

Analysis of language Style And Diction In The Song “Helena” by My Chemical Romance

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the stylistic and lexical elements in the song lyrics of “Helena” by My Chemical Romance, focusing on Figurative Language, Stylistics, how language style and diction convey emotional depth and narrative Semantic Analysis, Song Lyrics, My Chemical Romance meaning. The study explores the integration of literary devices—such as metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and antithesis—alongside the use of denotative and connotative diction to reflect themes of loss, grief, and longing embedded in the lyrics.

Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research combines stylistic and semantic analysis. Primary data were obtained from the official lyrics, while secondary data were collected through interviews with three fans of the band. The findings show that metaphor is the most dominant language style used, followed by personification, hyperbole, and antithesis. Additionally, the lyrics contain a rich interplay between denotative and connotative meanings, particularly in emotionally charged words and phrases such as “hearse,” “blade,” and “so long and goodnight.”

The interview responses affirm that the listeners’ emotional engagement with the song is significantly influenced by the figurative language and diction. This supports the notion that lyrical composition, when imbued with poetic language, not only enhances artistic expression but also deepens emotional resonance.

In conclusion, “Helena” exemplifies how contemporary song lyrics function as modern literary texts, with stylistic and semantic features that offer both aesthetic and affective impact. This study reinforces the importance of literary analysis in understanding the cultural and emotional dimensions of music.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a central medium in human communication and expression, particularly within the realm of literature. Literary works allow writers to channel thoughts, emotions, and experiences through carefully chosen language. Among the many forms of literary expression, song lyrics hold a unique position as they combine artistic language with musical rhythm, enabling a deep emotional connection with the listener. As a result, songs are often rich with symbolic and figurative language that can be analyzed for their literary significance. In the context of modern literature, song lyrics function not only as entertainment but also as poetic texts. The emotional impact conveyed through music is often strengthened by the use of various stylistic devices and carefully selected diction. These linguistic choices help shape the tone, mood, and overall message of a song. By examining the linguistic and stylistic features of a song, we can gain a deeper understanding of its underlying themes and emotional resonance.

One genre known for its emotional depth and expressive lyrics is emo rock, which often explores themes of loss, grief, identity, and internal conflict. My Chemical Romance, as a prominent figure in this genre, is widely recognized for its dramatic lyrics and raw emotional storytelling. Their song "Helena" stands out as one of their most iconic works, known for its haunting melody and powerful lyrical content that speaks to the pain of losing a loved one.

The song "Helena" is often interpreted as a personal tribute, capturing the intense sorrow of parting and the emotional aftermath of death. The lyrics are filled with vivid imagery, metaphoric expressions, and emotionally charged diction that make it a compelling subject for stylistic and semantic analysis. These features create a poetic narrative that transforms the song from a simple musical composition into a form of modern literary art. Despite its popularity and emotional power, scholarly analysis of the linguistic features in "Helena" remains limited. Most discussions focus on the song's emotional tone or cultural impact, but few examine the deliberate language choices that contribute to its meaning. This gap provides an opportunity for further investigation into how language style and diction shape the listener's interpretation and emotional experience. Therefore, this study aims to examine the use of figurative language—particularly personification, metaphor, antithesis, and hyperbole—as well as the role of diction, both denotative and connotative, in conveying the emotional themes of the song. Through stylistic and semantic approaches, this research seeks to uncover the deeper layers of meaning embedded in the lyrics.

