

UNMASKING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE OF TAYLOR'S SWIFT MEGA HIT SONG "ANTI-HERO"

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Abstract: This article explores the presence and impact of figurative language in Taylor Swift's music, focusing on the lyrical depth and artistic nuances found in her songs. It highlights the use of metaphors, similes, and personification in Swift's songwriting, emphasizing their ability to evoke emotions, create vivid imagery, and enhance the narrative power of her compositions. The study draws upon existing research on figurative language in music to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Swift's use of these literary devices enhances her lyrical and artistic expression. The article also presents a research methodology for analyzing the figurative language in Swift's songs and offers a detailed description of the findings and their implications. By examining specific examples from Swift's songs, the article aims to uncover the underlying artistic and communicative strategies used by the artist and shed light on the impact of her figurative language on the audience's interpretation and emotional response.

Keywords: Figurative Language, Song Analysis, Taylor's Swift mega hit song "Anti Hero"

INTRODUCTION

Figurative language serves as a powerful tool in songwriting, enabling artists to convey emotion, create vivid imagery, and connect with listeners on a deeper level. Although the use of figurative language in songs has long been recognized and appreciated, researchers are very interested in studying its impact and significance in the world of music. One of the modern singer who often use figurative language in their song is Taylor swift. Taylor Swift, the renowned singer-songwriter, has captured the hearts of millions with her compelling storytelling and heartfelt lyrics. One notable aspect of Swift's songwriting prowess is her adept use of figurative language. Through metaphors, similes, personification, and other literary devices, Swift creates a rich tapestry of imagery and emotion in her songs. This

article explores the presence and impact of figurative language in Taylor Swift's music, with a particular focus on the lyrical depth and artistic nuances found in her songs. Swift's discography spans various genres, including pop and country, and each of her songs showcases her skillful employment of figurative language. By analyzing specific examples, we can unravel the layers of meaning and poetic techniques employed by Swift to convey her narratives and emotions

Metaphors serve as a prominent feature in Taylor Swift's songwriting, allowing her to draw imaginative connections between disparate ideas and evoke powerful emotions in her listeners. In her song "Love Story," for instance, Swift uses the metaphor of a Romeo and Juliet-style love affair to convey a sense of forbidden love and tragic romance

(Swift, 2008). This metaphor adds depth and resonance to the song, enabling listeners to engage with the narrative on a more profound level. Metaphor, has been extensively researched by researchers in the field of music psychology. They have found that metaphors not only provide a means of expressing abstract concepts but also enable listeners to create mental images and build emotional connections to music (Gibbs, 2008; Zbikowski, 2015). Using metaphors in song lyrics can evoke strong emotions, generate personal associations, and contribute to the overall impact of the music.

Similes, another prevalent form of figurative language in songs, have also garnered attention from researchers. Studies have shown that similes enhance the intelligibility and memorability of lyrics, as well as facilitate the interpretation and understanding of complex emotions and ideas (Cooper & Condon, 2004). By comparing two distinct entities through the use of "like" or "as," similes enable listeners to create vivid mental images and foster a deeper connection with the song. Personification, the attribution of human qualities to non-human entities, has been explored for its impact on listener engagement and emotional response. Research suggests that personification in songs can elicit empathy, create a sense of familiarity, and facilitate emotional connections between listeners and the music (DeNora, 2000). By infusing inanimate objects or abstract concepts with human characteristics, songwriters can evoke a range of emotions and enhance the narrative power of their compositions.

Not only metaphors, Taylor Swift also use personification in her songs. Personification is another notable aspect of Swift's figurative language usage. By attributing human qualities to inanimate objects or abstract concepts, Swift brings

her lyrics to life and infuses them with emotion. In her song "Wildest Dreams," she personifies memories, singing, "He's so tall and handsome as hell / He's so bad, but he does it so well" (Swift, 2014). This personification adds depth and character to the memories, making them more relatable and evocative for the listeners. Personification, the attribution of human qualities to non-human entities, has been explored for its impact on listener engagement and emotional response. Research shows that personification in songs can elicit empathy, create a sense of familiarity, and facilitate an emotional connection between listeners and music (DeNora, 2000). By embedding inanimate objects or abstract concepts with human characteristics, songwriters can evoke a wide range of emotions and increase the narrative power of their compositions.

