

TRANSFERENCE OF MEANING EMPLOYED IN THE RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE ALBUM

Written by : Leonardo Teopilus Adre Fransteladi
First Supervisor : Titik Sudartinah, S.S., M.A.
Second Supervisor : Rachmat Nurcahyo, S.S., M.A.

English Literature Study Program English
Language Education Department Faculty
of Languages and Arts Yogyakarta State
University

teopilus1994@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study aims to describe the types and the functions of transference of meaning and the themes reflected by transference of meaning in the Rage Against The Machine's *Self-Title*. It was conducted by employing qualitative research. The data were in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences taken from the lyrics which are relevant to the topic. This research reveals three findings. First, all of the types of transference of meaning are found. They are Metonymy, Synecdoche, Simile, Metaphor and Personification. Second, all of the functions of figurative language are found. They are to afford imaginative pleasure, to bring additional imagery, to bring emotional intensity and to say much in brief compass. Moreover, a figure of speech may bring more than one function in which some of them probably are the same as the functions brought by other figures of speech. Third, the employment of transference of meaning reflects four themes. They are Capitalism, Racism, Brainwashing and Rebellion. Furthermore, all of the figures of speech reflect more than one theme. In fact, some of them can reflect three themes.

Keywords: transference of meaning, Rage Against The Machine, *Self-Title*

I. INTRODUCTION

Music is a popular entertainment for people of different ages, having various genres as well as themes. It is voice, musical instruments and lyrics that are composed in perfect harmony. The

three elements produce their own effects on listeners. The sweet voice of a singer brings maximum pleasure. The pleasing sound of piano soothes the hurt while energetic melody of guitar raises energy and enthusiasm. Meanwhile, the language style of the lyrics leaves listeners amazed.

Unfortunately, people just take songs for granted. They do not take efforts to understand what the songs actually want to say and what motivates the writer to write the songs. They listen to music for getting pleasure instead of understanding. In fact, through song, the singers have the chance to share their feelings, express opinion about recent issues, protest unfair policy, or encourage people to give up war.

To make those happen, there are many means that songs writer can take. They may employ unusual languages, ungrammatical structure, invent new words, or put registers in wrong domain to create an artistic work and bring special effects. When a song is presented in this way then it becomes deviated. As a consequence, people are attracted and willing to listen to their songs.

For that reason, language style of songs is worth to analyze. Rage Against The Machine (RATM) debut album, *Self-Title*, is selectively chosen as the object of study due to several reasons. First, in connection with the contents, the album is considered provocative. It is well recognized by many people for featuring political and social aspects. Second, the lyrics are composed of non-standard,

imaginative and offensive words. They are arranged in a creative way to create poetic effects and bring powerful emotion to the listeners. Third, the debut album has won praise from popular magazines. It was placed on number 368 of 500 greatest albums all of time by Rolling Stone in 2012 and 30 of 100 best album ever by Q magazine in 2006.

By employing stylistic approach, this research intends to describe in detail the phenomenon of language style in songs. To be specific, it aims to describe the types and the functions of transference of meaning, the themes reflected through the use of transference of meaning in the Rage Against The Machine's *Self-Title*.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Leech (1969, 144) suggests that transference of meaning is concerned with deriving meaning of a word from another. It is categorized into five types. They are synecdoche, metonymy, simile, metaphor and personification.

Drabble (2000) points out that metonymy is a figure of speech which substitutes quality or attribute of something for the thing itself. In line with Drabble, Jakobson (1956) via Norgard et al (2010) defines metonymy as a figure of

speech, or trope, in which a referent is substituted by something with which it is closely associated, and is therefore based on a principle of association. Moreover, Simpsons (2004:41) propose that it involves association between the part and the whole, known as synecdoche, as in *hired hand* for worker, a producer and the produced as in *'There is a good Spielberg on tomorrow night*, an institution and its location as in *The Pentagon* for United States and so on.

Synecdoche occurs when a part is used to represent a whole or a whole to represent a part. Synecdoche in which a whole represent a part occurs when workers are referred to as 'hands'. Then a part represents the whole occurs when national football team is signified by reference to the nation to which it belongs: 'England beat Sweden' (Norgard et al, 2010: 109).

Simile is a figure of speech which is closely related to metaphor and based on similarity. It is characterized by direct comparison through the employment 'as' or 'like' (Norgard et al, 2010: 107). Drabble (2010) gives another definition by saying simile is applied when an object, scene, or action introduced by way of comparison for explanatory,

illustrative, or merely ornamental purpose as in *as strong as an ox*, or more poetically as in Night Blake's *Songs of Innocence*.

