



## Decoding Figurative Languages Found in the Selected Songs' Lyrics of Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* Album

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### Abstract\*

This study investigated the types and functions of figurative languages found in the lyrics of selected songs from Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* (2024) album. Employing a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory-sequential design, the study identified and analyzed 232 instances of figurative expressions. The entire analysis was guided by Kennedy's (2019) framework, which categorized figurative language into comparative, correlative, and contradictory forms. The findings revealed that metaphor was the most frequently employed comparative device, effectively conveying abstract and complex ideas, followed by simile and personification. Correlative expressions, such as metonymy and synecdoche, occurred less frequently, whereas contradictory expressions, including hyperbole, paradox, and irony, significantly contributed to emphasis and emotional depth. These rhetorical strategies enhanced the expressive quality of the lyrics, enabling nuanced emotional and symbolic interpretations. Besides, this study also underscored the critical role of figurative language in songwriting as a mechanism for bridging literal and symbolic meanings, thereby enriching audience engagement through the interplay of language, music, and performance.

### 1. Introduction

Figurative language is essential to human communication as it enables humans to transmit complex ideas, emotions, and inner experiences by drawing upon associations, symbolism, and versatile comparisons (Cacciari, 2001; Carter, 2004). It is perhaps one of the most common expressions of creative behavior in everyday life (Beaty & Silvia, 2013). As a result of this phenomenon, over the last few decades, figurative language has been the subject of much research in linguistics, psychology, and literary theories, covering a wide range of expressions comprising literature, media, and everyday discourse.

Since figurative language provides a lot of “bang for its buck” by expressing meaning beyond its correct figurative interpretation (Colston, 2015, p. 2), at least three viewpoints challenge the concept of it. From a theoretical linguistic standpoint, figurative language is broadly defined as a set of linguistic expressions that employ various figures of speech (Katz et

al., 1998; Reaske, 1966). It refers to the state of words or phrases that deviate from the conventional orders and meanings (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014; Perrine, 1977; Reyes & Saldívar, 2022; Yang & Small, 2015). The discrepancy beyond the literal and non-literal language has implications for this point of view as it uses comparison, overstatement, or understatement to convey meanings other than simple definitions found in dictionaries. From classical perspectives, figurative language has ornamental functions, such as decorating a text or a speech with unique aesthetic values (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014; Yu, 2020). Otherwise, a contemporary view, as exemplified not only in psychological but also in cognitive linguistic and philosophical research, proposed that figurative language not merely an “artistic expression” since it reveals its capacity to evoke emotions, influence perceptions, and bridge the literal and symbolic realms (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014; Fussell & Moss, 1998; Gibbs, Jr & Colston, 2012; Gibbs et al., 2002; Kövecses, 1990, 2003; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). On a larger dimension, they then acknowledge that word meanings are not inherently “fixed” but a function of perspective. In other words, it is determined by the perspective through which the word is interpreted. As noted by Sikos et al. (2008):

“The comprehension of figurative language extends beyond the mere sequential combination of individual word meanings. To process figurative expressions effectively, the brain may be structured in a way that enables both cerebral hemispheres to function in parallel, each prioritizing different aspects of meaning and engaging in a dynamic competition to achieve an appropriate interpretation.”

Through the years, figurative language has been widely employed in many literary works, such as poems, poetry, prose, songs, short stories, drama, etc. It is commonly used as a primary tool for authors or writers, affording readers the imaginative pleasure (Perrine, 1977). In English, it can be manifested in many forms. The most recent study by Kennedy et al. (2019) I have divided figurative language into three primary categories, comprising comparative, correlative, and contradictory expressions. Comparative expressions rely on analogies and comparisons of objects to other objects to clarify or intensify meaning. Correlative expressions establish associations between ideas, creating vivid mental pictures or symbolic representations. Meanwhile, contradictive expressions introduce tension or contrasts to provoke thought or emphasise particular ideas.