By synthesizing findings and insights from research studies, this article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how figurative language enhances lyrical and artistic expression in song. Through the skillful use of figurative language, Taylor Swift creates a world of vivid imagery and emotional resonance in her songs. By exploring metaphors, similes, personification, and other literary devices in her music, this article aims to highlight the lyrical depth and artistic nuance that distinguishes Swift's songwriting.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher employed a descriptive qualitative approach, in which the facts are methodically reported to produce a precise and factual conclusion. According to Sugiyono (2006), doing research is a methodical strategy to gather facts for use in science. Qualitative research methods, in accordance with Sugiyono (2013), in qualitative research methods is a crucial

tool for examining the circumstances of natural objects. The process of data collection is linked with inductive analysis, and the findings of qualitative research place a strong emphasis on the meaning of generalization. Investigating and comprehending the meaning that people or groups assign to a social or human situation is possible through qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). This study was conducted using a problem-solving process, data collection, data classification, and data analysis.

The component that will be analysed is the data. The source of the data was taken from one of song lyrics of Midnights album called Anti-hero sung by Taylor. This album is her 10th album. According to Kothari (2004), the search for facts with the appropriate interpretation is the descriptive technique. According to the preceding statement, data analysis is an effort or method of transforming data into information so that the data's properties are recognized and helpful for addressing issues, particularly analysis connected to research. Reads all the songs lyrics from Anti-hero by Taylor Swift

In analyzing the data, the researcher used theory of descriptive qualitative research which goes through a series of steps and iterations: gathering data, examining data, comparing prior data to newer data and developing new data to gather. In reference with theory above, the procedure of analyzing data are as follows:

- a. Familiarization : Listen to the selected songs multiple times to become familiar with the lyrics, melody, and overall mood. Immerse deeply in the songs to gain a comprehensive understanding of their context and themes.
- b. Initial Coding : Conduct an initial coding process by reading through the lyrics and highlighting instances of

figurative language. Look for metaphors, similes, personification, hyperbole, alliteration, symbolism, or any other form of figurative language used in the songs. Note down the specific lines or phrases containing figurative language.

- c. Thematic Analysis : Begin analyzing the coded instances of figurative language within the songs. Identify recurring themes, motifs, or patterns that emerge. Examine how these figurative language elements contribute to the portrayal of anti-hero characters or situations. Make notes on the thematic interpretations and any connections you observe.
- d. Interpretation and Description : Provide a detailed description of the figurative language used in the anti-hero songs. Explain the types of figurative language found, along with specific examples from the lyrics. Describe how the figurative language enhances the anti-hero narrative, evokes certain emotions, or deepens the audience's understanding of the characters and themes.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Taylor Swift's "Anti-Hero" has established itself as a fan-favorite and critically acclaimed song from her fourth studio album, "Midnights." Known for its deeply emotional lyrics and raw storytelling, "Anti-Hero" offers a captivating glimpse into the complexities of insecurities. Through poignant imagery, evocative metaphors, and vivid storytelling, Swift crafts a narrative that resonates with listeners, inviting them to reflect on their own experiences of self-doubt, confusion, and the lingering memories that haunt them. In this exploration, we delve into the lyrical depth, musical composition, and thematic elements of "Anti-Hero" shedding light on Taylor Swift's ability to capture

universal emotions and create an enduring connection with her audience.

