
Raising Voices for Palestine: Analyzing Macklemore's "Hind's Hall" through Barthes' Semiotic Lens

Krisna Sujiwa¹, Lazuar Azmi Zulferdi¹
¹Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
✉: krisna@enlitera.uad.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines Macklemore's 2024 protest song "Hind's Hall" as a cultural text that articulates transnational solidarity with Palestine amid escalating global attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While popular music has long functioned as a medium of political expression, scholarly analyses of contemporary Western protest songs addressing this issue remain limited. The research investigates how the song's lyrics and visuals construct meanings related to resistance, institutional repression, and global activism. Grounded in Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, particularly the concepts of denotation and connotation, the study employs a qualitative method through close reading of lyrical content and selected scenes from the music video. The findings reveal that denotative elements depict protest actions, state violence, and humanitarian suffering, while connotative meanings expose deeper ideological critiques of colonialism, racial capitalism, media manipulation, and the criminalization of dissent. The song also mobilizes affect and empathy to foster a sense of collective responsibility and transnational unity. This study concludes that "Hind's Hall" operates not merely as a protest anthem but as a layered cultural artifact that challenges dominant narratives and amplifies marginalized voices. By transforming personal expression into political discourse, the song demonstrates how contemporary music can function as a powerful instrument of global awareness and resistance.

Keywords: *connotative; denotative; Hind's Hall; Macklemore; Palestinian; struggle*

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INTRODUCTION

Music has long served as a medium for political expression, cultural resistance, and social transformation. Popular artists often utilize their platforms to comment on pressing global issues, fostering dialogue and empathy among diverse audiences. In this context, hip-hop has emerged as a particularly potent vehicle for social critique, addressing issues such as racism, inequality, war, and injustice (Rose, 1994; Forman & Neal, 2012). As a genre deeply rooted in the African American experience, hip-hop offers both a narrative and aesthetic framework through which marginalized voices assert their agency and challenge hegemonic discourses (Chang, 2005; Alim et al, 2009). Benjamin Haggerty, known professionally as Macklemore, is a white hip-hop artist whose work is often characterized by its strong social messaging. While his position within the genre is sometimes contested due to his racial identity and commercial success, Macklemore frequently engages with issues of privilege, identity, and social justice in his hip-hop music (Rabaka, 2013; McAdam & Kloos, 2014). His artistic persona blends introspection

with advocacy, and this duality is evident in songs that address topics ranging from addiction and minority rights to consumerism and systemic inequality. This complexity situates Macklemore as an important, if unconventional, voice in contemporary protest music.

One of Macklemore's most poignant and politically charged songs is "Hind's Hall," released amid growing global attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The song conveys grief, anger, and solidarity with Palestinians, foregrounding human suffering in Gaza while critiquing broader systems of oppression and silence. Rather than offering a detached political analysis, it constructs an affective narrative centered on the experience of a child victim, Hind Rajab, thereby humanizing a distant geopolitical crisis (Fisher, 2024). In this sense, the song not only functions as commentary but also as a call to moral consciousness, illustrating how affect and empathy operate as central mechanisms through which cultural texts mobilize political engagement and transnational solidarity (Boler, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2013).

Within the context of contemporary protest music, these affective dimensions are closely linked to the rise of digital transnational activism, where cultural production circulates across networked platforms and contributes to the formation of global public discourse. Scholars have shown that digital media environments enable music and audiovisual texts to act as catalysts for political visibility, facilitating the cross-border circulation of contested narratives (LeVine, 2015; Nagle, 2017). At the same time, research on digital activism in the Middle East demonstrates how transnational networks and online platforms reshape the dynamics of political mobilization—opening new spaces for solidarity while remaining entangled in global power structures and regimes of information control (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Lynch, 2011).

Within this framework, "Hind's Hall" can be situated as part of a wider field in which American popular music participates in global geopolitical discourse. Scholarship on music and politics suggests that popular music operates as a transnational medium through which political meanings are negotiated, often reflecting

and contesting the interests of nation-states, media institutions, and transnational publics (Street, 2012; Pieslak, 2009). By situating the song within the intersections of affect, digital circulation, and geopolitical discourse, this study moves beyond emotional interpretation to examine how American cultural production engages with contemporary debates on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Macklemore's independent release and public stance further reflect an alignment between artistic expression and political positioning. In this context, the song can be understood as part of a broader body of cultural texts that foreground empathy and challenge processes of depoliticization (Street, 2012; Tawakkal & Monix, 2021).