*The moon, like a flower
In heaven's high bower
With silent delight
Sits and smiles on the night'*

Metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is compared with another by saying that one is the other (Kovecses, 2010). It aims to show that they have something in common by drawing comparison indirectly. It may occur in the form of single word or a collocation, an idiom, a sentence, a proverb, an allegory, a complete imaginative text (Newmark, 1988:104). Phrase *rage against the machine* draws a comparison indirectly between human and machine. It intends to convey extreme anger at those who are cold and heartless.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) define personification as subclass metaphors in which the physical object is further specified as being a person. This makes it possible to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities as in *Inflation has attacked the foundation of*

our economy, destroyed the dollar, and robbed my savings.

According to Perrine (1969:71-72), figurative language has four functions. They are to afford imaginative pleasure, bring additional imagery, add emotional intensity, and say much in brief compass (Perrine, 1969: 71).

The mind gets imaginative pleasure in seeing likenesses between unlike things. For example, it is delightful to stare into a fire and see a castle, cities and armies in it or look into the clouds and shape them into another form like animals or faces (Perrine, 1969:71).

Also, figurative language gives additional imagery into literary works, makes abstract concepts clear and certain, and enables poetry to give pleasure through senses (Perrine, 1969:71-72).

To say something by using figure of speech not only provides information but also brings strong emotions on the statement. For example, *my feet are killing me* is more emotional than *my feet hurt*. It is intended to convey that physical suffering caused by injury is extremely painful. If nothing is done, the pain will get worse and lead the speaker to be hospitalized.

Figurative language serves as a tool to say concepts by expressing them short and clear. For instance, Shakespeare compares life to candle in a passage from *Macbeth*. Life is like a candle. It begins and ends in darkness. While it burns, it produces light and energy. It can be snuffed out at any moment. It burns only for a short duration. This concise description of life as a brief candle suggests certain truth about life that requires tons of words to express in literal language (Perrine, 1969: 72).

Theme refers to the idea that holds the story together such as a comment about society, human nature, or the human condition. It is the main idea or central meaning of a piece of writing. It can be stated explicitly or implicitly and a literary work may have one or multiple themes (Lukens, 1999). To illuminate themes, song writers employ figurative language like personification, metaphor, simile and etc.

III. METHOD OF RESEARCH

This research was conducted by employing qualitative research. Strauss and Corbin (1998: 11) via Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 16) provide definition of

qualitative research as any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It produces narrative or textual descriptions of the phenomena under study (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009).

The object of the research is Rage Against The Machine's album entitled *Self-Title*. Indeed, the data are in the form of words, phrases and sentences related to the topic taken from the lyrics. The main instrument of the research is the researcher himself. He involved in all the process of conducting research including gathering data, analysing them, presenting the explanations and drawing conclusion. Besides main instrument, he employed secondary instrument, namely data sheets. To gain trustworthiness, the researcher applied member checking by asking his two supervisors and students of English Literature to check and validate the data.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the table, five types of transference of meaning are found in the album. They are Metonymy, Synecdoche, Simile, Metaphor and Personification. Each type has its own functions and reflects different themes. Metonymy

functions to bring emotional intensity and to say much in brief compass. It reflects Brainwashing and Rebellion theme. Synecdoche functions to bring emotional intensity and to say much in brief compass. It reflects Capitalism, Racism, and Rebellion theme. Simile functions to afford imaginative pleasure, to bring emotional intensity and to say much in brief compass. It reflects Capitalism, Brainwashing and Rebellion theme. Similar to Simile, Metaphor functions to afford imaginative pleasure, to bring emotional intensity and to say much in brief compass. It reflects Capitalism, Racism, and Rebellion theme. Personification functions to bring additional imagery. It reflects Capitalism, Brainwashing and Rebellion theme.

1. Types of Transference of Meaning Found in the Album *Self-Title*

a. Metonymy

Metonymy can provide understanding, making it easier to comprehend a concept or an idea. This can be seen in datum 11.

Bam! Here's the plan
Motherfuck **Uncle Sam**

Metonymy in the datum above is characterized by the word Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam is an imaginary tall thin man

with white beard and a tall hat which is represented in political cartoon. This figure is associated with the US government. Furthermore, metonymy in this expression happens for a reason. It makes easier to comprehend the idea that the frustration and anger are directed towards the government. If Uncle Sam is altered to America, then it is unclear towards whom the expression is directed, whether it is directed towards the people, the government or both.