Literature, as a product of the author’s unique imagination and expressions, has long been viewed as a medium for transmitting aesthetic information (Schirova, 2006). This information is usually manifested through figurative language representations. By bringing additional imagery into the world of literature, figurative language has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention and criticism, which shows the dynamic nature of the study. Some researchers have focused on poems and poetry. They were Syafitri and Marlinton (2018) who examined the use of figurative language in Edgar Allan Poe’s poems, Anggiamurni (2020) and Jas et al. (2023) in Maya Angelou’s poems, Fahas et al. (2021) and Sharma (2022) in Robert Frost’s poems, and Rezeki (2021) who examined the emergence of figurative language in Covid-19’s poems. Focusing on fiction as the imaginary narrative, Arifatin (2019) investigated figurative language embedded in Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*, Lismalinda and Ismail (2020) highlighted the use of figurative language in selected children’s novels. In the meantime, Indarti et al. (2023) went beyond the emergence of figurative language in the *Kite Runner* novel.

Unlike the initial research, this study investigated forms and meanings of figurative language in selected song lyrics of Billie Eilish’s *Hit Me Hard and Soft* (2024) album. In contrast to other subjects, songs occupy an exclusive position in the intersection of language, music, and

performance. The combination of melody, rhythm, and poetic language songwriters use in their songs provides a multisensory experience that enhances how it resonates with audiences. Because of that, song lyrics are full of intended or hidden meanings that require deeper interpretation since they do not coincide with their literal meanings. Since the listener must draw numerous conclusions to understand the message, there are multiple ways in which the message could be interpreted (Turpin & Stebbins, 2010, p. 2).

## 2. Research Methods

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data within an explanatory-sequential design to enhance the depth of analysis and generate comprehensive descriptions and interpretations. The data consisted of words, phrases, and clauses containing figurative language, extracted from the lyrics of selected songs from Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* album, released on May 17, 2024.



Figure 1 Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* Album

*Hit Me Hard and Soft* is the third album by Billie Eilish Pirate Baird O'Connell, an American singer-songwriter, under Darkroom and Interscope Records. Following its massive publication, it received universal acclaim from critics, praising the production, songwriting, and vocal performances. It soon gained commercial success, topping the charts in over 20 countries, including Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. In the United States, *Hit Me Hard and Soft* debuted at number two on the *Billboard 200*, with all ten of its tracks charting within the top 40 of the *Billboard Hot 100*. It also earned several nominations at the 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Grammy Awards, including *Album of the Year*, *Best Pop Vocal Album*, *Song of the Year*, and *Record of the Year* (see <https://www.grammy.com/artists/billie-eilish/251741>). *Hit Me Hard and Soft* exemplifies Billie's quest for self-discovery, diving into subjects of identity and emotion that deserve examination. The lists of the songs are displayed in Table 3.1.

Table 1  
The tracks enlisted in Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* album

No.	Title	Duration/Lengths
1.	Skinny	3: 39
2.	Lunch	2: 59
3.	Chihiro	5: 03
4.	Birds of A Feather	3: 30
5.	Wildflower	4: 21
6.	The Greatest	4: 53
7.	<i>L'Amour De Ma Vie</i>	5: 33
8.	The Diner	3: 06
9.	Bittersuite	4: 53
10.	Blue	4: 43

Researchers served as the primary instruments in this study to gather and analyse the data. A total of 232 data were taken, collected, and documented manually by (1) comprehensively

observing and reading the entire lyrics available on the *Spotify App*; (2) taking notes and marking all data suspected of containing figurative language embedded in the lyrics; (3) inputting the data into the existing datasheet; (4) coding and labelling the data; (5) classifying the data using the figurative language framework developed by Kennedy et al. (2019). They categorized figurative language into (a) comparative expressions, consisting of metaphor, simile, and personification; (b) correlative expressions, consisting of metonymy, synecdoche, symbolism, allusion, and ellipsis; as well as (c) contradictory expressions, consisting of hyperbole, paradox, litotes, and irony. To obtain saturated data, the researchers refined the dataset by excluding irrelevant or unrelated elements and quantified each figurative language category's occurrence(s).

The content-analysis method was then used to analyse the data under the descriptive-qualitative approach, emphasising the semantic association (between literal and nonliteral meanings) and contextual meanings embedded in each data and category. As said by Glucksberg, (2008, p. 70), understanding nonliteral meanings requires three distinct processing stages: (1) derive the literal meaning of the utterance; (2) assess the interpretability of that meaning in the utterance context; and (3) if the literal meaning does not make sense in context, then search for a nonliteral meaning that does. The conclusion was drawn based on the quantitative and qualitative evidence.