Despite the growing scholarly interest in music as a tool for activism, few academic studies have examined the interplay between lyrical and visual strategies in protest songs addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A relevant comparative study is presented by Sari and Wahyuni (2022) in their article "A Semiotic Analysis of Protest Meaning in Hujan Tanpa Awan Music Video by Efek Rumah Kaca," which, like the present

analysis of Macklemore's "Hind's Hall," utilizes Barthes' semiotic theory to decode the denotative and connotative elements embedded in a music video as a form of protest. Both studies examine how visual and lyrical elements communicate socio-political messages and how popular music functions as a medium of activism. However, while Sari and Wahyuni focus on environmental and governmental critique within an Indonesian context, this study advances a Transnational American Studies perspective by interrogating how American popular culture circulates globally as both a site of power and resistance. In this regard, Macklemore's positionality as a white American rapper is not incidental but constitutive of the song's meaning-making process: his voice operates within—and simultaneously attempts to disrupt—the epistemic and geopolitical authority historically associated with U.S. cultural production. "Hind's Hall" thus functions as a form of cultural self-critique, exposing the entanglement of American imperialism, racial capitalism, and U.S. foreign policy in sustaining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while also revealing the limits and contradictions of solidarity articulated from

within imperial centers. A notable similarity between the two studies lies in their shared methodology of close reading supported by Barthes' semiotics to dissect cultural codes and meanings. However, the key difference lies in the scale and theoretical framing—whereas Sari and Wahyuni (2022) foreground localized Indonesian activism, this study positions American protest music as a transnational discursive force that not only reflects but actively negotiates global power relations, thereby underscoring why such cultural interventions must be understood within broader circuits of empire, media, and resistance.

A comparable study is presented by Sidjabat et al (2018), who analyze the hybridization of hip-hop and dangdut in the music of NDX A.K.A, exploring how this fusion serves as a medium for political identity and resistance within a postcolonial framework. Similar to the current analysis of Macklemore's "Hind's Hall," both studies delve into how music genres can be instrumental in expressing socio-political commentary and resistance. While this study employs Barthes' semiotic theory to dissect the

connotative and denotative meanings in a Western hip-hop music video addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Sidjabat et al. focus on the textual and contextual analysis of Indonesian hip-hop dangdut, highlighting the cultural negotiations and identity formations within local contexts. The primary difference lies in the geographical and cultural focus: this study centers on Western music's role in global political discourse, whereas Sidjabat et al. examine the localization of hip-hop in Indonesia and its implications for cultural identity and resistance.

Macklemore's intervention has yet to be critically examined. This oversight reflects a broader hesitation within academia to treat mainstream Western artists as serious contributors to Middle Eastern political discourse. However, given Macklemore's global reach and the song's viral reception, such analysis is both timely and necessary. This paper analyses how Macklemore utilizes both lyrical content and visual aesthetics in "Hind's Hall" to engage audiences emotionally and intellectually in urgent conversations about Palestine, social justice, inequality, and collective unity. This study

aims to analyze how denotative and connotative signs in both lyrics and visuals of 'Hind's Hall' construct transnational solidarity discourse on Palestine.

METHODOLOGY

This study falls under qualitative research, which seeks to interpret the deeper meanings embedded in Macklemore's "Hind's Hall" through its lyrical and visual elements. Drawing on Creswell (2014), qualitative inquiry is employed to examine how meaning is constructed within cultural texts and situated within broader socio-political contexts. In this study, a "sign" is defined as any meaningful unit within the song, including linguistic expressions (lyrics, phrases, and rhetorical devices) and visual elements (images, scenes, and symbolic objects) that convey representational significance. The analysis follows Barthes' semiotic framework by first identifying denotative meanings—i.e., the literal, surface-level descriptions of what is explicitly presented in the lyrics or visuals—before proceeding to connotative meanings, which are interpreted through their cultural, ideological, and emotional associations. This process is conducted systematically by

selecting key lyrical lines and corresponding visual scenes, describing their explicit content, and then interpreting their broader socio-political implications within relevant cultural and historical contexts.

In alignment with a Transnational American Studies approach, this study employs semiotic analysis not merely to decode meaning but to interrogate how American cultural production operates within global circuits of power and resistance. At the same time, this study acknowledges the researcher's interpretive position as not neutral but situated. Given the politically charged nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the analysis is shaped by the researcher's academic background in American Studies and familiarity with critical theories of power, which may influence the interpretation of signs and ideological meanings. This reflexive stance is therefore explicitly recognized to account for potential bias, particularly in reading the song's critique of state power, imperialism, and global inequality. By foregrounding this positionality, the study seeks to maintain analytical transparency while critically engaging with how Macklemore's

positionality as a white American artist both enables and constrains the articulation of transnational solidarity. Through this combined methodological and reflexive approach, the analysis aims to produce a nuanced interpretation that situates "Hind's Hall" within broader transnational dynamics of culture, politics, and resistance.

