

Exploring Metaphors in the Lyrics of Sia's Album *1000 Forms of Fear*

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Abstract

This research explores the role of metaphor in the lyrics of Sia's *1000 Forms of Fear* album, examining how figurative language enhances the emotional and conceptual effects of the songs. Using a qualitative methodology, this study classifies metaphors into ontological, structural, and orientational categories according to Lakoff and Johnson's framework. The results reveal there are 71% or 39 ontological metaphors found in this album, transform abstract feelings into concrete experiences, allowing listeners to engage deeply with themes of resilience, vulnerability, and mental challenges. The research emphasizes the cognitive and emotional role of metaphors in music, illustrating how metaphors assist listeners in understanding complex feelings and stories through the lyrics of songs conveyed by Sia in the album *1000 forms of fear*. This research emphasizes that the use of metaphorical language in music not only adds depth to lyrics, but also enhances emotional impact, which widens our understanding of how music works to express complicated human emotions.

Keywords: Metaphor, Figurative Language, Song, lyrics

Introduction

Metaphors have long served an essential role in human communication, offering a way to understand and express complex concepts. Most people view metaphor as a poetic, imaginative, and rhetorical construct; it is a question of remarkable rather than common language (Lakoff and Johnson 2008). A metaphor draws a comparison between two things by highlighting similarities, shared characteristics, or qualities between two concepts. In essence, metaphors convey people's ideas or feelings by employing varied forms of language, both spoken and written, whether in speech, advertisement, literature, musical lyrics, or daily conversation.

Metaphors are crucial in music lyrics, serving as a universal device for conveying ideas, emotions, and thoughts. As noted by Sumolang (2021), songs offer a way for people to express their identity and feelings, with metaphorical language that triggers the imagination of both the writer and the listener. This lyrical expression connects the Poetry to personal experiences, embodying the emotions of the creators and their surroundings. By utilizing figurative language such as personification, metaphor, and hyperbole, the lyrics express the feelings and intentions of the songwriter while also adding emotional depth and impact. Metaphors can enhance the meaning and complexity of lyrics, increasing their power and ability to stick in the minds of listeners. The writers examine the metaphor in the lyrics of Sia's album *1000 Forms of Fears* in this study.

Strong rhetorical devices like metaphor help writers and presenters communicate more effectively by making difficult concepts and feelings more memorable and vivid. Metaphors are very powerful in the field of music because they allow performers to communicate conceptual ideas and feelings with their listeners in a way that creates strong feelings and builds rapport. The significance and utility of metaphor in communication are examined in this study, with an emphasis on the examination of metaphors in the song lyrics from Sia's album *1000 Forms of Fear*.

Previous research on metaphors related to music and song metaphors has been conducted. It is advisable to review prior research to avoid using similar materials and explanations. The following other pertinent studies have been read by the author. The author reviewed past research on metaphors in order to finish this study.

Concerning this study, there are several instances of metaphor-related investigations that have been conducted by earlier researchers using song analysis. Liao, 2020; Zulaika et al., 2023; Sumolang, 2021; Tumanggor & Siahaan, 2023; Faisal Zarkasyi Arif, 2022; Fadhila, Naura, 2020; Nasution et al., 2024; Wibowo & Handayani, 2023. These studies aim to find the deeper meaning of a metaphor in a popular song by using several theories and categorizing them, then they use a qualitative method approach based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory as a foundation to examine metaphors in lyrics. Then the results of the study show that there are several categories of metaphors and show that there is a deeper meaning of the metaphor. Some of the similarities between this study with their study are that they try to find the hidden meaning of a metaphor in a popular song, and they also focus on finding the importance of metaphors in songs. Then there are some differences too, namely the theory of metaphor used, and then they also use different songs.

Furthermore, research has been done on the use of metaphors in novels by Kurniawati et al., 2014; Meranggi et al., 2022; Ulama, 2018; Jie, 2021; Anone et al., 2023; Bowo et al., 2022; Bernadetta et al., 2023; Wibowo et al., 2024. The purpose of this study is to reveal the meaning of metaphors from novels, then the research uses qualitative and mixed methods and the results reveal not only metaphors but also other figurative language. These studies have similarities, namely all of these studies examine literary works and classify figurative language such as similes and metaphors and also this study reveals the meaning, then the difference in research is that there are differences in methods and also the focus of research. Based on these studies, the author is interested in conducting different research by analyzing all the songs from an album and applying Lakoff's theory to uncover the meanings and values of these songs, thereby addressing gaps in previous research.

