



## Post-structural analysis of lacan and derrida in queen's *bohemian rhapsody*

Izzaditya Dharmaputra Mikail<sup>1</sup>

Zahra Pramatatya Soenarko<sup>2</sup>

Muchammad Daffa Firzatullah<sup>3</sup>

Shelly Putri Nur Hidayah<sup>4</sup>

Rommel Utungga Pasopati<sup>5\*</sup>

<sup>12345</sup> Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Surabaya, Indonesia

Email: [rommelpasopati@yahoo.com](mailto:rommelpasopati@yahoo.com)

### Article info

#### Keywords:

Bohemian Rhapsody; Jacques Derrida; Jacques Lacan; post-structuralism

#### Article History:

Received: October 21, 2025

Revised: December 11, 2025

Accepted: March 26, 2025

Published: March 30, 2026

How to cite in APA style: Mikail, I. D., Soenarko, Z. P., Firzatullah, M. D., Hidayah, S. P. N., & Pasopati, R. U. (2026). Post-structural analysis of lacan and derrida in queen's bohemian rhapsody. *JOEEL (Journal of English Education and Literature)*, 7(1). 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.38114/9zky263>

### ABSTRACT

This study examines *Bohemian Rhapsody* (1975) by Queen through a post-structuralist lens, explaining how the song's shifting voices and fragmented storyline render it impossible to arrive at a single fixed meaning. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study analyzes the song as a literary text and explores its lyrics with an approach that breaks down and closely analyzes their deeper significance, drawing on the ideas of Jacques Derrida and the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan. The analysis identifies several key elements: the presence of opposing pairs such as life/death and guilt/innocence, the fragmentation of the lyrical subject, playful language that continually postpones definitive meaning, and the tension between free will and inevitability. The findings reveal that the song embodies Derrida's concept of *différance*, meaning that it is endlessly differentiated and Lacan's notion of a divided subject shaped by desire and symbolic structures. In conclusion, *Bohemian Rhapsody* is more than just a rock song; it is a complex cultural text that invites multiple interpretations influenced by the listener's context and personal experience.

This is an open access article under [CC-BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) license



## INTRODUCTION

*Bohemian Rhapsody*, the masterpiece by the legendary rock band Queen, is an iconic song entirely written by Freddie Mercury. Known for its unconventional structure combining piano ballads, guitar solos, opera segments, and hard rock, this nearly six-minute-long song has sparked a variety of interpretations thanks to its mysterious and complex lyrics. In literary and cultural studies, a song can be

explored, as a “text” layered with diverse meanings shaped by its language, structure, and the cultural setting in which it exists (Fink, 2010; Hwu, 1993; Lawlor, 2014). Rather than presenting a fixed storyline, a text in this context remains fluid, ambiguous, and resistant to any single interpretation as shown in that Queen’s song. This idea fits especially well with *Bohemian Rhapsody*, whose lyrics shift between intimate confession, existential unease, and dramatic narrative, encouraging a range of interpretations rather than offering a single message (Putra et al., 2020).

Given the reason, *Bohemian Rhapsody* does not have a single meaning but can have many leading to the need for a theory framework that can deal with this kind of fluidity and ambiguity. To analyze the song effectively, it requires a theoretical perspective such as post-structuralism that acknowledges both the instability and the multiplicity of meaning. Post-structuralism, which evolved from structuralist thought, emphasizes the instability of language and the impossibility of a final, singular interpretation (Derrida, 1978; Fink, 2010; Hwu, 1993). Jacques Derrida’s concept of *différance* highlights how meaning is continually deferred through the play of language, while Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory demonstrates how subjectivity is shaped through symbolic structures and desire (Derrida, 1978; Lacan, 1977). Applying this perspective to *Bohemian Rhapsody* allows the readers to examine the song not merely as a musical work but as a text in which language, identity, and meaning are fragmented, unstable, and open to deconstruction.

