



UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

THE ART OF LYRIC WRITING:
THE METAPHOR AND ITS EFFECTIVE USAGE

LIYANA BINTI YIS

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Abstract

"The Art of Lyric Writing – The Metaphor and Its Effective Usage"

Author: Liyana Binti Yis

Advisor: En Marzelan Bin Salleh

Lyric writing could be defined as the art of expressing feelings through words. Figurative language is a principal of saying things in a different perspective, an important device used in lyric writing. There are many types of figurative language, as much as its different character and rules of application in lyric writing. This study covers the effective usage of metaphor, an umbrella term for types of figurative language, in lyric writing. There are also explanations on the idea of creating metaphor and its application guideline in lyric writing. Discussions and comparisons of existence work that relates to the usage of the metaphor were also being provided in this study. By generating a better understanding of the effective usage of the metaphors, this study benefits lyricist, researchers and anyone who wants to learn this skill in more depth, help them to produce a good piece of art work, the quality lyrics.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Song is generally a musical composition with words. As one of an art work, song tells story to listener. Some songs may have the same message, but each of it has a different narration with a different description. This story of songs comes from a writing medium, which is being called a lyric.

Defining lyric in an education terminology, it is basically a verse or poem that would be sung to the accompaniment of music¹. Exploring the other side of its interpretation, lyric could be defined as the art of expressing feelings through words. It is a medium of sharing thoughts between lyricist and listener.

Lyric should fit with the music, and vice versa. Sometimes it works when the lyric comes first. While in some other time, it works better when the music comes first. The basic principle is simple, whether the lyric or the music comes first; both should work well in presenting message of a song.

Comparing lyrics with other types of writings, lyrics are short, using simple words, would be sung, and yet tells a story. The lyricist shares her emotions, her memories and her thought within the usage of only few words in lyric writing. Here, skills are required for a lyricist to be able to translate her mind into lyrics.

¹ lyric. (2010). In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved April 20, 2010, from Encyclopædia Britannica Online: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/353026/lyric>

Exploring the need of good lyrics, Josefs, J. (1996) compare the different impact between an instrumental piece and a song to the listener. People responses to words since their sounds contain meaning which has to be translated for them to make sense. It is generally an intellectual or left brain response. On the other hand, an instrumental music touches us emotionally, leaves our minds free to wander. The unique combination of music and lyrics gives a deeper impact as it hits us both intellectually and emotionally in presenting the same message².

Some might say the best lyric is the one with less word, but yet touches the listener's heart. Some others might say that 'straight forward' lyric would be easier to understand, as lyric tells stories, this kind of lyric writing would 'send' the listener straight away to the lyricist mind. Both statements are subjective; however, we already knew that there are many devices used in lyric writing that work unconsciously, to create great lyrics.

“Though you might not identify them right away, you know that without them the dish wouldn't taste nearly as good. Only when the chef tells you what the spices are, do you start to separate and recognize them in the overall taste” (Braheny, J., 1988, p.58).

² Josefs, J. (1996). *Writing music for hit songs*. New York: Schirmer Trade Books. (p.210)