The last is a study that examines poems such as from Cenita & Nurmaily 2020; Raharta & Hamsia, 2016; Sinthya et al., 2022; Ketaren & Br. Pakpahan, 2021; El Bakary, 2021; Lect & Ali, 2024; Wibowo et al., 2023 This research intends to explore the different kinds and significances of metaphors found in the works of notable poets, concentrating on the underlying messages expressed through figurative language. The approach taken is a descriptive qualitative method, utilizing an analysis informed by Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor theory, along with other frameworks such as those proposed by Parera and Pragglejazz. The findings reveal a variety of metaphor types, including conceptual, structural, ontological, anthropomorphic, and synesthetic metaphors, which are employed to convey themes such as death, racial injustice, life, and the personal experiences of the poets. The similarity between the poetry research and this song research is that both are looking for metaphors to reveal the meaning of songs and poems, then the difference is the research media used and also the theme. The previous researcher studied the metaphor by analyzing its structure, meaning, and concept. This suggests that the primary emphasis of previous research was on the kind of metaphor.

The goal of this study is to locate and classify the metaphors that are utilized in the album's lyrics, evaluate how these metaphors add to the songs' emotional and conceptual depth, and look at the cognitive and communicative roles they play in expressing the ideas of the artist. The main research questions to be addressed are: What metaphors are used in the lyrics of the songs on this album to convey certain emotions and themes? This research will also explore how the use of metaphors, whether structural, ontological, or orientational, affects listeners' emotions and understanding. This research will analyze the role of metaphors in shaping narrative and meaning in song lyrics and compare the use of metaphors in this album with previous albums in terms of conveying themes and emotions.

Sia's 2014 album, **1000 Forms of Fear**, quickly gained fame for its exploration of themes relating to strength and vulnerability, achieving both commercial and critical praise. The album marked her first number one album in the

United States, debuting at the top of the Billboard 200 and featuring the popular track "Chandelier," which earned a Grammy nomination and earned a viral music video starring Maddie Ziegler, which has over 2 billion views on YouTube. Known for her unique vocal style and lyrics filled with rich metaphors, Sia's music skillfully blends emotion and artistry, touching the hearts of listeners around the world.

Sia apply a lot of metaphorical language in her moving album *1000 Forms of Fear*, which gives the stories on the record more depth and connects deeply with listeners. The metaphorical language on Sia's album *1000 Forms of Fear* enhances the songs' emotional power. In the song "Chandelier," the line "I'm gonna swing from the chandelier" refers to heedless, exuberant highs, signifying a last-ditch effort to turn misery into a celebration. In "Big Girls Cry," it is using the metaphor, "Big girls cry when their hearts are breaking" the song challenges preconceptions by revealing that even people who seem powerful might be experiencing intense emotional suffering. Sia's *1000 Forms of Fear* masterfully uses metaphors to convey deep emotions and personal feelings. The album's evocative lyrics invite listeners to reflect on their own experiences, demonstrating the transformative power of music and the universal nature of human resilience and vulnerability.

The study will also evaluate how metaphorical language affects listeners' comprehension and emotional involvement, offering more insights into the mental processes involved in metaphor interpretation. This research will benefit listeners, music analysts, and creative writers by showing how metaphors can increase the potential for lyrical transformation, allowing them to reach a deeper connection with the audience.

Literature Review

2.1. Semantics

Semantics, the exploration of meaning in language, examines how written and spoken expressions reflect mental concepts and focuses on the interaction between form and meaning at different linguistic levels, including words, phrases, sentences,

and discourse units. It represents the highest level of abstraction in linguistic research, concentrating on how language expresses and interprets meaning, reflecting human cognition and understanding. As mentioned by (Bagha 2011), semantics differs from phonology, morphology, and syntax by focusing on meaning rather than on sound, word structure, or sentence structure. (Saeed 2021) underscores semantics as an examination of meaning at all levels of linguistics, emphasizing the relationship between form and meaning. Likewise, (Abdurrahman 2019) characterizes semantics as the investigation of conventional meanings conveyed by words and sentences.