Although *Bohemian Rhapsody* enjoys widespread acclaim, prior research predominantly emphasizes its musical composition, figurative language, or narrative structure, rather than analysing it through a stringent post-structuralist theoretical lens. Current studies frequently examine the lyrics via the lens of artistic elements, symbolic significance, or biographical allusions to Freddie Mercury, typically presuming that the song conveys a unified message. Such techniques often neglect the potential for the text to defy stable interpretation owing to the intrinsic volatility of language. Moreover, while post-structuralist theories have been widely used in literary studies, there is a paucity of research analysing popular music lyrics through the integrated lenses of Derridean deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis. These theoretical viewpoints provide significant insights into the continual deferral of meaning and the potential fragmentation of the lyrical topic inside language. The intricate and polyphonic composition of *Bohemian Rhapsody* offers a notably fertile ground for examining these concepts; nonetheless, its interpretative potential has seldom been explored via this cohesive theoretical framework.

This study aims to address this gap by analysing the lyrics of *Bohemian Rhapsody* via a post-structuralist lens that integrates Derrida’s concept of *différance*

and Lacan's idea of the divided subject. This framework illustrates how the song undermines fixed ideas and portrays a fractured subjectivity shaped by words.

## METHOD

This study employs qualitative textual analysis to examine the lyrics of Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* (1975) from a post-structuralist perspective. The study treats the lyrics not as empirical data in traditional qualitative research, but as a literary work, with meanings arising from interpretative engagement with language, symbolism, and narrative structure. Textual analysis enables the researcher to investigate how meaning is formulated, undermined, and redefined within the lyrics. The principal data of the study comprises the official lyrics of "Bohemian Rhapsody," authored by Freddie Mercury and released in Queen's album "A Night at the Opera" (1975). The lyrics serve as the primary textual corpus for examination. Supporting sources include academic books and journal articles on post-structuralist literary theory, specifically the writings of Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan.

The study's analytical framework incorporates two principal theoretical perspectives. Derrida's concept of deconstruction, including the ideas of *différance*, binary opposition, and aporia, is employed to analyse how the lyrics subvert stable meaning and expose underlying incoherence in language. Secondly, Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, encompassing the notions of the divided subject, the Symbolic Order, and the Real, is utilized to examine how the lyrical voice embodies fragmented identity and psychological conflict within the linguistic framework. The analysis proceeds through multiple interpretative phases. The lyrics were meticulously analysed to discern pivotal expressions, symbolic components, and narrative transitions that signify instability of meaning or subjectivity. Secondly, excerpts from various sections of the song introduction, verses, operatic segment, bridge, and conclusion were analysed in accordance with Derridean and Lacanian theories. Third, the discerned textual elements were analysed to elucidate how the song develops many layers of meaning and portrays the lyrical subject as unstable and fragmented.

This interpretative approach aims to illustrate how *Bohemian Rhapsody* functions as a multifaceted literary structure where language, identity, and meaning are flexible and subject to several readings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *Bohemian Rhapsody* and Its Complexity

Freddie Mercury's genius is directly reflected in the song of *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Such song does not only contain complex lyrics, but also meaningful ones. It is also

accompanied with various musicality that exemplifies its legendary position in artistic manner. The lyrics of the song are listed below;

**[Intro]**

*Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy?  
Caught in a landslide, no escape from reality.  
Open your eyes, look up to the skies and see.  
I'm just a poor boy, I need no sympathy,  
Because I'm easy come, easy go,  
Little high, little low,  
Any way the wind blows, doesn't really matter to me, to me.*

**[Verse 1]**

*Mama, just killed a man,  
Put a gun against his head, pulled my trigger, now he's dead.  
Mama, life had just begun,  
But now I've gone and thrown it all away.  
Mama, ooh,  
Didn't mean to make you cry.  
If I'm not back again this time tomorrow,  
Carry on, carry on, as if nothing really matters.*

**[Verse 2]**

*Too late, my time has come,  
Sends shivers down my spine, body's aching all the time.  
Goodbye, everybody, I've got to go,  
Gotta leave you all behind and face the truth.  
Mama, ooh (any way the wind blows)  
I don't wanna die,  
I sometimes wish I'd never been born at all.*

**[Verse 3]**

*I see a little silhouetto of a man.  
Scaramouche, Scaramouche, will you do the Fandango?  
Thunderbolt and lightning, very, very frightening me.  
(Galileo) Galileo. (Galileo) Galileo. Galileo Figaro magnifico oh oh oh.  
I'm just a poor boy, nobody loves me.  
He's just a poor boy from a poor family,  
Spare him his life from this monstrosity.  
Easy come, easy go, will you let me go?  
Bismillah! No, we will not let you go. (Let him go!)  
Bismillah! We will not let you go. (Let him go!)  
Bismillah! We will not let you go. (Let me go.)  
Will not let you go. (Let me go.)*

