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The Use of Metaphor and Symbolism In BTS's Black Swan Song

Carissa Maharani, Otong Setiawan Djauhari

English literature, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung

Email: carissa.maharani21@gmail.com, otongsetiawandjauhari@uinsgd.ac.id

Abstract

This article discusses metaphors contained in a song as an expression of the songwriter's emotions about something that happened in their real life. BTS's single "Black Swan" contains metaphorical elements in its lyrics. The author will explain the use of metaphors in one of BTS's popular singles, "Black Swan." In this study, the author employs a qualitative descriptive research method. According to Nasution, qualitative research is a research procedure that generates descriptive data from observed individuals and behaviors. This study aims to collect as much descriptive data as possible to be organized in a report and analysis. According to the analysis conducted, only three types of metaphors were found: ontological, structural, and orientational. Now we will discuss each type of metaphor in the BTS song "Black Swan" in detail: These three types of metaphors not only enrich the language and poetic nuances of the song but also help listeners understand the inner conflict and identity transformation experienced by the narrator. This analysis demonstrates that the lyrics of "Black Swan" are not merely an entertainment product but an artistic expression rich in philosophical and psychological meaning, making it worthy of study in the fields of literature and linguistics.

Keywords: song, metaphor, literary linguistics

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INTRODUCTION

BTS (Bangtan sanyeodan), also known as Bangtan Boys, is one of the world's most famous music groups from South Korea, consisting of seven members and under the management of Big Hit Entertainment (now Hybe Entertainment). BTS made their debut on June 13, 2013, with a strong focus on hip-hop music. Their first album, titled "2 Cool 4 Skool," featured the single "No More Dream." Surprisingly, the song gained immense popularity and won the "New Artist of the Year" award. As their career progressed, BTS demonstrated extraordinary appeal, not only through their dynamic stage performances but also through their meaningful works. BTS consistently addresses complex issues such as social pressure, existentialism, mental health, and criticism of the education system and societal structures. Their success is attributed to their ability to convey profound messages through reflective lyrics and powerful visual elements.

One of their most notable singles is titled "Black Swan." The song was released on January 17, 2020, as part of the album *Map of the Soul: 7*, which depicts the inner death of an artist due to the loss of passion in their work. In this song, BTS expresses deep concerns about the possibility that music, which has always been at the core of their identity, might lose its emotional depth and no longer evoke the same feelings as before. On January 17, 2020, the single "Black Swan" was first introduced to the public through an art film featuring an extraordinary contemporary dance group from Slovenia, the MN Dance Company. Meanwhile, BTS performed the single live for the first time on *The Late Late Show* with James Corden on January 28, 2020.

As explained in the book on figures of speech, pantun, and poetry, figures of speech are stylistic devices that use metaphors, definitions, comparisons, or similes to enhance the meaning and strengthen the message conveyed in a sentence. Good figures of speech should contain elements of honesty, politeness, and have their own appeal for readers (Keraf, 2010: 113). One of the most commonly used types of figures of speech in literary works is the comparison figure of speech, specifically the metaphor.

The term metaphor comes from Greek, namely “metaphor”, which is a combination of two words: “meta” meaning “beyond” or “above”, and ‘phrein’ meaning “to carry” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2013). From this combination of meanings, metaphor is defined as a form of transfer or shift of meaning from one concept to another. A metaphor is a type of figurative expression that typically uses language that does not conform to standard or formal language rules, thereby appearing to deviate from common language usage (Ratna, 2009:181).

A metaphor is a form of expression in language whose meaning cannot be understood literally from the words used, but must be interpreted through the predicative relationship between the symbol and the meaning intended by the expression (Wahab, 1986:88-89). According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors can be divided into three types: structural metaphors, orientational metaphors, and ontological metaphors. Conceptualizing abstract things such as thoughts, experiences, and processes into concrete things is known as ontological metaphor. Oriental metaphors refer to spatial orientation, such as up-down, inside-outside, or front-back, and are based on two domains: the source domain (SD) and the target domain (TD). Structural metaphors refer to concepts formed metaphorically from one concept to another. Knowles and Moon classify metaphors into two types: conventional and creative.

