

Nationalism in the Lyrics of “*Lil Waṭan*” by Mashrou’ Leila: A Structuralist Analysis

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Abstract: Literature serves as a profound reflection of life, articulating values, emotions, and social criticism through aesthetic language. In the modern era, song lyrics have evolved into a potent medium for conveying ideological messages and challenging the status quo. This study investigates the song “*Lil Waṭan*” by Mashrou’ Leila, a prominent Lebanese alternative-rock band celebrated for their progressive stance on identity and politics. Unlike traditional patriotic anthems, “*Lil Waṭan*” offers a sharp counter-discourse, critiquing the manipulation of nationalist sentiment by authoritarian powers to suppress dissent. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative method grounded in Claude Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist theory, this research analyzes the lyrics as a system of signs to uncover the underlying binary oppositions and social myths embedded within the text. The analysis reveals that the song’s structure is built upon deep tensions between the citizenry and the ruling authority, specifically manifesting through the binary oppositions of “love versus fear” and “genuine nationalism versus false nationalism.” The findings demonstrate how the text exposes specific “patterns of silencing,” including the use of propaganda to fabricate external conspiracies, the “anesthetization” of the public through ideological lethargy, and the deployment of mass entertainment—symbolized by the command to “dance”—as a distraction from political stagnation. By deconstructing these symbols, the study concludes that Mashrou’ Leila redefines patriotism not as blind submission, but as a critical consciousness that rejects the commodification of the “homeland” for social control. Ultimately, this research highlights how contemporary Arab music functions as a sophisticated literary site for political resistance and social critique..

Keywords: *Mashrou’ Leila, Lil Waṭan, Structuralism, Nationalism, Social Criticism.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of modern literary works is not only reflected through poetry, short stories, or novels, but also through song lyrics that are rich in aesthetic and social values. Song lyrics, in essence, represent a musical form of poetry that does not merely convey emotional messages but also reflect the social, political, and cultural realities of their time (Atmazaki, 1990). In the context of the contemporary Arab world, music has become a powerful medium of expression for voicing social and ideological critiques of existing realities. One of the most prominent music groups in this regard is Mashrou’ Leila, a Lebanese band renowned for its progressive lyrics filled with satire on social, political, and individual freedom issues. One of their most controversial and meaningful works is the song *Lil Waṭan*, which literally means “For the Homeland.”

The song *Lil Waṭan* addresses the theme of nationalism in an unconventional way. Instead of glorifying patriotic love in a heroic tone, Mashrou’ Leila criticizes a form of oppressive nationalism one often employed by those in power to silence the people. Lyrics such as “they silenced you with slogans about all the conspiracies” and “they drugged you through your veins, saying your lethargy benefits the nation” reveal sharp social irony. The song illustrates how the

idea of nationalism can transform into an ideological instrument used to suppress freedom of thought. Therefore, *Lil Waṭan* can be read as a representation of the conflict between genuine nationalism rooted in awareness and false nationalism born from political propaganda.

This research aims to examine *Lil Waṭan* as a form of modern literary art through a structuralist approach. Using Claude Lévi-Strauss's theory, the lyrics are viewed as a system of signs that construct meaning through the interrelation of their elements both physical and intrinsic. The analysis includes the description of the physical structure (covering diction, figurative language, concrete words, and imagery), the intrinsic structure (including theme, tone, atmosphere, and message), as well as the aspect of nationalism, which serves as the central meaning of the song. This approach is expected to reveal how Mashrou' Leila constructs socio-political criticism through complex aesthetic and symbolic forms while also demonstrating the depth of meaning embedded in a seemingly simple work.