The primary data used in this study consist solely of the lyrics of Macklemore's "Hind's Hall." The lyrics are obtained from the song's official release as published on YouTube, ensuring the authenticity and reliability of the textual data. Released in 2024, the song provides extensive material that reflects themes related to the Palestinian struggle, protest movements, and global political discourse. For data collection, this study employs a documentation method (Sugiyono, 2013), specifically through the systematic collection and organization of textual data from the song's lyrics. To avoid a generalized use of documentation, this study applies explicit criteria in selecting key lyrical excerpts for analysis. These criteria include: (1) the presence of explicit references to Palestine, protest, or state

violence; (2) the use of recurring or emphasized phrases that signal ideological significance; and (3) the relevance of the lyrics to the construction of denotative and connotative meanings within Barthes' semiotic framework. Through this approach, the selected data enable a focused and systematic analysis of how meaning is constructed within the lyrics, while also allowing the study to examine how American cultural expression engages with transnational political issues.

To further enrich the analysis, Barthes' semiotic theory (1967) provides a framework for examining how Macklemore's "Hind's Hall" communicates meaning through its lyrical elements. In this study, the analysis focuses exclusively on the song's lyrics as a textual form of cultural expression. Denotation is first identified by examining the literal meanings of specific words, phrases, and statements within the lyrics, such as explicit references to Gaza, protest, or state violence. Subsequently, the analysis proceeds to the level of connotation, where these linguistic signs are interpreted in relation to their broader cultural, emotional, and ideological associations, including themes

of resistance, solidarity, and injustice. This process is conducted systematically by selecting key lyrical excerpts and analyzing them in two stages: (1) describing their denotative meaning based on their explicit semantic content, and (2) interpreting their connotative meaning by situating them within relevant socio-political and historical contexts. Through this step-by-step approach, the study demonstrates how meaning is not fixed but constructed through layers of signification. By applying Barthes' semiotic model in this way, the analysis reveals how the lyrics of "Hind's Hall" function as a site of ideological articulation, producing meanings that extend beyond individual expression and engage with broader transnational discourses on power, resistance, and solidarity.

DISCUSSION

Criminalization of Protest and Institutional Repression

Macklemore's "Hind's Hall" opens with the lyric "The people, they won't leave / What is threatenin' about divesting and wantin' peace?" Denotatively, Macklemore's lyrics describe a situation in which people—presumably protestors or activists—remain

steadfast in their demands, despite external pressure or threats. The line "The people, they won't leave" signals a literal refusal to abandon a cause or space, such as university campuses where pro-Palestinian student protests and encampments have taken place. Then the line, "What is threatenin' about divesting and wantin' peace?" poses a rhetorical question that challenges the response of institutions and governments to peaceful calls for change. Divestment, in this context, refers to the global Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement, which advocates for withdrawing financial and institutional support from companies and entities complicit in the Israeli occupation of Palestine. These lines plainly question why non-violent activism is treated as dangerous or subversive. Connotatively, these lyrics uncover a deeper ideological tension embedded in the language of power and dissent. "The people" symbolizes a collective body of conscience—students, artists, workers, and citizens—who embody resistance against injustice. Their refusal to leave connotes resilience, moral clarity, and grassroots strength. The reference to "divesting and wanting peace" may seem benign on the surface, but Macklemore

uses this phrase to expose the hypocrisy and fear embedded within institutional responses to Palestinian solidarity. The connotation here reveals a power structure that finds even peaceful resistance threatening, not because it incites violence, but because it challenges profit systems, settler-colonial alliances, and geopolitical interests. The question becomes a critique of how calls for justice are framed as security threats, thus unmasking the ideological work done by dominant narratives to suppress liberation movements. In doing so, Macklemore not only amplifies the cause of Palestine but also critiques the rhetorical and institutional tools used to delegitimize peaceful dissent.

In the line "What is threatening about divesting and wanting peace?", Macklemore employs a rhetorical question that, on the denotative level, straightforwardly queries the rationale behind the hostility directed at non-violent activism, particularly campaigns advocating for divestment from Israeli institutions complicit in the occupation of Palestine. However, connotatively, this lyric functions as a trenchant critique of the ideological apparatuses that frame peaceful

dissent as inherently subversive or dangerous. The perceived threat of calls for peace and justice—when situated within movements like Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions, reveals the extent to which state power and capitalist interests rely on the suppression of even the most non-violent challenges to militarized and colonial structures. Macklemore's question lays bare the ideological contradictions of regimes that profess allegiance to democratic ideals while actively delegitimizing peaceful political actions that seek to redress systemic injustices. By foregrounding this paradox, the lyric not only deconstructs the mythologized narrative of Western moral superiority but also re-signifies peace activism as a radical disruption of hegemonic order, thereby repositioning it as a legitimate and potent force of resistance.

