

# Figures of Speech and Their Connotative Meaning in Song's Lyrics *Killing Me Softly with His Song*

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## ABSTRACT

The study is an analysis of figures of speech used in song lyrics. The writer chooses the topic because the figures of speech are used as one of the tools to deliver the messages of lyrics to the listener. They also make the lyrics more attractive for the listeners and attracted the listener to buy the album of the songs. This what make the writer interest in conducting a research about the figure of speech used in song lyrics. She wants to find out what figures of speech used in the lyrics. The lyrics that the writer analysis are song by Roberta Flack. The approaches of this study are qualitative and descriptive. To collect the data, the writer uses the documentation. The writer uses the Perrin's theory to describe the figures of speech of the song's lyrics. She also uses the theory of connotative meaning to explain the meaning beyond the used of figures of speech. From this analysis, the writer believes that there are many figures of speech occur in song's lyrics. They are: metaphor, personification, symbolism, synecdoche, and hyperbole. And metaphor is figures of speech which is used most in song's lyrics.

Keyword : Figures of speech, connotative, denotation, song's lyrics *Killing Me Softly with his song*.

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Lyrics in a song strengthen the existence of music. The song lyrics having a role to kindle, meaning imagination is called a product of kindling the meaning. Music and song are forming a communal activity in which, for a while, the world becomes one. Hancock (1996: 6) says songs can be immensely valuable for developing certain capacities, but they can be more valuable if the singer or the listeners exploit them creatively to bridge the gap between the pleasurable experience of singing or listening and the communicative use of language.

Each lyrics carries a message or theme that is delivered to the audience, lyrics most explore their inner world to produce their art, we find in song's lyrics, the deepest feelings and spiritual center of sensitive human beings.

Based on the importance of speaking picture in a song, the writer tends to cover and understand the style of language in song lyrics entitle *Killing Me Softly with his song*. Acquiring the song, we have to be able to explain precisely to ourselves of what we have experienced. We can explain it well if we convey its meaning. And the way to do that is analyze the figurative language contains in the song.

Figurative speech provides new ways of looking at the world, it always makes use of a comparison between different things. Figurative language compares two things that are

different enough ways so that their similarities, when pointed out are interesting unique and surprising ([http // www. Kidskonnet.com / figurative language / figurative language home.html](http://www.Kidskonnet.com/figurative%20language/figurative%20language%20home.html)) According to Perrine Laurence (1984 : 61) Figure of speech is any way of saying something, other than the ordinary way the use of figure of are applied in the lyrics.

Figure of speech also carry connotative meaning within because figurative language works by

exploiting the connotations of particular worlds and the thing refers to. It means that figure of speech and connotations are closely connected to each other. the figure of speech is the style of language , and the connotative meaning is the meaning beyond the words that are used in the figure of speech. The authors seems to apply figure of speech along with their connotative meaning in their lyrics in order to deliver the messages efficiently but in stylish way. That is why the writer also interested to analyze the connotative meaning of the figure of speech use in lyrics. Based on the background of the study, the questions are ; 1) What kind of figures of speech occur in song lyrics ?, 2) What kind of connotative meaning in the figure of speech ?. The design of the study uses descriptive qualitative because it is conducted by identifying of song's lyric of *Killing Me Softly with His Song*.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **The Definition of Song**

Song is poem set to music, intended to be sung (oxford 1991) actually, song is a poem, while poem is an individual of poetry so the term song is the same with poem or poetry.

Understanding the meaning of a song or a poem is not easy, especially in this time. Poetry song is more complex and strange. The genre of song or poem is diferent with genre of prose. It's more easy to understand prose than a poetry or song. Because the language in prose is common utterance. The language in song is "uncommon utterance". If we related the difference with normative grammar, commonly, prose follows the normatif grammar and song deflates form the normative language grammar.