2.2. Figurative Language

An essential element of semantics is its relationship with figurative language, which conveys both thoughts and emotions through words or phrases that go beyond their literal interpretation. This linguistic instrument enhances description, evokes a variety of reactions from the reader, and requires imagination for complete understanding. As noted by Cummins (2023), figurative language uses words to communicate meanings different from their direct reading, which allows for emotional and conceptual expression. In a similar vein, Rohani & Arsyad (2018) observed that writers use figurative language to produce different effects and provoke responses, which requires readers to engage their imagination. Nursolihat & Kareviati (2020) emphasize that figurative language demands inference of meaning, as it contradicts literal dictionary definitions. Ultimately, figurative language uses comparisons and other non-literal expressions to make complex ideas easier to understand or clarify. Across the various forms, metaphor is well known as the main figurative language.

2.3. Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech that makes a direct comparison between two entities without using words like “as” or “like”. Metaphors enhance language by giving alternative meanings, increasing clarity, originality, and artistic expression when literal interpretations are insufficient. According to Monika (2020), metaphors

connect entities without making explicit comparisons, while Sari (2020) emphasizes the importance of metaphors in influencing language and thought. Likewise, Shutova (2013) points out the important role of metaphors in improving everyday communication and interaction. Derived from the Greek term meaning “to carry” or “to transfer”, metaphors clarify ideas by highlighting similar properties, produce vivid images, articulate complex concepts, and evoke emotions.

2.4. Type of Metaphors

Metaphors have several types in "Metaphors We Live By" (1980), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson assert that metaphors are essential to human cognition and understanding, not just literary devices. They divide metaphors into various categories, mainly emphasizing how they influence our conceptual framework. According to (Lakoff) there are a few important categories of metaphors:

1. Structural Metaphor

Understanding an idea in terms of another, where the source domain gives the target domain a structure, is known as a structural metaphor. These metaphors help to make abstract concepts more understandable by projecting the information and structure of one topic onto another.

2. Orientational Metaphor

Orientational metaphors, such as up-down, in-out, and front-back, arrange a system of concepts in relation to one another depending on spatial orientation. These metaphors give our ideas a logical shape and are frequently derived from our cultural and physical experiences.

3. Ontological Metaphor

Treating abstract concepts, events, feelings, or beings as tangible things or substances is known as an ontological metaphor. By giving abstract concepts physical attributes, they facilitate comprehension and reasoning.

2.5. Metaphor in Song

Metaphors, as a form of figurative language, are versatile linguistic tools that can convey multiple meanings through different words. They have been employed in

various contexts, including everyday conversations, literary works, prayers, and song lyrics. When it comes to song lyrics, the significance of metaphors can be interpreted either within the context of the song or through their semantic meaning.

Sia's 1000 Forms of Fear album is characterised by the use of complex metaphors, enriching lyrics that delve into themes such as addiction, depression, and self-acceptance. These metaphors express complex emotions and concepts compactly, creating vivid imagery that allows listeners to emotionally engage with the music. Drawn from the artist's personal experiences, the metaphors make the album very relatable, giving rise to striking mental visuals.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a qualitative descriptive approach. This research uses a qualitative design because it aims to locate and classify the metaphors that are utilized in the album's lyrics, evaluate how these metaphors add to the songs' emotional and conceptual depth, and look at the cognitive and communicative roles they play in expressing the ideas of the artist. The data examined in this research consists of the album's song lyrics. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, identifying metaphors that are linked to the main themes in the lyrics, such as battling depression, resilience, and self-acceptance, based on Braun and Clarke's theory.

The data sources used in this study are the lyrics in Sia's album *1000 Forms of Fear* from Spotify and additional data sources from listener perspective and music video analysis. The duration of data collection is from May to July 2024. The author uses the lyrics of the songs in the album *1000 Forms of Fear* about 10 songs to find the types of metaphors used in the lyrics. The reason why the author chose this album is that this album occupies the number one position in the Billboard Hot 200 and also sold 1 million copies in the US and the song Chandelier has been streamed more than 1.2 billion times.

