



## Love Signs in Sabrina Carpenter's Lyrics Album *Short n' Sweet*

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### Abstract

Songs are able to convey listener's feelings, allowing them to connect with their own experiences and create a shared emotional environment. Depending on their circumstances, each listener may derive a different meaning from a single love song. This interpretive flexibility allows songs to transcend their initial context and build a shared emotional landscape, enabling for many diverse interpretations and exploration of love.. This study aims to describe the representamen, object, and interpretant found in Sabrina Carpenter's lyrics and how those elements reflect the types of love. This research is classified as descriptive qualitative research. The researcher uses content analysis with an interpretive framework based on Charles Sander Peirce's semiotics theory. The data for this research consist of the lyrics of three songs from Sabrina Carpenter's *Short n' Sweet* album entitled "Please Please Please", "Juno", and "Sharpest tool". The research result show that there are three types of love in the lyrics of these songs: self love, intimate love, and obsessive love. The love signs in the songs are conveyed through Charles Sander Peirce's triadic theory, which includes object, representamen, and interpretant. The songs in this album are narrated from a first-person point of view, and the narrator also exhibits characteristics of woman's language, including precise color term, lexical hedge, emphatic stress, intensifiers, empty adjectives, tag question, and empty adjective.

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## INTRODUCTION

Songs combine music and lyrics as a way of expressing what the author has heard, seen or experienced (Rusdiansyah et al., 2022). Song lyrics communicate the songwriter's ideas and thoughts with the purpose of portraying their feelings such as love, grief, and anger (Sitorus, 2019). Among themes explored in songs, love stands out as a particularly meaningful one, frequently reflecting the intricacies of human relationships. According to Clingan (2021) love is described as a strong attachment to someone or something. Love between two people varies

based on their relationship. There are nine types of love, the first is agape love or unconditionally love, then self love, love for parents, love for a friend, love for close friend, an enduring love for a friend, love for animals, obsessive love towards a person or things, love for a child, and intimate love (Clingan, 2021). As a basic component of these types of love, affection is one way that social values are expressed that conveys sentiments of concern, fondness, and love for other human beings (Prasetyo et al., 2023). This concept emphasizes how love songs may elicit a wide range of feelings, from the excitement of a fresh romance to the profound sadness of loss and heartache (Danesi, 2019). Songs are able to communicate feelings of listeners to connect with their own experiences, resulting in a shared emotional environment. One of the artists that can beautifully handle these themes is Sabrina Carpenter.

Sabrina Carpenter's songs capture the spirit of adolescent passion and emotional upheaval that goes along with it, frequently exploring the complexities of love. Carpenter's lyrics are open to interpretation, enabling listeners to imprint their own emotions and life experiences onto her songs. In her recent album *Short n' Sweet*, the lyrics show characteristics of woman's language according to Lakoff (2004), such as precise color term, lexical hedge, emphatic stress, intensifiers, empty adjectives, tag question, and empty adjective with the use of the first- person point of view. First person point of view lyrics allows musicians to tell their own narratives, making their music more relevant and effective by allowing listeners easily connect with the personal events and feelings depicted in the song (Frith, 1996). Depending on their own circumstances and emotional states, each listener may find a distinct meaning in a single love song. This interpretive flexibility allows songs to transcend their initial context and establishes a shared emotional landscape that makes it possible for many different interpretations and explorations of love. Semiotics also can help us comprehend how signs influence our perception of the world (Prasetyo, 2023). This is the main factor in the importance of studying semiotics in song lyrics as a dynamic phenomenon. Chandler (2007) explains that meaning is formed through a triadic model by Peirce (1998) made up of three interconnected components: representamen, object, and interpretant. He explains that representamen is the sign itself, or can be understood as a sign in common speech. This phrase is important because it sets the sign apart from the other two elements, which can also serve as indicators in other situations. The object, the second element of the triadic model, is the actual thing or idea that the sign represents, and the interpretant creates a relationship with it (Cobley, 2005).