### **A Figures of Speech**

A figures of speech is any way of saying something other than the ordinary way and more narrowly definealde as a way of saying one thing and meaning an other (perrine laurence 1992 : 61)

If we pay attention to our daily life, we do not often say a certain word. Directly, we say it by using figures of speech , an expression that make. Comparisons or use words in usual way. It might seem absorb to say one thing and mean another. A teacher says to his / her student, "You are very very clever, you must study harder", where as his / her speech means the opposite, that is "You are very stupied, therefore you must study harder" we all do it and with good reason. We do it because we can say what we want to say more vividly and forcefully by figures of speech than we can by saying it directly. And we can say more by figurative statement than we can literal statement. Figures of speech gives another way of adding extra dimersions to language.

Obviously, if we want to read a poetry well, we must be able to interpret figurative language. Every use of figurative language invoive risk of misinterpretation, thugh the

risk is well worth taking, for person who can transiate the figure, the divides are immense for tunatly all people have imagination to some degree, and imagination be cultivated. Be practice one's ability to interpret figures of speech can be increased.

According to Bentley R.C (1972 : 96 – 97) in fact we are constantly using figurative language to add to the clarity of our ideas. Sometimes without being consciously aware of it. For instance, a "satellite", in its literal sense is a "small member of the solar system that revolves round one of the planets," but it can also be applied to any action or thing that a chieves the same purpose. Therefore you could say , "The establishment of a new satellite township became an accepted part of their policy", and doing this you have used the word figuratively in this instance, in a metaphorical sense.

## Kind of Figures of Speech

We have explained in the preface chapter the a figure of speech is any way of saying something other than an ordinary way, and some rhetoricians have classified as many as 250 separate figures. But there are eight most common figures of speech. They are :

### 1. Metaphor

Metaphor is used as a means of comparing things that are essentially unlike in metaphor the comparison is implied – that is, the figurative term is substituted for or identified with the literal term.

Metaphor may take one of four forms, depending on whether the literal and figurative terms are respectively named or implied. In the first form of metaphor, as in simile, both the literal and figurative terms are named. In Francis poem, for example, the literal term is "life" and the figurative term is "hound". In the second form, the literal term is named and the figurative term is named. In the fourth form, both the literal and figurative terms are implied. Metaphor of the fourth form, as one might guess, are comparative rare. (Perrine 1992 : 61 – 64).

According to Bentley (1972 : 98) metaphor is a comparison which omits the words "like" or "as", but identifies one object with another :

Example : "The sun was in the summer grass,  
The cadibahs were twisted steel", (Campbell).

### 2. Simile

A figure of speech in which two things are compared. It has two important characteristics

- a. It is usually introduced by the words "like" or "as" (or words with a similar inference).
- b. The two objects compared are generally unlike, but possess are feature that is common to both. (Bentley 1972 : 97)

According to Perrine (1992 : 61) metaphor and simile are both used as a means of comparing things that are essentially unlike. The only distinction between that is that in simile the comparison is expressed by the use of some word or phrase, such as like, as, than, similar to, resembles, or seems.

Simile is comparison of two unlike thing, using two words "like" or "as" (standford judith 1999 : 50)

Have you ever noticed how many times your friends say, "It's like . . ." or "I'm like . . ."? They aren't always creating similes, but they are attempting to simulate something (often a conversation). The word *like* signifies a direct comparison between two things

that are alike in a certain way. Usually one of the elements of a simile is concrete and the other abstract. "My love is like a red, red rose" writes Robert Burns. He's talking about the rose's beauty when it's in full bloom (he tells us that it's May in the next line). "Love is like a rose" is a simpler version of the simile, but it's a more dangerous version. (A black rose? A dead rose in December? The thorns of a rose?) Sometimes similes force us to consider how the two things being compared are dissimilar, but the relationship between two dissimilar things can break down easily, so similes must be rendered delicately and carefully. ([http://www.element of poetry.com](http://www.elementofpoetry.com)).

### 3. Personification

Personification is giving an inanimate object the qualities of a person or animal. E.B. White's beastlike school bus is an excellent example of this kind of figurative language. We can see the bus bearing down on its innocent victim, and we certainly get the impression that city schooling, for white, has more to do with being a helpless captive than a willing participant.