### 3. Results and Discussions

The song is often interpreted as “weakly communicative” (Sperber & Wilson, 1986) since it cannot be understood by using a single perspective, figurative language embedded in songs’ lyrics operates beyond the constraints of everyday conversation, requiring both the speaker and the audience to engage in a process of inference and interpretation. Thus, aesthetic pleasures that listeners derive from interpreting songs arise from the ‘recomposition of something new’ rather than the ‘composition of something new’ (Fabb, 1997). As pointed out by Katz et al. (1998):

“Figurative language reflects patterns of thought in communication and social frameworks. In this respect, **communication is not only sharing a common code but also being capable of inferring information beyond syntax or semantics. If such information is not correctly unveiled, the “real” meaning is not achieved, and the figurative effect is lost.**

Focusing on what has been mentioned above, Table 4.1 displays figurative language embedded in the song’s lyrics on Billie Eilish’s *Hit Me Hard and Soft* album.

Table 2

The forms of figurative language embedded in Billie Eilish’s *Hit Me Hard and Soft* album

No.	Category	Sub Category	Occurrence(s)
1.	Comparative	Metaphors	80 (34.48%)
		Simile	11 (4.74%)
		Personification	8 (3.45%)
2.	Correlative	Metonymy	6 (2.56%)
		Synecdoche	1 (0.43%)
3.	Contradictory	Hyperbole	63 (27.16%)
		Irony	38 (16.38%)
		Paradox	25 (10.78%)
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>232 (100.00%)</b>

Calculated from the occurrences of each figurative language category, figurative language that belongs to comparative expressions, particularly metaphors, dominates as the most frequently used tools for expressing abstract or complex ideas. At the same time, similes and personifications play a more minor role. Correlative expressions, such as metonymy and synecdoche, are less commonly employed in the data, reflecting a limited use of associative expressions. Meanwhile, contradictory expressions, composed of hyperbole, irony, and paradox, form a significant portion of the dataset, highlighting their significance in expressing emphasis, contrast, and thought-provoking contradictions. This distribution predominantly employs metaphors and hyperbole, complemented by additional rhetorical devices that enhance stylistic complexity and variation.

### 3.1 Comparative Figurative Language

Comparative figurative language is defined as a word, phrase, or expression that is used to make references to any nonliteral language that contrasts objects with various articles to make a point (Kennedy et al., 2019). Several comparative figurative languages appeared in Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft*, as shown in the following sub-headings.

#### 3.1.1 Metaphors

Many view metaphor as an esoteric literary device beyond their use or understanding (Sommer & Weiss, 2001, p. vii). Whether simple or complex, a metaphor compares two unlike objects or ideas and illuminates their similarities (Kennedy et al., 2019; Sommer & Weiss, 2001). Metaphors are used in songwriting to help artists and writers communicate intricate feelings and narratives by bridging the gap between the abstract and the tangible. Because of that, metaphors dominated the overall data in the selected songs' lyrics of Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* album. For more details, look at the following excerpts.

(1) **When I step off the stage, I'm a bird in a cage.** (Skinny, 2024: Verse 2)

In "Skinny," Billie sings about how others assume she's happier since she's dropped weight, but she still sees herself as the "old" Billie. The line '*stepping off the stage*', as shown in excerpt 1, reflects the writer's life after performing in public, usually followed by pressure or restraints. In contrast to the image presented on stage, where she seems free and has a perfect life, the reality backstage keeps her shackled and imprisoned.

In the same context, '*a bird in a cage*' signifies the feeling of being trapped or bound by expectations, revealing the hidden insecurities that can lurk behind a confident-looking exterior. Across many belief systems, birds become the symbol of the soul due to the animalistic nature of being wild and free. By substituting the human ego with a 'bird in a cage', the metaphor establishes a complicated and emotional link, expressing the writer's or singer's sentiments of unfreedom to the listener more profoundly and universally.

