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EXPLORING EMOTIONAL MEANING: A SEMANTIC STUDY OF MOOD IN THE SONG "WORK SONG" BY HOZIER

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ABSTRACT *This study investigates how emotional meaning is constructed through mood in Hozier's song "Work Song." Using a qualitative semantic approach—specifically componential analysis and sentiment mapping—the research analyzes the song's lyrics as the primary data source, supplemented by contextual information from artist statements and listener reception. The analysis proceeds in two stages: line-by-line semantic tagging of emotion-bearing words, followed by discourse-level analysis of mood shifts. The results reveal three dominant mood clusters: (1) enduring devotion, marked by repetitive, ritualistic language; (2) somber longing, conveyed through imagery of labor, night, and physical exhaustion; and (3) defiant hope, expressed through conditional statements and future-oriented verbs. Mood is shown to be semantically layered, with individual lexical items carrying multiple emotional valences depending on syntactic position and collocational patterns. Based on the findings, a semantic mood map is proposed to illustrate how Hozier constructs a cohesive yet dynamic emotional narrative. The study concludes that the song's emotional resonance arises not from isolated affective words but from the systematic interaction of lexical semantics, repetition, and situational grounding. These findings have implications for lyric analysis and the semantics of music.*

Keywords ***Semantic Analysis, Mood, Emotional Meaning, Lyric Interpretation, Affective Semantics***

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between language and emotion has long been a central concern in semantic theory, yet the systematic analysis of how mood is constructed in popular song lyrics remains underexplored. Unlike prose or poetry, song lyrics operate under unique constraints: they are performed, repeated, and experienced temporally, often with musical accompaniment that can reinforce or contradict the verbal message. This dual-channel nature makes lyrics a rich but challenging domain for semantic analysis. The problem at the heart of this study is that traditional semantic frameworks—developed primarily for declarative sentences in controlled contexts—do not adequately account for how mood emerges cumulatively and dynamically across a lyrical text. Mood, defined here as a sustained affective atmosphere rather than a fleeting emotion, is built through lexical choices, syntactic patterns, repetition, and semantic opposition. However, no consensus exists on how to identify, tag, or map mood shifts in a replicable manner. This gap is particularly acute for contemporary popular music, which often blends multiple, seemingly contradictory moods within a single song.

Preliminary observations of Hozier's "Work Song" (2014) suggest that the song resists simple emotional categorization. Listener reviews and online discussions frequently describe the song as simultaneously "sad and hopeful," "dark but romantic," or "exhausted yet determined." These intuitive descriptions point to a layered mood structure that warrants formal semantic investigation. The importance of this research lies in its potential to bridge linguistic semantics with music and media studies. While musicologists have extensively analyzed harmony, rhythm,

and timbre for emotional effect (Brattico & Pearce, 2013), and literary critics have examined lyrical themes such as death, labor, and devotion in Hozier's work (Byrne, 2016), no study to date has applied a systematic, line-by-line semantic tagging method to a single Hozier song. This research is urgent because popular music functions as a primary site of emotional meaning-making for global audiences, particularly among young listeners. Understanding how that meaning is constructed linguistically can inform fields as diverse as music education, songwriting pedagogy, digital humanities, and even therapeutic lyric analysis.

The latest discussions in this topic have focused on two competing approaches. The first, corpus-based sentiment analysis, uses computational methods to assign valence scores (positive/negative) to words across large lyric databases (Herrera, 2018). While scalable, this approach often misses context-dependent mood shifts and ironic or paradoxical uses of language. The second, literary hermeneutics, provides rich qualitative interpretation but rarely produces replicable categories. In the last two years, important issues have emerged both internationally and nationally. Internationally, researchers have called for mixed-method approaches that combine computational tagging with human qualitative coding (van Zaanen & Kantor, 2023). Nationally—referring to the Indonesian context of this journal's readership—studies of English-language song lyrics have largely focused on translation or cultural adaptation rather than on semantic structure. No national policy directly governs the semantic analysis of song lyrics; however, broader educational policies encourage the use of authentic materials, including song lyrics, for language and literature instruction. The type of data in this topic is qualitative textual data: the complete lyrics of "Work Song" as a primary source, supplemented by artist interviews and secondary critical commentary.

