

## **Echoes of Uncertainty: Postmodern Reflections in the Songs of K. Lalhmingliana**

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### **Abstract**

Uncertainty is a pervasive feature of contemporary experience, shaping the emotional and social realities reflected in contemporary Mizo music. This article critically examines the songs of *K. Lalhmingliana* through the lens of postmodern theory, with a central focus on how uncertainty manifests in his treatment of identity, love, loss, and social change. Integrating perspectives from *Lyotard*, *Bauman*, *Hutcheon*, and other postmodern writers, as well as relational works by *bell hooks* and *Erich Fromm*, the analysis situates Lalhmingliana's lyrics within broader debates about fragmentation, vulnerability, and the ongoing search for meaning. By closely reading selected songs, the article demonstrates how Lalhmingliana's work articulates the anxieties, ambiguities, and possibilities of navigating connection and selfhood in a shifting, uncertain world.

**Keywords:** Postmodernism; Uncertainty; Mizo Music; Identity; Contemporary Poetry

### **Introduction**

Uncertainty is a defining feature of contemporary life, shaping how people experience love, identity, and belonging. In recent decades, rapid cultural and technological changes have transformed how individuals in Mizoram and beyond understand meaning and community. Contemporary Mizo music, particularly the songs of *K. Lalhmingliana*, both reflects and interrogates these evolving dynamics. Through a

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postmodern lens, his work illuminates the shifting boundaries of tradition, the complexities of selfhood, and the ongoing negotiation of values in a changing society. This article explores how Lalhmingliana's songwriting embodies the anxieties, doubts, and paradoxes of postmodern existence, with a particular focus on uncertainty as both a theme and a lived reality. Drawing on postmodern theorists such as *Lyotard*, *Bauman*, and *Hutcheon*, alongside influential writers on love and longing, such as *bell hooks* and *Erich Fromm*, the analysis situates Lalhmingliana's lyrics within broader debates about fragmentation, vulnerability, and the possibilities for connection in uncertain times.

*K. Lalhmingliana*, also known by his stage name *K. Hminga*, was born on June 11, 1992, in Armed Veng South, Aizawl, Mizoram, the eldest of three children of V. L. Rosiama and Lalthlamuani. His entry into the Mizo music scene was serendipitous: a demo of his song "*Hmangaih Hmasa Ber*" shared privately in 2015 unexpectedly went viral and was later uploaded to YouTube, reaching a wider audience. His official debut music video in 2017 marked the beginning of a prolific career, during which he has performed extensively across Mizoram, throughout India—including Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata, Shillong, and Churachandpur—and internationally in Perth, Australia.

Lalhmingliana is celebrated as a songwriter, musician, and producer, and has received multiple honours. With a repertoire of over seventy songs and the release of his 2023 album *Ka Ngaih Zawngho*, he stands as a prominent figure in contemporary Mizo music. Among his most acclaimed works are "*Si Ar Lalnu*" (2017), "*Tunge Inthlei Thei*" (2018), "*He Lunglen Ruam Thim Ata Hi*" (2019), "*Tawnmang Lova Lasi*" (2019), and "*Ka Hringnun Diary*" (2019). His music is noted for evocative metaphors, emotional vulnerability, and engagement with themes of identity, love, and social critique.

A postmodern reading of Lalhmingliana's songs requires a clear theoretical grounding. *Jean-François Lyotard* views postmodernism as a questioning of representability and a rejection of totalising narratives, leading to epistemic uncertainty (Lyotard 81). *Zygmunt Bauman* links postmodernity to ambivalence and instability, describing identity as fluid and continuously renegotiated (Bauman 15–17). These perspectives frame the persistent uncertainty evident in Lalhmingliana's work.

This article also draws on *bell hooks* and *Erich Fromm* to illuminate the emotional dimensions of uncertainty. *hooks* views love as an act of courage in a society marked by fear and fragmentation (*hooks* 105), while *Fromm* emphasises love as a practice requiring humility and openness to risk (*Fromm* 18). Their insights deepen the understanding of uncertainty in Lalhmingliana's lyrics.

### **Identity, Loss, and the Postmodern Condition**

Questions of identity and loss are central to Lalhmingliana's compositions. His songs resist presenting the self as unified, instead foregrounding tension and instability. This is evident in "Ka Hringnun Diary" (2019):

"Fur khua leh ruahui chu kawp tura duan  
Pangpar leh khuai te pawh kawp tura duan  
Vanzawla chhum leh nizung pawh kawp tura duan  
Nang leh kei erawh hrang tura duan" (lines 8–11)

*[The cloudy sky and the rain are meant for each other ... You and I are meant to be apart]*

The juxtaposition of harmony and separation destabilises romantic idealism, expressing postmodern anxiety about meaning and connection. The melancholic tone resonates with Bauman's notion of deferred meaning and fragmented selfhood (Bauman 15).

A similar dynamic appears in "He Lunglen Ruam Thim Ata Hi" (2019):

"Lusunna khawharna hi zawng  
Khuareiin a hnem an ti.  
An sawi 'khuarei' chu khawiah ding ni maw?  
Kei chuan ka tawng lo nitinin" (lines 9–12)

The scepticism toward time's healing power echoes Lyotard's critique of reassuring grand narratives (Lyotard 81).

### **Social Hierarchy, Equality, and the Collapse of Grand Narratives**

Lyotard's scepticism toward grand narratives finds resonance in "Tunge Inthlei Thei" (2018), which critiques social hierarchy in Mizoram. The song challenges the

authority of economic and educational elites, valorising lived experience and marginalised voices (Hutcheon 252).

*“Dai kil kawm kara sei lian,  
Pa mawlmang leh hriat tlem ...  
Lei ropuina thuam thuam riat aiin a hlu”* (lines 23–25, 31)

However, the song also risks romanticising poverty, reducing complex social realities to moral binaries. This tension highlights the limits of cultural critique without institutional engagement.

#### **Postmodern Aesthetics: Metaphor, Self-Reflexivity, and Irony**

Postmodern aesthetics emphasise self-reflexivity and instability of meaning (Russell 289; Hutcheon 252). In “*Ka Hringnun Diary*”, the diary metaphor frames life as narrative construction:

*“Ka hringnun diary hi miten chhiar se  
Phek 20-na atang I hming a ri ang”* (lines 1–2)

Similarly, “*Si Ar Lalnu*” employs the metaphor of *buklung bum* (a broken scale) to symbolise moral ambiguity and vulnerability.

#### **Folklore and Innovation: Reimagining Tradition**

In “*Tawnmang Lova Lasi*” (2019), folklore blends with personal narrative, merging myth and lived experience:

*“Min zawl, min lem ...  
Nang ngaia kur, sal tang, mi tang ka ni”* (lines 12–14)

This fusion reflects postmodern hybridity and democratized storytelling.

#### **Love, Longing, and Uncertainty**

Songs like “*Si Ar Lalnu*” and “*Tawnmang Lova Lasi*” portray love as enchanting yet destabilising. The beloved is elevated beyond reach, reflecting existential longing and emotional risk (Fromm 18; Lyotard xxiv). Love emerges as a site of vulnerability, uncertainty, and meaning-making.

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## Conclusion

Viewed through a postmodern lens, the songs of *K. Lalhmingliana* emerge as nuanced explorations of identity, loss, and social critique. His lyrics interrogate collapsing certainties, fragile connections, and shifting values. By blending tradition with innovation and embracing ambiguity, *Lalhmingliana*'s music captures the echoes of uncertainty that define contemporary Mizo and postmodern experience.

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