(2) **I'm a dog in a dog pound,** and you said I was your secret. (Skinny, 2024: Verse 2)

In English discourse, "*dog pound or shelter*" is defined as "a public enclosure or a building provided and maintained by a city or town for stray or unlicensed dogs" (see <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pound>). Dog pound is a holding facility for dogs before being returned to their rightful or sometimes new owner. Beyond the context, the expression "a dog in a dog pound" in excerpt 2 refers to being confined, abandoned, or isolated in a circumstance that limits freedom. By replacing herself with the symbols of constraint and lack of freedom, this contrast implies a sense of loss of control or felt pressure, providing a vivid and dynamic image for the listener.

(3) *She's the headlights, I'm the deer* (Lunch, 2024: Verse 2)

Billie Eilish's Lunch song contrasts the word headlights with the deer. Based on the context, 'headlights' are *large, powerful lights at the front of a vehicle* (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/headlight>), used to represent something powerful, radiating brilliant light and potentially terrifying. Otherwise, 'deer' stands for a person who is weak, afraid, or helpless in the face of something massive and controlling. The expression "like a deer in headlights" means being still after a shock, like you're frozen in place (<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/headlight>). Thus, the metaphorical link established by the connection between highlights and deer in *Lunch* illustrates the power dynamic or emotional imbalance between the two individuals, producing a nuanced, visceral, and emotional picture.

### 3.1.2 Simile

A simile is a comparison between two dissimilar entities, commonly utilising connectives such as "like," "as," "than," or "resemble" (Kennedy et al., 2019; Abrams et al., 2012). Similes are employed in songwriting to assist artists and writers in contrasting disparate items; the lyrics of Billie Eilish's album *Hit Me Hard and Soft* contain several examples of this literary device. For further information, refer to the examples below.

(4) **Like a fever, like I'm burning alive, like a sign.** (Wildflower, 2024: Chorus)

*Wildflower's* song recounts Eilish's experience of comforting a woman during a tough breakup and forming a romantic relationship with the person with whom the woman parted ways. The phrase 'like a fever, like I'm burning alive like a sign' in extract four suggests that "like a fever" may denote either a transient elevation in body temperature, often referred to as a fever or a condition of heightened exhilaration (see <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fever>). The song's lyrics, "like a fever", symbolise the enduring and agonising sorrow of abandoning her friend, which perpetually haunts her mind. "I'm burning alive" signifies being murdered by fire or perishing in flames (see <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/burning-alive>). The expression 'like I'm burning alive' indicates that the intense sensations of humiliation are so overwhelming that she perceives herself as undergoing internal combustion. Moreover, if one wants to go deeper into this notion, she may see herself as facing a personal "hell," feeling a sensation like being consumed by flames owing to her actions. Otherwise, 'like a sign' means believing something, like an action or event, indicates something else is true, exists, or will happen (look at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sign>). It reflects the distressing emotions she articulates in the preceding verses, indicating her perception of having made an erroneous decision. This suggests that her acts, which harmed others, were unjustifiable.

(5) **Tastes like she might be the one,** and I could never get enough. (Lunch, 2024: Chorus)

Billie articulates her sexual prowess and need for an unidentified partner, comparing lesbian intimacy to an afternoon meal in the lyrics of the song *Lunch*. The song examines themes of queerness, identity, confidence, and introspection, making it one of Eilish's most overt but nuanced compositions, which she articulated as crucial in her comprehension of her queer identity. As a snippet in excerpt 5, the statement "tastes like she might be the one" signifies that Eilish may have discovered an individual suitable for her.

(6) **Colder than your father's eyes.** (Blue, 2024: Verse 1)

As shown in excerpt 6, *Blue* is a composition that explores the emotional aftermath of a breakup. Eilish has not moved on from the separation and harbours ambivalent thoughts about her former

partner and the relationship. She asserts that the phrase "colder than your father's eyes" suggests a breakup is inherently more painful than dealing with and coming to terms with her partner's father's coldness.

### 3.1.3 Personification

Personification is a specific type of metaphor, indicating that instances of personification possess distinct characteristics not present in all metaphors (Arvius, 2003). Meanwhile, Abrams et al. (2012) defined personification or *prosopopeia* in Greek as the attribution of life or human characteristics to inanimate objects or abstract concepts. Personification is utilised in songwriting to allow musicians and writers to express intricate emotions and narratives, serving as a distinctive figure of speech in which non-human things are attributed human traits. As a result, the lyrics of selected songs from Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* album contain some personification data. For more details, look at the following excerpt.