*(Never, never, never, never let me go.)  
Oh mama mia, mama mia, mama mia let me go.  
Beelzebub has a devil put aside for me, for me, for me!*

**[Bridge]**

*So you think you can stone me and spit in my eye?  
So you think you can love me and leave me to die?  
Oh, baby, can't do this to me, baby!  
Just gotta get out, just gotta get right outta here!*

**[Outro]**

*(Ooh, ooh, ooh)  
Nothing really matters,  
Anyone can see,  
Nothing really matters,  
Nothing really matters to me.  
Any way the wind blows...*

The lyrics above underline that those are not merely English language with simple meanings. It is full of symbolism and even such rebellion against definitions on the surface. The audience of this song is always invited to learn more about what Freddie thinks alongside the symbolic understandings of such lyrics. *Bohemian Rhapsody* indeed should be read as an inherently unstable text that is full of ambiguities and contradictions. Through the Derridean lens, the lyrics suspend and disperse definitions through flexible yet open meanings (Derrida, 1978; Fink, 2010). Moreover, through Lacanian sense, what Freddie wrote in the lyrics is mediated through language in which the narrative subject splits and grapples with identity.

### **Post-Structuralism Lenses of Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan**

This analysis will be rooted in the two main pillars of post-structuralism: Jacques Derrida's deconstruction and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis. These two thinkers offer a powerful framework for dismantling seemingly stable meanings and understanding the complexity of the subject in language. Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction and *Différance*. Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) was a French philosopher known as the founder of deconstruction. This method aims to dismantle Western metaphysical assumptions about stable presence and meaning. Derrida argues that meaning is never fully present or self-contained, but rather always delayed and dispersed in a network of *différance*. The concept of *différance* combines "to differ" and "to defer", implying that the meaning of a word is always different from other words and delayed, never fully present (Derrida, 1978; Fink, 2010).

Derrida also emphasizes that every text contains traces of what is absent or suppressed. Language is not a direct reflection of reality, but a system of signs that refer to each other. In deconstruction, we look for aporia (internal contradictions)

that reveal the instability of meaning. Logocentrism, the belief in a stable center of meaning, is Derrida's main target. Any attempt to establish a single meaning will reveal the ambiguity inherent in language (Derrida, 1981). Deconstruction shows "the inability of language to achieve total transparency" (Chiesa, 2016; Critchley, 2014).

One of the most important examples of the deconstruction approach developed by Jacques Derrida is his analysis of the binary opposition between speech and writing. In the Western philosophical tradition, speech is often considered superior to writing because it is considered more authentic and directly reflects the speaker's thoughts - a view called logocentrism. Derrida questioned and dismantled these assumptions. He shows that it is precisely writing, with its repeatability and detachment from the author presence, that provides the basic framework for the possibility of communication in general. Without the delayed and open structure of writing, meaning in speech becomes unstable. In other words, what has been considered a secondary form (writing), turns out to have a very important and fundamental role for the existence and understanding of speech itself. Through this approach, Derrida reverses the hierarchy of values and invites us to see that what is considered primary often depends on what is considered secondary (Derrida, 1976; Fink, 2010).

Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) was a French psychoanalyst who combined Freud's psychoanalysis with Saussure's structural linguistics. For Lacan, the unconscious is structured like language, and language plays a fundamental role in the formation of the subject. Lacanian key concepts in Lacan include these aspects. The first is The Mirror Stage (*Le Stade du Miroir*). It is an early developmental stage in which the infant recognizes its self-image, creating the illusion of a unified self that is actually fragmented. This forms the "ego ideal," a cohesive yet imaginary identity (Evans, 2017; Fink, 2010; Lacan, 1977).

The second is Symbolic Order (*L'Ordre Symbolique*). It is the realm of language, law, and social structure. The subject enters this order through language, loses direct access to the Real (the inexpressible) and is governed by the "Name-Father" (*Nom-du-Père*). The subject's identity is formed in language, but there is always a gap or lack (*manque*) as no signifier fully captures the Real (Evans, 2017; Lacan, 1977; Stavrakakis, 2011). The third is Imaginary Order (*L'Ordre Imaginaire*). It is related to the realm of image, illusion, and identification. The subjects identify with external images, giving the illusion of wholeness but also alienation.