Anti Hero – Taylor Swift

**I have this thing where I get older but
just never wiser**

Midnights become my afternoons

**When my depression works the
graveyard shift**

**All of the people I've ghosted stand
there in the room**

The first line, "I had this thing when I got older but never got any wiser," uses a metaphorical expression to convey the sense of stagnation or lack of personal growth and wisdom one feels with age. The comparison between growing old and gaining wisdom highlights the speaker's self-awareness of their own inadequacies or perceived lack of development.

The line "Midnight becomes my day" uses personification to create a vivid image of the speaker's disturbed sense of time and routine. The metaphorical transformation from midnight to evening suggests a shift in the speaker's internal clock or the blurring of day and night, perhaps reflecting a sense of anxiety or a changed perception of time due to their emotional state. The phrase "When my depression works, the grave shifts" uses metaphorical language to describe the speaker's depressive experiences. The use of the term "shifting graves" metaphorically conveys the idea that their depression becomes more pronounced or active at night, emphasizing the impact it has on their daily lives and mental well-being. The final line, "Everyone I haunted is standing there in the room," combines metaphor and personification to create a striking visual image. The mention of "people I haunt" refers to individuals the speaker intentionally or unintentionally cuts off, making them feel neglected or abandoned. By suggesting that these people were "standing there in the room", the lyrics

metaphorically describe the lingering emotional presence or weight of that unresolved relationship.

I should not be left to my own devices

They come with prices and vices

I end up in crisis (tale as old as time)

I wake up screaming from dreaming

One day I'll watch as you're leaving

'Cause you got tired of my scheming

(For the last time)

The line "I should not be left to my own devices" suggests a lack of self-control or a tendency to make poor choices when left alone. Here, the phrase "left to my own devices" metaphorically implies that the speaker's actions or decisions without external guidance can lead to unfavorable outcomes. "They come with prices and vices" employs rhyme and alliteration to create a memorable line. The metaphorical reference to "prices and vices" suggests that certain choices or actions have consequences or negative aspects associated with them. This can imply that the speaker has experienced the repercussions of their own behavior or the influence of others.

The phrase "I end up in crisis (tale as old as time)" employs a simile to like the speaker's recurring crises to a timeless story. This comparison emphasizes the cyclic nature of personal struggles and suggests that such experiences are common and relatable, echoing themes found in literature and folklore. "I wake up screaming from dreaming" utilizes imagery to portray intense emotional distress. The act of waking up screaming suggests a sense of fear or trauma experienced in dreams, highlighting the emotional turmoil the speaker is grappling with.

"One day I'll watch as you're leaving, 'Cause you got tired of my scheme (For the last time)" conveys a sense of regret and impending loss. The mention of watching someone leave,

paired with the acknowledgment of the speaker's own scheme, suggests a history of manipulative behavior or a pattern of causing harm in relationships. The phrase "For the last time" adds a poignant note, implying a realization that their actions have pushed someone away permanently

It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me

At tea time, everybody agrees

I'll stare directly at the sun but never in the mirror

It must be exhausting always rooting for the anti-hero

The line "It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me" employs direct and straightforward language to convey a sense of self-blame or acknowledgment of personal flaws. By referring to oneself as "the problem," the speaker takes responsibility for their actions or behaviors, indicating a level of self-awareness and reflection. "At tea time, everybody agrees" uses tea time as a metaphorical setting to emphasize a sense of consensus or shared understanding among others. This implies that there is a general consensus or agreement about the speaker's negative traits or problematic behavior, further highlighting their introspective reflection and the recognition of how they may be perceived by others.

"I'll stare directly at the sun but never in the mirror" employs contrasting imagery to highlight a lack of self-reflection. The metaphorical act of staring directly at the sun suggests a willingness to confront intense or overwhelming experiences, while the refusal to look in the mirror implies a reluctance to confront one's own inner self or flaws. This line underscores the speaker's avoidance of self-examination and the potential consequences that may arise from it. "It must be exhausting always rooting for the anti-hero" employs a metaphorical comparison to depict the speaker's inclination to support or

empathize with flawed or morally ambiguous characters. The line suggests that consistently aligning oneself with such figures can be emotionally draining or tiring, hinting at the speaker's own struggles with personal identity and possibly feeling like an outsider.