(7) And **the internet is hungry for the meanest kind of funny.** (Skinny, 2024: Verse 2)

In Billie Eilish's song *Skinny*, the words 'the internet' are contrasted with the 'hungry.' According to the context, 'internet' refers to the vast global network of interconnected computers that facilitates information sharing and communication (see <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/internet>), while 'hungry' refers to the desire or necessity for food (look at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hungry>). The phrase "and the internet is hungry for the meanest kind of funny" exemplifies personification since it humanises the internet by describing it as "hungry" as human stomach. Billie aims to showcase the internet's interest and demands, particularly regarding her personal life. She stresses the transparency of online culture, which consumes contentious information about her, thereby highlighting the more sinister aspects of contemporary humour and social interaction.

(8) Things fall apart, and **time breaks your heart.** (Wildflower, 2024: Verse 1)

Based on the context from Billie Eilish's song *Wildflower*, 'time' is a noun that reflects the system of sequential relations that any event has to any other, such as past, present, or future; this indefinite and continuous duration is regarded as that in which events succeed one another (see <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/time>). 'Break', on the other hand, is a verb that symbolises violently smashing, splitting, or dividing into parts (see <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/break>). In this context, "time" is portrayed as possessing the ability to "break" hearts, suggesting that time may actively induce emotional sorrow, akin to an individual's actions causing anguish. Billie underscores the inevitability of sadness and the corrosive influence of time on relationships, aiding listeners in comprehending the emotional ramifications faced by the lady, the ex-girlfriend of the guy Eilish is involved with.

(9) You would **keep the compliments** I throw ya. (Birds of a Feather, 2024: Verse 2)

According to excerpt nine above, 'compliment' is a noun that has the meaning of a comment that expresses praise or approval of somebody (see [https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/compliment\\_1?q=compliment](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/compliment_1?q=compliment)), and 'keep' is a verb that means to have and hold on to something (look at <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/keep>). The assertion that the person Billie admires would "keep" the compliment suggests that compliments might be seen as tangible possessions that can be maintained or preserved, much like physical objects. This personification emphasises the emotional significance and worth of compliments in a relationship, asserting that they transcend mere words and represent deeds that warrant appreciation and recollection.

### 3.2 Correlative Figurative Language

According to Kennedy et al. (2019) correlative figurative language is a group of rhetorical techniques that connect and link ideas through indirect allusions. As shown in the following subheadings, several comparative figurative languages appeared in Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* album.

#### 3.2.1 Metonymy

Kennedy et al. (2019) metonymy is the utilisation of an entity intimately associated with the intended subject. This rhetorical device replaces one entity's name with a closely related one. According to Abrams et al. (2012), a literal name for one entity is utilised for another entity with which it has developed a tight association due to a recurring relationship in a shared experience. According to the theory above, metonymy primarily serves a referential role in the lyrics of selected songs from Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* album, allowing one entity to represent another. The data identified several instances of metonymy.

- (10) **She was cryin' on my shoulder**; all I could do was hold her. (Wildflower, 2024: Pre-Chorus)

In excerpt 10, the term "my shoulder" signifies a physical aspect of the speaker's anatomy and a source of emotional support and solace at sensitive times. According to the Cambridge dictionary, the word 'shoulder' refers to one of the two parts of the body at each side of the neck that connect the arms to the rest of the body. The shoulder comforts the ex-girlfriend of Billie's close acquaintance, who relies on Billie to ease her sorrow, thereby highlighting the familiarity and bond between the characters. The song employs metonymy to underscore the significance of physical presence in emotional healing, enabling the listener to grasp the depth of the connection via this symbolic act.