Many researchers examined signs in songs. There are several studies that were relevant to this research. Yusuf & Afifudin (2024) analyzed the meaning of signs in Taylor Swift's song entitled *Midnight Rain* using Peirce's semiotics theory. According to the research's findings, these symbols can represent both negative and positive aspects, transition, irony, portal, and regret, progression, and unhappiness. The research by Yusuf and Afifudin focused on finding specific symbols within a song. In contrast, this study intends to examine broader aspects of representamen, object, and interpretant as they relate to the entire song. Wulandari (2024) found that in the album *Bersamamu* by Jaz there is symbols of love, togetherness, and motivation which are conveyed by metaphors, melodies, and visuals, contributing to forming a deep emotional narrative. P. Pascua Jr (2024) studied the semiotic dimension of famous love songs to discover the symbolic representation and relevant educational applications.

Descriptive qualitative research was used to examine a corpus of famous love song. Pascua's study identified love signs, investigated the rhetorical tactics utilized in their construction, and created potential applications, whereas this study examined the signs using a content analysis method and not for educational purposes.

This study specifically aims to examine how representamen, interpretant, and object interact in the lyrical narratives of Sabrina Carpenter's most recent album, *Short n' Sweet*, which was released in August 2024. With an emphasis on how linguistic and symbolic components produce complex interpretations, this study attempts to reveal the deeper levels of meaning concealed inside the text by examining the album's lyrics.

## METHODS

This research used a descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research is focused on non-quantifiable concepts, opinions, perspectives and beliefs. Creswell & Creswell (2018) describe qualitative research as the study and understanding of how a person view an issue of society. Sugiyono (2011) demonstrates that qualitative research perceives the object as something dynamic, the outcome of the development of thoughts and interpretations of the symptoms observed as a whole. Since qualitative research is unaltered and places greater emphasis on the process, it can be used to determine how variables in the object of study interact, or have an impact or one another. The research process includes generating questions and processes, gathering data, analyzing the data inductively from particular to general themes, and assessing the relevance of the findings.

In determining the data, researchers use content analysis with an interpretive framework based on Charles Sander Peirce's semiotics theory. This study uses content analysis to provide a structured strategy to interpreting the nuances of meaning inside the text. Content analysis enables a systematic and in-depth evaluation of textual elements, revealing representamen, object, and interpretant. It is especially suitable for studying song lyrics, which are filled with symbolic language and frequently represent cultural values or emotional sentiments.

The data of this research are the lyrics of three songs from Sabrina Carpenter's *Short n' Sweet* album which was released in 2024. The songs on this album include "Please, please please", "Juno", and "Sharpest tool". The album *Short n' Sweet* was chosen as the subject of this study due its noteworthy impact and significance in today's music industry. With an impressive 233 million streams in its first week (Caulfield, 2024), it became the most streamed album at the time. The album received generally positive feedback, with critics praising it confident and entertaining qualities.

Qualitative research requires data collection in a natural situation to obtain relevant information. This enables researcher to obtain an enhanced and deeper grasp of the background of the subject under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The process starts with the researcher selects and compiles the lyrics of songs into a phrase. Second, the researcher analyzes and classifies the types of love presents in the songs. Third, the researcher draws connections between the songs for conclusion.

In this study, data gathering includes carefully listening to Sabrina Carpenter's album and studying each lyric to identify underlying meanings. This method allows for a thorough examination of components contained in the lyrics. Furthermore, data was gathered from

linked literature on Peirce's semiotic theory, which provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how signs and symbols transfer meaning in the context of songs. After listening to Sabrina Carpenter songs and the data collected, the researcher analyzed the representamen, object and interpretant according to Charles Sanders Peirce's theory. The technique for analyzing data involves: first step is identifying, the researcher identifies the data using the content analysis, noting the data from Sabrina Carpenter's album, and the researcher carefully records the information in the form of words or phrases that are particularly noticeable in the songs. By emphasizing important components that might have important meaning, this preliminary identification establishes the framework for a more thorough examination. The narrator then uses the symbols found in the song lyrics to classify the data after it has been discovered. The final