A dead metaphor is a conventional metaphor that has lost its meaning as a metaphor because it has become part of everyday understanding. People who use conventional metaphors are unaware that they are using metaphorical language. Dead metaphors are often known as conventional metaphors (Knowles and Moon, 2006: 5–6). Dictionaries have interpreted conventional metaphors. Writers or speakers use creative metaphors to convey their ideas or feelings in writing or speech. The use of creative metaphors is intended to make the context and meaning easy for readers to understand. Furthermore, Wahab (1986) categorizes metaphors into three types based on syntactic perspective: nominative, predicative, and calimative.

A metaphor is an indirect and implicit comparison, according to Nurgiyantoro (2017). The basic structure of a metaphor is fairly simple. According to Nurgiyantoro (2017), a metaphor consists of two elements: the thing being compared and the thing used as the comparison. Nurgiyantoro also categorizes metaphors into three types: explicit metaphors (when present), implicit metaphors (when absent), and obsolete metaphors. Metaphors are most commonly used in imaginative written works, such as song lyrics or poetry. The metaphors contained in a song are described as an expression of the songwriter's emotions about something that happened in their real life. BTS's single titled “Black Swan” has metaphorical elements in its lyrics. The author will explain the use of metaphors in one of BTS's popular singles, “Black Swan.”

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the author uses a qualitative descriptive research method. According to Nasution, qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data from people and observed behavior. This study aims to collect as much descriptive data as possible to be organized in a report and analysis.

Qualitative descriptive research, which is commonly used in postpositivist research, is generally used to study the state of natural objects. Sugiyono (2018) explains that qualitative descriptive research methods are used to study the state of natural objects, where researchers have a significant influence in describing situations objectively or based on visible facts (Butarbutar, 2022:41). One of the approaches chosen in this study was to read all the lyrics in the source language, listen to them, and note down the lyrics that contained metaphors. The objective of this method was to identify and analyze the types of metaphors found in the lyrics of the song Black Swan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the analysis conducted, only three types of metaphors were found: ontological, structural, and orientational. Now we will discuss each type of metaphor in BTS's song Black Swan in detail, as follows:

Lyrics of the song “Black Swan” by BTS

Do your thang
Do your thang with me now
Do your thang
Do your thang with me now

What's my thang
 What's my thang
 tell me now
 Tell me now
 Yeah yeah yeah yeah
 Ayy
 simjangi ttwijji anhneundae
 deoneun eumageul deureul ttae
 Tryna pull up
 sigani meomchun deushae
 Oh that would be my first death
 I been always afraid of
 ige nareul deo mot ullindamyeon
 nae gaseumeul deo tteollige mot
 handamyeon
 eoijeom ireohge han beon jukgessji ama
 But what if that moment's
 right now
 Right now
 gwisgaen neurin simjang soriman
 bump bump bump
 beoseonallaedo geu ipsogeuro
 jump jump jump
 eotteon noraedo wadahji moshae
 sori eopsneun soril jilleo
 modeun bichi chimmukhaneun bada
 yeah yeah yeah
 gil ilheun nae balmogeul tto jaba
 yeah yeah yeah
 eotteon sorido deulliji anha
 yeah yeah yeah
 Killin' me now Killin' me now
 Do you hear me yeah
 hollin deut cheoncheonhi garaanja
 nah nah nah
 momburimchyeobwado sabangi
 badak nah nah
 modeun sungandeuri yeongwoni dwae
 yeah yeah yeah
 Film it now Film it now
 Do you hear me yeah
 Do your thang Do your thang with me now
 Do your thang Do your thang with me now
 What's my thang What's my thang tell me now
 Tell me now Yeah yeah yeah yeah
 Deeper
 Yeah I think I'm goin' deeper
 jakku chojeomeul ilheo
 ijen nohajwo silheo
 charari nae ballo galge
 naega ttwieodeureogalge
 gajang gipeun goseseo
 naneun nal bwaseo
 cheoncheonhi nan nuneul tteo
 yeogin nauui jageopsil nae seutyudiogeosen pado