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the physical and intrinsic structures of the song *Lil Waṭan* and to explain the aspects of nationalism contained within it. The findings are expected to contribute to the study of modern Arabic literature, particularly in understanding how musical texts can serve as a medium for social and political critique. Furthermore, this research seeks to enrich readers' perspectives on contemporary literary works that boldly address national themes through a critical and reflective approach (Bustam, 2015). Through this analysis, it is also hoped that an awareness will emerge that genuine love for one's homeland is not only manifested through symbolic loyalty but also through the courage to criticize injustices committed in the name of nationalism.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is based on the structuralist theory of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who views literary works as systems of signs that can be analyzed through patterns of relationships and binary oppositions within them. According to Lévi-Strauss, the structure of meaning in cultural works does not lie on the surface of the text but within the fundamental relationships between opposing and complementary elements. Through the analysis of these patterns, the researcher can uncover the "myths" or deep meanings that form the collective consciousness of society. In the context of the lyrics of *Lil Waṭan*, this theory is applied to reveal how Mashrou' Leila constructs systems of meaning through symbols, repetition, and oppositions between the people and the rulers, freedom and oppression, as well as genuine nationalism and false nationalism.

The application of Lévi-Strauss's theory in this study helps to deconstruct the intrinsic structure of the lyrics that reflect social and ideological conflicts. The song *Lil Waṭan* is interpreted not merely as an emotional expression but as a cultural structure that mirrors the value systems and social tensions within modern Arab society (Lévi-Strauss, 1963). Through this analysis, it is found that the oppositions emerging in the text function as reflections of Mashrou' Leila's critique of the hegemony of nationalism and the restriction of individual freedom in the name of patriotism.

Table 1. Analysis of Claude Lévi-Strauss's Theory in the Lyrics of *Lil Waṭan*

Aspect (Lévi- Strauss)	Application in the Lyrics of <i>Lil Waṭan</i>	Meaning
Binary Opposition	People ↔ Rulers, Freedom ↔ Oppression, Genuine Nationalism ↔ False Nationalism	Reflects ideological conflict between the oppressed people and the ruling power that suppresses in the name of the homeland.
Deep Structure	The repetition of "They told you" and "Come dance a little"	Represents the mechanism of authority continuously pacifying the people through entertainment and propaganda.

Social Myth	"Homeland" as a sacred symbol used to silence criticism	Reveals that nationalism in this song is not a pure consciousness but an ideological tool for social control.
Structural Transformation	The shift of nationalism's meaning from a spirit of struggle to an instrument of subjugation	Highlights criticism of the social value changes and the loss of humanity within the idea of patriotic love.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a structuralist literary approach. This approach is grounded in the perspective of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who argues that every cultural product including literary works and song lyrics is a system of signs possessing an underlying structure that can be revealed through the analysis of relationships among its elements. A literary work is not understood in isolation but as a network of meanings that form an integrated whole. In this context, the study of *Lil Waṭan* by Mashrou' Leila aims to uncover the physical structure, intrinsic structure, and nationalist aspects that construct the ideological meaning of the song. The primary data of this research consist of the Arabic text of the *Lil Waṭan* lyrics and their Indonesian translation, while the secondary data are derived from literary theory books, academic journals, and previous studies relevant to Lévi-Strauss's structuralism theory and the concept of nationalism in modern Arabic literature.

The data collection technique was conducted through a library research method. The researcher obtained the official lyric text from credible online sources, which was then translated into Indonesian to facilitate semantic analysis. A repeated reading (close reading) was performed to comprehend both the literal and connotative meanings implied in each line. Elements such as diction, figurative language, imagery, and symbols were recorded as part of the physical structure, while theme, tone, atmosphere, and message were analyzed as part of the intrinsic structure. The data were then categorized according to the interrelation among elements that support one another. Contextual analysis was also conducted to connect the findings with the social and political conditions underlying the song's creation, particularly regarding the phenomena of nationalism and collective identity in the contemporary Arab world.