The line occurs in a song entitled *Take the Power Back*. The song itself is the embodiment of the writer's disappointment to education in America. Teachers do not give their students knowledge or train them to be skillful. Instead, students only sit as silent as grave and listen to nonsense and lies teachers tell. It is suggested by the repetition of the expression *No more lies* in the end of the song. As a consequence, they become dull and ignorant about current situation. Indeed, people must join as group to seize the power to restore condition as the song title suggests.

b. Synecdoche

A synecdoche in which a part is used to refer the whole can be seen in datum 5.

Dispute the **suits** I ignite
And then watch 'em burn

Synecdoche in the expression above is characterized by the word *suits*. A suit is a set of clothes made from the same material and having the same color. It is mostly worn by businessmen and politicians while doing a particular activity to show formality. By employing this figure of speech, the writer wishes to express his anger at businessmen and politicians. Businessmen are selfish; they prefer making profits as much as possible to sharing the profits for helping the have-nots struggling to live a life. Meanwhile, politicians, the representative of people, take no action to change the situation.

Based on the story background, the line occurs in a song entitled *Bombtrack*. The song itself was heavily influenced by America's economic system, namely capitalism. Capitalism is an economic system based on private or corporate ownership of property, business and industry rather than by the government. The production, distribution and price of the goods are determined by competition in a free market. The main purpose is to make the greatest possible profits. Capitalism is considered as a ruthless system since it is only beneficial

for those who own factory and industry. It only makes the wealthy wealthier and the poor poorer. It is due to the fact that profits belong to the landlords not the employees. The greater the profits are, the richer the landlords are.

c. Simile

The occurrence of simile is suggested by the word *as* in the datum below taken from a song entitled *Bombtrack*.

Another funky radical bombtrack
Started **as** a sketch in my
notebook (datum 6)

The line compares two unlike things directly: a song entitled *Bombtrack* and a sketch. By employing simile in the line, the song writer has an intention to explain the song in a clear way. The level explosion of the song is low in the beginning. It is like a process of drawing a picture which is started by a simple and quickly-made drawing that has no many details. As the time goes by, the song is expected to be in its perfect form, having high explosion, like a sketch finished off into a perfect drawing.

Through the song, the band transmits resistance of economic injustice, namely capitalism. The song portrays some shocking facts of capitalism,

including labors abuse by landlords. It also expresses extreme anger at politicians and businessman who are responsible for capitalism. Moreover, the song brings the hope that capitalism can be reduced and destroyed. If people have the same ideas and opinions about capitalism: ruthless and destructive, then they must join as a group to end capitalism.

d. Metaphor

Metaphor is suggested by direct comparison between two unlike things. The writer compares his song and a bomb as in datum 1, "Hey yo, it's just another **bombtrack...ughh!**", a line belonging to the song *Bombtrack*. It may seem absurd but the song writer has poetic license to do so to achieve a certain purpose. By comparing his song and bomb, Zack, the song writer, expects that his song can have the same qualities that a bomb has. It can explode, bring shock, hurt capitalists, and destroy capitalism into pieces. At the same time, the song brings the hopes to people that there is still a chance to end capitalism.

Metaphor is not only applied in the songs but also in the name of the band. The line clearly reflects what the band is made for. The name *Rage Against The Machine* draws a comparison indirectly

between human and machine to suggest that the two things have something in common. It is made for delivering extreme anger at those who have no kindness, feelings and emotions. The aim is to oppose and fight against people who have such qualities. They can be in the form of politicians, police and capitalists.

e. Personification

In datum 12 taken from a line of *Take the Power Back*, the system is presented as a human that can act.

Yeah, we need to check the
interior
Of the **system that cares about
only one culture**

The system is capable of protecting and defending certain people. This reflects an idea that laws do not fit to their ideal image: they do not treat people equally. In fact, the existence of laws is to order the way in which society behaves, prevent crime and bring those who commit crime to trial and punish them. Indeed, it seems ironic to see that laws, which are supposed to be applied to all, are made to keep certain people immune to prosecution.

The line is found in a song entitled *Take the Power Back*. The song itself is not only the embodiment of anger at education but also government. The line

considers that laws and rules are not merely human. It is much more specific, namely laws and rules are enemy. They have the ability to oppose, harm and hurt people. If they are not stopped, they may give rise to sorrow and suffer. As a consequence, protests against government to change law policies into what it is supposed to be can be justified.