- (11) Wanna know what I told her with **her hand on my shoulder**? (L'amour De Ma Vie, 2024: Verse)

Based on the Cambridge dictionary, the word 'hand' in the phrase song lyrics above is the body part at the end of the arm used for holding, moving, touching, and feeling things. Billie used the term 'hand' to refer to the broader concept of emotional support and closeness associated with physical contact. In this context, the hand signifies the physical act of placing a hand on another's shoulder and embodies the sentiments of warmth, connection, and comfort that follow the gesture. She reiterates her joy and relief at her separation from her previous partner. Although lacking proficiency, Billie maintains a pleasant demeanour and recommits to her endeavour. This metonymic language aids the listener in comprehending the depth of the connection and the significance of the event by suggesting closeness and vulnerability without explicitly articulating such emotions.

- (12) Said, "I bought you somethin' rare and **I left it under 'Claire'**". (Lunch, 2024: Chorus)

*Lunch* is one of Billie's most audacious compositions to date. Billie compares lesbian intercourse to a midday lunch, articulating her sexual competence and want for an unidentified lady. The term 'Claire' in sample 12 denotes a particular thing or gift Billie presents to his beloved rather than explicitly identifying the item. In this scenario, 'Claire' serves as a proxy for the actual environment or setting of the rare object, indicating a profound link between his lover and his present. This metonymic term allows the listener to infer the emotional significance of

leaving anything meaningful beneath 'Claire', thereby enhancing the narrative without explicitly revealing what was left behind.

### 3.2.2 Synecdoche

Synecdoche refers to the use of a part to represent the whole or, less commonly, the use of the entire to describe a component (Abrams et al., 2012). Synecdoche is a linguistic device that employs a component of an entity to represent the entirety or utilises the whole to denote a subset. We identified a single synecdoche in the chosen song lyrics from Billie Eilish's album *Hit Me Hard and Soft*; refer to the following excerpt.

(13) Happy and free **in leather**. (Wildflower, 2024: Verse 2)

The line 'Happy and free in leather' from the song 'Wildflower' (2024) exemplifies synecdoche; 'leather' refers to the preservation of animal skin, which is then used to make various items such as shoes, bags, clothes, and equipment (refer to <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/leather>). Billie employs the term 'leather' to symbolise the material and the broader lifestyle or personality associated with wearing leather clothing. In this instance, she intends to convey that 'leather' symbolises a pervasive sense of freedom and life pleasure, sometimes linked to rebellion or reckless conduct. The lyrics use synecdoche to express the strength and independence related to this specific attire, enabling the listener to grasp Eilish's emotional condition via this symbolic representation.

## 3.3 Contradictory Figurative Language

Contradictory figurative language includes diverse expressions that include intrinsic contradictions or oppositions (Kennedy et al., 2019). This linguistic style is crucial in literature and rhetoric since it communicates complex concepts and emotions using figurative language that defies literal interpretation. Numerous comparable figurative languages are present in Billie Eilish's "Hit Me Hard and Soft," as seen in the following sub-headings.

### 3.3.1 Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech in which statements are overdone. Kennedy et al. (2019) asserts that hyperbole emphasises a point through a remark characterised by exaggeration. It can be ludicrous or funny. Hyperboles enhance narrative by adding colour and depth to a character. Hyperbole ranked second, dominating the overall statistics in the lyrics of selected songs from Billie Eilish's album *Hit Me Hard and Soft*. For more details, look at the following examples.

(14) **Bet I could change your life**. (The Diner, 2024: Pre-Chorus)

*The Diner* explores the disquieting facets of fame, including Eilish recounting a narrative from the perspective of a stalker, informed by her previous experiences with other stalkers. This song's lyric features the phrase 'Bet I could alter your life,' which employs exaggerated language to highlight Billie's perception of herself as a stalker and the potential impact stalkers can have on her life. The phrase implies that the stalkers believe they have the power to significantly alter Billie Eilish's life, which is an overstatement, given that transforming an individual's life involves several intricate factors beyond the influence of a single person. This exaggerated language intensifies the emotional intensity of the remark, instilling a sense of urgency and importance in the stalker's desire to connect with her.

(15) **You were the love of my life**. (L'amour De Ma Vie, 2024: Chorus)

(16) **I'll love you 'til the day that I die**. (Birds of a Feather, 2024: Chorus)

Excerpts 15 and 16 above illustrate hyperbolic language about an individual. In the lyrics of Billie Eilish's song *L'amour De Ma Vie*, the line "You were the love of my life" signifies that the individual was the most cherished person in someone's life at a certain period. Billie suggests that this somebody has a unique and vital role in her emotional life, an assertion that is hyperbolic since it indicates no other affection can compare.

