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Ideologies behind the Song Lyrics "*A Little Piece Of Heaven*" by Avenged Sevenfold : A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Song lyrics function not just as entertainment but also as a reflection and construction of societal ideology. This study examines the ideologies within Avenged Sevenfold's "A Little Piece of Heaven" using Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), supported by Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005). Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research assesses three levels: text analysis, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice. Results reveal that 60.9% of the lyrics promote dominant negative values, mainly in judgment, highlighting themes like obsessive love, abuse of power, and violence. These are expressed monoglossically, indicating the songwriter's definitive stance. Analysis of the song's creation, distribution, and reception shows that, despite originating within a capitalistic music industry, it acts as resistance to mainstream norms, particularly romantic and heteronormative ideologies. Audience reactions vary significantly: fans interpret it as artistic freedom, whereas non-fans perceive it as moral deviation. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that song lyrics serve as a potent discourse that shapes and perpetuates social ideologies and criticism through language.

Keywords: CDA, Song Lyrics, Ideology, Appraisal Theory

INTRODUCTION

Music, especially the heavy metal genre, serves as a cultural expression that reflects society's ideology and social dynamics. The band Avenged Sevenfold (A7X) has gained popularity for its controversial lyrics, and one of their well-known songs, "*A Little Piece of Heaven*" (2007), attracted attention for exploring sensitive themes like obsessive love, extreme violence, and death. The lyrics of this song, inspired by the musical *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, subtly address issues of power, social injustice, and violence as forms of class resistance, which can be linked to class struggle theory (Engels, 2004). Due to its provocative and narrative style, this song is important to analyze to reveal the ideology embedded by the lyricist and its influence on listeners.

This study adopts Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to view language as a social practice connected to power, domination, and ideology. Fairclough's three dimensions of analysis, Text Analysis, Discursive Practice, and Social/Sociocultural Practice, are used to deconstruct how ideology is created, shared, and accepted. Furthermore, text analysis is enhanced by applying Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), which focuses on the evaluative system of language (Attitude,

Engagement, Graduation) to understand the writer's attitude and the strength of the message conveyed. This study aims to fill the research gap by specifically examining the song "*A Little Piece of Heaven*" through the combined use of Fairclough and Martin & White's Appraisal Theory. The focus is solely on the lyrics of the song and the integration of these two theories. Specifically, this study seeks to answer three main questions:1) What are the context of the song lyrics "*A Little Piece Of Heaven*"?, 2) How is the text analysis of the song lyrics "*A Little Piece Of Heaven*"?, 3) How are ideologies embedded in the song lyrics "*A Little Piece Of Heaven*"?

Thus, this study is expected to contribute academically by expanding knowledge about the intersection between language, ideology, and social context, while encouraging readers and listeners to engage critically with the media they consume.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is based on two main theoretical frameworks for analyzing the lyrics of "*A Little Piece of Heaven*": Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (1995) and Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005). CDA is used as the main approach to reveal the relationship between language, power, and ideology. Fairclough (1995) views discourse as a social practice that reproduces social structures, power, and dominant ideologies. The analysis is conducted through three interrelated dimensions: Text Analysis (Description): Examination of formal linguistic features in lyrics, including vocabulary choice and grammar, Discursive Practice (Interpretation): Observing how lyrics are produced, distributed, and consumed (audience understanding) in temporal and intertextual contexts (such as their relationship to the Sweeney Todd drama)., Sociocultural Practice (Explanation): Explaining how the discourse of lyrics reflects and disseminates ideologies of power, morality, and social injustice in a broader context.

This theory is applied to the dimension of Text Analysis to identify and measure evaluative language (attitude) in lyrics. The aim is to reveal how lyricists express their attitudes and position listeners ideologically through three subsystems: Attitude: Consisting of Affect (emotion), Judgment (assessment of character/behavior), and Appreciation (assessment of objects/phenomena); Engagement: Regulates how writers involve or reject other voices (Monogloss vs. Heterogloss), which shows awareness of alternative ideological positions; Graduation: Functions to strengthen or weaken the attitudes and meanings expressed, giving intensity to the ideological message.

Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of Critical Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Theory in analyzing music. Fauqi (2022), for example, used Critical Discourse Analysis to reveal the social and ideological aspects behind personal expressions in song lyrics. Meanwhile, Vidhiasi (2021) showed that Appraisal Theory is very effective in revealing values, ideologies, and linguistic strategies in lyrics, where the Graduation system plays a major role in shaping a particular image.