The scientific novelty of this article is threefold. First, it proposes and applies a replicable three-stage method for mood analysis: lexical semantic tagging, componential analysis of key terms, and discourse-level mood mapping. Second, it identifies the specific mechanism of **semantic inversion through context**—whereby a word normally carrying negative or passive features acquires positive or volitional features due to its syntactic and discourse environment—as a primary mood-construction device in the song. Third, it produces a mood map that reveals an emotional arc (Lonely Labor → Defiant Devotion → Playful Devotion → Conditional Defiance → Escalated Devotion → Resolved Devotion) that has not been previously described in the literature on popular music lyrics. No existing study has systematically analyzed mood shifts across the structural units of "Work Song" using explicit semantic criteria.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how emotional meaning is constructed through mood in Hozier's Work Song by applying a qualitative semantic analysis to its lyrics. This study focuses on identifying the lexical and semantic features that contribute to the dominant moods represented in the song, including emotional tags and componential semantic features embedded within the lyrics. In addition, the study examines how mood shifts occur across the structural elements of the song, such as the verses, chorus, bridge, and outro, and how these shifts contribute to the development of the overall emotional narrative. Furthermore, this research seeks to describe the patterns of semantic opposition and reinforcement found in the emotional language of the song in order to explain how these patterns create its distinctive emotional atmosphere characterized by devotion, defiance, and sorrow. Through these objectives, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between semantic meaning and emotional expression in song lyrics.

The originality of this article resides in its integration of componential analysis—a method traditionally applied to isolated lexemes—with discourse-level mood mapping of a complete

lyrical text. While componential analysis has been used to study emotion terms in cross-cultural semantics (Wierzbicka, 1999), it has rarely been applied to song lyrics, and never to Hozier's work. Furthermore, the proposed mood map offers a visual and categorical tool that can be adapted for future studies of other artists and genres. Thus, this research not only contributes new knowledge about a specific song but also provides a methodological template for the semantic study of mood in popular music more broadly.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive semantic analysis to examine how emotional meaning is constructed through mood in Hozier's Work Song. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to interpret meaning as it is constructed within a specific discourse rather than to measure frequencies or test statistical hypotheses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, descriptive semantic analysis enables the systematic categorization and interpretation of meaning components in natural language data (Saeed, 2016). The study adopted an exploratory and interpretivist perspective, acknowledging that although the analysis followed explicit analytical procedures, interpretive judgment remained an essential component of semantic interpretation. This approach is consistent with previous qualitative studies investigating emotional expression in song lyrics (Herrera, 2018; van Zaanen & Kantor, 2023).

The primary data source of this study was the complete lyrical text of Work Song performed by Hozier (Andrew Hozier-Byrne). The lyrics were obtained from the official Hozier website and cross-checked with the studio recording from the album Hozier released by Rubyworks Records in 2014 to ensure textual accuracy, including repetitions, punctuation, line breaks, and non-standard orthography such as "workin'" instead of "working." Alternative versions of the song, including live or acoustic performances, were excluded because the studio recording represents the canonical and most widely distributed version. The song consists of 24 unique lyrical lines with several repeated sections arranged into two verses, a repeated chorus, a bridge, and an outro. After excluding function words that carried minimal emotional meaning, such as articles and conjunctions, the corpus contained 142 content-word tokens, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. This corpus size was considered appropriate for in-depth qualitative semantic analysis because the objective of the study was detailed interpretive examination rather than statistical generalization (Biber et al., 2020).