Sometimes I feel like everybody is a sexy baby

And I'm a monster on the hill

Too big to hang out, slowly lurching toward your favorite city

Pierced through the heart, but never killed

The line "Sometimes I feel like everybody is a sexy baby" employs a juxtaposition of contrasting elements. The metaphorical reference to "sexy baby" suggests a sense of youthfulness, innocence, and desirability. The speaker's feeling that "everybody" embodies this quality could imply a sense of insecurity or a feeling out of place in comparison. This contrast emphasizes the speaker's perceived difference or uniqueness. The line "And I'm a monster on the hill" employs metaphorical language to depict the speaker's feeling of being isolated or different from others. The use of the term "monster" suggests a sense of otherness, possibly indicating a feeling of being misunderstood or outcast. The image of being on a hill further adds to the notion of separation or distance from the rest.

"Too big to hang out, slowly lurching toward your favorite city" employs metaphorical language and vivid imagery to convey a sense of feeling out of place or unable to fit in. The phrase "too big to hang out" suggests a perceived difference in size or significance that prevents the speaker from socializing comfortably or connecting with others. The image of "slowly lurching toward your favorite city" implies a sense of slow progress or struggle in trying to reach a desired destination, potentially reflecting the

speaker's efforts to be accepted or understood. "Pierced through the heart, but never killed" combines metaphor and resilience. The metaphorical reference to being "pierced through the heart" suggests emotional pain or vulnerability. However, the phrase "never killed" implies a sense of resilience and the ability to endure hardships or emotional wounds without being completely defeated.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In conclusion, the presence and impact of figurative language in Taylor Swift's music is undeniable. Through metaphors, similes and personification, Swift creates a world of vivid imagery, emotional resonance and narrative depth in her songs. The use of these literary devices enhances the lyrical and artistic expression, allowing Swift to connect with her audience on a profound level. The exploration of specific examples, such as the song "Anti-Hero," reveals Swift's ability to capture universal emotions, convey introspection, and tell compelling stories.

Metaphors play a significant role in Swift's songwriting, allowing her to draw imaginative connections between disparate ideas and evoke powerful emotions. The metaphors employed in her songs, such as the Romeo and Juliet-style love affair in "Love Story," enable listeners to engage with the narrative on a deeper level and create personal associations. Personification, another notable aspect of Swift's figurative language usage, breathes life into inanimate objects or abstract concepts, making them relatable and evocative. By attributing human qualities to memories in "Wildest Dreams," Swift adds depth and character to her lyrics, fostering an emotional connection between listeners and the music.

Through the synthesis of research studies, this article provides a comprehensive understanding of how figurative language enhances Swift's lyrical and artistic expression. The analysis of her songs highlights the depth, nuance, and poetic techniques employed by Swift. By exploring metaphors, similes, personification, and other literary devices, we gain insight into the impact of figurative language in Swift's music and its role in conveying narratives and emotions. Swift's ability to create a rich tapestry of imagery and evoke strong emotional responses through figurative language solidifies her status as a masterful songwriter.

Therefore, Taylor Swift's skillful use of figurative language sets her apart as a highly accomplished and celebrated singer-songwriter. Her adeptness in employing metaphors, similes, and personification creates a lyrical depth and artistic nuance that resonates with her audience. Swift's ability to convey complex emotions, tell captivating stories, and evoke vivid imagery through figurative language is evident throughout her discography. By delving into the depths of her songs, such as the introspective "Anti-Hero," we witness the lasting impact of figurative language in enhancing the emotional resonance and narrative power of her music. Taylor Swift's songs serve as a testament to the potential of figurative language in songwriting, cementing her status as one of the most skilled and respected artists of our time.

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