kkamkkamhage nareul seuchyeodo
 jeoldae kkeullyeogaji anheul geoya
 dasi tto
 Inside
 I saw myself myself
 gwisgaen ppareun simjang soriman
 bump bump bump
 du nuneul tteugo nau supeuro
 jump jump jump
 geu mueosdo nal samkil su eopseo
 himkkeot naneun sori jilleo
 modeun bichi chimmukhaneun
 bada
 yeah yeah yeah
 gil ilheun nae balmogeul tto jaba
 yeah yeah yeah
 eotteon sorido deulliji anha
 yeah yeah yeah
 Killin' me now Killin' me now
 Do you hear me yeah
 hollin deut cheoncheonhi garaanja
 nah nah nah
 momburimchyeobwado sabangi
 badak nah nah
 modeun sungandeuri yeongwoni
 dwae
 yeah yeah yeah
 Film it now Film it now
 Do you hear me yeah
 Do your thang Do your thang with me now
 Do your thang Do your thang with me now
 What's my thang What's my thang
 tell me now
 Tell me now
 Yeah yeah yeah yeah

1. The First Lyric

Lyric	simjangi ttwiji anhneundae "The heart no longer races "
Metaphor	Ontological, because thoughts and feelings are conceptualized physically.
Explanation	This sentence describes a loss of meaning or passion for music, as if the "heart," which is an abstract entity, is treated as a concrete object that can "beat."

2. Second Lyric

Lyric	ige nareul deo mot ullindamyeon "If this can no longer resonate / No longer make my heart vibrate"
Metaphor	Structural.

Explanation	Music is used as a metaphorical structure for life and passion. Music is the source (source domain) and meaning of life as the target (target domain), and it shows that losing touch with music is losing one's identity.

3. Third Lyric

Lyric	"Do your thang / What's my thang / Tell me now"
Metaphor	Orientational
Explanation	This leads to a search for lost direction or orientation in life. Although not explicitly spatial like "up-down," it semantically indicates confusion about direction in existence.

4. Fourth Lyric

Lyric	"I try to escape, but into the music I dive"
Metaphor	Structural
Explanation	- Diving into music is used metaphorically. Music is described as an ocean of escape. - This shows two realms: music as a place and emotions as an escape, making it a structural metaphor.

5. Fifth Lyric

Lyric	"My shadow's the only one that danced along with me"
Metaphor	Ontologys
Explanation	- The shadow here is not only a physical object, but a personification of loneliness or the dark side of oneself that constantly follows. This is a form of ontological metaphor because the concept of emotion (loneliness, identity) is concretized through the "shadow."

6. Sixth Lyric

Lyric	"Deep inside, I saw myself / Drowning slowly"
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Metaphor	Oriental
Explanation	- The word “drowning” gives a negative downward orientation, describing a loss of direction and depression. - This is an orientational metaphor because it uses the direction “downward” to express a declining emotional state

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the lyrics of BTS's "Black Swan" shows that the use of metaphors, especially ontological, structural, and orientational metaphors, plays an important role in shaping the emotional and aesthetic meaning of the work. The depiction of abstract concepts such as 'shadow' or "inner self" as concrete entities directly experienced by the singer demonstrates ontological metaphors. Structural metaphors are found in the relationship between art and life, where "dance" functions as a conceptual structure for understanding existence and identity. Oriental metaphors, on the other hand, are characterized by the use of directional dichotomies such as up-down or dark-light to convey deep emotions like fear, loss, or emptiness.

These three types of metaphors not only enhance the language and poetic nuances of the song, but also help listeners understand the narrator's conflicts and identity changes. According to this analysis, the lyrics of "Black Swan" are not merely a product of entertainment; they are an artistic expression with philosophical and psychological meanings that are worthy of study in the fields of literature and linguistics.

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- <https://m.kumparan.com/amp/lyric-lagu/lyric-lagu-bts-black-swan-dengan-terjemahan-bahasa-indonesia-1stwU7Yb4o2>