In the lyric, "The problem isn't the protests / it's what they're protesting," Macklemore articulates a critical distinction between the form and content of political dissent. Denotatively, the lyric suggests that institutional unease with demonstrations—particularly those in solidarity with Palestine—

stems not from the act of protest itself but from the specific political claims being advanced. Connotatively, however, the lyric exposes how protest becomes a site of ideological contestation, wherein dominant powers legitimize or delegitimize dissent based on its alignment with hegemonic interests. Protest is revealed as a mythologized object: its meaning is not fixed but shaped by cultural codes, media discourse, and state narratives. In this context, Macklemore critiques how protests challenging Zionist policies and U.S. complicity in Israeli state violence are disproportionately marginalized because they threaten deeply embedded geopolitical, economic, and ideological investments. The lyric thus functions as an act of semiotic resistance, destabilizing the dominant codes that determine which forms of dissent are socially and politically acceptable. By doing so, it underscores the asymmetrical power structures that regulate political expression and affirms the need to interrogate the ideological mechanisms that mediate public discourse around protest and legitimacy.

The lyric "If students in tents posted on the lawn /

Occupying the quad is really against the law / And a reason to call in the police and their squad" Denotatively, Macklemore describes a scene in which students have set up tents on a university lawn and are occupying a campus quad—likely referencing real-life student-led encampments that have taken place across American universities to protest the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The lyrics question the legality of such peaceful protest actions, implying that these acts have been deemed unlawful by authorities. The mention of the police and "their squad" underscores the physical manifestation of state authority, illustrating how law enforcement is used as a tool to control, intimidate, or disband student protestors. Macklemore uses straightforward language to illustrate how non-violent civil disobedience, particularly when linked to solidarity with Palestine, is often met with disproportionate state response and criminalization. Connotatively, these lines are rich with critique of institutional power and its role in suppressing dissent. According to Barthes (1967), connotation involves the cultural and ideological meanings behind a text's

surface language. Here, the phrase "students in tents" evokes historical memories of protest movements such as the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and Occupy Wall Street, which symbolize youthful resistance and moral urgency. The phrase "against the law" connotes not only legal restriction but the broader concept of authoritarian control—suggesting that the state uses legality as a tool to silence political action. The invocation of "the police and their squad" carries with it connotations of state violence, surveillance, and the militarization of public space, reinforcing how dissent—especially when it challenges imperial or Zionist narratives—is treated as a threat rather than a democratic right. By framing these peaceful actions as being wrongly criminalized, Macklemore exposes the contradiction between professed democratic values and the reality of state repression, urging his audience to question who benefits from such enforcement and whose voices are being suppressed.

Delegitimization of State Power

In the line "Actors in badges protecting property," Macklemore offers a layered critique of law enforcement that, on the denotative level,

casts police officers as performers whose primary role is the defense of material assets rather than the safeguarding of human life. Connotatively, however, the lyric functions as a radical unmasking of the ideological foundations of policing within racial capitalist societies. The lyric exposes the constructed narrative of the police as neutral protectors of public safety. Instead, Macklemore positions them as symbolic agents in a performative system, where authority is choreographed not in the service of justice but in the preservation of property relations and social hierarchies. The phrase "actors in badges" underscores the theatricality of state violence, implying that the rituals and visual codes of policing—uniforms, badges, procedural language—are designed to legitimize the coercive protection of capital, often at the expense of marginalized communities. By foregrounding this performativity, the lyric destabilizes dominant myths surrounding law enforcement and reframes the police not as impartial figures of order, but as ideologically charged instruments of white supremacy and structural inequality.

The line "A state that's gotta rely on an apartheid system / To uphold an occupyin' violent" Denotatively, the lyrics state that a particular "state" depends on an "apartheid system" to maintain an "occupying" and "violent" presence. At the surface level, Macklemore is describing a government or political entity—clearly referencing the state of Israel—that sustains its control through segregationist and coercive means. The use of the word "apartheid" recalls the official system of racial segregation in South Africa, while "occupying" and "violent" denote physical control and the use of force over another population. This direct naming of structural oppression provides listeners with a blunt and unambiguous description of how domination is maintained. The lyrics thus make explicit reference to the political realities in Palestine, challenging the sanitized language often used in mainstream media and political rhetoric. Connotatively, these lines carry much deeper ideological significance. According to Barthes, connotation involves the cultural, emotional, and ideological associations that accompany denotative meanings (Barthes, 1967). Here, "apartheid" not only signifies segregation but connotes

institutionalized racism, colonial legacies, and the moral bankruptcy of systems that claim democracy while enforcing separation and violence. The phrase "gotta rely" implies desperation or the unsustainability of such a regime, suggesting that the use of apartheid and violence is not a sign of strength but of fear and illegitimacy. Additionally, the connotation of "occupying" evokes historical images of colonialism, displacement, and resistance, positioning Israel's actions as part of a broader narrative of imperial domination. By choosing these charged terms, Macklemore connects the Palestinian struggle to global movements against racialized violence and structural injustice, inviting his audience to recognize the broader patterns of oppression and to reject the myths that frame the Israeli state's actions as defensive rather than oppressive. In doing so, the artist not only informs but provokes moral engagement and solidarity through layered, symbolic language.