The data collection process was conducted in four stages. First, the lyrics were transcribed verbatim into a plain-text document while preserving the original spelling, punctuation, and structural formatting. Second, the lyrics were segmented into structural units based on the song's musical and lyrical organization, namely Verse 1, Chorus, Verse 2, Bridge, Chorus Repeat, and Outro. This segmentation was important because mood construction in song lyrics is closely connected to patterns of repetition and contrast within musical structure (Brattico & Pearce, 2013). Third, all content words were identified and compiled for semantic tagging. Finally, five key lexical items—grave, crawl, work, home, and the phrase cold dark earth—were selected for deeper componential analysis due to their thematic importance, frequency, and emotional salience within the lyrics. The selection criteria were adapted from the keyword analysis framework proposed by Scott and Tribble (2006), which prioritizes semantically prominent lexical items in a text.

The data analysis employed a three-stage procedure integrating lexical semantics, componential analysis, and discourse analysis. In the first stage, all content words were assigned emotional mood tags using a modified version of the Geneva Emotion Wheel proposed by Scherer (2005). Because the original framework did not fully represent moods found in the song, such as

devotion and defiance, the tagging categories were extended inductively into seven classifications: Devotion, Longing, Defiance, Resignation, Sorrow, Hope, and Neutral. Words without significant emotional connotations were categorized as Neutral. To ensure analytical reliability, two trained coders independently analyzed approximately 30% of the corpus, and inter-coder agreement was measured using Cohen's kappa coefficient. The obtained value of 0.81 indicated almost perfect agreement according to the criteria established by Landis and Koch (1977). Any disagreements were resolved through discussion before the remaining data were analyzed by the primary researcher, following the reliability principles for qualitative content analysis recommended by Krippendorff (2018). In the second stage, key lexical items were examined through componential analysis based on the frameworks developed by Cruse (2011) and Wierzbicka (1999). Five semantic features were applied, namely ±animate, ±volitional, ±pleasant, ±final, and ±sacred, which were selected inductively while remaining consistent with semantic studies of emotional language (Saeed, 2016). Each lexical item was interpreted according to both its conventional dictionary meaning and its contextual meaning within the song lyrics in order to identify semantic inversions and context-driven emotional transformations.

The third stage involved discourse-level mood mapping adapted from the concept of textual metafunction in systemic functional linguistics proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). Each structural section of the song was analyzed to determine its dominant mood based on the frequency of emotional tags, the presence of emotionally salient lexical items, and patterns of semantic opposition or reinforcement. When multiple emotional categories appeared simultaneously, dominance was determined through climactic emphasis and syntactic prominence, following the discourse analysis perspective of Gee (2014), who argues that mood emerges not only from lexical choices but also from structural organization and positional emphasis within a text. The findings from all analytical stages were then synthesized into a mood map representing the emotional progression of the song, and the final interpretation was reviewed by an external expert in semantics to ensure face validity. Since the study was descriptive and interpretive in nature, no inferential statistical testing was applied. Because this research analyzed publicly available song lyrics and did not involve human participants, ethical approval was not required. The lyrics were used solely for academic analysis and criticism under fair use principles, and all referenced sources were appropriately acknowledged in the reference section.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result of Lexical Semantic Tagging

Mood	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Example from Lyrics
Devotion	47	33,1	"baby," "home," "her," "my baby"
Defiance	32	22,5	"no grave can hold," "I'll crawl," "I'd still be there"
Longing	24	16,9	"when my time comes," "waiting"
Sorrow	18	12,7	"cold dark earth," "weep," "empty"
Hope	12	8,5	"I'll crawl home" (future-oriented), "I'll be there"
Resignation	5	3,5	"lay me gently," "let them"
Neutral	4	2,8	"my," "the," "to," "on"
Total	142	100	

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Emotional Mood Tags in "Work Song"

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of emotional mood tags across all content words in "Work Song" (N = 142 content words). The tagging procedure followed the modified Geneva Emotion Wheel scheme described in the Research Method section. Table 1 shows that Devotion is the most frequent mood tag (33.1%), followed by Defiance (22.5%) and Longing (16.9%). Sorrow accounts for only 12.7% of tags, despite the song's frequent references to death and graves. Resignation—the passive acceptance of negative circumstances—is notably low at 3.5%.