A writer sometimes repeats a word or image so many times in a literary work that you begin to wonder why. Why, for instance, does Patricia Grace call her story "Butterflies" and use butterflies as the central image? Naomi Ruse, a writer that the Butterflies mean to the grandparents and the granddaughter and something else to the teacher (Stanford Judith 1999 : 48).

According to Perrine (1992 : 64) personification consists in giving the attributes of a human being to an animal, an object, or a concept. It is really a subtype of metaphor, an implied comparison in which the figurative term of the comparison is always a human being. When Sylvia Plath makes a mirror speak and think, she is personifying an object. When Keats describes autumn as a harvester "Sitting careless on granary floor "or" on a half reaped furrow sound a sleep", he is personifying a season. Personifications differ in the degree to which they ask the reader actually to visualize the literal term in human form. In Keats's comparison, we are asked to make a complete identification of autumn with a human being. In Sylvia Plath's, though the mirror speaks and thinks, we continue to visualize it as a mirror; similarly, in Frost's "Benefit" the "restive" door remains in appearance a door tugged by the wind. In Browning's reference to "the stratled little waves", a personification is barely suggested; we would make a mistake if we tried to visualize the waves in human form or even, really, to think of them as having human emotions. Personification, a form of metaphor in which an object or idea is likened to a person. E.g.

"September the maid, with her swift silver feet". (Kendall)

"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more". (Shakespeare).

Personification is primarily created by the effect upon abstract nouns of verbs denoting human activity (though adjectives, to a lesser extent, may also personify). Subjects are literal, but predicates figurative. (Stephens John 1990 : 232)

### 4. Metonymy

The conventional discrimination between metaphor substitutes for something else implied in its context, while a metonymy deletes something from its context; it takes out the main thing, and provides some aspect, or part, of the whole concept something from which that whole can be inferred, given the aspect that is stated; there is a process of overlap the part and the whole (Stephens John 1990 : 221)

Metonymy, the substitution of the name of one thing for that of another with which it is in some way connected. For instance, the sceptre stands for "royalty", for the person occupying it. (Bentley 1972 : 99).

According to Perrine (1992 : 214), metonymy is a figure of speech in which some significant aspect or detail of an experience is used to represent the whole experience, the single term metonymy is used for what are sometimes and metonymy (the use of something closely related for the thing actually meant).

## 5. Paradox

A paradox is an apparent contradiction that is nevertheless somehow true. It may be either a situation or a statement. As a figure of speech paradox is a statement. In a paradoxical statement the contradiction usually stems from one of the words being used figuratively or in more than one sense.

The value of paradox is its shock value. Its seeming impossibility startles the reader into attention and, by the fact of its apparent absurdity, underscores the truth of what is being said. (Perrine 1992 : 100)

## 6. Symbol

A symbol may be roughly defined as something that means more than what it is. "The Road Not Taken", for instance, concerns a choice made between two roads by a person walking in the woods.

Image, metaphor, and symbol shade into each other and are sometimes difficult to distinguish, in general, however, an image means only what it is, the figurative term in a metaphor means something other than what it is, and a symbol means what it is and something more, too. A symbol, that is, functions literally and figuratively at the same time.

The symbol is the richest and at the same time the most difficult of the poetic figures. Symbols vary in the degree of identification and definition given them by their authors. (Perrine 1992 : 80-81).

According to Stanford Judith (1999 : 50), symbol in literary work, an object, action, person, or animal that stands for something more than its literal meaning.

Symbolism, the device cannot be strictly regarded as a figure of speech, but is rather one of the modes of expression. It is a more general term, covering "metonymy" in its various forms, and make use of certain impressions or symbols of peace, the wedding ring the symbol of marriage, and the heart the symbol of true love. (Bentley 1972 : 99).

## 7. Hyperbole

Hyperbole use of exaggerated terms in order to emphasise, but not deceive ; e.g "all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (Shakespeare). (Bentley 1972 : 98)

Overstatement, or hyperbole, is simply exaggeration, but exaggeration in the service of truth. It is not the same as a fish story. If you say, "I'm starved!" or "you could have knocked me over with a feather!" or "I'll die if I don't pass this course!" you do not expect to be taken literally; you are merely adding emphasis to what you really mean. "There were figuratively millions of people at the beach", or, literally, "The beach was very crowded".) Like all figures of speech, overstatement may be used with a variety of

effects. It may be humorous or grave, fanciful or restrained, convincing or unconvincing overstatement may seem strained and ridiculous. (Perrine Laurence 1992 : 101 – 102).