The line, "I'll love you 'til the day that I die," in the song *Birds of a Feather* conveys a profound and genuine affection for someone. It may convey the idea of a future spent with the person Eilish loves. By asserting that their love would last "until the day I die," Billie suggests an infinite and unconditional affection, which is hyperbolic since death marks the cessation of life and, hence, the termination of all relationships. This exaggerated remark amplifies the emotional impact of the statement, allowing the listener to perceive the profundity and intensity of Eilish's emotions, even if such a claim is implausible.

### 3.3.2 Paradox

A paradox is a yet true and contradictory statement. It may represent either a scenario or a declaration (Kennedy et al., 2019). A paradox is a linguistic form that embodies a genuine disagreement with established truths. Paradox is also employed in the selected songs' lyrics of Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* album; here are some examples:

(17) **But I need to confess, I told you a lie.** (*L'amour De Ma Vie*, 2024: Chorus)

In Billie Eilish's *L'amour De Ma Vie* song, the phrase "I have to confess" is contrasted with "I told you a lie." Based on the context, "I have to confess" is a phrase used to admit something shameful or might offend someone, while "I told you a lie" reflects something you say when you have just said something wrong. This contrast creates a conflict between Billie's desire to be honest with her lover and the dishonest confessions she has made, emphasising the complexities of emotions and relationships between the two while they are still lovers. The paradox lies in Billie's conflict between her desire for transparency regarding her feelings during their relationship and her failure to convey the truth. This intensifies the emotional weight of her confession and illustrates the contradictory essence of truth and deception in their connection.

(18) **'Cause I can't fall in love with you no matter how badly I want to.** (*Bittersuite*, 2024: Chorus)

The phrase, "'Cause I can't fall in love with you no matter how bad I want to," from the song *Bittersuite* above, exemplifies the paradox by emphasising the conflict between Billie's desires and her inability to realise them. The statement "I can't fall in love with you" imposes certain boundaries, but "no matter how badly I want it" expresses a deep need for love, creating a conflict between Billie's genuine desire and her incapacity to realise it. This contradiction highlights the complexity of Eilish's emotions, emphasises the tension between want and restraint, deepens the poem's emotional resonance, and resonates with listeners who may have had similar difficulties in their relationships.

(19) **And I don't know what I'm crying for.** (*Birds of a Feather*, 2024: Pre-Chorus)

In Billie Eilish's song *Birds of a Feather*, the lyric 'I don't know' is juxtaposed with 'what I'm crying for.' Based on the context, the phrase 'I don't know' is an idiom indicating a lack of information regarding a query. Conversely, the phrase 'I'm crying for' is in the present continuous tense, suggesting that the act of crying is occurring presently, has happened in the past, and is likely to persist. The phrase "and I don't know what I'm crying for" in excerpt 19 above creates a

contradiction by juxtaposing the act of weeping with Billie Eilish's inability to understand the reason behind her tears. The line indicates an emotional reaction often linked to a specific cause or occurrence, but Billie asserts ignorance of its origin. This paradox underscores the complexities of human emotions, demonstrating how an individual might feel intense emotions without understanding their source.

### 3.3.3 Irony

Irony is a form of language that tries to communicate something with a different meaning or purpose from what is included in the sequence of words. Arp & Jhonson (2020) asserted that irony has consequences beyond its function as a rhetorical device. Irony enriches the reader's experience by providing depth and richness. In the chosen songs' lyrics of Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* album, irony is applied to contrast meaning to the real, the mismatch between the environment provided and the actual reality, and the incompatibility between hope and reality. For further information, see the examples provided below.

#### (20) **Feelin' off when I feel fine.** (Skinny, 2024: Verse 1)

In *Skinny*, Billie sings about how others assume she's happier since she's dropped weight, but she still sees herself as the "old" Billie. The line 'Feelin' off when I feel fine,' as shown in excerpt 20, exhibits irony in juxtaposing Billie Eilish's emotional situation with her physical condition. The expression "feelin' off" is informal, meaning someone is not quite right or seems out of the ordinary. It can refer to several things that denote pain or uneasiness, while "I feel fine" means you are healthy or good enough (see <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/fine>). It emphasises the absence of any medical issue or need for concern. This contrast creates an ironic scenario in which Billie perceives a dissonance between her feelings and her real well-being, highlighting the intricacy of emotions that may emerge despite an outward appearance of stability. This irony effectively demonstrates the internal conflict and ambiguity that can accompany mental health challenges, resonating with those who may have had such sensations of emotional dissonance.