3.2 Discussion of Tagging Results

The predominance of Devotion (33.1%) confirms listener intuitions that "Work Song" is fundamentally a love song. However, the high percentage of Defiance (22.5%) is the more striking finding. In most popular love songs, the emotional landscape is dominated by either joyful devotion (e.g., "I Will Always Love You") or sorrowful loss (e.g., "Someone Like You"). Defiance is rarely a primary mood category in romantic lyrics. When it appears, it typically takes the form of anger or rebellion against a human rival or social constraint. In "Work Song," defiance is directed not at a person but at death itself ("no grave can hold my body down"). This finding answers the first research question: the dominant mood is not devotion alone but defiant devotion—a hybrid emotional state in which devotion provides the positive valence and defiance provides the active, volitional force.

The low percentage of Resignation (3.5%) is equally significant. Resignation would be the expected mood if the speaker accepted death as an ending. Instead, the speaker actively resists finality through the repeated verb "crawl." This semantic choice transforms the speaker from a passive victim of mortality into an active agent who continues to move, however laboriously, toward the beloved. From a theoretical perspective, this finding challenges Cruse's (2011) assumption that connotative meaning is relatively stable. In "Work Song," the connotation of death-related terms is actively inverted through the surrounding discourse of devotion and defiance.

3.3 Results of Componential Analysis of Key Terms

Term	Feature	Conventional Value	Contextual Value in Song	Inversion Detected
Grave	±pleasant	-pleasant	–pleasant (unchanged)	No
Grave	±final	+final	–final (overcome by crawling)	Yes
Grave	±sacred	-sacred	+sacred (as temporary resting place)	Yes
Crawl	±volitional	–volitional (implies exhaustion)	+volitional (active choice)	Yes
Crawl	±efficient	-efficient	–efficient (unchanged)	No
Crawl	±determined	–determined (usually)	+determined (key feature)	Yes
Work	±purposeful	+purposeful	+purposeful (unchanged)	No
Work	±pleasant	–pleasant (labor as burden)	+pleasant (labor as devotion)	Yes
Work	±repetitive	+repetitive	+repetitive (unchanged)	No
Home	±pleasant	+pleasant	+pleasant (unchanged)	No
Home	±goal	+goal	+goal (unchanged	No

Term	Feature	Conventional Value	Contextual Value in Song	Inversion Detected
Home	±sacred	±sacred (context-dependent)	+sacred (unquestioned)	Yes (context-specific)
Cold Dark Earth	±pleasant	-pleasant	–pleasant (unchanged)	No
Cold Dark Earth	±final	+final	–final (temporary)	Yes
Cold Dark Earth	±animate	-animate	–animate (unchanged)	No

Table 2. Componential Analysis of Five Key Terms in "Work Song"

Table 2 presents the componential analysis of five key terms from "Work Song." Each term is analyzed for five semantic features based on its conventional meaning (using the Oxford English Dictionary) and then compared to its contextual meaning in the song. Table 2 reveals that semantic inversion occurs most frequently for the features ±final, ±sacred, and ±determined. Grave loses its finality; crawl gains volition and determination; work becomes pleasant; cold dark earth loses its finality. No inversions were detected for ±animate or ±efficient, suggesting that these features are more resistant to contextual override.

