

ECHOES OF EMOTION: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF TAYLOR SWIFT'S REPUTATION ALBUM AND ITS RECEPTION AMONG "SWIFTIES"



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ABSTRACT

Taylor Swift's Reputation album was released during a period of intense media scrutiny and public controversy, significantly shaping its lyrical themes and reception. The album presents a transformation in Swift's artistic persona, showcasing themes of defiance, empowerment, and self-reclamation amidst external criticism. Given the intersection of music, discourse, and fan engagement, analyzing the stylistic and thematic elements of Reputation provides insight into how linguistic and narrative strategies reinforce artistic identity and audience connection. This study investigates the stylistic devices and thematic elements present in the album, as well as their reception among "Swifties." Using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework and I. R. Galperin's taxonomy of stylistic devices, all 15 songs from the album were examined. Additionally, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted to explore how fans interpret and relate to Swift's lyrics. The analysis identified metaphor as the most prevalent stylistic device (51.11%), followed by simile, apostrophe, antithesis, and others such as personification and hyperbole. Thematic analysis revealed recurring motifs of public scrutiny, reputation, loyalty, betrayal, emotional resonance, and privacy. Results highlight how Swift strategically employs stylistic devices to construct a compelling narrative, resonating deeply with listeners' personal experiences. Through FGDs, fans articulated the album's emotional impact and its role in shaping their perceptions of identity and resilience. The findings position Reputation as a bridge between personal storytelling and broader cultural discourse, contributing to a deeper understanding of the interplay between music, language, and audience engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

Taylor Swift's "Reputation" album, released in November 2017, marks a significant departure from her earlier country and pop music stylings, embracing a darker, more introspective approach that reflects complex themes of love, media scrutiny, and personal transformation. This transition not only underscores Swift's evolution as an artist but also invites a deeper exploration into the album's lyrical content and its emotional impact on listeners, particularly her fanbase known colloquially as "Swifties."

Swift's *Reputation album* serves as a rich text for analysis due to its intricate production, lyrical depth, and the context of its release during a tumultuous period in Swift's public life. The album's reception was polarized, with significant attention from both media critics and fans, making it a pivotal point in Swift's career and popular music culture (Tanujaya & Purnomo, 2023). The lyrical content of *Reputation* diverges significantly from Swift's previous albums, incorporating a blend of pop, electroclash, and R&B influences, which has been described as a symbolic *armour* crafted in response to personal and public battles (Pradana et al., 2024). Music is one of the very common vessels of humans which is mainly aired at communication; music refers to things that are inside of itself, such as a theme that alludes to an earlier occurrence or a discordant note that suggests a resolution that comes later (Meyer, 1961). Emotions can be expressed through music (Grimaud & Eerola, 2022), or perhaps emotions can be expressed through music (Cespedes-Guevara & Eerola, 2018). Its

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ability to elicit emotional resonance and transmit emotional information, music is a significant part of human culture (Lee et al., 2017). Further, in view of musical discourse music can be subversive and challenge power. As Leone (2012) demonstrates in this issue, music has been feared and suppressed by dictators around the world since 1979, when Khomeini outlawed it completely, claiming that it was *like a drug* and that "we must eliminate music because it means betraying our country and our youth".

Taylor Swift began her career in 2006 as a country music performer and has since continued to explore new creative directions as a singer, songwriter, and entrepreneur. With numerous important accolades for her songs, songwriting, tours, and other accomplishments, she has now emerged as one of the top pop performers in the world. Taylor Swift must put up with the public's and media's ongoing scrutiny of her private life in addition to her popularity. Social media has been a crucial tool for constructing an online identity that fosters an audience in favor of her, considering her over 15 years of expertise in the entertainment industry. Swift's enduring presence in the industry and her capacity to sustain a tight rapport with her followers warrant additional scrutiny. In 2005, Taylor Swift commenced her social media presence on MySpace, employing the platform as an online journal to disclose facets of her daily existence, intertwining components of her distinctive career with the experiences of a typical young girl (Daly, 2022). Taylor maintained a steady display of authenticity on Twitter and Instagram for her online followers (Wilkinson, 2019). According to Junes (2023), Taylor Swift is one of the most successful musical artists in history and holds a pivotal role in pop music. Swift has garnered numerous professional accolades, including Grammy awards and Billboard records, and has maintained a prominent position in the music charts for nearly two decades, releasing 10 critically acclaimed studio albums. With more than 336 million followers on social media sites, she is a notorious figure in the domain of pop culture. She is among the rare instances of women who have attained her degree of accomplishment despite contending with systems of sexism and patriarchy. Consequently, Swift's career provides unique insights and serves as a valuable case study of celebrity, the American music industry, and public persona.

Since Swift's online battle with Kanye West and Kim Kardashian, her social media profile has evolved from that of a girl-next-door who is approachable to that of a successful business prodigy in 2017 (Fogarty & Arnold, 2021). Additionally, Swift has reduced the amount of time she spends on social media. Taylor Swift vanished from the public eye and disappeared from Instagram and Facebook on August 18, 2017. Swift reappeared on social media three days later, this time with a 10-second black-and-white film clip of a slithering snake. The post received a ton of feedback and startling impact from her followers and coverage in traditional media. This was the first of several calculated steps that Swift took to involve fans in the promotion of her next album, *Reputation*. According to functional theories, the word "reputation" implies that the reputations of persons are connected to the activity that they have participated in in the past. Indirect evidence, on the other hand, implies that the connection between behavior and reputation may be, at best, a fragile one (Anderson & Shirako, 2008).

Taylor's issue requiring alteration is her reputation. Before the composition and release of this album, considerable dispute surrounded Swift's genuineness. This is particularly evident in the tumultuous relationship between her and Kanye West/Kim Kardashian following the microphone theft incident in 2009. Visual rhetoric comprises visuals designed to influence the spectator. The most notable recurrent motif is that of snakes. During the West/Swift exchanges, Kim Kardashian implied that Taylor was duplicitous. By portraying herself in this manner, Taylor is appealing to her fans' perceptions of her identity and the impact of this criticism on her. The snake symbol signifies Taylor's assertion that she is not characterized by another's unfounded allegations. She urged her supporters to trust in her true identity and encouraged them to adopt a resilient mindset in their own life in the face of criticism (Alek et al., 2020). In the music industry's marketing strategy, most artists and performers seek to generate buzz to enhance their visibility and maintain their prominence. In the entertainment industry, a celebrity's life is perceived as a commodity that can be extensively sold (Rupp, 2016).