This research also includes perspectives from listeners by incorporating interview data from fans of the band. Their interpretations serve as valuable secondary data that support the textual analysis. By comparing theoretical insights with real listener responses, the study offers a more holistic view of how language in music can affect perception and emotional engagement. The analysis of "Helena" offers insights into the literary merit of song lyrics and highlights the significance of language in shaping emotional narratives. This study not only contributes to the field of literary analysis but also affirms the value of music as a powerful medium for emotional and linguistic expression in contemporary culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language is not merely a tool for communication but also a powerful medium for artistic and emotional expression. In literary works, language functions as a vehicle to convey deeper meanings and layered interpretations. The way language is used—known as language style—plays a vital role in shaping how a message is delivered and understood. According to Keraf (2000), language style is not just about word choice but also about how language is arranged to produce certain aesthetic and emotional effects. This stylistic aspect is fundamental in the analysis of both traditional literary forms and modern texts such as song lyrics. Language style, or stylistics, encompasses various forms of figurative language, including metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and antithesis. These stylistic devices enrich the text by making it more vivid and emotionally resonant. Leech and Short (1981) argue that style is a means of expressing tone, attitude, and perspective, contributing to the artistic character of a literary work. In the context of song lyrics, these stylistic tools are essential in amplifying the emotional message and giving depth to the narrative voice.

Metaphor, for example, allows writers to compare abstract concepts with concrete images, enabling listeners or readers to relate to complex emotions through familiar references. Personification breathes life into inanimate objects or ideas, while hyperbole exaggerates for emphasis, and antithesis juxtaposes contrasting ideas to highlight internal conflict. These elements not only beautify the text but also function as powerful instruments of persuasion, empathy, and reflection. Diction, or word choice, is equally crucial in literary analysis. It involves selecting specific words that carry either literal (denotative) or implied (connotative) meanings. Keraf (2000) defines diction as the ability to choose words that are appropriate for the subject, context, and audience. A precise and expressive diction can influence the tone and clarity of a literary work, shaping how it is perceived and interpreted by the audience. In song lyrics, diction helps to construct mood and deliver emotional nuance effectively.

Diction also affects the rhythm, tone, and memorability of lyrics. Words are not chosen randomly; they are selected based on their phonetic appeal, emotional resonance, and cultural connotations. In the emo rock genre, where lyrics often explore themes of loss, identity, and emotional turmoil, diction plays a key role in building an atmosphere of intensity and intimacy. Words such as “hearse,” “tears,” “burn,” and “goodnight” in the song “Helena” evoke not only literal meanings but also symbolic layers that resonate with the listener’s own experiences.

Previous studies have explored the use of language style and diction in song lyrics. Manuaba et al. (2019) examined figurative language in the albums of Westlife and My Chemical Romance and found that hyperbole and personification were commonly used to express emotion. Another study by Wardhani and Febiyanti (2024) analyzed deixis in My Chemical Romance lyrics, identifying how pronouns and spatial references contribute to the song’s intimacy and narrative voice. These studies highlight the potential of song lyrics as texts rich with literary value and emotional expression. Although there has been considerable research on figurative language and diction in song lyrics, there is limited specific analysis of “Helena” by My Chemical Romance using both stylistic and semantic approaches. Most existing studies tend to generalize the findings across albums or artists, leaving room for more focused analysis. By examining the figurative language and diction used in “Helena,” this study aims to fill that gap and provide a deeper understanding of how language is employed to evoke

strong emotional responses. the literature suggests that language style and diction are essential tools in shaping meaning and emotion in literary texts, including song lyrics. Their application in emo rock songs, particularly in “Helena,” demonstrates how language can be manipulated to express grief, longing, and introspection. By synthesizing existing theories and previous studies, this chapter establishes a strong foundation for analyzing how stylistic and lexical choices contribute to the emotional and artistic impact of the song.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the language style and diction in the lyrics of the song “Helena” by My Chemical Romance. The research focused on identifying and interpreting figurative language and lexical choices, aiming to reveal how these elements contribute to the song's emotional depth and artistic value. Qualitative methods were chosen to allow for a detailed, interpretive analysis of language, emphasizing meaning rather than numerical data.

The primary data source for this research consisted of the official lyrics of “Helena,” which were accessed from My Chemical Romance’s verified YouTube channel. The secondary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with three fans of the band, who were selected based on their familiarity with the song and its emotional impact. Their interpretations provided insight into how stylistic and semantic elements are received and understood by actual listeners.