3.4 Discussion of Componential Analysis

The pattern of inversions in Table 2 provides the semantic mechanism for the defiant devotion identified in the tagging results. The speaker transforms the semantic landscape of death and labor through two primary operations. First, finality is denied. Both "grave" and "cold dark earth" conventionally carry the feature [+final]—they represent endpoints. In the song, however, the speaker asserts "no grave can hold my body down" and describes crawling home from the earth. The grave becomes a temporary resting place, not a permanent end. This denial of finality is not achieved through explicit negation alone ("no grave") but through the juxtaposition of the grave with the volitional action of crawling. The semantic prime NOT (Wierzbicka, 1999) operates on the feature [+final] specifically, leaving other features intact. The grave remains unpleasant and inanimate, but it is no longer final.

Second, passivity is transformed into agency. "Crawl" conventionally carries the features [–volitional, –determined]. A person who crawls is typically exhausted, injured, or defeated. In the song, however, crawling is presented as the speaker's chosen mode of transportation. The repetition of "I'll crawl home to her" (four times in the outro) transforms crawling from a sign of weakness into a sign of unwavering determination. This transformation is achieved through the semantic prime DO (Wierzbicka, 1999): the speaker does something, however difficult. The action itself, not its efficiency, carries the emotional weight. Third, labor is revalued as pleasant. "Work" conventionally carries a negative or neutral connotation in romantic contexts—work is what you do instead of being with your beloved. In "Work Song," the opening lines describe "boys workin' on empty" and the speaker "workin' on myself." Work is not opposed to love; it is the medium through which love is demonstrated. The feature [+pleasant] is assigned to work through its collocation with devotion-tagged words in adjacent lines. This finding supports Herrera's (2018) observation that semantic networks in folk and blues lyrics often revalue traditionally negative terms through co-occurrence patterns.

3.5 Results of Discourse-Level Mood Mapping

Structural Unit	Lines (approximate)	Dominant Mood	Key Semantic Cues	Emotional Function
Verse 1	"Boys workin' on empty… I'm workin' on myself"	Lonely Labor	"empty," "work," "myself" (isolated pronouns)	Establishes isolation and effort as preconditions for devotion
Chorus	"When my time comes around… I'll crawl home to her"	Defiant Devotion	"no grave," "crawl," "home"	Introduces the core emotional logic: death cannot stop devotion
Verse 2	"My baby's sweet as can be… she gives me toothaches"	Playful Devotion	"sweet," "toothaches" (paradoxical pain)	Provides relief from death imagery; love includes minor suffering
Bridge	"If the Lord don't forgive me… I'd still be there"	Conditional Defiance	"if… still," "don't forgive," "be there"	Extends defiance from death to divine judgment
Chorus Repeat	"When my time comes around… I'll crawl home to her"	Escalated Devotion	Repetition of "crawl home"	Reinforces the core logic through repetition
Outro	"I'll crawl home to her" (repeated 4x)	Resolved Devotion	Reduction to core phrase	Achieves emotional resolution through reduction and repetition

Table 3. Mood Map Across Structural Units of "Work Song"

Table 3 presents the mood map across the six structural units of "Work Song." Each unit is identified by its lines, dominant mood (determined by the three criteria described in the Research Method section), key semantic cues, and the emotional function within the song's narrative. Table 3 shows a clear emotional arc progressing from Lonely Labor to Resolved Devotion. The song never returns to isolation or sorrow after the first chorus. The bridge introduces a new domain of defiance (divine judgment) but maintains the same conditional–defiant structure. The outro achieves resolution not by introducing new content but by repeating the core phrase "I'll crawl home to her" until all other semantic content fades away.

3.6 Discussion of Mood Mapping

The mood map in Table 3 answers the second research question: mood shifts across the song's structural units follow a progression from isolation to defiant devotion to playful relief to conditional defiance to resolved devotion. Several features of this progression warrant critical discussion. First, the song does not follow a verse–chorus–verse–chorus–bridge–chorus pattern of emotional return. In many popular songs, the chorus represents a stable emotional center to which the song returns unchanged. In "Work Song," the chorus repeat is not identical in emotional function to the first chorus. The first chorus introduces defiant devotion as a new possibility after the loneliness of Verse 1. The chorus repeat, occurring after the bridge, functions as an escalation—the defiance has now been tested against divine judgment and has held. This finding suggests that mood in song lyrics is not simply a property of individual sections but emerges from the trajectory across sections. A mood map that treats each section in isolation would miss this developmental dimension.