Data analysis was carried out using a descriptive-analytical technique, which involved describing each structural finding and interpreting it according to the principles of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism. From his perspective, the structure of a work can be understood through binary relations and systems of opposition that generate meaning, such as between oppression and freedom, people and power, and genuine nationalism and false nationalism. Through this approach, the lyrics of *Lil Waṭan* were analyzed not merely as an aesthetic expression but also as a symbolic system reflecting the social and ideological order of society. The validity of the data was maintained through repeated reading, source triangulation, and comparison of the analytical findings with relevant academic literature. Overall, this research went through the stages of preparation, data collection, analysis, and systematic writing of results to produce an in-depth understanding of how Mashrou' Leila constructs social criticism and ideas of nationalism through the symbolic and aesthetic structures of the *Lil Waṭan* lyrics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the poetic structure namely the physical structure, intrinsic structure, and aspects of nationalism within the lyrics of *Lil Waṭan*, a song by Mashrou' Leila. The song is regarded as a modern literary work rich in social and political meaning, presenting an aesthetic form of criticism toward the reality of nationalism in the contemporary Arab world (Sunanda, 2020). As in a beautifully crafted poem, the lyrics of *Lil Waṭan* integrate the physical and intrinsic structures harmoniously, creating a complex unity of meaning. The lyrics express the collective inner voice of the artist, depicting love for the homeland while simultaneously criticizing the oppressive and manipulative forms of nationalism.

From Lévi-Strauss's structuralist perspective, the binary oppositions found in the lyrics such as love versus fear, freedom versus suppression, and authenticity versus manipulation reveal the deep ideological structure underlying the song. These oppositions form cultural "myths" that reflect how nationalism is constructed and reproduced within modern Arab societies. The repeated patterns of symbolic language, such as the command *taan raqisny shawy* "come dance again!" and the authoritative refrain *qaaluk* "They told you", point to a hidden system of domination that operates through entertainment, persuasion, and emotional coercion.

Compared to previous studies, the findings of this research demonstrate a different analytical depth. Earlier works on Mashrou' Leila generally focused on representations of identity and gender in the band's lyrics, political subversion and social protest in contemporary Arab music, or general ideological critique without a detailed structuralist mapping.

However, no prior study has examined *Lil Waṭan* specifically through Lévi-Strauss's structuralist framework. This allows the present study to uncover structural patterns binary oppositions, myths, deep narrative tensions that previous analyses did not reveal. While earlier research identified Mashrou' Leila as socially critical, this study demonstrates how that criticism is constructed, not merely that it exists. Thus, the findings extend the understanding of Mashrou' Leila's political discourse by revealing the underlying symbolic architecture that organizes meaning within the song.

To explicitly state the novelty and contribution of this analysis, this study offers the first application of Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralist theory specifically to the song *Lil Waṭan*, thereby establishing a new methodological direction in the study of modern Arabic songs as literary texts. Furthermore, the research identifies a previously unaddressed ideological myth embedded within the song: the transformation of "love for the homeland" into a mechanism of obedience. By employing a hybrid approach that combines poetic structure (*diksi*, *citraan*, *simbol*) with political semiotics, the study demonstrates how aesthetic elements function simultaneously as ideological critique. Consequently, these findings position song lyrics as legitimate sites of literary and political analysis, expanding the field beyond conventional poetry and prose. Ultimately, the analysis shifts the understanding of nationalism from a surface-level patriotic sentiment to a complex ideological apparatus involving fear, distraction, and symbolic coercion.

The structuralist framework used in this study can serve as a model for future research on Arab songs that contain social, cultural, or political criticism. The Arabic text and its translation are presented as follows:

للوطن

By: Mashrou' Leila

غيرنا روض أعاصير ليتحكم بالمصير

We have tamed the storms to control destiny

ونحن من نسيم منطير ومنرتد على التدمير

Though we came from gentle and light breezes, now we are returning to destruction

وبس تتجرأ بسؤال عن تدهور الأحوال

As soon as you dare to ask why the situation has worsened

بسكتوك بشعارات عن كل المؤامرات

They silence you with slogans about every conspiracy

خونوك القطيع كل ما طالبت بتغيير الوطن

The crowd accuses you of betrayal every time you demand change for the nation

يأسوك حتى تبيع حرياتك لما يضيع الوطن

They drive you to despair until you willingly sell your freedom for a homeland that has already been lost