Reputation is the sixth album of the American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift. According to Taylor Swift's Official YouTube Channel, this album received 12,484,039 views as of December 2024, which shows that this album is quite renowned and frequently streamed by the public. Moreover, various metaphors are incorporated in this album, as Swift remarked, "Reputation is a metaphor". The findings in the study of Tanujaya and Purnomo (2023) demonstrated the expectations to help listeners better know and comprehend the stylistic devices especially metaphors and their meanings and theme elements in the Reputation Album. By their knowledge of the metaphors and their significance, miscommunication between the singer-songwriter and "Swifties" can be prevented.

This study aims to dissect the stylistic and thematic elements of the "Reputation" album, examining how these components contribute to its narrative coherence and resonate on a personal level.

Research Questions: (i) What are the most frequently used stylistic devices in Taylor Swift's Reputation Album? (ii) What thematic elements are recurring throughout the Reputation Album and how do they contribute to the album's narrative coherence? (iii) What personal context can be identified within the lyrics of the Reputation album and how do they shape listeners' interpretation?

The following sections begin with a discussion of the study's theoretical framework, followed by the study's methodological procedures, and the presentation of findings and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is analyzed within the framework of Fairclough's Social Theory of Discourse. As articulated by Fee and Fairclough (1993), this theory encompasses three core principles that define discourse as an aspect of social practice. First, discourse simultaneously shapes and is shaped by social structures, playing a pivotal role in their formation and representation. Second, social practice actively constructs social identities and relationships, particularly among various groups and classes within society. Finally, social practice influences systems of knowledge and belief, underpinning diverse

language functions, including identity, relational, and ideational functions.

The foundation of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is comprised of three essential elements: description, interpretation, and explanation. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to identify the linguistic characteristics of texts through the process of text analysis, to understand the connection that exists between the processes of discursive practice and the texts, and to provide an explanation of the connection that exists between social practice and discursive practice (Fee & Fairclough, 1993). In order to accomplish this, Fairclough devised a methodical strategy for investigating the connection that exists between a text and the social environment in which it is situated. The following are some of the ways in which this analytical technique contributes to improving the current inquiry. The textual, processing, and social layers of discourse analysis are first incorporated into the multi-layered analysis. Second, the analysis revolves around the text. As a result, claims produced from the discourse analytical work are supported by linguistic analysis of texts.

This study draws on the foundational principles of Galperin's framework of expressive means (EM) and stylistic devices (SD) as outlined in his seminal works, including *Stylistics* (1981). Galperin distinguishes EM and SD through a level-oriented approach, focusing on the semantic and structural features of language. SD are literary models that integrate semantic and structural elements to represent generalized patterns in texts, while EM are defined as linguistic forms that enhance the forcefulness or expressiveness of statements.

Galperin (1981) classified EM and SD into three principal categories: (1) phonetic EM and SD, which includes devices such as alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia; (2) lexical EM and SD, comprising tools like personification, allegory, irony, metonymy, synecdoche, pun, zeugma, tautology, epithet, oxymoron, antonomasia, simile, hyperbole, meiosis, litotes, periphrasis, and euphemism; and (3) syntactical EM and SD, which involves structures such as gradation, bathos, enumeration, suspense, antithesis, parallel constructions, chiasmus, inversion, repetition, detachment, prolepsis, rhetorical questions, and narrative questions.

Recent scholarship has built on Galperin's work, such as the contribution by Salih et al. (2023), who proposed a modern division of EM and SD based on paradigmatic stylistics (focused on individual language units) and syntagmatic stylistics (focused on sequences and combinations within texts). Galperin's framework views stylistically significant phenomena through a paradigmatic and syntagmatic lens, encompassing phonetics, morphology, lexicology, syntax, and semantics.

Galperin emphasized that stylistic devices serve dual roles. Historically, they were employed to make texts aesthetically pleasing and persuasive. However, they are also pivotal in contemporary text interpretation, aiding in understanding an author's message, the main idea, and the author's attitudes toward narrative elements such as characters and their actions. Stylistic devices are inherently emotionally charged, dense with information, and versatile, enabling their use in diverse stylistic objectives. These include emphasizing critical points, clarifying ideas, engaging or entertaining readers, creating imagery, or producing humorous effects.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework and Galperin's Stylistic Features, to analyze and discuss Taylor Swift's *Reputation album*. Qualitative research is concerned with exploring the nature and quality of phenomena, including their various manifestations, the contexts in which they appear, and the perspectives through which they can be understood. It excludes considerations of range, frequency, and cause-and-effect relationships, which are more characteristic of quantitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Among the various qualitative research designs, this study employs content analysis, a systematic technique for the subjective interpretation of textual data through a structured process of coding and the identification of themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis offers a methodical, empirical, and controlled approach to the investigation of texts within their communicative contexts. It adheres to established step-by-step procedures and norms without premature reliance on quantification.

Additionally, qualitative analysis seeks to uncover new themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings (Patton, 2002). Unlike quantitative approaches that address questions of "how many" or "how much," qualitative research focuses on answering questions about the "what," "how," or "why" of a phenomenon, making it particularly suitable for in-depth explorations of textual and communicative content (Patton, 2002).

Corpora of the Study

This study utilized the entire Taylor Swift's *Reputation album* which includes songs titled Ready for It?; End Game; I Did Something Bad; Don't Blame Me; Delicate; Look What You Made Me Do; So It Goes...; Gorgeous; Getaway Car; King of My Heart; Dancing With Our Hands Tied; Dress; This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things, Call It What You Want; and, New Year's Day. The researchers analyzed and interpreted the corpora using critical discourse analysis filtered through the lens of Fairclough's framework of CDA, along with Galperin's Stylistic Devices.

Data Gathering and Analysis

In this study, fifteen (15) songs from the Reputation album of Taylor Swift were used. Moreover, the lyrics of the songs were taken from Taylor Swift's digital platform. Furthermore, coding was used in this study to arrange the corpora into lyrical pieces or chunks before assigning meaning to the data. It entails taking text data that was acquired during data collection, breaking up lyrics into categories, and then labeling those categories with a term often one that is derived from the participant's actual language (Creswell, 2009).

In systemic functional linguistics, the primary unit of analysis is the text, as the functional meaning of language is fully realized only at this level. Similarly, Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) noted that text serves as the primary data for linguistic analysis, with all grammatical descriptions rooted in text. In this study, the song lyrics were divided into lines, since the basic compositional structure of English grammar typically begins with a clause or a line (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013).

