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THE MEANING OF METAPHOR IN COPING WITH CELEBRITY DEATH  
ONLINE

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## Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the relevance of deliberate metaphor in the context of online articles about celebrity death. Qualitative analysis of the structure of the expressions reveals that the main motivation for using metaphor is dealing with emotions. The aim behind this is twofold: illustration and coping. While some of the analysed articles aim to merely illustrate people's reactions, all of them include the elements of coping with emotions of grief, which is why the paper re-examines the posits of previous research on metaphors' therapeutic functions (cf. e.g. Stanojević and Čičin-Šain 2015, Tay 2015). The significance of deliberate metaphor in this context lies in its ability to convey personal experiences in a relatable way, in order to achieve the so-called therapeutic alliance, which enables people to understand each other more closely. Whether the analysed article's purpose was to comment or inform about the critical event, the basic intention behind the use of deliberate metaphors remained the same – providing a link between the reader and the public in coping with celebrity death.

Keywords: deliberate metaphor, qualitative analysis, online articles, therapeutic functions of metaphor, therapeutic alliance

## Contents

Introduction.....	1
Methodology .....	2
Results: .....	4
Analysis: the news articles .....	5
The original text.....	5
The quotes.....	7
Analysis: the opinion articles.....	11
Conclusion: .....	15
References: .....	17

## Introduction

In this paper, I will investigate what prompts people to use metaphorical expressions in online articles about the death of a celebrity, working on the case of the death of David Bowie. The focus will be on the communicative functions of deliberate metaphor (as defined by Steen 2014). Deliberate metaphor is metaphor intentionally used in order to influence perspective – it is an expression that engages us in cross-domain mappings, i.e. considering something in terms of something else; nonetheless, it is not necessary for the expression to be recognised as metaphorical. Besides conceptual elaboration, deliberate metaphor can serve a wide variety of purposes such as persuasion, designating a type of discourse or one's particular style, etc. (Steen 2014, 183). Deliberate metaphor is thus a useful tool for shaping discourse, which makes it a particularly interesting subject of investigation in discourse-oriented studies. Since celebrity is a public phenomenon, we can expect that the articles are imbued with some kind of well-known public discourse. Discursive metaphors are those that are rooted in common knowledge, stemming from culture and human interaction, which means we have to share in that knowledge if we want to understand them (Šarić 2014, 178). These expressions differ from primary conceptual metaphors, which are based on our more immediate physical experiences in order to facilitate cognition and comprehension of more abstract concepts (Stanojević 2013, 88). Since the comprehension of context-specific metaphors is not as straightforward as that of primary conceptual metaphors, and may involve more than one source domain, the analyses in this paper rely on the theory of conceptual integration, whereby the notion of metaphor is observed as a dynamic process of creating mappings by making inferences from two or more input spaces (Berberović, Delibegović-Džanić 2014, 148). The final metaphor is a *blend* of the features of several input spaces (both source and target domains), which allows us to examine the mental processes that lead to the metaphor's creation. This approach enables the identification of the specific discursive functions that each deliberate metaphor has in the text.

The main assumption of this paper is that emotion is the main motivator for most deliberate metaphors on this topic – this includes both illustrating other people's emotions and expressing one's own as a means of coping with the critical event (for an overview, cf. Stanojević, Čičin-Šain 2015). By using metaphors, one can redefine the situation that causes

their negative feelings. Dennis Tay, the author of *Metaphor theory for counselling professionals*, puts forward one important aspect of using metaphors in counselling – the so-called ‘therapeutic alliance’. When it comes to dealing with emotions, metaphors can help us relate to each other by facilitating the understanding of the intricacies of one’s experience. This means that figurative language enables us to vivify our experiences by comparing them to something more ‘tangible’. The idea that we can enable other people to go through vicarious emotional experience strengthens the bond and understanding needed to produce therapeutic effects in counselling. The paper will present detailed analyses of examples of metaphors to see just how this is employed for the purposes of online articles.