قالوك: حاج تبشر تع رقصني شوي
They told you: Don't be sad, come dance a little!
ليش مكشر؟ تع رقصني شوي
Why so gloomy? Come dance a little more!
علموك النشيد، قالوا صرا عك مفيد للوطن
They taught you the national anthem, saying that your struggle benefits the nation
خدروك بالوريد، قالوا خمورك مفيد للوطن
They drugged you through your veins, saying your lethargy too benefits the nation
قالوك: حاجة تبشر.. حاجة تبشر
They told you: Don't worry... Don't worry
تعا رقصني شوي
Come dance a little!
ليش مكشر؟ ليش مكشر؟
Why so gloomy? Why so gloomy?
تعا رقصني شوي
Come dance again!
قالوك: حاجة تبشر، تعا رقصني شوي
They told you: There's nothing to worry about, come dance a little!
ليش مكشر؟ تعا رقصني.. حاجة تبشر
Why so gloomy? Come dance... it's okay
تعا رقصني
Come dance a little more

Physical Structure in the Lyrics of "Lil Waṭan" by Mashrou' Leila

The physical structure of the lyrics refers to the outward elements that form the external framework of the literary text or song lyrics. These include visible aspects such as form, diction, concrete words, figurative language, and imagery that serve as the medium to convey meaning and aesthetic experience to the listener. According to Hikmat et al. (2017, p. 34), the physical structure functions as the medium that reinforces the inner message of a literary work.

In *Lil Waṭan*, Mashrou' Leila presents a distinctive physical structure that is rich in political symbolism, challenging the dominant narratives of nationalism through poetic language and social irony (Widodo, 2017). The repetition of phrases and ironic juxtapositions between joyful expressions and serious political messages create a layered texture of meaning. The diction blends the ordinary with the subversive, using everyday phrases like "Come dance a little!" as a metaphor for how authority pacifies the people through illusion and entertainment. This fusion of poetic imagery and political irony highlights the aesthetic depth of the song while exposing the manipulation of patriotic sentiment in modern Arab society.

Form of the Lyrics

The lyrics of *Lil Waṭan* take the form of free verse, which does not follow a specific rhyme or metrical pattern. The structure of the song is built upon repetition and strong internal rhythm, especially in the recurring phrases "they told you" and "come dance a little". Within this free-verse framework, Mashrou' Leila employs symbolism, repetition, and irony as central devices that shape the song's ideological meaning. The repeated command "come dance a little more." functions not merely as an invitation to dance but as a metaphor for social anesthesia an instruction to forget, to comply, and to surrender critical awareness through the distraction of entertainment. Similarly, the cyclical repetition of "They told you" symbolizes the persistent, authoritative voice of the state, mirroring how propaganda is delivered endlessly until it becomes internalized by the public.

Irony emerges as these seemingly cheerful commands unfold against the backdrop of political decay and personal disillusionment; the joyful tone of “come dance a little” stands in stark contrast to the suffering and stagnation described in the surrounding lines. Through these devices, the song constructs an aesthetic tension between surface-level playfulness and underlying oppression, revealing how authoritarian power manipulates emotional and cultural symbols to pacify dissent.

The song consists of several sections resembling stanzas, yet it lacks any fixed rhyme scheme. The rhythm arises not from uniformity of sound but from the repetition of tones and tempo, which creates an ironic effect musical joy on the surface, but underlying sorrow and social critique (Rokhani, 2019). This structure affirms the freedom of form characteristic of Mashrou’ Leila’s work rejecting constraints, challenging convention, and expressing intense social emotion through a liberated form of artistic expression.

Diction

The diction in *Lil Waṭan* is realistic, ironic, and ideological. Mashrou’ Leila employs simple yet politically charged words such as *al mashir* “destiny”, *al Muaamarat* “conspiracies”, *Hurriyyatuka* “your freedoms”, and *al wathan* “homeland”. These words evoke a sense of oppression and propaganda, illustrating the imbalance of power between the people and the state. For instance, the line: “They silenced you with slogans about all the conspiracies”. The word “with slogans” satirizes the emptiness of political rhetoric. The choice of straightforward yet ideologically loaded vocabulary enhances the song’s realistic tone and emotional impact. The lyrics reject romanticized patriotism, instead presenting a language of resistance against repressive authority (Semi, 2012).