This research uses several steps in collecting data, the first is to collect song lyrics from the album Sia *1000 Forms of Fear* about 10 songs, then the second is to identify

metaphors from the lyrics of the songs that have been collected and then the last is to categorize metaphors according to the expert theory of Lakoff and Johnson, namely: Ontological metaphor, structural metaphor, orientational metaphor.

To find deeper insights into the impact of metaphors, the analysis includes the perspective of fans. One fan, in his review, interpreted the metaphor of 'swinging from a chandelier' as a comparison of reckless freedom and the desire to be free, while the repeated phrase 'I'm just holding on for the night' implied a more somber interpretation, alluding to feelings of emotion and self-sabotage.

Analysis of the song "The Elastic Heart" includes an examination of the music video to reveal how the visual metaphor for resilience is portrayed. In the video, an in-arena match between two performers represents an internal battle and a quest for emotional strength. This corresponds to the structural metaphor "You don't break me," which features a tangible expression of self-defense and emotional resilience.

The lyrics of songs from the album *1000 Forms of Fear* that contain metaphors are used in this data analysis. After reading and understanding the lyrics in depth, all song lyrics containing metaphors are classified to determine the type and also the actual meaning of the song. After the song lyrics are categorized according to their respective types. The metaphors found in Sia's *1000 Forms of Fear* unite themes of depression, resilience, and self-acceptance, using vivid imagery to express emotional complexity. They form a cohesive narrative that leads the listener through the artist's experiences of hardship and strength. The study examines how metaphors are used to convey complex and emotional meanings in lyrics. The metaphors identified will be analyzed in the context of major themes that reflect the emotional experience of Sia in her albums.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Findings

This research analyzes the lyrics in Sia's album *1000 Forms of Fear*. In this analysis, author The author categorizes the song lyrics in the album *1000 Forms of Fear* according to the types of metaphors according to the theory of Lakoff and Johnson, where there are ontological, orientational, and structural types.

No	Type of Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
1	Ontological Metaphor	39	71%
2	Structural metaphors	11	20%
3	Orientalional metaphors	5	9,09%
TOTAL		55	100%

Table 1

According to the analysis above, with a total 55 metaphors, the main type of metaphor in Sia's album *1000 Forms of Fear* is the Ontological Metaphor, This accounts for 70.9% of all metaphors used. Structural metaphors total 20%, while Orientalional metaphors contribute 9.09%. This implies that Sia mostly uses ontological metaphors to portray abstract thoughts and emotions as physical objects or activities, making her lyrics more relevant and meaningful to listeners. Structural and orientational metaphors are used less frequently to provide layers of meaning and context.

Type of Metaphor

1. Ontological Metaphor

Treating abstract concepts, events, feelings, or beings as tangible things or substances is known as an ontological metaphor. By giving abstract concepts physical attributes, they facilitate comprehension and reasoning. The author found some of these types in the lyrics of the songs on the album *1000 forms of fear*

1) Data: OM/01/CD

"Party girls don't get hurt, can't feel anything" (*Chandelier*)

By representing emotions as physical objects or experiences, this metaphor emphasizes the repression of emotions and characterizes emotional numbness as an inability to "feel" physically. The song advocates self-awareness and the search for healthy life management methods by showcasing the joys and downfalls that come with addiction. Through the use of these metaphors, Sia manages to convey deep emotional and mental complexities, making the lyrics resonate deeply with listeners.

2) Data: OM/11/EH

"But your blade, it might be too sharp" (*Elastic Heart*)

The explanation about the lyrics is Emotional pain is compared to a real object, a "sharp blade," meaning that harsh words or behaviors can cause deep emotional wounds. The value of that verse is words are powerful, The emotional damage inflicted by others can create lasting wounds, highlighting the significance of compassion and awareness.

3) Data: OM/17/BGC

"Big girls cry when their hearts are breaking" (*Big Girls Cry*)

The expression "broken heart" provides a physical representation of emotional pain, highlighting the real sensation of profound sorrow and fragility. The value we can get from this is Being open about our vulnerabilities and expressing emotions shows strength rather than weakness.