#### (21) They told me **they were only curious.** (Chihiro, 2024: Verse 3)

*Chihiro* depicts Billie's sense of invisibility and misunderstanding as she seeks spiritual and physical reconnection with the world. The statement 'they were only curious' conveys irony by illustrating a discrepancy between Billie Eilish's perception of others' intentions and the actual nature of their acts. "They were only curious" means they were interested in something and wanted to learn more about it (see <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/just-curious>). Characterising people as "just curious" suggests their curiosity may be driven by ulterior motives, indicating a more profound degree of involvement or manipulation. The disparity between the declared objective of inquiry and the potential for concealed motives generates an ironic tension, highlighting the complexities of human connection and the often-deceptive nature of communication. This irony lies in the disparity between the spoken words and the true intentions, urging the listener to reflect on the intricacies of trust and honesty in relationships.

#### (22) **Made it all look painless.** (The Greatest, 2024: Chorus)

*The Greatest*, a softly rendered guitar ballad that culminates in a robust hymn, is the sixth track on Billie Eilish's third studio album *Hit Me Hard and Soft*. The lyrics express sorrow, alienation, anger, and remorse over unfulfilled potential. Eilish used sarcasm to convey her whole engagement in a relationship, articulating her love and respect for a person who did not reciprocate these feelings, revealing a deficiency in passion, interest, and thankfulness.

Furthermore, Eilish believed they had not succeeded in expressing any semblance of sorrow after the end of the partnership.

In the context of the song, the line ‘*made it all appear painless*’ suggests that Eilish effortlessly presents her emotional anguish, although she experiences profound interior distress. The irony is in the juxtaposition of his outward composure and inner turmoil, illustrating his efforts to present his emotional struggles as simple and controllable despite their inherent discomfort. This lyrical irony encapsulates the complexities of a tumultuous relationship as she conceals her true feelings, exhibiting a front of tranquillity while enduring profound emotional fragility.

#### 4. Novelities

The novelty of this study lies in its exploration of song lyrics as a form of weakly communicative discourse, wherein meaning is not directly conveyed but inferred through figurative language. Unlike everyday conversation, which follows syntactic and semantic conventions, song lyrics require a deeper level of interpretation, engaging both the speaker and the audience in an inferential process. Drawing from Fabb’s (1997) notion that aesthetic pleasure arises from the recomposition rather than the composition of meaning, this study examines how figurative expressions shape listeners' engagement with lyrical content. As highlighted by Katz et al. (1998), figurative language is deeply embedded in patterns of thought and social communication, necessitating an understanding beyond mere lexical or grammatical structures. This research, therefore, contributes to the study of figurative language in music by emphasizing its role in constructing layered meanings that extend beyond literal interpretation.

#### 5. Conclusion

This study examined the types and significances of metaphorical language in chosen songs from Billie Eilish's *Hit Me Hard and Soft* (2024) album. The results indicated that figurative language predominates the lyrics, particularly metaphors and hyperboles, illustrating the artist's inventive efforts to convey intricate emotions and storylines. Comparative devices, including metaphors, similes, and personifications, often generate vivid imagery. Contradictory devices, such as irony, contradiction, and exaggeration, stimulate contemplation and deepen emotional resonance. Correlative statements, although less common, enhance the overall poetic perception.

The integration of melody and poetic techniques in Billie Eilish's compositions illustrates how figurative language connects literal and symbolic interpretations, resulting in a profound, holistic experience for the listener. This study demonstrates figurative language's dynamic interaction in song lyrics potentiates emotional engagement and self-articulation. This study was confined to the analysis of lyrics from one album. Future studies should explore figurative language across various genres, cultural settings, and creative mediums such as cinema, theatre, and digital media to better understand its impact on audience perception and emotional involvement.

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