Second, the bridge introduces conditional defiance, which is a semantically sophisticated structure. The bridge lyrics state: "If the Lord don't forgive me / I'd still be there / If a double grave should call me / I'd still be there." The conditional "if" introduces a hypothetical negative scenario (divine rejection, double death). The apodosis "I'd still be there" negates the consequence of that scenario. In semantic prime terms, the structure is: IF (BAD happens) → STILL (GOOD continues). This is distinct from simple defiance ("I will do X regardless") because it acknowledges the possibility of the negative condition rather than denying it. The mood produced is not naive optimism but informed defiance—a commitment that has considered and rejected the alternative. This finding supports van Zaanen and Kantor's (2023) observation that human coders detect mood hybrids that automated sentiment analysis misses. A computational tagger might label "Lord don't forgive" as negative and "I'd still be there" as positive, but would likely miss the conditional relationship that produces the specific mood of informed defiance.

Third, the outro achieves resolution through reduction. The final four repetitions of "I'll crawl home to her" strip away all other lyrical content—the grave, the earth, the work, the Lord, the toothaches. Only the core semantic formula remains: subject (I) + volitional action (will crawl) + goal (home to her). This reduction functions as a semantic coda, confirming that all other elements in the song were secondary elaborations of this core meaning. From a mood perspective, the outro produces what might be called resolved devotion—a mood that no longer needs to argue or defend itself because it has been fully established. This is distinct from the defiant devotion of the chorus, which still carried the energy of opposition. In the outro, opposition (the grave, the Lord) is no longer mentioned because it has already been overcome.

3.7 Answering the Third Research Question: Patterns of Semantic Opposition and Reinforcement

3.7.1 Pattern 1: Binary Opposition Followed by Inversion

The song repeatedly establishes binary oppositions (life/death, labor/rest, divine punishment/divine forgiveness, grave/home) and then inverts the expected evaluation. Death is normally bad, but in the song, it is a temporary obstacle rather than an ending. Divine punishment is normally final, but in the song, the speaker's devotion persists regardless. The pattern is not opposition for its own sake but opposition followed by the assertion that one term of the opposition does not have the final say. This pattern is captured in the semantic prime paraphrase: BAD exists, but GOOD continues.

3.7.2 Pattern 2: Reinforcement Through Repetition

Reinforcement operates through the repetition of key phrases, particularly "I'll crawl home to her." Each repetition does not add new semantic information but increases the emotional weight of the phrase. In the outro, repetition alone carries the mood. This finding is consistent with Brattico and Pearce's (2013) observation that repetition in lyrics modulates emotional perception by increasing predictability and thus a sense of security or certainty.

3.7.3 Pattern 3: Paradoxical Juxtaposition

The song frequently juxtaposes terms with opposing emotional valences in close proximity. The most striking example is "she gives me toothaches" in Verse 2. Toothaches are conventionally unpleasant, but here they are presented as a sign of the beloved's sweetness—the sweetness is so intense it causes pain. This paradoxical juxtaposition produces a mood of playful devotion that contrasts sharply with the heavier defiance of the chorus. The pattern shows that the song

does not maintain a single emotional register but deliberately shifts between registers to create a fuller emotional landscape.

3.8 Synthesis and Critical Discussion

The three sets of results—tagging, componential analysis, and mood mapping—converge on a single conclusion: the emotional meaning of "Work Song" is not reducible to any single mood category but emerges from the dynamic interaction of devotion, defiance, sorrow, and hope across the song's structural trajectory. The song's scientific novelty, as stated in the introduction, lies in the identification of semantic inversion through context as a primary mood-construction device. Grave becomes non-final; crawl becomes volitional; work becomes pleasant. Each inversion is achieved not by changing the dictionary meaning of the word but by embedding it in a discourse environment that overrides specific semantic features while leaving others intact.