2. Functions of Transference of Meaning Found in the Album *Self-Title*

a. To Afford Imaginative Pleasure

A way of achieving creativity is relating a thing to another which is completely different from it. This happens in the example of affording imaginative pleasure function brought by metaphor as in datum 1, “Hey yo, it's just another **bombtrack...ughh!**” The writer considers that his song has similarities with a bomb. His song is a device designed to explode and destroy something into pieces in order to bring shock, extreme fear and deep hurt. It aims to attack on capitalism and those who get involved in capitalism. Creating resemblance between different things provides a source of pleasure in the exercise of imagination.

Music is a powerful device to influence people because almost every

people in the world love music. This is clearly what Rage Against The Machine has done. Through music, they want to spread their ideas and opinions about crucial issues. In this song, they bring awareness to people that capitalism is a cruel system. They enlighten people that businessmen and politician have control and authority over capitalism. They act as a catalyst for change in economy system.

b. To Bring Additional Imagery

Personification in datum 2, “**And the business that burned us all.**”, a line belonging to a song called *Bombtrack*, brings additional imagery function through giving human qualities to *the business*. Based on the background, *Bombtrack* is an anti-capitalistic song. The writer wants to depict some horrible truths of capitalism. Through personification, he describes business as an antagonist fighting against the protagonist, namely society. Business has capability of making many suffer and preventing them from improving lives. Personification in this datum suggests these certain truths of capitalism in a very clear way.

In capitalism system, factors of production such as land, transportation, oil and employees can be owned by

individuals. They are organized to gain maximum profits with no consideration of negative effect in social and environmental aspects. In social aspect, the belief that work hard can give achievement opportunity does not apply to labors. Labors work in day and night to earn low salary with no compensation and promotion. Meanwhile in environmental aspect, the pollution of factories causes damage to earth, resulting in global warming.

c. To Add Emotional Intensity

In the example taken from the opening line of *Killing in the Name*, the function of adding emotional intensity is brought by metaphor which can be seen in datum 7, “**Some of those that work forces are the same that burn crosses.**” By employing metaphor, the writer wants to emphasize the idea that there is no difference between police and Ku Klux Klan. Police do not believe in racial equality between whites and blacks. They may beat, shoot and kill blacks with showing no mercy. In fact, they are excused from trial for killing because they are police. This implies that police are still protected by other whites like their commander and judges. The idea that police can be as cruel as Ku Klux Klan

brings strong feelings of anger, disappointment and despondency. Police are supposed to protect people, not to hurt them.

Ku Klux Klan was a terrorist group organizing violence in the southern of America shortly after Civil War ended and advocating white supremacy. The members rampaged and killed countless blacks and raped black women. Some were dead with a rope tied around their neck. They targeted not only human but also buildings. Houses, schools and churches were burnt. They also killed those who fought for claiming racial equality, no matter they were white or black. Their aim was only to bring whites again as master and reduce blacks to slave (Zinn, 1980:198-200).

d. To Say Much In Brief Compass

In an example of saying much in brief compass function taken from a line of a song called *Bullet in the Head*, the figure of speech that brings the function is metonymy, which occurs in datum 18, “A **yellow ribbon** instead of a **swastika**.” Yellow ribbons are associated with a condition in which soldiers are deployed to go war. The family of solders ties yellow ribbon on house to remember soldiers and wait for the return. Swastika

is a symbol connected with peace. The song was written to express disapproval of America’s involvement in a series of war including Korean War, Vietnam War, and East Middle War. Instead of focusing taking care of the people, the government’s concern was to go war. If this information is expressed in literal language than figurative one, it will require a great number of words.

There is a reasonable judgment about the involvement of America in war. Defense industry has been driving significantly the economic growth in every part of the country. This can be traced back in 1930’s, the time when Great Depression happened. Great Depression reduced the economy of US. It collapsed stock market, raised unemployment rate massively and led some to commit suicide. However, things changed radically when World War II happened. Factories began producing gun, and bullet and unemployment dropped gradually. As a result, US economy returned to be in good condition.

3. Themes Reflected Through Transference of Meaning in the Album *Self-Title*

a. Capitalism

Some horrible truths of capitalism are suggested by personification as in datum 2, “And **the business that burned us all.**” Based on the context, the song criticizes problems raised by capitalism. In capitalism, the main idea is to earn profits as great as possible. This can be achieved by reducing costs of production. Companies establish factories in countries which provide cheap labor like China, Vietnam and Indonesia. Labors are required to work more than the time expected in the job and get no compensation for this. The overtime working may raise depression and lead some to commit suicide. In fact, company may hire children to work in factory. Therefore, it is no surprise that business can hurt countless people.