By combining Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis and Martin & White's Appraisal Theory, this study provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing not only what is said in the lyrics, but also how the lyrics are evaluated, produced, and absorbed

in social and ideological practices, particularly in the context of the themes of obsession, violence, and morality in the song "*A Little Piece of Heaven*."

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach in accordance with Sulistyo (2006) who states that qualitative research deals with beliefs, perceptions, and ideas that cannot be measured numerically, and Hancock (2009) who explains that qualitative research aims to develop explanations of social phenomena. The study focused on the lyrics of Avenged Sevenfold's "*A Little Piece of Heaven*" as verbal document data, collected through documentation techniques using official song lyrics and supporting sources such as books, journals, websites, YouTube, and Avenged Sevenfold's official account. The analysis followed Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis consisting of text analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice, combined with Van Dijk's (1998) concept of power, inequality, and ideology in discourse. Appraisal Theory by Martin and White (2005) was applied to categorize evaluative expressions through Attitude (affect, judgement, appreciation), Graduation (force, focus), and Engagement (monogloss, heterogloss). In determining the classification of Affect, Graduation, and Engagement, the researcher relied on three authoritative dictionaries such as Oxford English Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Dictionary, and Cambridge Dictionary to used to define key lexical items, identify their semantic intensity, and determine their emotional or evaluative orientation; these dictionaries were essential for confirming whether lexical choices carried positive or negative meanings, identifying levels of force in Graduation (low, medium, high), and validating the monoglossic or heteroglossic nature of Engagement.

Data analysis used Miles and Huberman's (1994) flow model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting lyric segments related to themes such as violence, love, power, death, and morality; additional data were taken from fans' YouTube comments to examine emotional responses and moral perceptions. Data display employed tables containing stanza numbers, lyric excerpts, and textual explanations to facilitate interpretation. The analysis identified ideological categories including love and life, power and control, and morality, showing how the lyrics reflect complex social ideologies and power relations. Conclusion drawing involved verifying meanings for plausibility and validity by referencing CDA frameworks. Through the integration of Fairclough's CDA, Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach, and Appraisal Theory, this research systematically examined how ideology is represented in language, how the text is produced and consumed socially, and how it contributes to collective cognition among listeners.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research results and discussion are presented to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ideological meanings embedded in the song lyrics "A Little Piece of Heaven." Figures and tables are included to help visualize the findings. The discussion is

divided into two major sub-chapters to clearly explain the linguistic patterns and the sociocultural interpretations..

a. Sub Bab 1. Textual Analysis Using Appraisal Theory

Table 1. Summary of Appraisal Analysis in "*A Little Piece of Heaven*"

Attitude	Graduation						Engagement	
	Positive			Negative				
	L	M	H	L	M	H	Mo	Ht
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Affect	4	1	4	1	2	5	17	0
Judgement	3	1	0	2	5	7	18	0
Appreciation	2	1	2	1	2	3	11	0
N	9	3	6	4	9	15	46	0
%	19.6%	6.5%	13.0%	8.7%	19.6%	32.6%	100%	0.0%
N	18			28			46	0
%	39.1%			60.9%			100%	0.0%

The table summary reveals a total of 46 attitude-related data points, with a significant dominance of negative attitudes accounting for 60.9% (28 entries), while positive attitudes represent only 39.1% (18 entries). Among the three attitude categories, judgment contains the highest number of data, totaling 18 entries. However, the distribution within this category shows a clear imbalance: only 22.2% (4 entries) reflect positive judgment comprising 3 low positive and 1 medium positive, with no high positive values while the remaining 77.7% (14 entries) represent negative judgments, including 2 low negative, 5 medium negative, and 7 high negative entries. This disproportionate representation suggests that the evaluative language used in the dataset tends to lean more toward negative assessments, especially in the domain of
judgment. The following is an example of data:

"Cause everybody's gotta die sometime"

The passage above shows as data with a high level of negative value. "*Die*" is to stop being alive, either suddenly or slowly (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/die), "*Die*" is to stop living (https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/die_1?q=die), "Die" is If someone dies a violent, unnatural, or painful death, they die in a violent, unnatural, or painful way. (https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/ english/die).