Firstly, all the songs were sequentially coded as (Rep1, Rep2, Rep3), starting with the first paragraph (line) in each stanza. Next, for stylistic device, the lyrics in the songs were coded as (Metaphor, Simile, Antithesis), and so on until all the lyrics in each song were numbered. For thematic analysis, the lyrics in the songs were coded as (Public Scrutiny and Reputation, Defiance and Revenge, etc.) and finally, for the key informants' focused group discussion (GFD), the responses as essential theme coded as Betrayal, Love, Reputation, etc.

Meanwhile, color coding was utilized to show the stylistic device, thematic analysis and essential themes found in Reputation album of Taylor Swift. Also, for the convenience of the researcher during the coding period, Maxqda Software was utilized.

Fairclough's conceptualization of CDA served as the foundation for this study's methodological approach. The discourse (lyrics) was examined utilizing a top-down methodology that was broken down into three analytical stages. At the text level, linguistic aspects were examined using Galprine's Stylistic Device. In order to establish the validity and reliability of this study, the analysis's findings were presented, debated, and conclusions and suggestions were made. The results were validated and reviewed by experts who are faculty members of literature and languages department of university.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Stylistic Devices in Taylor Swifts' Reputation Album

This section presents the results of the study based on the research questions which talks about the stylistic devices, thematic analyses, and the *Swifties* reception on Taylor Swift's Reputation album.

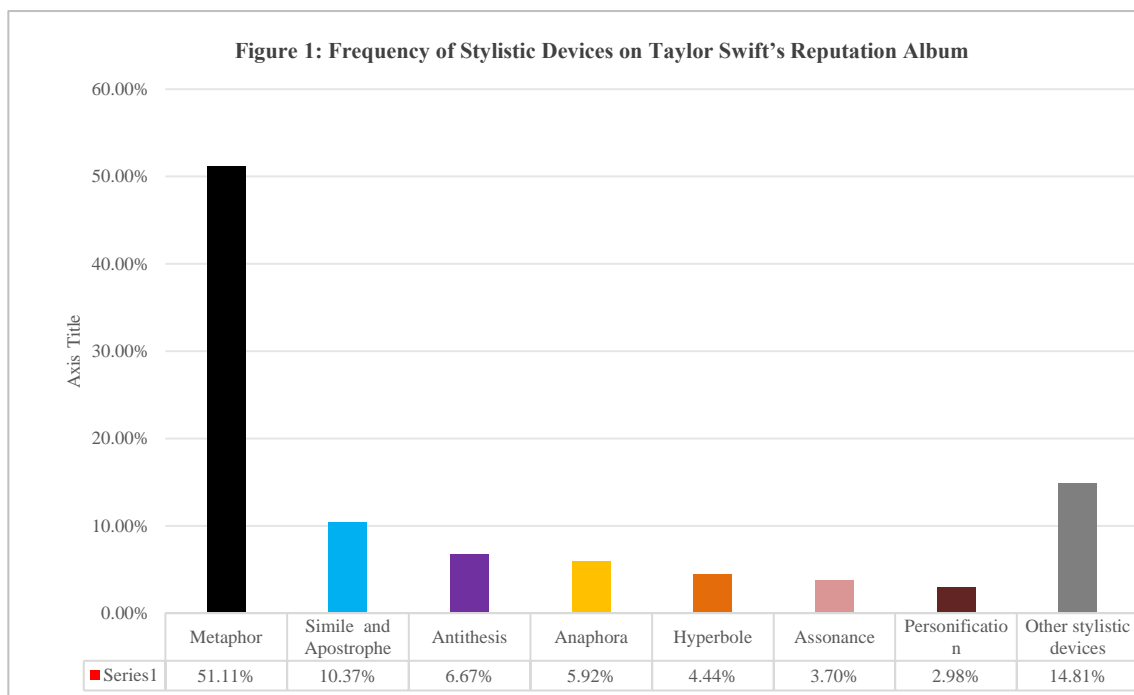


Figure 1. Frequency Stylistic Device

As presented in Figure 1, it can be gleaned from the table that metaphor emerges as the predominant figurative language device, constituting a substantial 51.11% of the total frequency. Following, other stylistic devices namely: synecdoche, euphemism, metonymy, paradox, aphorism, litotes, pleonasm, consonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and hypophora contribute significantly at 14.81% respectively. Notably, simile and apostrophe at 10.37%, antithesis at 6.67%, anapohora with 5.92%, hyperbole at 4.44%, assonance at 3.70% and personification at 2.98%. This distribution highlights the variety of techniques authors use to elicit imagery and convey meaning in their writings, with metaphor emerging as the most frequently selected linguistic device among the linguistic devices examined.

Table 1. Stylistic Devices and Sample Lyrics

Stylistic Devices	Lyrics
Metaphor	<i>I never trust a narcissist (I Did Something Bad, Rep. 1)</i>
Simile	<i>Cause my baby's fit like a daydream (Call It What You Want, Rep. 7)</i>
Apostrophe	<i>They say, "She's gone too far this time" (Don't Blame Me, Rep. 14)</i>
Antithesis	<i>Some boys are tryin' too hard, he don't try at all though (...Ready For It?, Rep. 5)</i>

Anaphora	<i>Is it cool that I said all that? my head? (Delicate, Rep. 20 - 21)</i>	<i>Is it chill that you're in</i>
Hyperbole	<i>Ocean blue eyes looking in mine (Gorgeous, Rep. 25)</i>	
Assonance	<i>Both sprung, I got issues and chips on both of my shoulders (End Game, Rep. 37)</i>	
Personification	<i>Late in the night, the city's asleep (King of My Heart, Rep. 20)</i>	
Synecdoche	<i>All eyes on you, my magician (So It Goes..., Rep. 2)</i>	
Euphemism	<i>Made your mark on me, golden tattoo (Dress, Rep. 4)</i>	
Metonymy	<i>This is how the world works (I Did Something Bad, Rep. 7)</i>	
Paradox	<i>I don't trust nobody and nobody trusts me (Look What You Made Me Do, Rep. 42)</i>	
Aphorism	<i>The world moves on, another day another drama, drama But not for me, not for me, all I think about is karma</i>	<i>(Look What You Made Me Do, Rep. 25-26)</i>
Litotes	<i>It was the great escape, the prison break (Getaway Car, Rep. 23)</i>	
Pleonasm	<i>He built a fire just to keep me warm (Call It What You Want, Rep. 15)</i>	
Consonance	<i>And I'd do it over and over and over again if I could (I Did Something Bad, Rep. 18)</i>	
Alliteration	<i>So, so, so it goes (So It Goes..., Rep. 38)</i>	
Onomatopoeia	<i>I hit you like, "Bang" (End Game, Rep. 68)</i>	
Hypophora	<i>Why's it feel, why's it feel so good? (Bad) Did Something Bad, Rep. 59-60)</i>	<i>It just felt so good, good (I</i>