step of this analysis is to interpret the song's lyrics, which is accomplished by dividing them into stanzas for a more in-depth analysis. The three main components of each stanza are representamen, object, and interpretant, which are identified by the researcher using Peirce's semiotic theory.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Clingan (2021), there are nine types of love, there are agape love (unconditional love), self-love, love for parents, love for friends, love for close friends, love for animals, obsessive love towards a person or things, love for a child, and intimate love. In the album "Short n' Sweet" by Sabrina Carpenter, there are three types of love are identified: self-love, obsessive love towards a person, and intimate love. The three songs analyzed are "Please, please, please" which represent self-love, "Juno" which represent intimate love, and "Sharpest Tool" which represent obsessive love.

### Data 1 The song "Please, please, please"

(Peirce, 1998) explain that meaning is formed through a triadic model made up of three interconnected components: Representation (R), Interpretant (I), and Object (O). The relationship between all of three elements, representation, interpretant, and object makes it clearer how a sign expresses meaning and promotes comprehension.

#### a. Representamen

In this data, there are lyrics that represent love, or spesifically self-love. There are line

(10) *Please, please, please*, line (11) *Don't prove I'm right*, line (12) *And please, please, please*, line (13) *Don't bring me to tears when I just did my make up so nice*, line (14) *Heartbreak is one thing, my ego's another*, line (15) *I beg you don't embarrass me, motherfucker*, line (28) *If you wanna go and be stupid*, line (29) *Don't do it in front of me*, line (30) *If you don't wanna cry to my music*, and line (31) *Don't make me hate you prolifically*

#### b. Object

In Peirce (1998) semiotics framework, the object refers to the entity or concept that the representamen signifies and serves as its direct reference. The object is more than the actual physical item, it also includes the larger context and significance that are connected to it. Understanding how meaning is created and conveyed requires an awareness of this interaction

between representamen and object. Peirce's theory of object emphasizes the complex relationship between representamen or signs and the reality they represent, highlighting the ways in which our use of signs and the settings in which they are situated affect how we interpret objects.

The lyrics in lines (10,11) express a deep plea (as the word "please" is repeated) to not prove that her presumption is true. In lines (12,13), the narrator repeats the word "please" again, asking her partner not to make her cry because it will ruin her nice makeup. The narrator states in line (14) that heartbreak and her ego are different things, so she begs her partner not to embarrass her (15). The narrator says if her partner wants to do something stupid he can just go somewhere, don't do it in front of her (28,29). In lines (30,31) the narrator states that don't make her hate him prolifically, or else he will cry to her music.

### **c. Interpretant**

The interpretant represents the meaning or concept that forms in an individual's mind when they encounter a sign (Peirce, 1998). Peirce highlights that the interpretant is a dynamic process that can change depending on experience, context, and the relationship between representamen and object rather than fixed definitions. This emphasizes how the listener actively participates in the meaning-making process.

The line "please, please, please, don't prove I'm right" implies that the narrator has a presumption or expectation about a person in a certain circumstance. This line expresses the narrator's feelings of hope and fear that her partner's behavior may lead her to negative feelings, such as disappointment or painful heartbreak. The repeated word "please" in line (12) highlights her desperation, showing that the narrator is really concerned about being upset by her partner's words or actions. This line emphasizes the narrator's request to her partner not to let her down. Heartbreak would result in tears, this is particularly important because she has worked hard on her make up, and crying would ruin it. The narrator underlines that heartbreak and ego are different things. While heartbreak is defined by severe emotional suffering as a result of a failed relationship, the narrator also has other concerns about how her self-image is affected by this situation. In the line "I beg you don't embarrass me, motherfucker" the narrator is begging her partner not to do something that may cause embarrassment. The word "motherfucker" can be used to express the feelings when someone is frustrated or annoyed. The mix of begging and cursing in this line shows that the narrator is both desperate to avoid embarrassment and she is upset at the person who could cause it. Additionally, the narrator suggests that if her partner does anything stupid, he should take it somewhere and not to do it in front of her to avoid involving her in the situation. Furthermore, the narrator states that don't make her hate him prolifically, or else he will cry to the music she writes about the pain he caused.