To collect the data, the researcher first transcribed and examined the song lyrics line by line. Each line was analyzed to identify stylistic devices such as personification, metaphor, hyperbole, and antithesis, as well as the use of denotative and connotative diction. Simultaneously, interviews were conducted to gather subjective responses, which were then compared with the textual findings to support or contrast interpretations.

The analytical method involved stylistic analysis to explore how language style contributes to poetic expression, and semantic analysis to interpret the deeper meanings behind the words. The stylistic analysis was applied by classifying figurative language in the lyrics, while the semantic analysis focused on the emotional and symbolic layers conveyed through word choice. The researcher also employed interpretive techniques to synthesize interview data with the theoretical framework.

In analyzing interview responses, the researcher followed several steps: rereading each participant's statement, identifying expressions relevant to the themes of diction and language style, categorizing them accordingly, and interpreting the meaning through the lens of stylistic and semantic theory. This process ensured that the findings from textual analysis were contextualized by real audience perceptions, enhancing the depth and reliability of the research. Overall, the combination of textual analysis and audience interpretation enabled a comprehensive exploration of how the lyrics of “Helena” function both as an emotional expression and a literary artifact. This method allowed the researcher to assess not only what kinds of language were used, but also how they affect listeners, contributing to a richer understanding of the song as a modern poetic text.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the song “Helena” by My Chemical Romance revealed a significant presence of various types of figurative language and diction. Through close reading of the lyrics and cross-validation with interview responses, the study identified several dominant stylistic devices, particularly metaphor, hyperbole, personification, and antithesis. These elements were found to be central in conveying the emotional depth of the song’s themes: grief, farewell, and emotional conflict.

Metaphor emerged as the most frequently used language style, appearing in nine key phrases across the lyrics. These metaphors symbolized emotional turmoil and loss, such as “blade you stain” and “we are the very hurt you sold,” which metaphorically portray pain, guilt, and emotional scars. These metaphors helped express psychological states that go beyond literal meanings, allowing the lyrics to resonate with deeper emotional realities. Personification was identified in several lines, such as “the hearse you die to get in again” and “every star fall brought you to tears again.” By attributing human qualities to objects or abstract concepts, the lyrics intensify the listeners’ emotional connection to the themes of the song. This style reflects the struggle to humanize and process emotional experiences, particularly death and longing. Hyperbole was also frequently used, exaggerating emotional expression to emphasize the extremity of grief and heartbreak. Phrases like “you die to get in again” and “the lives of everyone you know” serve as hyperbolic amplifiers, heightening the dramatic effect of loss and sorrow. The use of hyperbole functions as an emotional intensifier, creating a strong impression on the audience.

The antithesis found in lyrics such as “what’s the worst I can say? / Things are better if I stay” presents emotional contradictions. This language style highlights internal conflict, portraying the emotional ambiguity of staying versus leaving. Though less frequent than metaphor, antithesis adds complexity to the psychological state of the lyrical persona. In terms of diction, the study classified each word or phrase as either denotative or connotative. Denotative diction includes literal meanings such as “hearse,” “tears,” and “cars collide.” Meanwhile, connotative diction includes symbolic meanings such as “so long and goodnight” interpreted as a final farewell, or “match you strike to incinerate” referring to emotional destruction. Interview responses confirmed the emotional impact of these stylistic and lexical elements. Respondents were able to identify and interpret metaphorical and emotional expressions in the lyrics. Most notably, “so long and goodnight” was unanimously understood as a metaphor for death, not a literal goodnight. Similarly, phrases involving “burning” and “holding on” were interpreted as metaphors for mental and emotional endurance.

The results of this study affirm that “Helena” is a song that transcends its musical structure, functioning as a piece of poetic literature. The stylistic devices and diction employed by the songwriter contribute to a layered and emotionally intense narrative, which listeners perceive and internalize based on both textual cues and personal experiences.