## 8. Irony

Like paradox, irony has meaning that extend beyond its use merely as a figure of speech, verbal irony, saying the opposite of what one means, is often confused with sarcasm and with satire.

Though verbal irony always implies the opposite of what is said, it has many gradations, and only in its simplest form does it mean only the opposite of what is said. In more complex forms it means both what is said and the opposite of what is said, at once, though in different ways and with different degrees of emphasis. When Terence's critic, in "Terence, this is stupid stuff". "Pretty friendship it is to rhyme / your friends to death before their time". We may substitute the literal sorry for the ironic "pretty" with little or no loss of meaning. When Terence speaks in reply, however, of the pleasure of drunkenness "and down in lovely muck I've lain, / Happy till I woke again". We cannot substitute loathsome for "lovely" without considerable loss of meaning, for, while muck is actually extremely unpleasant to lie in, it may seem lovely to an intoxicated person. Thus two meanings one the opposite of the other operate at once (Perrine 1992 : 104 – 105).

According to Judith (1999 : 49) Verbal Irony just as there can be discrepancies between what a character says what a character does or between what a character believes to be true and what the reader knows to be true (irony of situation, page 29), so, too, can there be discrepancies between what a character or author says and what he or she means (**verbal irony**). For example, when Varinka compares Byelinkov to Lermontov, Tchaikovsky, and Peter the Great (all respected Russian men), Byelinkov adds, "Ivan the Terrible". Of course, Byelinkov does not really mean he is like the merciless tyrant; he is being ironic. But Varinka either doesn't pick up on the irony or replies with an ironic statement of her own, "Yes, him too". Whether Varinka is intentionally ironic or not, the discrepancies underline the enormous differences between these two would-be lovers.

As a figure of speech, irony refers to a difference between the way something appears and what is actually true. Part of what makes poetry interesting is its indirectness, its refusal to state something simply as "the way it is." Irony allows us to say something but to mean something else, whether we are being sarcastic, exaggerating, or understating. A woman might say to her husband ironically, "I never know what you're going to say," when in fact she always knows what he will say. This is sarcasm, which is one way to achieve irony. Irony is generally more restrained than sarcasm, even though the effect might be the same. The woman of our example above might simply say, "Interesting," when her husband says something that really isn't interesting. She might not be using sarcasm in this case, and she might not even be aware that she is being ironic. A listener who finds the husband dull would probably understand the irony, though. The key to irony is often the tone, which is sometimes harder to detect in poetry than in speech.

The use of irony as a figure of speech, though it has a bite to it, often has its humorous side. Our Lord was using both effects when he said, "...how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye?" (Luke 6:42).

## 9. Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a special type of metonymy in which a part of something is substituted for whole.

e.g many new hands are working at the factory(employees)  
give us this day our dayly bread (food)  
and here from gracious england (king of england)  
(Bentley 1972:99)

## Denotation and Connotation

### 1. Denotation

- a. Is when you mean what you say, literally ([http // www. Elements of poetry. com](http://www.Elements.of.poetry.com))
- b. A direct specific meaning as distinct from an implied or associated idea ([http // www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com))
- c. Denotation is the surface or literal meaning encoded to a signifier, and the definition most likely to appear in a dictionary ([http // www.define.runturl.com/denotation](http://www.define.runturl.com/denotation))

### 2. Connotation

Is created when you mean something else, something that might be initially hidden. The connotative meaning of word is based on implication, or shared emotional association with a word ([http // www. Elements of poetry. com](http://www.Elements.of.poetry.com))

Can everything have connotative meaning ? poets gravitate toward words with strong connotative possibilities because they are so rich with connotative possibility, like leaves falling in autumn (graceful and beautiful, but signifying a kind of death) or roses (undulating and sensual, but don't grab one by stem) what is the connotative of say, the following sentence ?

