AN ANALYSIS OF METAPHOR IN THE ALBUM THE TORTURED POETS DEPARTMENT: THE ANTHOLOGY BY TAYLOR SWIFT

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes one of the types of figurative language, namely metaphor, found in the album The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology by Taylor Swift. It employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the data based on the theory of conceptual metaphor, which contains three types of metaphors: structural, orientational, and ontological metaphor [1]. The purpose of this study was to identify the types and the meanings of metaphors contained in the song lyrics of this album. From 50 instances of metaphor identified in the album, the writer found that there were 20 structural metaphors, 8 orientational metaphors, and 22 ontological metaphors. The findings also revealed the presence of connotative meanings in the lyrics in the album. The use of metaphors in these songs provided emphasis and enhanced the aesthetic quality of the lyrics, enabling listeners to appreciate the songs while gaining a deeper understanding of the meanings and messages conveyed in the lyrics, as well as the context and the storytelling that Swift expresses through her music.

Keywords: Metaphor, Figurative Language, Taylor Swift, The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology

INTRODUCTION

Linguistics concerns the analysis of language, including its structure, development, and function in human interaction. It investigates how languages change over time in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, as well as how they vary across regions, cultures, and social communities [2]. Moreover, linguistics studies how language communicates feelings, constructs social bonds, and reflects identity, emphasizing its vital role in social life [3]. Figurative language serves as an essential device to enrich artistic expression, communicate subtle emotions, and deepen narrative meaning. Forms such as metaphor enable authors to convey meanings beyond literal interpretation [4]. Metaphor functions by mapping one experiential domain onto another and is classified into structural, orientational, and ontological, without using "as" or "like" as a direct comparison like simile, made metaphors rely on shared attributes between subjects, thereby enhancing expressiveness [5]. As one of the most influential musicians in the contemporary music industry, Taylor Swift often using figurative language into her songwriting. One of the latest albums, The Tortured Poets Department demonstrates this stylistic tendency. This study addresses two central questions: (1) what types of metaphor that appear in each song of the album, (2) what the meanings are communicated through these metaphors? The objective is to classify the types of metaphor and explore the meanings inside the lyrics. This study excludes the other figurative elements such as hyperbole, simile, personification, and others. This delimitation enables a focused analysis while opening opportunities for subsequent studies to investigate additional figures of speech or compare to different album versions. The significance of this study is for the academic and practical contributions. In literary studies, it demonstrates how metaphor operates within contemporary music, linking classical literary analysis with modern cultural production.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine metaphors in this album, which consists of 31 tracks.

In this study, the writer functions as the main instrument for collecting and interpreting data, directly analyzing metaphorical expressions within the lyrics. The data source was accessed through Taylor Swift's official Spotify account. The data collection steps included listening to every track from this album, listening carefully, and examining the written lyrics, after that, marking expressions identified as metaphors that were identified (structural, orientational, and ontological). The analysis procedure involved three steps: (1) reviewing the lyrics while listening to the songs, (2) determining and classifying the types of metaphor based on conceptual theory [1], and (3) interpreting the meanings conveyed by each metaphor. Through these steps, the study aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of how metaphors articulate emotions, concepts, and thematic elements throughout the album.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part are the results and interpretation of metaphor usage in TTPD: The Anthology. Through the use of the conceptual metaphor, the study found 50 metaphorical examples were documented and classified according to their type and respective track.

1. Structural Metaphor

From 50 data identified, the study identified the are 20 data of structural metaphor in this research study. Here's an example of data containing structural metaphor:

Taylor Swift – Fortnight ft. Post Malone
Line: 13
Duration: 01:03/03:48

"All my mornings are Mondays stuck in an endless February"
Target domain : Morning
Source domain : Mondays, February

In this example, the metaphor shows an emotional burden and monotony by framing abstract inner experiences through the concrete notion of calendar time. Based on conceptual theory [1], intangible feelings are conceptualized via familiar domains. Mondays in this lyric represent routine exhaustion and psychological pressure, whereas "an endless February" heightens the sense of stagnation, as February is often culturally associated with coldness, limited sunlight, and subdued mood. If it combined, these temporal images depict persistent and draining emotional condition. Overall, the lyric portrays the felling of exhausted that always happen over and over again.

2. Orientational Metaphor

From 8 examples of data that founded in this study, here's one of examples of orientational metaphor:

Taylor Swift - Down Bad
Line: 8
Duration: 00:41/ 04:21
Target domain : I
Source domain : down

Based on the lyric of this song, the pronoun "I" represents the target domain, while "down" functions as the source domain. The spatial orientation "down" metaphorically structures the speaker's emotional condition, rather than indicating physical direction like "under", "down" symbolizes emotional decline, sorrow, and helplessness. Using the conceptual metaphor theory, negative emotional states are frequently associated with downward orientation (down = bad). As a result, the phrase "down bad" exemplifies how internal distress is conceptualized through spatial positioning. It expresses heartbreak and fragility, suggesting that the speaker feels emotionally overwhelmed. The detail of "crying at the gym" strengthens this understanding, illustrating a form of grief that surfaces even in public.

3. Ontological Metaphor

The study identified there are 22 examples of orientational metaphor. Here's one of the examples:

Taylor Swift – Who's Afraid of Little Old Me?
Line: 35
Duration: 03:15/05:34

I'm always drunk on my own tears, isn't that what they all said?
Source domain: drunk/tears
Target domain: I

The metaphor applies meaning from the concrete experience of intoxication to the abstract experience of emotional suffering. Although one cannot literally become drunk on tears, the metaphor shows that the speaker's sadness is overwhelming, lead to intoxication. This can be conceptualized as emotion is substance or sadness is intoxication, where grief is depicted as something that fills, controls, and destabilizes the self. The lyrics itself exemplifies an ontological metaphor, because it treats emotion as a physical substance that can be consumed. By giving physical characteristics to the sadness, the lyric renders internal suffering concrete and vivid. The

phrase "drunk on my own tears" describe a feeling of exhaustion, lack of control, and deep emotional distress. The follow up with line "isn't that what they all said?", adds an ironic dimension, suggesting public perception of her as overly emotional or dramatic.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The study identified metaphorical expressions in 28 songs from The Tortured Poets Department, based on the conceptual metaphor theory. Metaphors were categorized into structural, orientational, and ontological metaphor. From this study, there were founded 50 metaphorical examples, 20 structural metaphors, 8 orientational metaphors, and 22 ontological metaphors. Drawing on Leech's theory of meaning, the analysis further reveals the prominence of connotative meaning, which enhances the expressive depth and interpretive richness of the lyrics. For the suggestions, these studies could explore more about the usage of metaphor in other albums by Taylor Swift or other kind of figurative language to uncover broader stylistic tendencies. Subsequent research might also explore the communicative roles of metaphor, such as identity construction or social commentary, or employ alternative linguistic frameworks including pragmatics or discourse analysis.

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