The lyric "The blood is on your hands, Biden, we can see it all" Denotatively, the lyric "The blood is on your hands, Biden, we can see it all" is a direct accusation addressed to U.S. President Joe Biden,

attributing responsibility for Palestinian deaths to him. The phrase "blood is on your hands" literally implies that Biden bears culpability for acts of violence—specifically those carried out or supported through American military funding, diplomatic backing, or silence in the face of Israeli actions. The addition of "we can see it all" further suggests a rejection of concealment or plausible deniability; it signals that the public, especially a younger and politically engaged generation, is aware of and bearing witness to the atrocities committed in Palestine. This line foregrounds the visibility of violence in the digital era, where social media and citizen journalism expose real-time footage of war crimes and civilian suffering. Connotatively, Macklemore's lyric carries a profound symbolic charge by invoking the imagery of stained hands—a classic metaphor for guilt and complicity. The connotation here transcends individual accountability and reflects systemic entanglement, implicating the American state and its institutions in the perpetuation of settler-colonial violence. The line plays on the symbolic power of "blood" to evoke emotional and moral weight, aligning with a

long history of protest language used to call out leaders for unethical wars or foreign policy decisions. Furthermore, "we can see it all" undermines state-crafted narratives and propaganda, reinforcing the idea that truth can no longer be hidden in an era of global digital awareness. This confrontation with power serves not only as a lyrical act of dissent but also as an invitation for collective political consciousness, aligning Macklemore's art with anti-imperialist and decolonial movements that challenge dominant narratives and demand justice for the Palestinian people.

The lyric "We sell fear around the land of the free" operates as a potent paradox that, on the denotative level, points to the commodification of fear within the United States, suggesting that political, economic, and media institutions profit from the proliferation of anxiety and insecurity. Connotatively, the phrase critiques the deep irony embedded in American national identity: while the U.S. proclaims itself as "the land of the free," it simultaneously sustains itself through systems of securitization, surveillance, militarization, and ideological control. The phrase "land of the free" is

revealed as a mythic signifier—one that naturalizes a national self-image rooted in liberty and democracy, while concealing the structural mechanisms of domination that contradict this ideal. The juxtaposition of "freedom" with the act of "selling fear" functions to deconstruct this myth, exposing the ideological contradictions that underpin U.S. statecraft. Fear becomes a political commodity, instrumentalized to justify foreign interventions, domestic policing, and the suppression of dissent, all under the guise of protecting freedom. By foregrounding this contradiction, Macklemore not only challenges the legitimacy of foundational American narratives but also reveals how language and ideology work together to maintain a veneer of freedom that obscures systemic violence and control.

Denotatively, the lyric "Has always been about dollars / and the color of your pigment" expresses a direct commentary on systemic inequality, suggesting that decisions regarding justice, defense, and human rights have historically been influenced by money and race. The word "dollars" literally refers to economic power or financial interests, while "color of your pigment" plainly points to an individual's skin color or

racial identity. On the surface, this lyric criticizes how access to rights and protection is not equally distributed, and instead depends on economic resources and racial background. Macklemore's choice of phrasing highlights a recurring pattern in global politics, where those in power prioritize financial alliances and racial hierarchies over human dignity and equity. Connotatively, this lyric invokes a broader critique of racial capitalism and geopolitical hypocrisy. "Dollars" signify more than just money—they connote the larger system of neoliberal interests, international lobbying, and military-industrial influence that underpin foreign policy, particularly U.S. support for Israel (Fajarwati & Adi, 2024). Meanwhile, "the color of your pigment" evokes not only race, but the deeply entrenched ideologies of white supremacy that shape which lives are valued and which are rendered invisible. Macklemore points to how resistance movements, like that of Palestinians, are delegitimized or criminalized precisely because they come from communities of color without economic leverage. Thus, the lyric critiques the structural forces that determine who has the right to self-defense and whose lives

are deemed expendable. In this way, Macklemore uses his platform to expose the intersection of racial and economic injustice at the heart of the Palestinian struggle, urging listeners to confront the connotative myths that obscure these power dynamics.

The lyric "History been repeating for the last seventy-five / The Nakba never ended, the colonizer lied" Denotatively, Macklemore's lyric "History been repeating for the last seventy-five" points to a continuous and prolonged historical pattern spanning seventy-five years, a reference to the period since the 1948 Nakba, or "catastrophe," when over 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes during the creation of the state of Israel. The next line, "The Nakba never ended, the colonizer lied," reinforces this by asserting that the initial trauma of displacement has not ceased, contradicting dominant narratives that treat the Nakba as a closed historical event. The phrase "the colonizer lied" denotatively accuses the colonizing force—implicitly Israel or its supporting Western powers—of historical deception, particularly regarding the nature and continuity of the Palestinian

struggle. Together, these lines call attention to the ongoing realities of occupation, suggesting that the violence and dispossession that began in 1948 persist in new forms. Connotatively, the lyrics carry a deep ideological critique of how history is written and remembered. The Nakba is often framed as a singular event rather than a structure of continuous colonial violence. By stating that "history been repeating," Macklemore disrupts the illusion of progress or resolution, instead highlighting cyclical oppression and unacknowledged colonial legacies. The connotation of "the colonizer lied" suggests that historical narratives have been manipulated to obscure the truth, creating a myth of legitimacy for the state and erasing the experiences of the oppressed. The use of the term "Nakba" itself also carries cultural and emotional weight, invoking generational trauma and collective memory among Palestinians. Through this language, Macklemore aligns himself with decolonial discourse and challenges listeners to rethink what they have been told about Israel-Palestine. His lyrics not only raise awareness but also work to dismantle dominant myths that normalize ongoing

occupation and silence Palestinian voices.