## Methodology

This paper is a small-scale qualitative study of four different online articles, which aims at providing a more detailed account of how and why deliberate metaphors are used within the context of celebrity death. There are plenty of different means by which people can express their thoughts on the web, starting from social network posts to various comments and articles. I have chosen four articles from the Guardian which belong to two different genres – news articles and opinion articles. The selected news articles do not have a visible author so their original texts are mainly ‘objective’ with the purpose of informing the public. The majority of the text is obituary-like, namely, primarily focused on the facts about Bowie’s life and career. Still, they offer insight into other means of paying homage by quoting examples of other people’s tributes, usually listed one after the other (see Figure 1). The news articles contrast with the subjectivity of the selected opinion articles, both written by the same author, which have the purpose of conveying one’s personal thoughts on the topic. These are not as ‘segmented’, but rather function as single and somewhat more coherent units. (see Figure 2). There is also a comment section at the bottom, which the news articles do not have. However, we will only deal with the main text, as we strive to establish the exact places where deliberate metaphors are found in the specific contexts of the two genres.

The rock guitarist Joel Madden, quoting *Changes*, wrote simply: “Turn and face the strange”.

The rapper Kanye West said: “David Bowie was one of my most important inspirations, so fearless, so creative, he gave us magic for a lifetime.”

Mick Jagger said: “David was always an inspiration to me and a true original. He was wonderfully shameless in his work. We had so many good times together ... He was my friend. I will never forget him.”


Bowie was born David Robert Jones on 8 January 1947 in Brixton, south London, to mother Margaret “Peggy”, a waitress, and charity worker Haywood “John” Jones. His older brother’s record collection introduced him to rock music at an early age.



David Bowie at the Theatre Workshop in New York to attend the premiere of the musical *Lazarus*. Photograph: BR/Dana Press/PA

The family moved to south-east London and he graduated from Bromley technical high school at 16, when he was busy forming a number of bands and leading a group. He called himself Davy Jones, later changing his name to David Bowie to avoid confusion with Davy Jones of The Monkees. The name was reportedly inspired by a knife developed by the 19<sup>th</sup> century American pioneer Jim Bowie.

Figure 1 *David Bowie dies of cancer 69: 'he gave us magic for a lifetime'* – an example of one of the news articles



David Bowie, Copenhagen 1976. Photograph: Jorgen Angel/Getty Images

My David Bowie is not dead. Nor ever can be. What he gave to me is forever mine because he formed me. I have absolute clarity about that, I need no lamentations from politicians or TV presenters with their dim memories of his “hits”. I need no ranking of whether he was up there with Dylan or Lennon because I just know that is a dumb question. I simply know. He was my lodestar: in the years when I was trying to become myself, he showed me the endless possibilities. He extended out into the new spaces, metaphorically and physically. That man could move.

Those possibilities never end though of course he knew they would. He has gone “just like that bluebird” as he soars and sings on his latest single *Lazarus*. Well he knew things we didn’t, as he had all his life. He departs with *Blackstar* which I found terrifying without knowing why. What can I do now but listen and weep?

Or find your own Bowie. You will have it somewhere. That first play of *Ziggy*. That time you put food colouring in your hair. The night when lust became utterly confused with a different kind of longing. A longing to be in one of the worlds he told us about.

Figure 2 *My David Bowie, alive for ever* – an example of one of the opinion articles

Regarding the topic, each text in both genres focuses more on one of the two present themes: the fact of the singer’s death or people’s reactions to the event. Different points of focus on the subject can yield different results in the scope and motivation of metaphor-use, which is why I have opted for thematically different articles, assuming that fans’ reactions and emotions would prove a more fertile ground for deliberate metaphor than objective accounts of the fact of a person’s death.