At the level of discursive practice, the song's production demonstrates Avenged Sevenfold's theatrical-metal identity, influenced by dark narratives and cinematic horror aesthetics. The song blends orchestral arrangements with aggressive metal elements,

constructing a rebellious and provocative artistic expression. Its distribution across major digital platforms such as YouTube and Spotify allows global access and contributes to diverse audience receptions. Consumption patterns reveal two contrasting interpretations: loyal fans who appreciate the song as a form of artistic storytelling, and non-listeners who criticize its controversial themes. Socioculturally, the song reflects and challenges ideologies of love, morality, and gendered power. It subverts traditional romantic narratives by intertwining love with murder, possession, and supernatural revenge. The lyrics illustrate domination, emotional control, and violence as forms of relational expression, thereby engaging with broader societal discourses on morality and deviant behavior. The researcher analyzed the reaction of the comments that appeared on the song's YouTube platform:

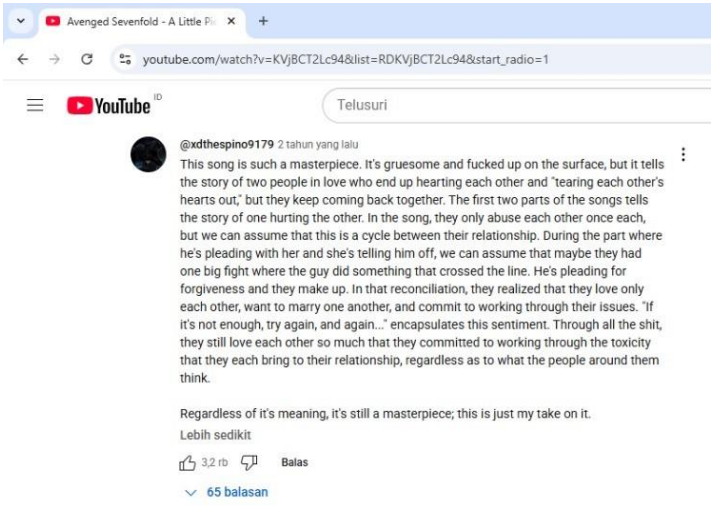


Figure 1. Comments from heavy metal fans and Avenged Sevenfold fans

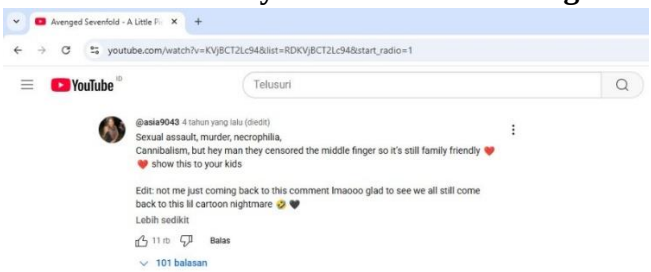


Figure 2. Comments from listeners who are not fans of heavy metal music and fans of Avenged Sevenfold

In the results of the analysis of comment reactions on the YouTube platform, in figure 1 show ideological differences in the meaning of the song "*A Little Piece Of Heaven*". Meanwhile, in figure 2 is a group that is neither Avenged fans nor heavy metal music fans who tend to form different model mentalities and negative responses. In this group, it is interpreted and seen that the song forms moral and cultural deviations and has the potential to have a bad influence on listeners.

The results of these findings show that the song "*A Little Piece Of Heaven*" in the social cognition and collective perception is polarized by heavy metal music fans,

especially Avenged Sevenfold fans and not heavy metal music fans or Avenged Sevenfold fans, giving judgments based on cultural ideology by considering it as freedom of expression or as a form of deviation from social norms. This is in line with Yuliasari's findings (2025) who found the results of social cognition and collective perception in the song "*Yok Miak*" which reflects the values of mutual cooperation and the preservation of local culture which are positively accepted by the people of Bangka as part of their collective identity. The results of the two studies reflect the values of the social groups of each different impact where the song "*Yok Miak*" shows the identity of the audience by interpreting the song as a form of strengthening the solidarity of the local community, while in the song "*A Little Piece Of Heaven*" shows the polarity of the audience with dominant values that challenge the general public.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis supported by Appraisal Theory, this study concludes that "*A Little Piece of Heaven*" operates as a discursive text filled with ideological symbolism rather than merely a musical composition. The song emerges from a cultural context that subverts traditional romantic values by merging themes of love, violence, death, and revenge, and is consumed by heavy metal audiences as an artistic expression that renegotiates moral boundaries. The Appraisal analysis shows a strong dominance of negative affect, moral judgement, and the aesthetic framing of sadistic acts as romantic, expressed through a monoglossic voice that limits alternative interpretations. Ideologically, the lyrics reflect possessive love and masculine dominance, depicting the male figure as maintaining control over the female even beyond death, which reinforces an extreme patriarchal discourse. At the same time, the song critiques consumer culture and the entertainment industry's transformation of violent narratives into symbolic artistic products, with fans collectively interpreting these extreme representations as existential symbols rather than literal forms of violence.

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