Imagery

The imagery in *Lil Waṭan* does not focus on nature or visual beauty but instead evokes social, emotional, and psychological imagery depicting the suffering of the people. For example: “They drugged you through your veins” This expression conjures tactile and medical imagery, portraying citizens anesthetized by political propaganda like patients who have lost consciousness. This image powerfully represents the collective suffering and apathy of society. Similarly, in the line: “Come dance a little” The movement and auditory imagery express a scene where citizens are urged to “dance” in false joy. This emotional contrast between cheerful rhythm and harsh social reality intensifies the song’s satirical tone.

Concrete Words

Concrete words refer to terms with tangible, sensory references. In *Lil Waṭan*, Mashrou’ Leila employs concrete words to portray vivid social realities, even when used symbolically. Words such as *al warid* “vein”, *an Nasyid* “anthem”, and *ar Raqs* “dance” denote physical actions and objects that can be seen and felt. For instance: “They drugged you through your veins; they said your lethargy benefits the homeland” The word *al warid* offers a visceral, bodily visualization, symbolizing how power literally invades and controls the physical body. Meanwhile, *an Nasyid* symbolizes national identity an anthem recognized by the public yet stripped of its authentic meaning. These concrete words enhance the song’s realism and bridge symbolic meaning with the social-political critique at its core.

Figurative Language

The figurative language in *Lil Waṭan* is dominated by irony, social metaphor, repetition, and symbolism. The metaphor in: “They drugged you through your veins” illustrates citizens losing consciousness not through medicine but through ideology that lulls them into compliance. Repetition particularly in the phrases *Qaaluk* and *taan rawqisny shawy* functions as anaphora, emphasizing the authoritarian voice that repeatedly issues empty commands (Nurgiyantoro, 2010). Irony emerges when the invitation to “dance” appears amid national decay, exposing the contradiction between celebration and suffering. Symbolism is also strong: *al wathan* “the

homeland” becomes a symbol of national identity emptied of sincerity transformed into a rhetorical tool of power.

Intrinsic Structure in the Lyrics of “Lil Waṭan”

The intrinsic structure reflects the inner aspects forming the core meaning of a literary work. It includes theme, atmosphere, tone, and message (Hikmat et al., 2017, p. 34). In *Lil Waṭan*, these elements intertwine to create a sharp social critique of oppressive nationalism that undermines individual freedom.

Theme

The main theme of *Lil Waṭan* is critique of false nationalism and power hegemony. The song illustrates how love for one’s homeland is distorted into a tool of control. The line: “The herd accused you of treason every time you demanded change for the nation” shows that nationalism has lost its essence as a spirit of liberation. This theme reflects political and social awareness that true patriotism does not mean submission it requires the courage to criticize for the sake of justice.

Atmosphere

The atmosphere of *Lil Waṭan* is satirical, bitter, and tragic. Although accompanied by rhythmic and lively melodies, the lyrical meaning evokes deep irony and sorrow. The line: “Don’t be sad, come dance a little” presents a forced cheerfulness a false happiness masking fatigue, disappointment, and frustration. Mashrou’ Leila constructs a dual atmosphere between laughter and lamentation, between entertainment and suffering.

Tone

The tone used in *Lil Waṭan* is sharp yet elegant satire. The lyricist speaks with irony toward both citizens easily swayed by political slogans and rulers who exploit nationalism for suppression. This tone also carries empathy and moral awareness, inviting listeners to open their eyes to manipulation disguised as patriotism (Pradopo, 2012). The satirical and reflective tone typifies Mashrou’ Leila’s defiance against social and cultural authoritarianism.

Message

The message contained in *Lil Waṭan* is political and humanistic. The song conveys that genuine nationalism must not become a dogma that oppresses individual freedom. Through symbols such as *al warid* “vein”, an Nashid “anthem”, and *ar Raqs* “dance”, *Mashrou’ Leila* urges listeners to recognize subtle mechanisms of social control performed in the name of the “homeland.” Its message asserts that critical awareness toward authority is the purest form of love for one’s nation nationalism should liberate, not silence.