Transnational Solidarity

The repeated chant "Block the barricade until Palestine is free" operates at both a literal and symbolic register, functioning as a powerful instance of politically charged discourse within protest culture. Denotatively, it calls for the physical obstruction of institutional or state apparatuses—such as university buildings, administrative operations, or public spaces—as an act of solidarity with the Palestinian liberation movement. The chant accrues connotative meaning that extends far beyond its surface directive. Repetition, a key mechanism in the construction of myth according to Barthes, imbues the phrase with cultural and ideological significance, transforming it into a symbolic articulation of resistance (Barthes, 1967; Pratiwi, 2023). The chant evokes a collective memory of anti-colonial and civil rights struggles, aligning the Palestinian cause with a transnational genealogy of liberationist movements, including Black resistance in the United States, anti-apartheid activism in South Africa, and global student uprisings. In this way, the phrase becomes a polyvalent signifier—its invocation of

"barricade" conjures imagery of revolt, endurance, and refusal. At the same time, the conditional clause "until Palestine is free" signals a sustained commitment to justice and decolonization. Connotatively, then, the chant not only mobilizes bodies in space but also mobilizes historical consciousness, embedding contemporary protest within a larger semiotic tradition of anti-oppression and collective resilience.

Denotatively, the lyric "White supremacy is finally on blast / Screamin' 'Free Palestine' 'til they're home at last (Woo)" refers to the act of publicly exposing and criticizing white supremacy, a system of racial hierarchy that privileges white people over others. The phrase "on blast" denotes a direct, vocal condemnation—bringing attention to something previously ignored or unchallenged. The following line, "Screamin' 'Free Palestine' 'til they're home at last," denotatively expresses an active and continuous support for Palestinian liberation, calling for an end to displacement and occupation. Taken at face value, these lines describe a moment of awakening, where individuals are speaking out against systemic racism and aligning

that resistance with the demand for Palestinian freedom. Connotatively, however, these lyrics carry deeper ideological weight. "White supremacy" operates not only as a literal system but also as a myth—a constructed, normalized structure of power that governs how people and struggles are represented, or erased, in dominant discourse. Macklemore's act of putting "white supremacy on blast" connotes the unraveling of this myth, exposing its role in upholding both domestic racial injustice and global oppression, including the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The line "Screamin' 'Free Palestine'" signifies more than a chant—it symbolizes a broader resistance movement rooted in solidarity and decolonization. The phrase "'til they're home at last" evokes both a literal return to Palestinian land and a metaphorical return to justice and dignity. Through these lines, Macklemore draws a powerful parallel between racial struggles in the West and anti-colonial movements abroad, using connotation to dismantle the sanitized narratives that often obscure the structural ties between racism, empire, and occupation.

The question "Who gets the right to defend and who gets

the right of resistance?" It functions as a direct examination of the political dynamics of legitimacy that shape the framing of violence in both global and domestic contexts. Denotatively, the lyric highlights disparities in the attribution of moral and legal authority to acts of violence, questioning why certain actors are valorized as defenders while others are vilified as insurgents or terrorists. Connotatively, this inquiry exposes the underlying racialized and economic logics that shape these distinctions, revealing how systems of power selectively ascribe legitimacy based on geopolitical interests, colonial histories, and socio-economic hierarchies. The lyric functions as a semiotic intervention that unmask the ideological deployment of language as a tool to naturalize state violence and hegemonic narratives, while simultaneously criminalizing and delegitimizing resistance from marginalized groups. By problematizing the binary categories of "defence" and "resistance," Macklemore challenges the dominant moral and legal discourses that sustain asymmetrical power relations, compelling a critical re-evaluation of whose violence is sanctioned and

whose is condemned within the frameworks of international law and political rhetoric. This lyric thus serves as a potent call to disrupt normalized narratives and to reconsider the ethical parameters through which violence and resistance are understood.