Table 1 presents the stylistic devices identified in Taylor Swift's *Reputation* album, analyzed through the lens of Galperin's framework of Expressive Means and Stylistic Devices (1981). Among these devices, metaphor stands out prominently due to its frequent occurrence across the majority of the album's songs. This prevalence underscores metaphor's unique capacity to convey complex concepts and emotional depth in the lyrical narrative. As a figure of speech, metaphor draws comparisons between seemingly unrelated elements, operating under what Leech (1969) describes as the "metaphoric rule," expressed as $F=Like\ LF = \text{\text{Like}} \setminus, LF=LikeL$. This rule implies that a figurative language construct (metaphor, FFF) is derived from a literal meaning (LLL) by suggesting a likeness or resemblance to LLL.

The importance of metaphor in lyrical analysis is further evidenced in related studies. Tanujaya and Purnomo (2023), for instance, explored the metaphorical meanings in the lyrics of Queen's *Another One Bites the Dust* through a semantic approach. Their analysis revealed multiple layers of meaning within the lyrics, including interpreting the metaphor "another one bites the dust" as a euphemism for death, with references to its poignant use in the context of the 2018 Santa Fe High School shooting. Similarly, Rifki (2016), in his semantic analysis of metaphors in selected song lyrics by *The Script*, *Katy Perry*, and *Michael Bublé*, identified 259 metaphorical instances, employing the theories of Crystal (1999) and Beckson and Ganz (1975). These studies highlight metaphor as a pervasive and impactful stylistic device in songwriting, enabling lyricists to engage listeners on both intellectual and emotional levels.

Other studies have illuminated the role of stylistic devices in songwriting. For example, Song (2020) differentiates between similes and metaphors, noting that similes involve explicit comparisons, while metaphors are understood as categorization assertions. Ahmed (2022) further elaborates on similes as traditional and easily recognizable figures of speech. Similarly, Sangki et al. (2024) discovered a prevalence of open similes (57%) in Adele's song lyrics compared to closed similes (43%), underscoring stylistic diversity in songwriting.

Apostrophe, as defined by Flannery (2020), is a rhetorical device used to address an inanimate object, an abstraction, or a deceased or absent person. Sayakhan (2016) expands on this, explaining that in poetry, apostrophe serves to personify or animate non-living entities, allowing the poet to address them directly. Through this figure of speech, abstract concepts, inanimate objects, or imaginary individuals are given life, enhancing the expressive depth of a text. Similarly, Fahnestock (2011) describes antithesis as a rhetorical device that creates parallel phrases by pairing opposing terms—whether as contraries, contradictions, or correlatives. Antithesis appears in both serious literature and memorable catchphrases, exemplified in phrases like "Buy low, sell high" or Martin Luther King Jr.'s defense of civil disobedience, where he asserts that "one has a moral as well as a legal responsibility to obey just laws" (Green, 2022).

Another impactful stylistic device, anaphora, involves the repetition of words or phrases at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences, or lines. According to Mustafayeva (2023), anaphora is often employed to emphasize and create rhythm in speech or writing. Dhayef and Mahdi (2022) further note that this repetition imbues the text with a unique rhythm that seamlessly combines the sound patterns of prose and poetry, enhancing its aesthetic and emotional appeal.

Hyperbole, a device characterized by intentional exaggeration, is used to emphasize or overstress ideas without the intent of being taken literally. Vlasova (2023) describes hyperbole as a linguistic tool for overstating ideas in excessive detail, which can enhance dramatic or humorous effect. Sangki et al. (2024), in their analysis of hyperboles in Adele's albums *19* and *21*, identified 79 instances of hyperbole, categorized into phrasal (66%), clausal (25%), numerical (3%), comparative (1%), and repetitive forms (5%). This study highlights the versatility of hyperbole in enhancing lyrical narratives.

Assonance, the repeated use of vowel sounds within a line or verse, and alliteration, the repetition of consonant sounds, are also key stylistic devices. Toxirova (2024) differentiates the two, emphasizing that while both involve repetition, assonance focuses exclusively on vowel sounds. Rahmani (2020), in an analysis of figurative language in *A Million Dreams*, found that assonance occurred once, representing 1.58% of the figurative language used, underscoring its subtle yet significant role. Similarly, personification, another figurative device, attributes human qualities to inanimate objects, animals, or abstract ideas. FaqeAbdulla (2024) describes personification as a metaphorical language tool that humanizes non-living entities to deepen emotional connection and convey abstract ideas vividly.

Figurative language is not only prevalent in literature but also integral to songwriting, where it enhances artistic quality and emotional resonance. Sari and Anindita (2020) assert that figurative devices, such as metaphor, simile, and

hyperbole, allow songwriters to capture human experiences and emotions more effectively. Beyond aesthetics, figurative language stimulates listeners' imagination and makes lyrics more engaging and memorable. Songwriting legend Taylor Swift affirms this perspective, stating, "Composers must communicate, and part of effectively communicating is releasing a message that resonates with your meaning."

Taylor Swift's *Reputation* album exemplifies the use of diverse stylistic devices, including synecdoche, euphemism, metonymy, paradox, aphorism, litotes, pleonasm, consonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and hypophora. While these devices occur less frequently than metaphor and simile, they collectively enhance the literary richness of the album. Through the strategic use of stylistic tools such as apostrophe, personification, hyperbole, antithesis, and anaphora, Swift creates narrative-driven lyrics that subtly convey the emotional and dramatic themes of her songs. These devices open a new dimension of storytelling, establishing *Reputation* as a masterful integration of literary artistry and contemporary songwriting.