The first two articles that will be analysed are reports: *'David Bowie dies of cancer at 69: He gave us magic for a lifetime'* is a report on the critical event itself, while *'We thought he'd go on forever: Bowie fans gather worldwide to pay tribute'* is a report on people's reactions to the critical event. The second part of the analysis will deal with two opinion articles, both written by the same author, Suzanne Moore. *'My David Bowie, alive for ever'* is a text about the author’s own thoughts on what Bowie’s death meant to her and to the world, while *'Don't deride those who are mourning David Bowie – this grief is serious and rational'* is a text about her opinions on people’s reactions. Below is a table of reference for each of the articles:



<b><i>'David Bowie dies of cancer at 69: He gave us magic for a lifetime</i></b>	Article 1	Report on the critical event
<b><i>'We thought he'd go on forever: Bowie fans gather worldwide to pay tribute</i></b>	Article 2	Report on people's reactions to the critical event
<b><i>My David Bowie, alive for ever</i></b>	Article 3	Opinion on the critical event
<b><i>Don't deride those who are mourning David Bowie – this grief is serious and rational</i></b>	Article 4	Opinion on people's reactions to the critical event

The deliberate metaphors in the articles have been identified by intuition and further assessed according to the degree of conventionality. The metaphors are observed as blends, which means that their in-depth analyses consist of identifying the input spaces and the specific connections between them. The purpose of such analyses is to reveal the function of the metaphors, as we examine the choices one makes when deciding how to form each particular blend.

## Results:

Both the distribution and type of metaphors used in all four articles suggest that their primary function is dealing with fans' emotions. The news article dealing with the fact of Bowie's death has by far the smallest total number of deliberate metaphors among the articles (only 12 of them), all of which are found in the quotes by other people commenting on the impact Bowie and his death had on them. At the same time, the news article specifically dealing with fans' reactions has the largest total number of deliberate metaphors, which is 21, located both in its original text and the quotes. However, the majority of metaphors in the news articles are still to be found in the quotes. The opinion articles have 17 instances of deliberate metaphor each, spread across the texts without localisation. It should be noted that the difference in numbers between the two genres could be attributed to the comparative length of the texts: the two news articles are much longer (avg. around 1500 words) than the two opinion articles (avg. around 900 words).

Out of the total of 67 deliberate metaphors, 57 have been identified as 'original' as opposed to conventional, which means that they have either deviated from a similar conventional structure or have been entirely invented by whoever uttered them. This bears interesting implications when considered in the context of the metaphors' purpose. As further analyses will show, all four articles mainly display figurative expressions of emotions (usually by fans themselves) and the fact that most of these metaphors are original in structure suggests that they serve the purpose of articulating people's unique experiences of grief.

## **Analysis: the news articles**

### **The original text**

As mentioned in the previous section, there is a significant difference in the number of metaphorical expressions between the two news articles. Article 1 – the one reporting on the critical event itself – contains no deliberate metaphors in its original text. In contrast, Article 2 abounds in metaphors which do not only come from people paying their tributes, but are an ingrained part of the original text, serving the purpose of illustrating the scope and intensity of people's reactions. (See examples (1), (2) and (3)). This points to the fact that the relationship between a celebrity and their fans is what triggers the need for conceptual interplay – deliberate metaphors are found only in informative text that deals with fans' reactions to their hero's death. Also, it can be argued that using metaphors allows for stronger representation of emotions, as their main function in the text is to reinforce the emotional component. We already find all of this at the sub-headline of Article 2:

- (1) "From Brixton to Beckham, Berlin and New York, mountains of flowers and notes show how singer touched millions of lives."

And later in the text:

- (2) "Moving messages nestled among the sea of blooms."

*Mountains of flowers and notes* in (1) and *sea of blooms* in (2) are fairly conventional metaphorical illustrations of abundance, which should nonetheless be treated as deliberate metaphors. Instead of being literal in the description of the quantity of material tributes, the author of the article opted for metaphors that evoke a sense of awe by making comparisons with natural phenomena much larger than human scale. Because they share a similar shape,