### **d. Love Representation**

The lyrics in song *Please, please, please* by Sabrina Carpenter express a strong statement of self respect, which is in line with Clingan (2021) definition of self-love. He states that self-love is a fundamental sort of love that requires placing self emotional well-being first, maintaining self-worth, and creating personal boundaries in relationships. The narrator's request to not embarrass or disappoint her highlights an intention to protect her feelings, emphasizing the need of taking care of herself and understanding how to set boundaries in

relationships. The lyric “Heartbreak is one thing, my ego’s another” makes a clear distinction between pride and emotional suffering. According to Clingan (2021), self love enables people to see their value even in the face of negative behavior from their partner. In addition to avoiding heartbreak, the narrator is attempting to maintain her self-esteem and how other people perceive her by not allowing anyone else’s words or action to negatively impact it.

#### **e. Point of View and Woman’s Language**

In the song entitled “Please, please, please”, the lyrics is narrated in the first-person point of view because the lyrics use the pronouns “I”, “I’m”, “me”, and “my” as shows in lines:

*I know I have good judgement, I know I have good taste* (line 1)

*All I’m asking baby* (line 9)

*Don’t bring me to tears when I just did my make up so nice* (line 13)

This song addresses a man, as stated in the lines “I heard that you’re an actor, so act like the stand-up guy”. The term “actor” is actually gender-neutral for someone who acts in a movie or play, but it is now commonly used to refer to a man, while woman is called an “actress”. The term “stand up guy” refers to someone who has integrity and is reliable, the word “guy” clearly indicates that the person is a man. However, man and woman communicate in distinctive ways. They communicate using various words, vocabularies, and grammatical use (R. T. Lakoff, 2004). There are five aspects of women’s language found in the song *Please, please, please*. First, lexical hedges, such as “well”, “could”, and “maybe” are language devices that people can employ to soften the words they use, show hesitation, or show a lack of confidence (G. Lakoff, 1973). The lyrics contain intensifiers, which are words or phrases used to intensify or clarify the meaning of an utterance, such a “so” and “prolifically”. Super polite forms, such as “please” and “could”. Women also use more tag questions, such as “It’s so nice, right?”. Emphatic stress such as “please, please, please”, “Heartbreak is one thing, my ego’s another”. Additionally, the lyrics contain empty adjectives, such as the word “nice” and “fun”. In conclusion, the narrator is a woman, and song is about her romantic relationship with a man.

#### **Data 2 The song “Juno”**

##### **a. Representamen**

In this data, there are lyrics that represent love, or spesifically intimate love. There are in line (9) *I know you want my touch for life*, line (10) *If you love me right, then who knows?*, line

(11) *I might let you make me junno*, line (31) *Adore, me, hold me, and explore me*, line (32)

*Mark your territory*, line (33) *Tell me I’m the only, only, only one*.

##### **b. Object**

Line (9) expresses an awareness of her partner's feelings and desire for a physical intimacy. In lines (10,11) the narrator has an expectation of genuine love from her partner, and possibility of a more serious relationship by starting a family because she might let her junno. Lines (31,32) implies that the narrator needs an emotional and physical closeness with her partner. The line “mark your territory” is a possessiveness, the narrator also wants validation that she is the only one for her partner (33).