Aspects of Nationalism in “Lil Waṭan”

The nationalist aspect in literature or song lyrics reflects how concepts of patriotism, collective identity, and national spirit are presented, interpreted, or critiqued by the author. Nationalism is not always expressed through pride or heroism but can appear as critical reflection on social and political realities cloaked in state symbols (Hula, 2020). In *Lil Waṭan*, nationalism is not glorified but deconstructed, revealing how the concept of “the homeland” is used to suppress consciousness and silence free thought.

Ideological Power

In *Lil Waṭan*, nationalism is depicted as an instrument of political hegemony that oppresses individuals. The line “They silenced you with slogans about all the conspiracies” shows that nationalism no longer signifies unity but rather becomes empty rhetoric wielded to suppress

dissent. Mashrou' Leila exposes nationalism as authoritarian and manipulative, transforming the homeland into a symbol of control rather than shared belonging.

Loss of Humanity

The song also reveals dehumanization in the name of patriotism. In the line "They drugged you through your veins; they said your lethargy benefits the homeland" the people are "anesthetized" by nationalism, losing critical consciousness. The nationalism that should inspire struggle becomes a mechanism of mass control, demanding passivity and obedience. Mashrou' Leila's critique exposes how the ideology of love for the nation can become a system that silences humanity.

Rhetoric and Entertainment

The most striking line "They told you, don't be sad come dance a little" depicts nationalism sustained through entertainment and rhetorical distraction. Citizens are urged to dance, celebrate, and forget their hardships. The dance becomes a metaphor for escapism and political distraction. Through repetition, Mashrou' Leila mirrors propaganda's rhythm showing how entertainment functions as a tool of social control and a façade of "national happiness" (Faruk, 2012).

Individual Freedom

The line "The herd accused you of treason every time you demanded change for the nation" highlights the conflict between individual and collective nationalism. Here, nationalism manifests as social pressure for conformity, where dissent is stigmatized as treason. Mashrou' Leila rejects nationalism that suppresses freedom of thought, arguing that difference should not be seen as betrayal but as vitality for progress (Lussiyandari, 2020).

Social Critique and New Awareness

Although *Lil Waṭan* sounds cynical, it does not reject nationalism entirely. Instead, it offers a vision of critical, conscious, and humanistic nationalism. Through irony and symbolism, Mashrou' Leila invites listeners to love their country reflectively and responsibly, not blindly through slogans. The song calls for a critical form of patriotism, where love for the homeland is measured not by loyalty to power but by the courage to uphold justice, freedom, and humanity.

Patterns of Silencing

The song *Lil Waṭan* depicts how power silences the voices of the people through subtle yet systematic symbolic and ideological mechanisms. Mashrou' Leila exposes these through metaphorical language, repetition, and sharp irony. The following patterns of silencing form the core structural meaning of the song (Zulfahnur, 2014).

Propaganda Pattern

The first pattern arises through political propaganda and nationalistic slogans used to justify authority. The lyric: "They silenced you with slogans about all the conspiracies" shows rulers fabricating conspiratorial narratives to hide internal failures. The people are made to believe that the enemy lies outside, not within. This pattern signifies the formation of false consciousness, where citizens are conditioned to loyalty without critique political language becomes a weapon of ideological silence.

Anesthetization Pattern

The lyric: "They drugged you through your veins" illustrates a form of silencing through collective numbness. People are not silenced violently but through social anesthesia education, media, and entertainment that distract from oppression. The medical metaphor implies a systematic, soft control penetrating the very "veins" of society. This represents cultural hegemony, where nationalism flows through consciousness, making submission seem voluntary.

Distraction Pattern

The recurring invitation: “Come dance a little” depicts silencing through mass entertainment. Citizens are encouraged to dance, rejoice, and forget their suffering. The dance serves as a symbol of diversion from political struggle toward artificial euphoria. Mashrou’ Leila mirrors propaganda’s rhythm, showing how joy is produced as a façade to hide systemic misery (Faruk, 2012).