The man drank  
Whiskey quietly

The dennotative meaning is simple : a guy drunk whiskey and didn't make much noise. But to get the connotative meaning, think about emosional impact of the line, and about the associations you have with these words. Drinking can be celebratory ; parties are sometimes accomparied by alcohol. But this man does not seem to be in the company of others. The word "quietly", in association with alcohol. Seems to mean "alone", intensifying this feeling is fact that "the man" is anonymous to the reader (he isn't "Jack"), and he is drinking whiskey. How might it have been different if he were drinking scotch, a kind of whiskey that is gerelly associated with sophistication ? What if he were drinking a milder, "fun" drink like pina colada ? "Quietly" and "whiskey" allow us to read connotative into a simple sentence, if a poem makes you feel a certain may, ask yourself why. (Virtualit : element of poetry, 1).

## Figures of speech and their connotative meaning in song's lyrics *Killing Me Softly with His Song*

To answer the question what kind of figures of speech occur in song lyrics and What kind of connotative meaning in the figure of speech , the writer identifies the song. First, after the lines containing figures of speech are collected, each line that contains figures of speech is followed, each line that contains figures of speech. The identification of each line using figures of speech start from the first line of the lyrics in the song's lyrics. The writer underlines word that show figures of

speech. After the identifications of figure of speech. The writer put a brief description of particular figure of speech being used.

Second, the identification of each figure of speech is followed by the identification of connotative meaning of words that show the figure of speech. In identifying the connotative meaning the writer relies on her background knowledge. Before she analyzed these song, she already knew what each song is about. The background knowledge about the themes of the lyrics helps the writer to identify the connotative meaning of the words being used.

The connotative meaning of the words showing the figures of speech is briefly explained based on the linguistic context in each lyrics. For example : tears, the symbol of sadness.

Table 1  
The type of the figures of speech

Lyrics	Figures of Speech
Struming my pain with his fingers	Metaphor
Singing my life with his words	Symbol
Killing me softly with his song	Personification
Killing me softly with his song	Personification
Telling my whole life with his words	Symbol
Killing me softly with his song.....	Personification
I heard he sang a good song	Metaphora
I heard he had a style	Synecdoche
And so I came to see him	Synecdoche
To listen for a while	Symbol
And there he was a young boy	Symbol
A stranger to my eyes	Metaphor
I felt all flushed with fever	Metaphor
Embarrassed by the crowd	Metaphor
I felt he found my letters	Metaphor
And read each one out loud	-
I prayed that he would finish	Metaphor
But he just kept right on	-
He sang as if he knew me	Metaphor
In all my dark despair	Hyperbole
And then he looked right through	Metaphor
As if I wasn't there	Metaphor
But he was there his stranger	Metaphor
Singing clear and strong	Metaphor

In this song's lyrics ,each words must carry specific denotative and reach connotative meaning. Dennotative words can be found in dictionary. Connotative words must be guessed according to its context and situation. Its meaning is not important, the important one is its value style and meaning extension.



Table 2  
The connotation and denotation in song's lyrics

No	lines	Lyrics	Meaning	
			Connotative	Denotative
1	1	Struming	To hurt	Play(guitar)
2	2	Singing	To tell	Speak words to a tune
3	3	Song	Words	Poem set to music
4	6	Good	Immoral	Morally right or acceptable
5	12	Stranger	Different	unknown
6	15	Letters	Something secret	A piece of pepar
7	17	Prayed	Hope	Speak to god

After the writer analyzing the song's lyrics, the writer finds some figure of speech they are : metaphor, personification, symbolism, synecdoche, and hyperbole and she conclude that metaphor is mostly used in song's lyrics entitle killing me softly with his song. Most figures of speech in song's lyrics is created by the writer in relation with her feeling, and relation with somebody. Beside that the writer finds some connotative meaning in song's lyrics.

## CONCLUSION

Most figures of speech in song's lyrics is created by the writer in relation with her feeling and relation with somebody , example the song's lyric of *Killing Me Softly with His Song*. Beside that the writer finds some connotative meaning in song's lyrics.

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