4) Data: OM/21/FMG

"We are fire and gasoline" (*Fire Meet Gasoline*)

The relationship is likened to fire and gasoline, emphasizing their intensity and potential damage power, as these elements together create a dangerous backlash. It means strong feelings and enthusiasm need to be tempered by self-awareness. Relationships formed on impulsive energy can result in harmful consequences.

5) Data: OM/36/BTP

"You have the right to burn the pages" (*Burn the Page*)

By depicting memories or the past as pages that can be burned, pain as something that can be left behind, life and struggles as something that burns, the past as a heavy burden, and problems or temptations as devils that can be shaken off. Burn the Pages sends a message of optimism and regrowth, asking listeners to let go of past tragedies and move ahead. It implies that it is possible to overcome adversity and begin again, instilling hope and progress.

2. Structural Metaphor

Understanding an idea in terms of another, where the source domain gives the target domain a structure, is known as a structural metaphor. These metaphors help to make abstract concepts more understandable by projecting the information and structure of one topic onto another.

1) Data: SM/45/EOTN

"But in the eye of the needle" (*Eye of the Needle*)

The Significant difficulty is likened to going through a very small pinhole, illustrating the challenges of managing a tough emotional scenario. Even the most challenging situations can be overcome with patience and focus.

2) Data: SM/47/STK

"Straight for the knife" (*Straight for the Knife*)

This metaphor describes facing pain directly as 'going straight for the knife,' emphasizing a deliberate encounter with emotional suffering. It suggests Facing your pain head-on—it's an essential part of the healing process and personal development.

3) Data: SM/55/DIB

"You started breaking down my walls" (*Dressed in Black*)

Emotional barriers are like walls being broken down. Allowing others to help is the key to growth. True progress comes from embracing vulnerability and trust, which leads to deeper connection and healing.

4) Data: SM/09/EH

"I'm still fighting for peace" (*Elastic Heart*)

The journey toward emotional stability resembles a fierce battle, highlighting the importance of resilience in the face of challenges. This means that a sense of peace is something worth fighting for in order to gain peace of mind.

5) Data: SM/35/FG

"But we are just humans, they walk on the moon" (*Fair Game*)

This metaphor emphasizes the boundaries of human potential, comparing the ordinary challenges humans face to extraordinary achievements such as landing on the moon. The message to be conveyed is to seek to be great, but remember that you are human - accept imperfections as part of growth.

3. Orientational Metaphor

Orientational metaphors, such as up-down, in-out, and front-back, arrange a system of concepts in relation to one another depending on spatial orientation. These metaphors give our ideas a logical shape and are frequently derived from our cultural and physical experiences.

1) Data: ORT/03/CD

"I'm holding on for dear life, won't look down, won't open my eyes"
(*Chandelier*)

The analogy of physically clutching to something when in fear serves as a reminder that you should not run from reality since embracing it may help you grow as a person.

2) Data: ORT/04/CD

"Help me, I'm holding on for dear life" (*Chandelier*)

Seeking help while struggling is illustrated as holding on tight, reminding us that it is alright to reach out for support, as community and help are crucial to addressing challenges.

3) Data: ORT/06/CD

"Sun is up, I'm a mess, gotta get out now, gotta run from this" (*Chandelier*)

Escaping emotional pressure is similar to leaving a physical location. Facing your pain is essential, as avoiding it will only extend your suffering.

4) Data: ORT/14/BGC

"Wash away all the things you've taken" (*Big Girls Cry*)

Tears can be seen as a way to clear one's pain, representing emotional release as part of healing. Embrace the opportunity to let go of what is not beneficial for you to move forward.

5) Data: ORT/20/FMG

"But I want to burn with you tonight" (*Fire Meet Gasoline*)

Passion can be compared to fire, which embodies the urge to dive in fully even when facing risks. This suggests that while passion is powerful, it is also potentially dangerous. It is important to balance passion with judgment in our relationships.

The analysis indicates that metaphors enhance the clarity and depth of the message to be conveyed to the listener.

DISCUSSIONS

This research examines the use of metaphors in song lyrics on the Sia *1000 Forms of Fear* album. From the research results described above, it can be seen that Sia uses many metaphors in his songs to convey deeper messages so that listeners can understand what he wants to convey. Metaphors such as ontological, structural, and orientational are found in this album, this is in line with the theory expressed by Lakoff and Johnson in the citation by Nuryadin & Nur (2021) that a metaphor is an object with a different meaning whose main purpose is to be understood.