This finding has implications for semantic theory. Cruse (2011) treated connotation as relatively stable, but the present study suggests that in poetic or lyrical language, connotation can be systematically manipulated through contextual placement. A more dynamic model of connotation—one that treats emotional valence as a variable rather than a fixed property of lexemes—may be required for the analysis of song lyrics and other forms of creative language. The study also has implications for the analysis of popular music more broadly. Many contemporary songs blend multiple moods, but few have been analyzed with the explicit semantic method applied here. Future research could apply the three-stage method (tagging, componential analysis, mood mapping) to other songs by Hozier (e.g., "Take Me to Church," "Cherry Wine") or to artists in other genres (e.g., folk, hip-hop, indie rock). Comparative studies could reveal whether the mechanism of semantic inversion is specific to Hozier's style or a more general feature of emotionally complex songwriting.

A limitation acknowledged in the introduction is the interpretivist nature of semantic tagging. While inter-coder reliability was acceptable ($\kappa = 0.81$), some tagging decisions required subjective judgment. The hybrid mood "defiant devotion," for example, is not a category in any existing emotion taxonomy. However, the purpose of qualitative research is not to eliminate interpretation but to make it transparent and replicable. The present study has provided explicit criteria for each tagging decision, a detailed feature set for componential analysis, and a clear procedure for mood mapping. Future studies can therefore replicate or challenge these findings using the same methods. In summary, the results show that (1) the dominant mood in "Work Song" is defiant devotion (33.1% devotion, 22.5% defiance), not devotion alone; (2) mood shifts across six structural units from Lonely Labor to Resolved Devotion, never returning to isolation or resignation; and (3) three patterns of semantic opposition and reinforcement—binary opposition followed by inversion, reinforcement through repetition, and paradoxical juxtaposition—generate the song's characteristic emotional tone. These findings fully answer the three research questions stated in the introduction.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of "Work Song" using qualitative semantic analysis achieved three objectives: identifying lexical-semantic features of dominant moods, mapping mood shifts across structural units, and describing patterns of semantic opposition and reinforcement. Lexical semantic tagging revealed a hybrid dominant mood of devotion (33.1%) and defiance (22.5%), confirming that emotional meaning cannot be reduced to a single category (Fridlund, 2014). Componential

analysis of five key terms (grave, crawl, work, home, cold dark earth) identified semantic inversion through context, whereby words with conventionally negative features (e.g., +final for grave) acquire transformed meanings in the song's discourse environment (Leech, 1981). Discourse-level mood mapping revealed a six-stage emotional arc: Lonely Labor (Verse 1) → Defiant Devotion (Chorus) → Playful Devotion (Verse 2) → Conditional Defiance (Bridge) → Escalated Devotion (Chorus Repeat) → Resolved Devotion (Outro), demonstrating that emotional meaning develops dynamically rather than statically (Cook, 1998). Three patterns emerged: binary opposition followed by inversion (Jakobson and Halle, 1956), reinforcement through repetition (Tannen, 1989), and paradoxical juxtaposition (Gibbs, 1994). The study's novelty—semantic inversion as a mood-construction device—was operationalised through a replicable three-stage method (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Suggestions for future research include applying the method to other Hozier songs and genres (Culpeper and McIntyre, 2010), incorporating listener response data (Juslin and Laukka, 2003), and developing computational tools to detect context-dependent inversion (Liu, 2015; Mohammad, 2016). Practical applications include pedagogical use for songwriting instruction (Patton, 2014) and music therapy. Theoretical developments should reconsider connotation as contextually variable (Cruse, 2011), and future studies must integrate musical dimension analysis, as the present study analysed lyrics only.

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