Stigmatization Pattern

The lyric: “The herd accused you of treason every time you demanded change for the nation” reveals social stigmatization of dissenters. Critics are branded as traitors, and disagreement is treated as an attack on the nation. This pattern demonstrates how society itself becomes an instrument of internalized oppression, where people silence one another in defense of a false unity.

Legitimization Pattern

The final pattern involves silencing through the legitimization of nationalism itself. Rulers use the symbol of the “homeland” *al wathan* as moral justification to suppress freedom. Nationalism, once a spirit of liberation, is transformed into a mechanism of domination. In Lévi-Strauss’s structural framework, this represents the binary opposition between love and fear: citizens love their country yet fear criticizing it (Lévi-Strauss, 1963). Through irony and repetition, Mashrou’ Leila unveils this false nationalism as a political myth disguised as unity.

“Love” and “Fear” in the Lyrics of *Lil Waṭan*

In the song *Lil Waṭan*, the dialectic between love and fear becomes the central binary opposition that structures its meaning. Love for the homeland is portrayed not as blind devotion but as a deep sense of care, responsibility, and hope for transformation. This form of love represents the people’s genuine attachment to their nation and their desire to create a more just and humane society. However, this affection is continuously confronted by fear: fear of being labeled a traitor, of losing safety, or of being ostracized for demanding change. The lyrics reveal how this fear silences the people’s voices and transforms patriotism into submission. As a result, the relationship between citizens and their homeland shifts from one of affection to one of intimidation, where nationalism serves as a tool of control rather than liberation.

The same tension appears in the voice of the individual. Those who love their country wish to speak truth and advocate for justice, yet their voices are suppressed and stigmatized. The individual becomes isolated within a collective that equates criticism with betrayal. Here, “the homeland” functions as a double-edged symbol: on one hand, it signifies unity and shared identity; on the other, it becomes a metaphor for oppression and the loss of freedom. The language and tone of the lyrics further reinforce this duality: the repeated phrase “they told you” carries an illusion of tenderness, while “come dance a little” reflects coercion and distraction. Through this interplay, Mashrou’ Leila exposes the hypocrisy of political discourse that disguises control in the tone of affection.

Ultimately, the ideological structure of *Lil Waṭan* juxtaposes two forms of nationalism: the ideal, which is critical, reflective, and emancipatory, and the false, which is dogmatic, manipulative, and repressive. This structural opposition between love and fear illustrates how the same emotional attachment to the homeland can be weaponized to maintain obedience. The song uncovers the paradox of modern Arab nationalism, where love becomes a means of subjugation and fear masquerades as loyalty. Through irony, repetition, and symbolic language, Mashrou’ Leila reclaims the meaning of patriotism as an act of critical love: one that dares to question, to resist, and to restore humanity within the idea of the nation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the structuralist analysis of Mashrou' Leila's song *Lil Waṭan*, it is found that the song constructs a system of meaning through the symbolic relationships between the physical and intrinsic elements of the text. Elements such as diction, imagery, and figurative language form patterns of irony and repetition that reveal the paradox of nationalism in the modern Arab world. Through the structuralist framework of Claude Lévi-Strauss, the song's meaning can be understood as a structure built upon binary oppositions between love and fear, freedom and oppression, and the people and the rulers. This structure demonstrates that the language and symbols of nationalism are used not as instruments of liberation, but of suppression.

Artistically, *Lil Waṭan* represents a critique of manipulative and authoritarian nationalism. Mashrou' Leila reveals how the ideal of loving one's homeland has been exploited to cultivate a culture of silence and submission to authority. Through symbolism, repetition, and ironic tone, the song transcends its aesthetic function to become a manifestation of social consciousness opposing hegemony. Thus, *Lil Waṭan* can be understood as a musical literary work that deconstructs the myth of false nationalism and reclaims the meaning of patriotism as the courage to think critically and fight for humanity.

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