### c. Interpretant

The line “I know you want my touch for life” conveys the narrator’s assurance that her partner wants her touch. The word “touch” refers to both emotional and physical intimacy. The phrase “for life” signifies anything that is permanent rather than just temporary. In lines (10,11), the narrator suggests that there are ways to love her properly as she wants. If he could love her right, she would consider committing to a relationship. The word “juno” frequently refers to the Roman mythological goddess Juno, who was worshiped as the queen of the gods (Cambridge University Press, n.d.) and also widely recognized as the goddess of marriage and childbirth. She safeguarded all of Rome’s women. Making her juno can be interpreted as allowing someone to crown her as queen or the most important person in his life. The phrase “adore me” expresses the narrator’s desire to be valued, complimented, and respected by her partner. The word “hold me” indicates a desire for physical and emotional intimacy, wanting comfort and warmth to hold her.

In the phrase “explore me”, the narrator encourages her partner to learn more about her, including her thoughts and her feelings. The term “mark your territory” means that the narrator expects her partner to express exclusivity and commitment to the partnership. The narrator additionally seeks validation from her partner, claiming that she is the only one for him.

### d. Love Representation

The lyrics of Sabrina Carpenter’s song “Juno” portray the type of intimate love. Clingan (2021) highlights the fundamental components of intimate love, such as a desire for physical and emotional intimacy, as shown by the line “I know you want my touch for life. The line “If you love me right, then who knows? I might let you make me juno” signifies the narrator’s willingness to develop their relationship as long as her partner loves and understands her. This song express a desire with a mix of flirting and seriousness. This phrase is in line with Clingan’s theory that trust and mutual understanding are required for intimate love.

### e. Point of View and Woman’s Language

The song entitled *Juno* is narrated in the first-person point of view because the lyrics use the pronouns “I”, “I’m”, “me”, and “my”.

*Oh, I know you want **my** touch for life, if you love **me** right, then who knows?*  
(lines 9 and 10)

The narrator uses lexical hedges, such as “might”, “you know”, super polite forms, intensifiers, tag questions “wanna try out my fuzzy pink handcuffs?”, “if you love me right, then who knows?”, “wanna try out some freaky positions?”, “have you ever tried this one?”, empty adjective, precise color term “fuzzy pink”. Emphatic stress “I’m so fucking horny” which are the characteristic of female language. This song addresses a man, as implies in the phrase “God bless your dad’s genetics”, the narrator appreciates the male’s attractiveness as she says the word “dad”. The phrases such as “you know, I just might let you lock me down tonight”, “I might let you make me juno”, “wanna try out my fuzzy pink handcuff?”, and “I’m so fucking horny” express a desire and flirty tones, which is often seen in a romantic relationship between a man and woman.

### **Data 3 The song “Sharpest Tool”**

#### **a. Representamen**

In this data, there are lyrics that represent love, or specifically obsessive love. There are in line (7) *We were going right, then you took a left*, line (8) *Left me with a lot of shit to second guess*, line (9) *Guess I'll waste another year on wondering if*, line (10) *If that was casual, then I'm an idiot*, line (11) *I'm looking for an answer in between the lines*, line (12) *Lying to yourself if you think we're fine*, line (13) *You're confused and I'm upset*, line (14) *But we never talk about it*.

#### **b. Object**

Line (7) portrays that there is a shared goal, but one person is going left or to a different direction, he left her with emotional stress and questioning their relationship (8). The line “guess I'll waste another year on wondering” expresses the narrator's feeling of being caught in a loop of uncertainty. Line (10) indicates the narrator's frustration and disappointment about their relationship. In line (11), the narrator is looking for an answer, trying to find if there are any hidden messages behind her partner's words or actions. The narrator indicates in line (12) that her partner is lying by pretending that they are fine, while in fact, they are not. Line (13) reflects their feelings; confused and upset, but because of a lack of communication, they avoid talking about their feelings (14).