Essential Themes in Taylor Swift's Reputation Album

The thematic analysis of Taylor Swift's *Reputation* album reveals a rich tapestry of essential themes that reflect her personal experiences, emotions, and societal commentary. These themes are intricately woven into her lyrics, showcasing her narrative depth and artistic versatility. Table 2 illustrates the thematic elements identified, accompanied by sample lyrics that exemplify their presence.

Table 2. Thematic Elements and Sample Lyrics

Essential Themes	Sample Lyrics
Public Scrutiny and Reputation	<i>Reputation precedes me, they told you I'm crazy</i> <i>I swear I don't love the drama, it loves me</i> (End Game, Rep. 71-72)
	<i>I don't trust nobody and nobody trusts me</i> (Look What You Made Me Do, Rep. 41)
	<i>Even in my worst times, You could see the best of me</i> (Dress, Rep. 39-40)
	<i>But I'm not the only friend you've lost lately</i> <i>If only you weren't so shady</i> (This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things, Rep. 20-21)
	<i>My castle crumbled overnight</i> <i>(Call It What You Want, Rep. 1)</i> <i>All my flowers grew back as thorns, Windows boarded up after the storm</i> <i>(Call It What You Want, Rep. 13-14)</i>
Defiance and Revenge	<i>They say I did something bad</i> <i>Then why's it feel so good?</i> (I Did Something Bad, Rep. 13 - 14)
	<i>But I got smarter, I got harder in the nick of time</i> <i>Honey, I rose up from the dead, I do it all the time</i> <i>(Look What You Made Me Do, Rep 29-30)</i>
	<i>The world moves on, another day another drama, drama</i> <i>But not for me, not for me, all I think about is karma</i> <i>(Look What You Made Me Do, Rep. 25-26)</i>
	<i>Cause forgiveness is a nice thing to do</i> <i>Hahaha, I can't even say it with a straight face</i> <i>(This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things, Rep. 34-35)</i>
Admiration	<i>And I can't let you go, your handprint's on my soul</i> <i>It's like your eyes are liquor, it's like your body is gold</i> <i>(End Game, Rep. 73-74)</i>
	<i>Stealin' hearts and runnin' off and never sayin' sorry</i> <i>(...Ready for It?, Rep. 19)</i>
	<i>Dark jeans and your Nikes, look at you</i> <i>Oh damn, never seen that color blue</i> (Delicate, Rep. 10-11)
	<i>Handsome, you're a mansion with a view</i> (Delicate, Rep. 31)
	<i>Sometimes when I look into your eyes</i> <i>I pretend you're mine all the damn time</i> (Delicate, Rep. 55-56)
	<i>Of your magnetic field being a little too strong</i> (Gorgeous, Rep. 4)
	<i>You're so gorgeous, I can't say anything to your face</i> (Gorgeous, Rep. 10-11)
	<i>Ocean blue eyes looking in mine</i> <i>I feel like I might sink and drown and die</i> (Gorgeous, Rep. 25-26)
	<i>And all at once, you are the one I have been waiting for</i> <i>King of my heart, body and soul</i> (King of My Heart, Rep. 11-12)
	<i>My, my love had been frozen</i> <i>Deep blue, but you painted me golden</i> (Dancing With Our Hands Tied, Rep. 5-6)
<i>Say my name and everything just stops, I don't want you like a best friend, Only bought this dress so you could take it off</i> (Dress, Rep. 27-29)	
<i>Cause my baby's fit like a daydream</i> (Call It What You Want, Rep. 7)	
<i>I want to wear his initial, On a chain 'round my neck, chain 'round my neck, Not because he owns me</i>	

	But 'cause he really knows me	(Call It What You Want, Rep. 32-35)
Vulnerability	Don't blame me, love made me crazy	(Don't Blame Me, Rep. 1-2)
	If it doesn't, you ain't doin' it right	(Gorgeous, Rep. 21)
	If you've got a girlfriend, I'm jealous of her	(Gorgeous, Rep. 34-35)
	You make me so happy, it turns back to sad, yeah	(Call It What You Want, Rep. 2)
	There's nothing I hate more than what I can't have	(Call It What You Want, Rep. 2)
Empowerment	I don't regret it one bit, 'cause he had it coming	(I Did Something Bad, Rep. 11-12)
	You must like me for me	(Delicate, Rep. 3)
	Look what you made me do	(Look What You Made Me Do, Rep. 13-14)
	Look what you just made me do	(King of My Heart, Rep. 5)
	I'm a mess, but I'm the mess that you wanted	(Dancing With Our Hands Tied, Rep. 31)
Self-reflection	For all my flaws, paranoia, and insecurities	(End Game, Rep. 43)
	I once was poison ivy, but now I'm your daisy	(Don't Blame Me, Rep. 28)
	No, nothin' good starts in a getaway car	(Getaway Car, Rep. 1)
	I wanted to leave him, I needed a reason	(Getaway Car, Rep. 7)
	I'm perfectly fine, I live on my own	(King of My Heart, Rep. 1-2)
Loyalty and Friendship	This is why we can't have nice things, darlin'	(This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things, Rep. 11-12)
	Because you break them, I had to take them away	(This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things, Rep. 11-12)
	And I know I make the same mistakes every time, Bridges burn, I never learn, at least I did one thing right	(Call It What You Want, Rep. 19-20)
	Even when we'd argue, we'd not do it for long	(End Game, Rep 40-41)
	And you understand the good and bad end up in the song	(End Game, Rep 40-41)
Betrayal	So, baby, can we dance	(Dancing With Our Hands Tied, Rep. 28-29)
	Oh, through an avalanche?	(Dancing With Our Hands Tied, Rep. 28-29)
	Here's a toast to my real friends, They don't care about the "he said, she said", And here's to my baby, He ain't readin' what they call me lately	(This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things, Rep. 27-30)
	He built a fire just to keep me warm	(Call It What You Want, Rep. 15)
	Not because he owns me, But 'cause he really knows me	(Call It What You Want, Rep. 34-35)
Loyalty and Friendship	Don't read the last page	(New Year's Day, Rep. 13-14)
	But I stay when it's hard, or it's wrong, or we're making mistakes	(New Year's Day, Rep. 13-14)
	I never trust a narcissist, But they love me	(I Did Something Bad, Rep. 1-2)
	They're burning all the witches, even if you aren't one	(I Did Something Bad, Rep. 40-41)
	They got their pitchforks and proof	(I Did Something Bad, Rep. 40-41)
Betrayal	The role you made me play of the fool	(Look What You Made Me Do, Rep. 3 - 4)
	No, I don't like you	(Look What You Made Me Do, Rep. 3 - 4)
	I don't like your perfect crime	(Look What You Made Me Do, Rep. 5-6)
	How you laugh when you lie	(Look What You Made Me Do, Rep. 5-6)
	You (you) asked me for a place to sleep	(Look What You Made Me Do, Rep. 23-24)
Betrayal	Locked me out and threw a feast (what?)	(Look What You Made Me Do, Rep. 23-24)
	It's no surprise I turned you in (oh-oh)	'Cause us traitors never win (Getaway Car, Rep. 46 - 47)
	There I was, giving you a second chance	(This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things, Rep. 15-16)
	But you stabbed me in the back while shakin' my hand	(This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things, Rep. 15-16)
	And therein lies the issue, friends don't try to trick you, Get you on the phone and mind-twist you, And so I took an axe to a mended fence	(This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things, Rep. 17-19)
Betrayal	So why'd you have to rain on my parade?	(This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things, Rep. 7)
	They took the crown, but it's alright	(Call It What You Want, Rep. 3)
	I've been breakin' hearts a long time, and	(Don't Blame Me, Rep. 5-6)
	Toyin' with them older guys	(Don't Blame Me, Rep. 5-6)