an imagined heap of flowers and notes is likened to a mountain, but the important element is the mountain's disproportionate size which inspires amazement. The same mechanism can be found in the second metaphor – *the sea of blooms* suggests that it is virtually impossible to see the limit to the amount of flowers people have laid, just as we cannot see the borders of the open sea. Both metaphors are employed to illustrate the incredible scope of people's reactions, which, in this context, is also inevitably driven by emotions. It is not just about the amount of flowers and notes – it is about the number of people who feel the need to lay them because they are in grief. To additionally illustrate the emotional impact, the author of the article says that Bowie *touched millions of lives* – also a conventional expression for the influence someone or something has on a person. Since it is least equivocal of all the senses, touch can be used to talk about a wider range of impressions such as emotional impact or aesthetic pleasure (Putman 1985). For this reason, Bowie's influence, which mainly relies on his art, is compared to 'touch' as it is more elusive, and arguably more personal to each of his fans. To make this point even stronger, there are words in example (2) that do not immediately strike us as metaphorical, but they share in creating the targeted metaphorical impression. These are what Gerard Steen calls indirect metaphors – the metaphorical use of words or expressions which does not display a clear target-domain structure, but frequently support the existing prominent metaphor (Steen 2014, 186). In describing the messages as *moving* the author supports a similar notion to the one expressed by the metaphor of touch: we can be influenced (*moved*) by an external agent that provokes emotion. Also, using the verb *nestled* for messages laid among the flowers brings to mind the idea of them being laid carefully and gently, with a purpose. Both direct and indirect metaphors in this example serve the purpose of boosting the emotional aspect of the story, because they all carry implicit indications of emotions that would have otherwise been pushed to the margins if the text was more literal.

Even the very conventional metaphors that might go unnoticed are highlighted for the purposes of emphasising emotions in the same article:

(3) ... fans of David Bowie are mourning the death of one of rock's most incandescent stars.

Referring to famous people as stars is very common in everyday speech, and need not necessarily mean people are using a deliberate metaphor. However, this expression is expanded with the adjective 'incandescent' to highlight the aspect of this metaphor that

refers to shine and visibility. People have always used stars as guidelines for spatial orientation, but they also admired them purely for their beauty and lustre. These elements – guidance and awe-inspiring shine – are taken from the first input space and blended with fame and influence coming from the other input space, in order to create the blend in which a celebrity's prominence is measured in the same way as a star's. The brighter it shines, the more people appreciate and discern it from others – and Bowie 'shined' the strongest.

### **The quotes**

It appears that the death as a fact does not lend itself to metaphorical rendition as much as the fan-celebrity connection, which means that the articles take care to impart the sentiment to the reader in such a manner that one can genuinely understand and relate to it. Consequently, the rest of the metaphors in both articles come from their reports on other people's words, which are supposed to bring the reader closer to fans' personal experiences. The following selection of expressions is found in these quotes, which come from various sources that include interviews, online tweets and posts, paper notes, etc. The following analysis may therefore not be as representative of the functions of these expressions within their source contexts, as they have been extracted for the purposes of the articles, but it still offers some valuable insight.

Perhaps the most specific and noticeable among deliberate metaphors are those that make some sort of a reference specific to Bowie's work and celebrity persona. The most direct examples are cases of recontextualization – using quotes from Bowie's songs in order to express one's own thoughts and feelings. Semino, Deignan and Littermore explain recontextualization as "cases where a specific metaphor is explicitly adopted and adapted in a different context from that in which it was first introduced." (Semino, Deignan, Littermore 2013, 4) The term 'specific metaphor' refers to a previously used expression whose meaning, author and contextual origin are known. People add to the original connotation of the quote by applying it to the new context, so the quote as a whole may function as a deliberate metaphor. It can be contested that using a well-known quote in our specific context does not only have the purpose of communicating one's own sense of loss, but also the one of sharing in with everyone else's sense of loss too. We can argue that the therapeutic function of these metaphors largely relies on the feeling of belonging, since understanding of their meaning depends on the recognition of their original sources. For example, Article 1

mentions that a musician, Joel Madden, publicly wrote (though it does not specify where) an isolated quote from Bowie's song *Changes*:

(4) Turn and face the strange.