The fourth is The Real (*Le Réel*). This is a domain that is inexpressible, unimaginable, and cannot be assimilated by language or imagination. It is the ever-present core of trauma, impossibility, and incompleteness, resisting representation (Evans, 2017; Lacan, 1977). By stating so, human is never as a whole at all. Human

is such a Divided Subject (*Sujet Barré*). The subject is never whole and independent, always split. This division arises because the subject is expressed in a language that is cannot capture its entire being. The subject's desire always arises from this lack, from the impossibility of fully fulfilling desire.

Imagine someone who has experienced deep trauma-something so disturbing that it is difficult or even impossible to fully express in words. He may try to talk about it, but always feels that the language he used was never enough. There is a sense of separation from the experience, as if a part of him cannot truly be present or integrated. In Jacques Lacan's framework, this reflects the concept of the split subject. There is a lack (*manque*) between the unspeakable experience-what Lacan calls the realm of the Real-and the attempt to represent it in language, which belongs to the Symbolic order. Since no symbol or word can fully capture the depth of the traumatic experience, the subject becomes fragmented. His identity, formed in and through language, always feels incomplete. It is this incompatibility that gives birth to the feeling of being divided or fragmented within the individual (Chiesa, 2016; Lacan, 1977; Žižek, 2012). That is why both Derrida and Lacan see language as an arena meaning and identity are constantly constructed, dismantled and questioned.

### ***Bohemian Rhapsody's* Existential Questions and Deconstruction of Reality**

#### **Data 1**

##### **[Intro]**

*"Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy?  
Caught in a landslide, no escape from reality.  
Open your eyes, look up to the skies and see.  
I'm just a poor boy, I need no sympathy,  
Because I'm easy come, easy go,  
Little high, little low,  
Any way the wind blows, doesn't really matter to me, to me."*

The lyrics introduce a binary opposition between "real life" and "fantasy" but deliberately avoid providing a clear answer, thereby deconstructing the idea that these two concepts are entirely separate or stable. The line "no escape from reality" asserts the dominance of reality, yet paradoxically suggests that the subject is trapped within it, implying that reality itself may be a human-constructed framework from which there is no true freedom (Chiesa, 2016; Lawlor, 2014). Furthermore, the phrase "doesn't really matter to me" reflects Derrida's concept of aporia, where fixed meaning is delayed. This phrase blurs the boundary between reality and fantasy, showing how the subject is left in a state of uncertainty, unable to settle on a definitive interpretation (Derrida, 1981).

The initial question, *“Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy?”* captures the subject’s unstable position between Imaginary Order (the world of dreams and images) and the Symbolic Order (the world of language and society). The line *“I’m just a poor boy”* demonstrates the subject’s attempt to form a basic self-identity. However, *“caught in a landslide, no escape from reality”* reveals the subject’s entrapment within the Symbolic Order. In Lacan’s view, this entrapment prevents access to the Real, a realm beyond language and representation (Lacan, 1977). Additionally, the lyric *“easy come, easy go”* reflects the subject’s resistance to fixed identity, expressing a desire to escape from rules and not be trapped in one fixed identity (Chiesa, 2016).

Through these two perspectives, the lyrics can be seen as a reflection of the human struggle with meaning, identity, and freedom. Derrida highlights the impossibility of securing fixed meaning, while Lacan focuses on the subject’s internal division and the limitations imposed by language and society.

## Data 2

### [Verse 1]

*Mama, just killed a man,  
Put a gun against his head, pulled my trigger, now he's dead.  
Mama, life had just begun,  
But now I've gone and thrown it all away.  
Mama, ooh,  
Didn't mean to make you cry.  
If I'm not back again this time tomorrow,  
Carry on, carry on, as if nothing really matters.*

The phrase *“Mama, just killed a man”* is a signifier full of double meanings. The act of killing can be interpreted literally (real murder) or as a metaphor for a major change in the character. This ambiguity reflects Derrida's concept of *différance*, where meaning in a text is always delayed and dispersed, opening up many possible interpretations (Derrida, 1978; Weber, 2013). This shows how texts can challenge the notion that meaning is always clear and certain. In addition, the phrase *“as if nothing really matters”* reinforces this uncertainty by destabilizing the idea that every action must have clear consequences, emphasizing the unstable and open to interpretation nature of the narrative.