The lyric "What if you were Gaza?" employs a powerful rhetorical device that, denotatively, invites the listener to imaginatively place themselves within the lived experience of those enduring the crisis in Gaza. Connotatively, this line functions as an ethical confrontation, challenging the listener to move beyond detached spectatorship and engage empathetically with the human realities behind geopolitical conflict. This lyric acts as an emotional and moral wound that breaks down the psychological distance between observer and subject. By personalizing the suffering of Gaza, the line subverts conventional modes of distant, abstract consumption of trauma and instead demands intimate identification, thereby politicizing empathy itself. This engagement foregrounds the ethical imperative that silence in the face of systemic injustice is tantamount to complicity, compelling the listener to take a moral stance

consciously. Thus, the lyric operates not merely as a call for awareness but as a decisive intervention in the politics of representation and responsibility.

Then the lyrics "If the West was pretendin' that you didn't exist / You'd want the world to stand up and the students finally did, let's get it" Denotatively, these lyrics convey a hypothetical scenario addressing the invisibility and erasure experienced by Palestinians within Western political and media discourses. The phrase "If the West was pretendin' that you didn't exist" straightforwardly indicates deliberate denial or ignorance by Western nations regarding Palestinian suffering and existence. This is followed by an empathetic call that positions the listener to imagine their own reaction under such marginalization: "You'd want the world to stand up." The final line, "and the students finally did, let's get it," highlights concrete action taken by a new generation—specifically students who have organized protests and campaigns in solidarity with Palestine, symbolizing a break from silence and complicity. Connotatively, these lyrics operate on a deeper symbolic level by critiquing the West's

hegemonic narrative control and exposing systemic erasure. Through Barthes' lens, the phrase "pretendin' that you didn't exist" connotes not only ignorance but an active political choice to render Palestinians invisible, which functions as a form of structural violence. This invisibility silences Palestinian voices and normalizes their suffering as unworthy of global attention or intervention. The invocation of "the students finally did" connotes hope and a shift in consciousness, suggesting a burgeoning grassroots resistance that disrupts established power relations and challenges dominant media portrayals. The celebratory "let's get it" conveys collective energy and mobilization, affirming solidarity and the urgent demand for justice. Thus, Macklemore's lyrics use denotative clarity combined with powerful connotative resonance to raise awareness and inspire activism surrounding the Palestinian struggle.

Digital Witnessing and Resistance to Media Hegemony

In the line "You can pay off Meta / you can't pay off me," Macklemore articulates a critique of corporate influence over digital discourse that

operates on both denotative and connotative levels. Denotatively, the lyric references Meta-parent company of Facebook and Instagram—as an entity susceptible to financial persuasion, implying its complicity in silencing dissent or shaping narratives in accordance with powerful interests. Connotatively, however, the line affirms Macklemore's artistic autonomy, framing himself as resistant to commodification and immune to institutional co-optation. Meta functions here as a signifier of digital hegemony—an apparatus that naturalizes selective censorship and curates political visibility through algorithmic governance. The lyric demystifies the seemingly neutral role of social media platforms by exposing their ideological embeddedness within systems of capital and state power. Macklemore's declaration positions him in opposition to these mechanisms, casting himself as a subversive voice committed to truth-telling in a media landscape saturated with corporate distortion. In this context, independent art emerges as a form of counter-hegemonic resistance, capable of disrupting dominant modes of communication and reclaiming narrative agency from

algorithmically curated information economies.

The line "You can ban TikTok/take us out the algorithm/but it's too late" denotatively references U.S. governmental attempts to regulate or censor digital platforms, reflecting concrete policy measures aimed at restricting access to certain modes of communication and information dissemination. Connotatively, however, the lyric elevates the emancipatory potential of digital witnessing and grassroots information flows that transcend institutional control. The word "algorithm" emerges not as a neutral mechanism but as an instrument of power that governs visibility and shapes public discourse by privileging or suppressing particular narratives. Macklemore's assertion that "it's too late" suggests that despite such censorship efforts, the truth about Gaza's realities has already permeated collective consciousness, circulating through decentralized networks of resistance and solidarity. In this context, the lyric functions as a performative declaration of epistemic resistance, wherein the very act of bearing witness via digital media becomes a subversive practice challenging hegemonic control

over knowledge production. By framing digital platforms as contested spaces where counter-hegemonic truths can flourish despite attempts at suppression, Macklemore underscores the transformative potential of mediated activism and the resilience of truth in the digital age.

Denotatively, the lines "we've seen the truth we bare witness / We've seen the rubble the buildings / the mothers the children / And all the men that you murdered / and then we see how they spin it" describe a direct observation of destruction and human suffering. The lyric enumerates the physical devastation ("rubble," "buildings") and the tragic human cost ("mothers," "children," "men that you murdered") of conflict, portraying a stark and factual account of violence. The phrase "we bare witness" indicates an act of bearing testimony, suggesting that these horrors are witnessed firsthand or through credible documentation. Barthes' theory helps us understand this denotative layer as the surface narrative, which is straightforward and undeniable in its presentation of loss and death. Connotatively, however, these lyrics carry profound political and ideological implications. The phrase "and

then we see how they spin it" reveals a critical awareness of how media and official narratives manipulate or distort the representation of these events to serve particular interests. "Spin" functions as a myth, a dominant cultural narrative that reframes or obfuscates the truth to justify or minimize violence and occupation. The mention of "mothers" and "children" heightens the emotional resonance, evoking innocence and victimhood, while the inclusion of "men that you murdered" points to direct culpability and violence perpetrated by specific actors, implicitly criticizing the Israeli state and its supporters. This lyric thus challenges hegemonic discourses, emphasizing how truth is contested and how bearing witness becomes an act of resistance against propaganda that seeks to delegitimize Palestinian suffering. Macklemore's language invites listeners to question the official narratives and to recognize the power dynamics involved in controlling historical memory and public perception.