Taken out of the context of the song, this quote obtains new meaning when used to pay tribute to its deceased author. This kind of metaphor is what Kövecses would call 'context-induced metaphor' because its interpretation is determined by contextual factors (Kövecses 2010, 684); namely the cultural context (knowledge about Bowie's work), social setting (public reaction to the news of Bowie's death), and the knowledge about major entities in the discourse (the speaker, the hearer and the topic). Originally, this quote is a part of a song that speaks about impermanence and changing one's identity through time. While this line is meant to refer to our inevitable personal change, in the new context it can be interpreted as inevitability for fans to face the fact that Bowie has died. In the song, the topic of change has a positive connotation that goes with looking into our future potentials, while the new rendition of the same word in the context of Bowie's death adds the negative aspect of change related to having to leave something in the past. The desired emotional effect is furthered by the melancholy we experience upon recognising Bowie's own words. Finally, we are left with a blend which is both poignant and hopeful as it draws on the different connotations that come from different contexts. It is less about asserting one's own unique perspective and more about connecting with the general sensitivity. Also relying on the shared knowledge of his work, it stands in the same article that the rock group Queen tweeted a link to the song they co-wrote with Bowie, and with it attached its quote:

(5) *This is our last dance...*

Again, the quote takes on a completely different meaning from the original, although both meanings rely on the same basic conceptual metaphor. In the song, it is a very ambiguous line that is supposed to refer to the last chance for showing empathy and cooperation with the whole of humanity. The use of the word 'dance' to refer to cooperation relies on Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor DANCE is DIALOGUE. Knowing the fact that the band and Bowie cooperated to create that song helps us understand how this basic conceptual metaphor is now applied to refer to his death – the *last dance* now refers to their specific cooperation. However, the meaning of the adjective 'last' changes completely thus changing

the tone of the line: in the song, it denotes one more chance to create this dialogue, while here it has the opposite meaning of not having any more chances, thus changing the mood from hopeful to despondent. Both of these cases of recontextualization achieve the effect of inspiring the feelings of grief by presenting the topic of Bowie's death to the reader in juxtaposition to the context of his life and work.

Another kind of expressions entailing Bowie-specific references does not rely on direct quoting, but rather on identifying Bowie with some aspects of his work in order to create a deliberate metaphor. In the context of his death, one of the most common specific metaphors is regarding him as a spaceman, alien, or more precisely, 'starman'<sup>1</sup>. Describing Bowie as a non-human entity helps people deal with the fact of his death by contriving alternative explanations to the event:

- (6) Christoph Storkmann, 50, said Bowie was his "musical backbone", adding: "He even died in style – made a last record, celebrated his birthday, then went off to space. He won't be replaced. There are the pyramids in Egypt and then there's Bowie in the music business."

The person uses a well-known metaphorical expression that refers to dying as going away to a different world (usually it is heaven, or something as vague as 'a better place') and makes it Bowie-specific. The function of such metaphors is clearly therapeutic, as we are trying to come to terms with someone's death by envisaging some other scenario and a place where they could still exist. Saying that Bowie went off to space, instead of typically saying that he went to heaven, does not only act as a euphemism but also gives us the opportunity to remove the notion of death from the event. Space and aliens are worldly terms and do not have the connotations of afterlife which is still somehow attached to the idea of death. Saying that he went off to space has an even stronger therapeutic impact because it suggests that he might not have died at all. Another therapeutic act is comparing the singer's role in the music business to what the pyramids mean to Egypt – timelessness and historic importance – which suggests that his death does not influence his 'existence'. By saying that Bowie was his 'musical backbone', the person is being very visual about Bowie's role in his personal life. Clearly, this metaphor revolves around the function of the spine as the main supporting element of the body, but what is particularly interesting is the fact that he uses

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<sup>1</sup> Space travelling and aliens have been a frequent topic of Bowie's songs, one of which is *Starman* – one of his greatest hits. In the second article, there is an example of the written papernote message that said: "RIP David – a Starman gone to heaven".

the metaphor of the body to talk about Bowie's significance. Our bodies are our most personal and essential possessions, and we oftentimes identify ourselves with our bodies. Choosing to identify another person with parts of our own bodies conveys more than just the idea of basic influence – it conveys a certain emotional component of attachment<sup>2</sup>, which is usually connected to either love or dependence. Interestingly, there is another similar expression to this one in the same article:

(7) The singer, said Davis – who went to see the Bowie show at the Victoria and Albert Museum six times – “is in my blood.”