Heartbreak	<i>I'm in a getaway car, I left you in a motel bar, Put the money in a bag and I stole the keys, That was the last time you ever saw me (oh!) (Getaway Car, Rep. 48-51)</i>
	<i>I was dyin' in a getaway car. Said goodbye in a getaway car (Getaway Car, Rep. 65-66)</i>
Emotional Resonance	<i>I get so high, oh, Every time you're, every time you're lovin' me (Don't Blame Me, Rep. 41-42)</i>
	<i>It was the great escape, the prison break face</i>
	<i>The light of freedom on my (Getaway Car, Rep. 23-24)</i>
	<i>I was cryin' in a getaway car (Getaway Car, Rep. 64)</i>
	<i>Your love is a secret I'm hoping, dreaming, dying to keep (King of My Heart, Rep. 21)</i>
	<i>My hands are shaking from holding back from you (Dress, Rep. 24) Hold on to the memories</i>
	<i>They will hold on to you (New Year's Day, Rep. 17-18)</i>
Privacy	<i>Please don't ever become a stranger Whose laugh I could recognize anywhere (New Year's Day, Rep. 24-25)</i>
	<i>Our secret moments in your crowded room and you</i>
	<i>They got no idea about me (Dress, Rep. 1-2)</i>
	<i>Everyone thinks that they know us, (Dress, Rep. 21-22)</i>
	<i>Nobody's heard from me for months, ever was</i>
<i>I'm doing better than I (Call It What You Want, 5-6)</i>	
	<i>I want your midnights But I'll be cleaning up bottles with you on New Year's Day (New Year's Day, 7-8)</i>

Public Scrutiny and Reputation

A central theme in *Reputation* is the tension between Taylor Swift's private self and the public persona shaped by media and societal perceptions. The album title itself is derived from the Latin word *prutatio*, which means "reckoning" or "calculation," reflecting the complexities of navigating public judgment. Swift's lyrics highlight the distortions of her image, the drama associated with fame, and the persistent scrutiny of her personal life. As Zafina and Sinha (2024) argue, Swift masterfully utilizes social media to curate an online persona, leveraging it to maintain a supportive audience while addressing the challenges of public visibility. This aligns with Marshall et al. (2019), who describe celebrities as active participants in shaping their public identity through performative and educational practices. Swift's lyrical explorations in tracks like *Call It What You Want* and *Look What You Made Me Do* vividly portray this theme, blending vulnerability with resilience.

Defiance and Revenge

Defiance and revenge emerge as dominant themes, as Swift reclaims her narrative and confronts adversities through assertive and aggressive lyrical tones. Tracks such as *Look What You Made Me Do* and *I Did Something Bad* reflect her transformation from vulnerability to strength. Tanujaya and Purnomo (2023) interpret the metaphorical "death" in *Look What You Made Me Do* as a representation of Swift's withdrawal from the public eye during a tumultuous period, only to re-emerge stronger and more self-assured. This thematic exploration highlights the resilience of individuals navigating betrayal and public backlash, underscoring the power of self-reinvention.

Admiration

Swift's admiration for those who provide unwavering support amidst external turmoil is evident in tracks such as *Delicate*, *Gorgeous*, and *King of My Heart*. The lyrics often express deep respect and affection for a romantic partner, emphasizing their steadfastness during challenging times. Yastanti and Susilawati (2020) note that Swift employs vivid imagery, such as "ocean blue eyes," to convey awe and admiration, blending emotional depth with poetic artistry. This theme resonates as one of the most prevalent across the album, underscoring the interplay between love and gratitude.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability is another recurring theme, as Swift candidly explores personal struggles, emotional wounds, and the journey toward resilience. Lyrics such as "I brought a knife to a gunfight" from *Call It What You Want* symbolize inadequacy and unpreparedness, while metaphors like "burning bridges" depict irreversible mistakes and their consequences (Tanujaya & Purnomo, 2023). This openness allows Swift to reclaim her narrative while inviting listeners to reflect on their own vulnerabilities and growth.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a dominant theme in Taylor Swift's *Reputation* album, as she asserts her independence and challenges societal norms with resilience and confidence. Tracks like *I Did Something Bad* and *Delicate* reflect Swift's refusal to conform to societal expectations or be silenced by criticism. In *I Did Something Bad*, she directly confronts double standards, declaring, "If a man talks shit, then I owe him nothing," which epitomizes her defiance of patriarchal norms and gender inequality. According to Cookson et al. (2024), empowerment enables individuals, particularly women, to redefine societal expectations, pursue their goals, and assert autonomy. Swift's lyrics encapsulate this transformative power, allowing her to reclaim agency over her life and narrative. This theme resonates strongly in her assertive tone and bold musical choices,

demonstrating her strength and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is an equally significant theme in *Reputation*, as Swift delves into her personal journey of growth, acknowledging her flaws and learning from past experiences. In *Call It What You Want*, she candidly admits, “And I know I make the same mistakes every time,” illustrating her awareness of recurring patterns in her life and her willingness to confront them. Similarly, in *King of My Heart*, she embraces the solitude that has allowed her to rediscover herself, singing, “I’m perfectly fine, I live on my own.” These introspective moments highlight her transition from emotional turmoil to self-acceptance. Through this theme, Swift underscores the importance of introspection in personal transformation, navigating her vulnerabilities with grace and authenticity. As Dewi Max et al. (2023) suggest, self-reflection fosters emotional growth and resilience, empowering individuals to move forward from past challenges.