The chant "You can't twist the truth, the people out here united / Never be defeated when freedom's on the horizon" Denotatively, these lyrics

assert a straightforward message about collective solidarity and resilience. "You can't twist the truth" suggests that despite efforts by certain powers—likely governments, media, or institutions—to manipulate or obscure reality, the factual circumstances surrounding the Palestinian struggle remain clear and undeniable. The phrase "the people out here united" literally depicts a community of protestors and activists standing together in solidarity, strengthening their cause through shared commitment. The second line, "Never be defeated when freedom's on the horizon," implies an unwavering hope and determination rooted in the belief that liberation and justice are imminent. These lyrics construct an image of perseverance in the face of oppression and contested narratives. At the connotative level, the phrase "twist the truth" can be interpreted as signaling the manipulation of discourse by dominant political forces, in which certain narratives are privileged while others are marginalized. This suggests that the struggle is not only material but also discursive, involving competing representations of legitimacy and resistance. The expression "the people" may be read as extending beyond a

literal collective, instead signifying a broader sense of shared consciousness that underpins forms of collective action. Similarly, the phrase "freedom's on the horizon" connotes a future-oriented perspective, in which liberation is framed as a possibility rather than an immediate reality. Taken together, these elements indicate how the lyrics construct a layered system of meaning in which notions of resistance, hope, and collective identity are articulated through culturally embedded signs. Rather than functioning as direct statements of political intent, these expressions can be understood as semiotic resources that position the Palestinian struggle within wider discourses of human rights and anti-colonial resistance. In this sense, the ideological critique emerges through the interplay of signs within the lyrics themselves, rather than through explicit authorial assertion.

The line "What happened to the artist? What d'you got to say? / If I was on a label, you could drop me today / I'd be fine with it 'cause the heart fed my page". Denotatively, these lyrics express Macklemore's direct questioning of artists'

responses to political injustice, particularly regarding the Palestinian struggle. The opening line, "What happened to the artist? What d'you got to say?" explicitly calls out musicians and cultural figures, challenging them to speak out rather than remain silent. The following line, "If I was on a label, you could drop me today," refers literally to the commercial consequences of speaking out against powerful interests, implying that record labels might sever ties with artists who engage in politically sensitive activism. Finally, "I'd be fine with it 'cause the heart fed my page" denotes Macklemore's personal conviction that authentic artistic expression, driven by passion and moral integrity, holds greater value than commercial success or industry approval. Connotatively, these lyrics carry layered meanings that critique the commodification of art and the pressures faced by artists within capitalist and corporate systems. Using Barthes' theory, the question "What happened to the artist?" suggests a lost sense of social responsibility and courage among mainstream artists, implying that many prioritize profit and popularity over truth-telling and activism. The potential "dropping" by a label

connotes censorship and silencing of dissenting voices, highlighting the structural constraints that limit artistic freedom when it conflicts with dominant political or economic interests. Moreover, "the heart fed my page" symbolizes a return to sincerity, emotional truth, and grassroots connection—values that resist commercialization and uphold art as a tool for social change. By embedding this tension in his lyrics, Macklemore raises awareness about the Palestinian struggle while simultaneously exposing the broader challenges artists face when navigating the politics of expression in an industry often complicit in maintaining the status quo.

CONCLUSION

Importantly, this analysis extends to the level of myth, where these connotative meanings coalesce into broader ideological structures. In Barthesian terms, the lyrics can be read as decoding and contesting dominant myths perpetuated by mainstream political and media discourse—such as the normalization of state violence, the framing of resistance as illegitimate, and the construction of geopolitical conflicts through selective narratives. By exposing these myths, the song does not simply describe

political realities but participates in a process of ideological critique. "Hind's Hall" functions as a site where meaning is negotiated and re-signified, positioning the Palestinian struggle within wider discourses of colonialism, racial capitalism, and global inequality. Rather than advancing explicit political claims, the song's critical force emerges through its semiotic construction, which enables it to challenge dominant narratives while simultaneously revealing the ideological assumptions that sustain them.

COMPETING INTEREST STATEMENT

Herewith, the author declares that this article is totally free from any conflict of interest regarding the assessment, review and revision, and publication process in general.

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