Saying that something is in our blood communicates that it is an inseparable part of us which makes us who we are. Choosing these specific metaphors over expressing the same thoughts in a different or more literal language provides more space to integrate the details about one's emotional experience. This is yet another example of what we have mentioned before: metaphors help reinforce the emotional component by enabling the therapeutic effect of relating to others' emotions, which goes to say that emotional representation can be stronger in its metaphorical subtlety than in its literal description.

Even among the comments that do not directly refer to Bowie's death but only to his influence or persona there are usually some intimations of one's emotions, mostly because these comments deliberately exaggerate their point. For example, the first article reports that the rapper Kanye West said:

(8) David Bowie was one of my most important inspirations, so fearless, so creative, he gave us magic for a lifetime.

Comparing Bowie's work to magic invokes feelings of wonder and amazement in the face of something we are unable to understand. This blend exaggerates the propensity of art to remain unexplained and irrational. Emphasising this aspect of Bowie's work also brings to the fore the irrational and emotional impact it has on his fans. Again, even though the comment does not serve the therapeutic purpose of re-negotiating the critical event, it nonetheless expresses the emotional side of one's connection with him.

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<sup>2</sup> Consider: apple of my eye, my right hand, etc.

Finally, we can say that the subjective metaphorical accounts of Bowie's death in the articles' quotes also revolve around emotions. For the most part, these metaphors serve a therapeutic purpose either by renegotiating the critical event or relying on the feeling of comfort and support by reaching out to the group of people who feel the same way. In the context of news articles, this means that the readers who share in the grief can find comfort and sympathy, while those who might not be as conversant with the topic can quickly find a way to relate to it.

## **Analysis: the opinion articles**

The next two articles we will analyse are opinion articles written by the same person, Suzanne Moore, which have been introduced to this paper because of their specific perspective. While the subjective comments we have seen so far were taken out of their contexts to fit the news articles, the two following texts essentially serve as a platform for an individual to express and develop her opinions in a larger stretch of text. As will be shown later in the analysis, most of the metaphors in these articles also serve therapeutic purposes.

One of the most noticeable features of the original text of these articles as opposed to the original text of the news articles is that it contains a much larger number of metaphorical expressions which are also less conventional. For example, while Article 2 mentions that Bowie is one of "the most incandescent stars", Suzanne Moore furthers this kind of metaphor in Article 3 (see example (11)) by saying: "He was my lodestar" – still referring to the conventional metaphor of celebrities as stars, she creates a more specific expression by choosing a word other than conventional. The word *lodestar* immediately triggers different associations from those of celebrity, and allows the author to highlight the subjectivity of her experience.

To further exemplify the pronounced originality of Moore's opinion articles as opposed to the news articles, we can contrast two conceptually similar expressions of loss from Article 2 (example (9)) and Article 4 (example (10)) that drastically differ in the level of conventionality:

(9) The world is so much emptier without him here



(10) For some, a hole has been ripped in the universe and we are lost, and we will be for a good while yet.

Both of these expressions rely on the same case of embodiment, where the basic idea of death is presented as a loss to the world. In example (9), the world is seen as a container that has lost some of its content. Moreover, the emotion of grief is also conventionally presented as emptiness, where our lives are seen as containers and other people as their filling. Both concepts of loss include the notion of an emptying container, which blends them together into this conventional expression of grief. On the other hand, Moore's comment (example (10)) is even more expressive in terms of emotions, although it is conceptually almost identical, because she strengthens the impact of embodiment by using specific words to make the loss more graphic: a *hole* that now exists in the *universe*. Both words are concrete nouns that can be experienced more vividly than their vaguer counterparts – *emptiness* and *world*. Also, she uses the verb *to rip* to accentuate both the violence with which the incident occurred and the violence of emotions it caused. This implies that the occurrence was brought about forcibly, and thus puts forward the suddenness of the event that must have provoked shock and very intense emotions.