#### **c. Interpretant**

The line “we were going right” indicates that they are in the same direction and things were going well between them. Then, in the phrase “then you took a left” signifies that there is a sudden change or decision of one person. It can be interpreted that one person is left or betrays the narrator. Line (8) shows the impact of that sudden change, the narrator's drowning in confusion, doubting and questioning their relationship. The phrase “guess I'll waste another year on wondering” showed that the narrator would spend a long time in an emotional state of uncertainty, wondering what went wrong in their relationship. Then, with the line “if that was casual, then I'm an idiot”, the narrator realized that her partner may not value their relationship as much as she does. If it was “just casual” the narrator is foolish to have taken this relationship seriously. The phrase “I'm looking for an answer in between the lines” implies that the narrator seeks clarity of their relationship by trying to analyze hidden messages or hints in her partner's words, actions, or their conversation, attempting to make sense of unresolved feelings. The term “lying to yourself if you think we're fine” implies that the narrator's partner intends to deny the truth of the situation they faced by avoiding it. They are fully aware that their relationship is not working, but the narrator's partner appears to ignore this and pretend that everything is fine, when it is not. He is obviously confused and even unsure of what to do, what he wants, or simply what he feels. On the other hand, the narrator is feeling upset and suffering from her partner's ambiguity. However, because of a complicated situation and a lack of communication, they avoid discussing it to resolve the problem they have.

#### **d. Representation of Love**

The lyrics of Sabrina Carpenter's song “Sharpest Tool” shows the characteristics of obsessive love by Clingan (2021), such as a relationship that is mixed with confusion, insecurity and uncertainty. Obsessive love is a type of love in which one person becomes

excessively attached to another. This might lead to negative tendencies like jealousy and possessiveness. When people have this kind of love, they may become depressed or self-conscious. They may be quite concerned about losing the other person. This can make individuals lose confidence and believe they are not good enough and not being loved in the same way that they love.

#### **e. Point of View and Woman's Language**

The song entitled *Sharpest Tool* is narrated in the first-person point of view because the lyrics use the pronouns "I", "I'm", "me", and "my".

*Guess I'll waste another year on wondering* (line 9) *If that was casual, then I'm an idiot* (line 10)

Narrator also use the female language, such as lexical hedges words "think", "guess", "seems like", "always", and "never". Intensifiers, such as "really", "so", and "just". Emphatic stress, such as "all the silence just makes it worse, really", "left me with a lot of shit to second guess", "guess I'll waste another year on wondering", and "leaving me dumbfounded". These lyrics portray the confusion and frustration about relationship.

### **CONCLUSION**

From the 9 types of love according to the theory by Clingan (2021), in Sabrina Carpenter's album *Short n' Sweet*, 3 types of love were found, there are self love, intimate love, and obsessive love. The lyrics of songs "Please, please, please", "Juno", and "Sharpest Tool" narrated in the first-person point of view because the lyrics use the pronouns "I", "I'm", "me", and "my". The narrator also has a characteristic of female language, such as lexical hedges, intensifiers, emphatic stress, super polite forms, tag question, empty adjective, and precise color term.

The song "Please, please, please" has 10 representamen. The object and interpretant in this song contain a powerful expression of self-respect, which align with Clingan's (2021) concept of self love. The narrator's request not to embarrass or dissappoint her shows a desire to safeguard her feelings, underlining the need of self-care and knowing how to create boundaries in relationships. In addition to avoiding heartbreak, the narrator is working to protect her self-esteem and how others view her by refusing to let anyone else's words or actions ruin it. In the song "Juno", there are 6 representamen. The object and interpretant in this song portray the type of intimate love. The lyrics convey a longing for both physical and emotional intimacy. This song express desire through a combination of flirtation and seriousness. This lyrics also consistent with Clingan's theory that trust and mutual understanding are required for intimate love. The song "Sharpest Tool" has 8 representamen, the object and interpretant of this song shows the characteristics of obsessive love, such as a relationship filled with confusion, insecurity, and uncertainty (Clingan, 2021). Obsessive love is a form of love in which one person becomes overly devoted to another. This might cause people to lose confidence and believe they are not good enough and are not loved in the same way they love.

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