Loyalty and Friendship

The themes of loyalty and friendship reflect Swift’s journey through complex relationships and the enduring connections that offer emotional support. Bukowski et al. (1996) describe friendship as a reciprocal social relationship that provides a unique resource of emotional sustenance. Vaquera and Kao (2007), friendships that are reciprocal as opposed to ones that are one-sided are a unique resource, particularly in terms of emotional support. Tracks such as *This Is Why We Can’t Have Nice Things* and *New Year’s Day* celebrate the depth of genuine connections, highlighting their importance in navigating life’s challenges.

Betrayal

Betrayal is a pervasive theme, exploring dishonesty, damaged trust, and the psychological impact of being wronged by others. Swift’s lyrics often juxtapose betrayal with resilience, as seen in *Look What You Made Me Do* and *This Is Why We Can’t Have Nice Things*. Dewi Max et al. (2023) argue that Swift’s lyrics invite listeners to examine the complexities of human relationships and the nuances of justice and retribution. References to historical witch-hunt phenomena further contextualize Swift’s experiences, likening her to a persecuted figure facing societal condemnation (Tanujaya & Purnomo, 2023).

Emotional Resonance

The theme of emotional resonance is deeply embedded in Swift’s *Reputation*, as she crafts songs that evoke intense feelings and foster a deep connection with her audience. Tracks like *New Year’s Day* and *Don’t Blame Me* explore the raw complexities of love and its emotional impact. In *New Year’s Day*, she reflects on the enduring power of memories, singing, “Hold on to the memories, they will hold on to you,” emphasizing the significance of shared moments. Similarly, in *Don’t Blame Me*, she captures the intensity of love, describing it as a force that makes her “crazy.” Prigerson and Jacobs (2001) note that emotional resonance, particularly in the context of relational experiences, allows individuals to process complex emotions and find catharsis. Swift’s lyrical vulnerability invites listeners to engage deeply with her experiences, creating a shared emotional journey that transcends individual narratives.

Heartbreak

Heartbreak is a recurring theme throughout *Reputation*, as Swift explores the pain and loss associated with failed relationships. Songs such as *Getaway Car* and *Don’t Blame Me* narrate stories of betrayal, regret, and emotional turmoil. In *Getaway Car*, she poignantly sings, “I was cryin’ in a getaway car,” a metaphor for the fleeting nature of love and the inevitable pain of separation. Similarly, in *Don’t Blame Me*, she describes the emotional highs and lows of love, capturing the fragile balance between passion and heartbreak. Prigerson and Jacobs (2001) emphasize that heartbreak mirrors the symptoms of grief, underscoring the profound emotional impact of relational loss. By addressing these feelings openly, Swift not only processes her own experiences but also provides a voice for listeners grappling with similar emotions, creating a sense of solidarity and understanding.

Privacy

Finally, privacy is a prominent theme as Swift grapples with media intrusion and the challenges of maintaining boundaries. Tracks like *Dress* and *Call It What You Want* reflect her efforts to regain control over her narrative and protect her personal life. Putra and Agung (2023) interpret these lyrics as expressions of self-awareness and accountability, emphasizing the importance of introspection and growth in safeguarding one’s privacy.

The thematic elements in Taylor Swift’s *Reputation* album offer a multifaceted exploration of personal and societal issues, blending vulnerability, empowerment, and emotional resonance. Through her introspective and poetic songwriting, Swift transcends the boundaries of pop music, delivering a compelling narrative that resonates deeply with her audience.

Swifties’ Personal Context and Interpretation of the Reputation Album

Table 3 presents the essential themes derived from Swifties’ personal contexts and interpretations of Taylor Swift’s *Reputation* album. The themes were identified through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted via the Zoom platform, where participants explored how Swift’s lyrics resonated with their personal experiences. The lyrics served as a canvas upon which listeners projected their emotions, navigating themes of betrayal, love, retaliation, reputation, privacy, and self-reflection. This section delves into the interplay between these themes and the personal reflections they evoke.

Table 3. Swifties' Personal Context and Interpretation

Essential Themes	Sample Lyrics
Betrayal	"When I listened to the album, many tracks deliver vivid actions of betrayal." - Informant C "The reputation album made me a realization that there are people whom must never be given second chances in our lives. Once a traitor will always be a traitor." Informant H
	"The album describes how some certain human beings born bad and that's how the universe created them." - Informant J
Love	"When I was listening to the reputation album; I feel how relevant is love or to have someone that will bring you solace during the lowest point of your life." Informant A
	"The album addressed how love blossomed throughout the most depressing moments in someone's life." - Informant G "I noticed how the subject/songwriter put into words the metaphors and adjectives to mention "ocean blue eyes and he built a fire just to keep me warm" in the song "Call It What You Want", the feeling of admiration and desire are quite evident." - Informant E
Retaliation	"When I listened to the song "I Did Something Bad" there is a line that resonates me the most which is (I did something bad but why's it feel so good) for me, the best thing to live up with the people who hurt us is to own the narrative they want us to be included." Informant I
	"I applaud how Taylor retaliated against her archnemesis in the album, as always her songwriting prowess is unmatched and words as daggers will always be a testament of her wit and excellence as a songwriter." - Informant D "I learned from the album the essence of being "calculating". There are right timings to defend yourself and there are moments, SILENCE is the best revenge." - Informant B "The title of the album itself tells how a person's reputation can be changed in a "snap" due to all the traumas and tumultuous public scrutiny." Informant F
Reputation	"The album describes how character development took place from being a girl-next-door or American sweetheart to someone gothic and brave." Informant H
Privacy	"The album revolves into keeping up with the current situation. To adapt and protect oneself what the people throw at you and rebranding oneself will never be out of style." - Informant A "When I listened to the album, some lyrics convey disappearance and break from the public eye." Informant F
	"The album taught me a lesson how privacy will help us to protect our peace of mind and rebuild our self to the people who used to throw rocks at things that shine." - Informant D "The album open how Taylor Swift reflects on her personal and public struggles being a celebrity against the media and the haters." - Informant J "The album explores her identity of becoming resilient and to embrace her true self amidst the chaos." - Informant C
Self-reflection	"The album conveys how a person gains her trust back to the world and to the people who value her the most without judging the predicament of her ruined reputation." - Informant G

Betrayal

The theme of betrayal is a cornerstone of *Reputation*, as Taylor Swift delves into the emotional aftermath of broken trust from friends, lovers, and the media. Participants expressed how the lyrics vividly portrayed the pain of deceit, emphasizing the strength required to overcome such experiences. Informant H noted, "The album made me realize that there are people who must never be given second chances. Once a traitor, always a traitor." Swift's lyrics often reflect this sentiment, exemplified by her ability to weave narratives that are both deeply personal and universally relatable.