In capitalistic society, labors seem to be powerless. They have no strong position in bargaining with landlords for better wages and working conditions. This is all influenced by the fact that the landlords own the factory and may offer wage as whatever they please. If labors disagree with the wage and working

conditions agreement, they just find other labors. Inevitably, labors say yes since they need money to carry on life. It is true that most of labors are uneducated but it does not mean that labors deserve to be treated in an unfair way. After all, they are still human.

b. Racism

In the following example, synecdoche describes how the police commit racism which can be seen in the datum below.

Something must be done
About vengeance, **a badge and a gun** (datum 22)

The words a *badge* and a *gun* in the expression stand for the owner which is police. By employing synecdoche to refer a badge and a gun as police, the writer wishes to emphasize two crucial points. A badge characterizes the ones who commit a crime which are police. A gun signifies the crime that police commit which is gun shooting at blacks.

As can be seen in the expression, the writer advocates taking actions in dealing with gun shooting committed by police. America is notorious for a series of gun shooting triggered by the difference of color skin. Police have bigger chance to shoot black suspects rather than the white

ones because there is a stereotype that crime is mostly associated with blacks. In fact, when dealing with unarmed black suspects posing no threat, white police perceive the blacks to be dangerous. They shoot dead blacks and get no consequence for their brutal actions. If laws treat everyone equally, police should be put into trial.

c. Brainwashing

The idea that television is used to brainwash people is suggested by the use of metonymy, which can be seen in datum 20, "They load the clip in **omnicolor**." The word *omnicolor* stands for television. Thus, the expression conveys that by using unlimited resources, capitalists capitalize on television to brainwash people by playing a video. This immoral way is committed to make people buy products the capitalists sell.

In the beginning of 90's, television was the ultimate choice for many to get entertainment as internet was not yet popular. At night after working, many people sit on couch and watch television. However, capitalists use this moment for their own advantage. They play an eye-catching but deceiving clip and rewind it at prime time to lock people's mind. As a consequence, people

may lose their common sense and follow what capitalists say. It is what the writer calls as the mass mind rape.

d. Rebellion

In a song called Freedom, the writer correlates rebellion with anger which can be seen through metaphor existing in datum 27, "**Anger is a gift**." He presents anger as something good, contrary to popular idea considering anger as something bad. Anger is a present that triggers people to take actions against something wrong and hurtful. It can lead people to find the best solution of problems. Indeed, anger can show compassion and empathy quality of one.

Anger indicates that people still notice what is happening around. People often get angry as the response to unfairness happening around. When they are angry, they show a strong feeling of sympathy and sadness for the suffering others and a wish to help them. This feeling of anger makes them think that this unfairness should not happen. For this reason, anger can be like fuel. It gives people the energy to take actions against the unfairness.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, some conclusions can be drawn.

1. All of the five types of transference of meaning proposed by Leech are found in the album *Self-Title*. They are Metonymy, Synecdoche, Simile, Metaphor and Personification. This implies that the writer is a creative person. He can combine rhymes and figurative language to produce artistic works.
2. All of the four functions of figurative language proposed by Perrine are found in the album *Self-Title*. The functions are to afford imaginative pleasure, to bring additional imagery and to bring emotional intensity and to say much in brief compass. To be specific, Metonymy functions to bring emotional intensity and to say much in brief compass. Synecdoche functions to bring emotional intensity and to say much in brief compass. Simile has functions to afford imaginative pleasure, to bring emotional intensity and to say much in brief compass. Similar to Simile, Metaphor functions to afford imaginative pleasure, to bring emotional intensity and to say much in brief compass. Personification functions to bring additional imagery.

Based on this explanation, it can be said that a figure of speech may have same functions as other figures of speech. For example, simile and metaphore bring same functions since they are based on comparison. Another is Metonymy and Synecdoche since Synecdoche is a subclass of Metonymy. Meanwhile, personification is the only figure that brings additional imagery since when a non-human entity is personified, it is imagined as if it was real.

3. The use of transference of meaning reflects the themes of the album. The researcher only took several data to explore and obtain clear descriptions of the themes the band brought. The album addresses some crucial issues which are mainly concerned with American government and the society. Based on the findings and discussions in Chapter IV, transference of the meaning applied in the album reflects four themes. They are Capitalism, Racism, Brainwashing and Rebellion. *Self-Title* deals with the ruthlessness of capitalism, racism committed by police, the mass media brainwashing and advocates taking actions against the government.

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