That the pronounced subjectivity and originality of these two articles can also have therapeutic purposes is shown in the following example taken from Article 3:

(11) My David Bowie is not dead. Nor ever can be. What he gave to me is for ever mine because he formed me. I have absolute clarity about that, I need no lamentations from politicians or TV presenters with their dim memories of his "hits". I need no ranking of whether he was up there with Dylan or Lennon because I just know that is a dumb question. He was my lodestar: in the years when I was trying to become myself, he showed me the endless possibilities.

The author refers to David Bowie in a metonymical way by insinuating that his influence on her will never be gone. She draws the attention away from the critical event by denying the death of the figurative Bowie, and thus puts forward the relevance of his influence on her. The whole passage brings to the fore the priority of her own experience over the critical event itself. This culminates with her almost ridiculing the more conventional ways of paying tributes as she claims that it is a 'dumb question' to consider whether Bowie is *up there with Dylan or Lennon*. This blend, which relies on the previously mentioned conventional

metaphor of talking about dying as going to heaven mixed with the idea that praised celebrities socialise with each other after they die, is a very common way of referring to a renowned person's death. Moore's rejection of this kind of concept supports her initial claim that Bowie's legacy is what we should hold on to, and not his physical presence. Moore uses the creativity of metaphorical thinking to reconceptualise the significance of the event for therapeutic purposes by stressing the importance of subjective experience.

While the author puts forward her own unique experience of the critical event by using metaphors that are original and sometimes even in contrast with conventional expressions, she also frequently employs one of the commonest ways of paying tributes – using Bowie-specific references to talk about his death or influence. For example, in the third article, the author first quotes two lines from his song *The Bewlay Brothers* and then goes on to interpret them in the light of the critical event:

(12) "Lay me place and bake me pie I'm starving for me gravy  
Leave my shoes, and door unlocked I might just slip away."  
He has slipped away.  
That door. He unlocked it. For me, for you. For us. He gave us everything. He gave us ideas, ideas above our station. All THE ideas and a specific one. Of life.

Firstly, it should be noted that *The Bewlay Brothers* is not among Bowie's most famous hits, so it would be recognised chiefly by more ardent fans. This could potentially point to the author either reaching out to those people, or positioning herself in that role by showing her familiarity with the song. She takes the words of a song that is so ambiguous that Bowie himself said he was unable to interpret it clearly, writing for Mailonline in 2008, and she turns them into a straightforward metaphor of his death and legacy. The dramatic effect is achieved by saying that Bowie's 'warning' has come true – dying is referred to as slipping away, which yet again has roots in the concept of dying as going away. However, the metaphor of the door is taken from the quote but changed into something completely different. Instead of the author unlocking the door for Bowie to slip away, she claims that he has unlocked the door for everyone to acquire new ideas. The concept of the door as an exit or end is exchanged for the concept of the door as revelation. This is yet another example of recontextualization, but the quote used is not clear enough for people to infer any changes in its meaning. Instead, the author resorts to explaining the relevance of this quote for the

point she is making, which is shifting the focus from the singer's death and turning it towards his influence, which has hitherto proved to be a more prevalent topic of the metaphorical expressions she uses.

Interestingly, Article 4 contains more than double the amount of Bowie-specific references as opposed to Article 3. Arguably, this could be related to the article's topic, because the author speaks up against people who mock fans' expressions of grief. Article 3 is all about the author's own perspective, while Article 4 puts this perspective in conflict with its opposition. This could be relevant because using quotes from songs proves that you are familiar with their sources, and so affirms your identity as a fan as opposed to the people who are not. One fairly apparent example is using a completely unrelated Bowie-quote to comment on opposers:

(13) We are in denial, maybe. But it's not the denial of the naysayers, who function *in a most peculiar way*. There is a constant refrain of discomfort about public mourning from the zombified bourgeoisie who are fearful of crowds. (italics mine)