Betrayal, whether through metaphorical language in Taylor Swift's "Reputation" album or in broader contexts like personal relationships and celebrity actions, can evoke strong emotional responses and lead to significant psychological effects such as distress, mental contamination, and shifts in parasocial relationships (Pradana et al., 2024; Tanujaya & Purnomo, 2023).

Love

Love emerges as a central theme, showcasing its transformative and redemptive power amid adversity. Swifties reflected on how the album celebrates love as a source of solace and resilience during difficult times. Informant A remarked, "I feel how relevant love is during the lowest points of your life," while Informant G highlighted the portrayal of love blossoming even in moments of despair.

Through vivid imagery and poetic expressions, Swift captures the complexities of love. For instance, the lyric "Ocean blue eyes looking in mine" in *Call It What You Want* conveys admiration and deep affection. This emotional depth aligns with Liao's (2020) analysis of Swift's discography, where love often intertwines with themes of longing and vulnerability, resonating with listeners who share similar experiences.

Retaliation

Retaliation is a prominent theme, reflecting Swift's defiance against those who have wronged her. Tracks like *I Did Something Bad* capture her boldness and resilience, as she reclaims control over her narrative. Informant I shared how the

lyrics inspired a sense of empowerment: “The best way to live with people who hurt us is to own the narrative they want us to be included in.” This sentiment aligns with Tanujaya and Purnomo’s (2023) findings that Swift transformed vulnerability into strength, using her lyrics as a platform to assert her identity and fight back against public criticism and personal betrayals.

Reputation

The concept of reputation is intricately woven throughout the album, exploring how public perception shapes personal identity. Informant F noted, “The album shows how a person’s reputation can change in a ‘snap’ due to public scrutiny.” Zafina and Sinha (2024) argue that Swift’s career has been characterized by a constant negotiation between fame and privacy, with the album reflecting this tension. The recurring snake imagery symbolizes her embrace of criticism and her transformation into a stronger, more self-assured individual, as she rebrands herself to adapt to challenges.

Privacy

Privacy is another recurring theme, as Swift reflects on the impact of media intrusion on her personal life. Informant D commented, “The album taught me how privacy helps protect peace of mind and rebuild self-esteem.” Tracks like *Dress* and *Call It What You Want* underscore the importance of retreating from the public eye to regain control over one’s narrative. According to Putra and Agung (2023), Swift’s lyrics highlight her self-awareness and acceptance of her role in creating public scrutiny, while also emphasizing the need for introspection and self-improvement.

Self-Reflection

Self-reflection resonates deeply throughout *Reputation*, as Swift examines her identity and growth amid personal and public challenges. Informant J observed, “The album reflects Taylor Swift’s struggles as a celebrity against media scrutiny and haters,” while Informant G highlighted how the lyrics explore regaining trust and resilience. Mansfield and Seligman (2021) note that Swift’s songs often evoke nostalgia and introspection, offering listeners an opportunity to reflect on their own journeys of growth and self-awareness.

The thematic exploration of betrayal, love, retaliation, reputation, privacy, and self-reflection in Taylor Swift’s *Reputation* album demonstrates the profound interplay between music and personal context. Through introspective lyrics and evocative storytelling, Swift not only shares her own experiences but also invites listeners to navigate their own complexities and emotions. The album stands as a testament to the transformative power of music, resonating deeply with Swifties and offering a narrative that is both personal and universal.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study offer significant contributions to the fields of discourse analysis, popular music studies, and celebrity culture. First, the integration of Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Galperin’s taxonomy of stylistic devices underscores the interplay between linguistic features and broader social constructs. By demonstrating how Taylor Swift’s *Reputation* album employs a variety of stylistic devices to convey complex emotional and societal themes, this research highlights the potential of CDA as a robust framework for unpacking cultural texts. The use of metaphor, simile, and other rhetorical strategies reinforces the importance of stylistic analysis in understanding the layered narratives within music lyrics.

Second, the study enriches our understanding of the role of narrative in shaping celebrity identity and audience engagement. As illustrated by the themes of betrayal, empowerment, and self-reflection in the *Reputation* album, Swift’s lyrics act as both a mirror and a medium, allowing listeners to navigate their own emotions and social experiences through her storytelling. This aligns with theories of parasocial interaction and audience interpretation, offering insights into how popular culture artifacts foster emotional resonance and collective identity among fans.

Third, this research bridges the gap between musicology and sociolinguistics, illustrating how lyrical content serves as a site for identity negotiation and cultural commentary. Swift’s deliberate rebranding in *Reputation*—from a perceived victim to a resilient artist reclaiming her narrative—demonstrates the capacity of music to challenge societal norms, particularly those surrounding gender and power dynamics. By framing her lyrics as tools for defiance and empowerment, this study expands the discourse on the sociopolitical potential of popular music, particularly in the context of celebrity-driven narratives.

Lastly, the methodological approach, which combines lyrical analysis with fan interpretations through Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), provides a comprehensive lens for examining the interplay between text and audience. This dual-layered analysis not only validates the relevance of textual features but also highlights the subjective meanings ascribed by listeners, offering a holistic view of the communicative power of music.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis focuses exclusively on Taylor Swift’s *Reputation* album, which, while thematically and stylistically significant, represents only one artifact within her extensive discography. A comparative study of multiple albums could provide a broader understanding of her artistic evolution and thematic development. Second, the qualitative approach, though well-suited for examining audience interpretations and textual features, limits the generalizability of the findings, as they reflect the perspectives of a specific group of fans. Expanding the sample to include participants from diverse cultural and demographic backgrounds could yield more comprehensive insights. Lastly, the reliance on linguistic frameworks such as Fairclough’s CDA and Galperin’s stylistic taxonomy, while effective, does not address the multimodal aspects of musical discourse, such as visual storytelling and musical composition. Future research incorporating these dimensions could offer a more holistic perspective on the album’s impact.

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