.

These findings strongly align with (Taj, 2025) who notes that popular music often serves as a medium for social protest and resistance against institutionalized inequality. Furthermore the track exemplifies the theories of (Campbell et al.,2022) who argues that music functions as a cultural artifact that reflects harsh social realities and captures genuine human suffering within contemporary society.

2. Moral Values

Beyond merely documenting social illness the song operates as a pedagogical tool embedding core ethical responsibilities within its lyrical structure.

a. Empathy as a Shared Mirror

The song forces a shift in perspective through the ultimate rhetorical question:

"Oh Lord is there nothing more anybody can do?

Oh Lord there must be something you can say"

The moral value of empathy is pushed to its absolute limit here. By invoking a higher power ("*Oh Lord*") the lyrics reflect humanity's tendency to shift blame to fate or divine will rather than taking personal accountability. True empathy as suggested by the narrative gaps requires the listener to stop asking *what can be done* and instead recognize themselves as agents capable of doing it.

b. Compassion vs. Apathy

The stark contrast between the freezing environment and human warmth highlights the value of compassion:

"He can see she's been crying

It's cold and the shirt she wears is torn"

Compassion is defined not just by feeling sorry for someone but by the urgency to alleviate their suffering. The physical description of the torn shirt in the cold serves as a moral prompt. The song argues that failing to act in the presence of such obvious vulnerability is a failure of basic human decency.

c. Collective Social Responsibility

The song's concluding shifts reinforce that poverty is not an individual failure but a collective social responsibility:

"You can tell by the lines on her face

You can see that she's been there

Probably been moved on from every place

'Cause she didn't fit in there"

The phrase "*moved on from every place 'cause she didn't fit in there*" is a searing critique of systemic hostility. It highlights how hostile architecture and anti homeless laws seek to erase poor people from public spaces rather than helping them. The moral lesson is clear that society has a responsibility to dismantle the structures that exclude vulnerable individuals simply because they disrupt the aesthetic of "paradise."

These insights expand upon (Survia, 2025) who states that contemporary songs act as modern fables communicating vital moral and educational values to the masses. Similarly, (Hariyanto and Prasetyawati, 2025) assert that literary and musical works provide essential ethical guidance and life lessons for navigating complex societal duties. The track also validates the perspective of (Rohmiyati, Fatihah and Sobayarunnisa, 2023) who argue that music contains intentional moral knowledge designed to educate listeners and foster humanitarian consciousness.

3. Semiotic Dimensions

From a semiotic standpoint the song operates on a dual plane of signs and symbols to critique modern capitalism:

Tabel 1.
Semiotic Dimension in Another Day in Paradise Song

Signifier (Lyric/Image)	Signified (Literal Meaning)	Connotation / Cultural Myth
"The Homeless Woman"	A displaced woman on the street.	A universal symbol of the marginalized exploited and discarded segments of modern society.
"The Passerby (The Man)"	An ordinary pedestrian walking away.	A symbol of systemic apathy middle-class guilt and the societal choice of willful blindness.
"Paradise"	A heavenly or ideal place.	A symbol of socioeconomic privilege material insulation and consumerist comfort.
"Whistling / Crossing the street"	Physical movements to avoid a person.	The physical and psychological boundaries built by society to segregate classes and avoid moral guilt.

Through these interconnected signs *Another Day in Paradise* strips away the romanticism of urban life. It subverts the comforting myth of meritocracy by showing that "paradise" for some is built directly alongside the systemic purgatory of others urging a radical reclamation of human empathy.

2. Discussion

A semiotic analysis of Phil Collins' song "*Another Day in Paradise*" can be explained using Roland Barthes' theory of denotation (literal meaning) connotation (implied/cultural meaning) and myth (social ideology behind signs). First the character "*homeless woman*" at the denotative level refers to a woman who is homeless and living on the street. However at the connotative level she represents not only an individual but also a symbol of marginalized and poor people who are often ignored by the modern social system. From this sign the song challenges the myth of meritocracy the belief that poverty happens simply because of laziness or lack of effort. Instead it suggests that poverty is mainly caused by systemic social failure rather than individual weakness. Second the character "*the passerby*" is denotatively just an ordinary man walking on the street. Connotatively he represents social indifference especially from the middle class who choose to ignore the suffering of others. His actions such as "whistling and crossing the street" become connotative signs of avoiding moral responsibility and emotional discomfort. This reinforces the myth that modern urban life produces individualism and reduces empathy among people. Third the word "*paradise*" denotatively means heaven or a perfect place. However connotatively in this song it refers to the comfortable life of the privileged class that is separated from the reality of poverty around them. This deconstructs the myth that urban progress brings equal prosperity for everyone. In reality the comfort of one group exists side by side with the suffering of another.

Overall through the interaction of these signs "*Another Day in Paradise*" criticizes social inequality and the lack of empathy in modern society. Using Barthes' perspective the song shows how denotative meanings shift into connotative meanings which then reveal deeper social myths embedded in everyday life.

D. Conclusion

Based on the analysis the song *Another Day in Paradise* by Phil Collins contains strong representations of social awareness and moral values. The song portrays issues of poverty homelessness and social indifference through emotional and symbolic lyrics. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach the study reveals both denotative and connotative meanings related to empathy compassion and social responsibility.

The findings show that songs can function not only as entertainment but also as literary and social media that communicate moral teachings and social criticism. Therefore *Another Day in Paradise* can be understood as a meaningful literary work that encourages listeners to develop awareness and concern toward social problems in society.

Based on the findings of this study, future researchers are encouraged to explore social awareness and moral values in other songs using different semiotic theories or literary approaches to gain broader insights. Educators may also utilize songs as learning materials to enhance students' critical thinking skills and social sensitivity toward societal issues. In addition listeners are expected to pay closer attention to the messages conveyed in song lyrics as music can be an effective medium for fostering empathy, moral reflection and awareness of social problems.

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