The quote comes from one of Bowie's most widely-recognised songs, *Space Oddity*, but it is used with a different verb and thus has a completely different meaning. Bowie sings about space travel where, at one point, the main protagonist of the song exclaims 'and I'm floating in a most peculiar way.' The reference Suzanne Moore makes to this quote has nothing to do with its original meaning, which suggests that this expression is exploited primarily for the fact that it is Bowie's quote. Since there is no obvious cross-domain comparison between two concepts, it is dubious whether this expression should even be considered metaphorical. However, the reference to Bowie's most popular song is still clear and deliberate, so it influences the connotative meaning of the expression. Unlike the previous example where Bowie's words were explicitly quoted, here they are more subtly included in the original text, which means that they can only be recognised as Bowie's quote by those who are familiar with them. This pun-like approach to quotes proves the author's wit and familiarity with Bowie, and also challenges her readers' knowledge. Interestingly, the fourth article abounds with such references (as the following example will illustrate), which supports the proposition that the author deliberately stresses the extent of her knowledge in order to both prove herself as a real fan and distinguish herself and other fans from people who criticise but do not understand them. It is worth a quick note that the author refers to those

people as ‘zombified bourgeoisie’, where both words point to an ingrained or learned lack of genuine emotion. Among the rest of Bowie-specific references in the fourth article, there is also the following account of Bowie’s last days spent working on his last album:

(14)(...) But his death, the turning of his ending into something full of awe and humanity, is breathtaking. Most people in the last days of cancer cannot get dressed, let alone produce *sounds and vision* that sear our souls. (italics mine)

The author refers to one of Bowie’s earlier songs called *Sound and Vision* to talk about his last album he made while he was in the final stages of cancer. There are no quotation marks, italics or any other indicators of referencing, so the identification of the expression is left to the readers. The author provides a strong description of the emotional impact Bowie’s last album has, evoking a sense of physical pain and burning associated with grief by using the verb *to sear*. Also, the effect is made even stronger by suggesting that this almost physical pain is felt by our soul, which is considered to be the fundamental part of our being. This illustration is also oriented towards expressing emotions, and just like the rest of the article supports the dramatic tone with which the author asserts it.

The comment articles also use metaphors to reach out to people who empathise, but they do so in a more forcible manner. The author seems to actively seek recognition and affiliation by being creative with her metaphors and often including some very specific references. Also, apart from identifying with a group of people, she actively distinguishes herself and that group from others who are unable to share in the experience she is so willing to illustrate. This only goes on to show that the notion of forming ‘therapeutic alliance’ seems to be the central motivation for the use of deliberate metaphor in this context.

## **Conclusion:**

Despite the fact that none of the articles’ purposes have been to actively provide consolation in a manner that a psychotherapist or another professional might do, it can be said that the fundamental role of deliberate metaphor throughout the articles is to establish a kind of a ‘therapeutic alliance’ – a mutual understanding of emotional experiences. Even

when only reporting on the critical event, the articles include other people's words to illustrate the more intimate details about their feelings of grief. Metaphors provide an emotional dimension, which is not merely conceptual but rather experiential. It is not enough to plainly say that people exhibit certain emotions – if we want to truly understand why and how these emotions come to be experienced, we need to be able to somehow experience them ourselves. Generally speaking, from the point of view of the articles' authors, it is crucial that the readers thoroughly understand the aftermath of the critical event. However, many instances of metaphor were found in direct quotes by people who only wanted to express their personal experience, so they were not made to illustrate the general attitude. Therefore, we should also consider the reasons for their use.

Since many examples of personal tributes do not come from developed dialogues but people's mainly 'monologic' remarks, we could say that using figurative language primarily serves as an outlet. However, the fact that there are many Bowie-specific references that can be understood only by people who know what they refer to also points to the people's need to be identified with that group. This is especially so since celebrity death is basically treated as a public event. Being able to relate to other people in the same emotional experience, even if they are complete strangers, also has a therapeutic effect associated with understanding and support. If we use the analogy of Dennis Tay's patient-therapist relationship, we could say that by publicly displaying their thoughts people are acting as both therapists and patients. They find consolation in being understood and participating in the general sentiment, while at the same time providing support to the readers who come across their comments. One of the best examples of this are the two comment articles we have analysed where the author evidently helps others by both renegotiating the event and sharing her thoughts, while at the same time actively stressing her belonging to "those who know".

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