This murder scene can be understood as an image of trauma that destroys the illusion that one's self is intact. The murdered figure of *“man”* can be interpreted as the ideal ego of the Mirror Stage or as a representation of the father figure in the Symbolic Order. By killing *“man,”* the subject tries to break away from the rules and restrictions set by the symbolic world. However, the result is *“thrown it all away,”* where the subject loses a stable position or identity. The plea to *“Mama”* represents a call to an early life figure, namely a mother figure who represents comfort and protection. In the passage *“Carry on, carry on, as if nothing really matters,”* the subject seems to begin to accept the fact that he is indeed divided or incomplete, and begins

to accept these shortcomings as a natural part of himself (Lacan, 1977; Weber, 2013).

### Data 3

#### [Verse 2]

*Too late, my time has come,  
Sends shivers down my spine, body's aching all the time.  
Goodbye, everybody, I've got to go,  
Gotta leave you all behind and face the truth.  
Mama, ooh (any way the wind blows)  
I don't wanna die,  
I sometimes wish I'd never been born at all.*

This part introduces the theme of death and the search for “truth.” However, in Derrida's view, “truth” here is not a fixed meaning, but an empty signifier whose meaning is always pending and changing (*différance*). This means that death in this song is not the end of meaning, but rather opens up space for new interpretations to be born (Cohen, 2018; Weber, 2013). The lines “*I don't wanna die*” and “*I sometimes wish I'd never been born at all*” form an opposition between the desire to live and the desire to never exist. However, according to Derrida, these oppositions are interdependent and not truly separate. This is what is referred to as *aporia*, which is the tension or *impasse* in the search for definite meaning in human existence (Derrida, 1976; Weber, 2013).

“*Too late, my time has come*” signifies an acceptance of fate, which can be interpreted as the death of the old ego or identity. The phrase “*Goodbye, everybody, I've got to go, Gotta leave you all behind and face the truth*” can be interpreted as the moment of the subject's separation from the Imaginary Order and Symbolic Order, towards the Real—a realm that, according to Lacan, cannot be explained by language. Here, the subject leaves the world of images and social structures that make up his identity to face something unspoken. The inner conflict becomes clearer when the desire to live “*I don't wanna die*” clashes with the desire to never exist “*I sometimes wish I'd never been born at all*”. This depicts a split subject, an individual who feels incomplete because they are shaped and fragmented by language. This kind of wish, according to Lacan, can never be truly fulfilled because it stems from the flaws inherent in the structure of the Symbolic Order—a world shaped by language, laws, and social norms (Lacan, 1977; Weber, 2013).

### Data 4

#### [Verse 3]

*I see a little silhouetto of a man.  
Scaramouche, Scaramouche, will you do the Fandango?  
Thunderbolt and lightning, very, very frightening me.  
(Galileo) Galileo. (Galileo) Galileo. Galileo Figaro magnifico oh oh oh.  
I'm just a poor boy, nobody loves me.  
He's just a poor boy from a poor family,  
Spare him his life from this monstrosity.*

*Easy come, easy go, will you let me go?  
Bismillah! No, we will not let you go. (Let him go!)  
Bismillah! We will not let you go. (Let him go!)  
Bismillah! We will not let you go. (Let me go.)  
Will not let you go. (Let me go.)  
(Never, never, never, never let me go.)  
Oh mama mia, mama mia, mama mia let me go.  
Beelzebub has a devil put aside for me, for me, for me!*

The opera section of *Bohemian Rhapsody* is rich with elements of deconstruction. The appearance of names like Scaramouche, Galileo, Figaro and Beelzebub, as well as overlapping voices, shakes up the idea of a single, stable narrator. The presence of these multiple voices creates a chaos of signifiers that refer to each other, without a fixed center of meaning. This reflects Derrida's concept of *différance*, where meaning is never fully present, but always delayed and dispersed (Bennington, 2011; Derrida, 1978; Hasana et al., 2025). Moreover, the opposition between “*Will you let me go*” and “*We will not let you go*” is a clear demonstration of aporia—an internal contradiction in the text that cannot be resolved logically. This suggests that even in its musical and dramatic form, the song questions the stability of meaning and identity.