Table 4.1 – Frequency of Language Style and Diction in “Helena” Lyrics

Language Feature	Occurrences	Examples
Metaphor	9	“Blade you stain”, “We are the very hurt you sold”

Language Feature	Occurrences	Examples
Personification	8	"Every star fall", "The hearse you die to get in"
Hyperbole	8	"You die to get in again", "Lives of everyone"
Antithesis	8	"What's the worst I can say? / Better if I stay"
Denotative Diction	14	"Hearse", "Tears", "Cars collide"
Connotative Diction	14	"So long and goodnight", "Match you strike"

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research suggest that the song "Helena" functions as more than a piece of musical entertainment—it is also a complex literary text rich in figurative language. The dominant use of metaphor contributes to the song's capacity to convey abstract emotions in relatable, concrete terms. Metaphors such as "the blade you stain" represent emotional wounds and guilt, portraying psychological states that may otherwise be difficult to articulate. Personification in the lyrics adds an intimate, emotional layer to the narrative. For example, stars that fall and cause tears, or a hearse that evokes desire, humanize inanimate elements, allowing listeners to form deeper emotional associations. Personification intensifies the song's portrayal of emotional suffering and the passage of life into death.

The consistent presence of hyperbole throughout the lyrics emphasizes the intensity of grief and emotional pain. These exaggerations are not merely decorative—they serve to reflect the depth of emotional experience, often felt in extremes when dealing with loss. Hyperbole in the lyrics functions as a stylistic amplifier, making emotional states more visceral and immediate to the listener. While antithesis appears less frequently, it provides significant narrative function. Contrasting ideas, such as despair versus hope or leaving versus staying, reflect the inner turmoil of the character within the song. The presence of antithesis suggests a divided self, grappling with unresolved emotions—a common theme in emo rock and poetic discourse.

The analysis of diction showed a balanced use of denotative and connotative meanings, each serving a different purpose. Denotative diction grounded the lyrics in reality, while connotative diction elevated the emotional and symbolic weight of the words. This balance contributes to the complexity and depth of the song's lyrical message. Interview data played a crucial role in validating the textual findings. Listeners consistently interpreted figurative phrases through an emotional lens, affirming the power of stylistic devices to influence audience perception. Their interpretations revealed that the emotional resonance of the song was deeply connected to how the language was crafted and delivered.

These results highlight the importance of analyzing popular song lyrics through the lens of stylistics and semantics. Not only do such texts reflect personal and cultural emotion, but they also serve as modern literary expressions that deserve academic attention. The effectiveness of "Helena" in evoking emotional responses can largely be attributed to its deliberate use of poetic language and emotionally charged diction. The language of "Helena" successfully merges literary aesthetics with emotional storytelling. Through metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and connotative diction, the lyrics construct a narrative of grief that is both personal and universal. This underscores the idea that contemporary music can be a meaningful subject of literary and linguistic study, especially when it bridges emotion, art, and language in such a compelling way.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the song “Helena” by My Chemical Romance, it can be concluded that the use of language style and diction plays a significant role in shaping the song’s emotional and literary impact. The dominant figurative languages identified—such as metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and antithesis—serve not only as artistic expressions but also as narrative tools that intensify the listener's emotional engagement. These stylistic features effectively communicate the central themes of grief, loss, and emotional conflict embedded in the lyrics.

The diction used in the song combines both denotative and connotative meanings, creating layers of interpretation that resonate with listeners. While denotative diction provides clarity and literal context, connotative diction evokes symbolic and emotional responses, making the song more meaningful and memorable. The interview responses further validated the textual analysis, as participants consistently identified and emotionally responded to the figurative expressions and word choices within the lyrics. The song “Helena” exemplifies how contemporary music can function as a form of modern literature. Its stylistic richness and carefully chosen diction contribute to its depth, allowing it to transcend entertainment and become a poetic expression of human emotion. This study reinforces the relevance of stylistic and semantic analysis in understanding not only literary texts but also the broader emotional and cultural dimensions of popular music.

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