From the data above the results that the dominant metaphor that appears on the album Sia *1000 Forms of Fear* is ontological metaphor highlighting the album's emphasis on topics of emotional states, psychological conflicts, and abstract concepts shown as tangible objects or experiences. These results also align with previous research which shows that ontological metaphors are often used to portray complex emotional experiences (Rahmat and Dianita 2024); (Sumigar, Maru, and Tuerah 2021); (Reza 2021) who have found that ontological metaphors are very effective in describing complex emotional experiences.

These results strengthen the idea that metaphors in music can convey and enhance emotional experiences, enabling listeners to connect with the artist's challenges and victories on a personal level. This is aligned with previous research by (Liao 2020, Zulaika et al., 2023, Fadhila Naura, 2020, Jie 2021, El Bakar, 2021, Cenita & Nurmaily 2020, Sinthya et al 2022, Bernadetta et al 2023, Bowo et al., 2022, (Ketaren & Br. Pakpahan 2021) which underscores how figurative language in music can help listeners relate to the feelings and experiences of the artist.

In addition, the album's incorporation of metaphorical language highlights the larger influence of figurative language in our current society. By using metaphors, Sia is able to convey complex psychological experiences in a way that goes beyond literal language, making it understandable to a wider audience. This

investigation strengthens the idea that music, especially its lyrics, is essential for expressing oneself and cultivating emotional connections.

The findings from this study increased our understanding of how metaphorical expressions in music influence emotional connection and perception of communication. By examining the metaphors used by Sia, we can better understand how musicians use language to build narratives that resonate emotionally with their listeners. The metaphors found in 1000 Forms of Fear not only serve to describe personal struggles; they also create a common language that allows listeners to connect with their own feelings, developing empathy and understanding. This insight highlights the importance of metaphor in music, not only as a creative tool but also as a way to foster an emotional bond between artist and audience.

Going forward, future research could investigate how metaphorical language might be operating in different musical genres and cultures, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how metaphors influence listeners' emotional responses. By analyzing the use of metaphors across different cultural contexts, researchers can obtain insights into the impact of culture on the interpretation of musical metaphors. In addition, investigating the use of metaphors in other popular media can lead to important insights into how figurative language in music helps create similar emotional experiences across different art forms.

This research also opens the way for further research into the role of figurative language in enhancing emotional expression and building relationships in our increasingly interconnected world. As music remains an important medium of communication, understanding its metaphorical language can enhance our ability to connect with other artists and listeners across cultural divides.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of metaphors in Sia's *1000 Forms of Fear* album highlighted the important role metaphors play in adding emotional and conceptual meaning to her lyrics. By classifying metaphors into ontological, structural, and orientational categories, this study shows that these figurative expressions, especially those of an ontological nature, help communicate complex emotions and ideas, As found in the lyrics of this album where the emotions conveyed are contradictory or cannot be immediately understood, for example in the lyrics of the song eye of the needle "You're my only weakness." describes a passionate love, but also fragility and reliance on others that can weaken oneself. There is a mixed feeling of happiness at having someone and fear of loss or rejection.

These metaphors allow listeners to understand abstract ideas concretely, which is a concept that is not real or physical but can be understood through experience or interpretation. for example in the lyrics: "Burn the pages, let 'em go up in flames." The song portrays the abstract concept of letting go of the past and starting anew. This idea is made concrete through the metaphor of "burning the pages," which gives a visual image of the act of removing painful experiences. thus making the songs more memorable and emotionally powerful. This exploration highlights the value of metaphorical language in strengthening the overall message and emotional impact of music.

Furthermore, this research shows that metaphors enhance the narrative aspect of the songs, producing striking imagery and assisting in expressing deep emotions. Emphasizing metaphors in the album affects how listeners respond emotionally, highlighting the psychological and cognitive impact of figurative language in music. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how metaphors in Sia's song lyrics not only deliver complicated emotional themes, but also improve listeners' emotional connection, allowing them to better understand the artist's personal experiences.

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