The chaos of sound in this section of the opera reflects the Fragmented Body, where the subject experiences extreme rupture due to the pressure of the Symbolic Order. Names like Scaramouche, Galileo, Figaro, and Beelzebub do not function as full meanings, but rather as empty signifiers that are constantly thrown around in language games. None of these signifiers are able to fully represent or capture the Reality of the subject. The debate between “*Will you let me go*” and “*We will not let you go*” illustrates the inner conflict of the subject. On the one hand, there is a desire to break away from the bonds and identity formed by the Symbolic Order. On the other hand, there is a rejection from the Symbolic Order that does not want to let the subject out of the language structure and social norms (Bennington, 2011; Lacan, 1977; Žižek, 2012).

The sentence “Beelzebub has a devil put aside for me” also presents the concept of *plus-de-jouir* or excess pleasure, which is the part of pleasure that cannot be absorbed by the Symbolic Order. This is the part of the Real that cannot be expressed through language, but continues to be present as something that haunts and disturbs the subject.

#### **Data 5**

##### **[Bridge]**

*So you think you can stone me and spit in my eye?  
So you think you can love me and leave me to die?  
Oh, baby, can't do this to me, baby!  
Just gotta get out, just gotta get right outta here!*

This section shows resistance to the figure of “you” who is depicted as the one who oppresses or hurts the subject. However, in the framework of deconstruction, “you” does not refer to a definite figure-it is just an empty signifier that can mean anyone. Rhetorical questions like “So you think you can stone me...” look like the subject's attempt to construct an assertive and resistant meaning, but since there is no clear answer, the meaning remains delayed and never fully present-a condition Derrida calls *différance* (Bennington, 2011; Derrida, 1976).

The desire to “get out” reflects the subject's urge to escape from the pressure and chaos of language, namely from the network of signifiers that are constantly changing and never provide a fixed meaning. It is also an acknowledgment that the subject is incapable of establishing identity or meaning in a stable manner, because language itself is a system that is constantly in motion and never finished.

The resistance in this passage reflects the subject's rebellion against the big “Other”, which is the order of the Symbolic Order-the structure of language, norms, and social meanings that shape identity. Rhetorical questions such as “So you think you can stone me and spit in my eye? So you think you can love me and leave me to die?” is the cry of the divided subject, who demands recognition while rejecting the meanings imposed on him by the symbolic system.

The plea of “Just gotta get out, just gotta get right outta here!” signifies a strong urge to escape the prison of language, the symbolic structure that limits and shapes who she is. It is an expression of the desire to break away from the identity shaped by language and society, and seek freedom beyond the boundaries of the symbolic-toward the Real, i.e. the territory that cannot be explained or reached through language (Bennington, 2011; Lacan, 1977; Copjec, 2015).

#### **Data 6**

##### **[Outro]**

*(Ooh, ooh, ooh)*

*Nothing really matters,*

*Anyone can see,*

*Nothing really matters,*

*Nothing really matters to me.*

*Any way the wind blows...*

The last part of the song returns to the ambiguity of the beginning, especially through the repetition of the line “Nothing really matters” and the closing “Any way the wind blows.” There is no definitive resolution, and meaning remains open. The word nothing functions as an empty signifier-it does not refer to a fixed meaning, but rather resists any attempt to fixate meaning. Meanwhile, “Any way the wind blows” emphasizes Derrida's concept of *différance*, namely that meaning is always in motion, changing, and delayed (Bennington, 2011; Derrida, 1978; Pasopati et al., 2025). This shows that texts are never truly finished and will always be open to various interpretative possibilities.

The repetition of the phrase “Nothing really matters” reflects the subject's recognition of the fact that attempts to find meaning and wholeness in the Symbolic Order-the world of language and social norms-are futile. It reflects an acceptance of *manque-à-être*, which is an innate deficiency in the subject that cannot be fully filled.

In this sense, the Real-something inexplicable in language-remains unreachable (Bennington, 2011; Lacan, 1977; Wijaya et al., 2025). The phrase “*Any way the wind blows*” shows that the subject has detached himself from the desire to have a stable and complete identity. It now accepts the fact that it is a divided subject, living in a constantly moving, endless stream of language and signifiers. This shows a form of surrender to the fact that meaning and identity are always temporary and changing.

*Bohemian Rhapsody* is a work of art that reflects post-structuralist values. It does not give definitive answers, but instead presents open-ended questions. The song invites listeners to reflect on the uncertainty of life, the complexity of identity, and the fact that language can never really capture the full truth. In line with the thoughts of Derrida and Lacan, this song celebrates uncertainty and diversity of meaning, and reminds us that reality and human identity are always fluid and ever-changing (Fink, 2010; Hwu, 1993; Lawlor, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

Using the post-structuralist approaches of Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan, *Bohemian Rhapsody* emerges as a highly complex text full of hidden meanings. From Derrida's perspective, the song shows that meaning is always differed and dispersed, without ever reaching certainty. The song dismantles binary oppositions such as between reality and fantasy, life and death, and continues to show aporia - confusion where meaning is never truly stable. Through its lyrics, the song shows how language is always a game of signs that never stops. From Lacan's perspective, the song shows the journey of the split subject, who continues to struggle in the Symbolic Order-the world of language, norms, and social identity-without ever being able to reach the Real, something that language cannot explain. The song's journey can be read as the subject's inner journey, from the illusion of self in the Mirror Stage to the acceptance that he is never whole, and from conflict with social demands. The voices and identities that appear throughout the song show how human identity is always unstable, always shaped and rebuilt by language.

## REFERENCES

- Bennington, G. (2011). *Derridabase*. University of Chicago Press.
- Chiesa, L. (2016). *Lacan: A guide for the perplexed*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Cohen, T. (2018). *Reading derrida reading*. Northwestern University Press.
- Copjec, J. (2015). *Read my desire: Lacan against the historicists*. Verso Books.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. SAGE Publications.
- Critchley, S. (2014). *Very little, almost nothing: Death, philosophy, literature*. Routledge.

- Derrida, J. (1976). *Of grammatology*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1978). *Différance*. Dalam *margins of philosophy*. University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (1981). *Positions*. University of Chicago Press.
- Evans, D. (2017). *An introductory dictionary of lacanian psychoanalysis*. Routledge.
- Fink, B. (2010). *A clinical introduction to lacanian psychoanalysis: Theory and technique*. Harvard University Press.
- Hasana, F. A., Oktavia, D., Pasopati, R. U., Wijaya, K., & Hariyono, H. (2025). Ideologies and its resistances in martin mcdonagh's film three billboards outside ebbing, missouri. *Educalitra: English Education, Linguistics, and Literature Journal*, 4(2), 115-124.
- Hwu, W. S. (1993). *Toward understanding post-structuralism and curriculum*. Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College.
- Lacan, J. (1977). *The four fundamental concepts of psycho-analysis*. Norton & Company.
- Lawlor, L. (2014). *Jacques derrida*. Routledge.
- Li, X. (2021). The narrative form of music text and its sound vocabulary. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(02), 102. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2021.92007>
- Pasopati, R. U., Zhafirah, M. Q., Wirnoto, Y. A. A., Fadillah, M. R. I., & Andharu, D. (2025). The psychoanalytical roles of imaginary friends in emotional development in if movie. *Alphabet*, 8(1), 57-66. <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.alphabet.2025.08.01.06>
- Putra, O. P., Setianingrum, H. W., & Alawiyah, S. (2020). The analysis of figurative language in Bohemian Rhapsody's lyric by Queen. *LADU: Journal of Languages and Education*, 1(1), 43-50.
- Queen. *Bohemian Rhapsody. on a night at the opera*. EMI.
- Stavrakakis, Y. (2011). *Lacan and the political*. Routledge.
- Weber, S. (2013). *The Limits of the symbolic: Derrida and freud*. Stanford University Press.
- Wijaya, K., Santoso, L. S. V., Wirnoto, Y. A. A., Pasopati, R. U., & Kartiningsih, R. (2025). The exposition of collective trauma in short movie of bear story. *EJI (English Journal of Indragiri): Studies in Education, Literature, and Linguistics*, 9(2), 311-327. <https://doi.org/10.61672/eji.v9i2.2918>
- Žižek, S. (2012). *Less than nothing: Hegel and the shadow of dialectical materialism*. Verso Books.