

UDC 82:1/82.1/9

DOI [https://doi.org/10.18524/2307-8332.2025.2\(32\).350479](https://doi.org/10.18524/2307-8332.2025.2(32).350479)

Iraida TOMBULATOVA

Candidate of Philological Sciences,

Associate Professor at the Department of Ukrainian Literature and Comparative Studies

Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University

Odesa, Ukraine

tombulatova@ukr.net

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2396-2902>

STUDIO ALBUM AS A TRAVELOGUE: INTERDISCURSIVE APPROACH

This short study focuses on the features of the artistic embodiment of the “travelogue” genre and the possibility of its successful artistic representation in lyrics. In general, the article states that the lyrics of popular songs are a separate type of literary art and a unique channel of communication with the recipient. Lyrics of this type often gain worldwide popularity, signaling that they are somehow relatable to a large number of people. The study of such texts can demonstrate the main components of the axiological system of entire generations and cultural epochs. It can also explain which values are important to humanity in general, as some new generations reinterpret lyrics that may have been popular with generations of past decades. The study talks about the studio album as an artistic representation of the travelogue, emphasizing that an artistic journey should have two main components: documentary and fictional. An interesting fact is that the artistic journey is often extended from purely geographical to cultural and/or metaphysical, etc. Moreover, any journey is a part of an experience, and therefore can in some way affect the identity of both the author and the recipients. The article focuses on the studio album “Californication” (1999) by the Red Hot Chili Peppers, which was produced by Rick Rubin. This studio album has been analyzed in terms of being identifiable as a travelogue. In addition to the exclusively imagological approach, through which we can talk about certain dominant geographical topos (California is obviously a central topos), in this album we often encounter an intertextual dimension in the lyrics, which involves the recipient in a cultural journey. It is also worth emphasizing that the authors reflected a number of intellectual aspects and philosophical theories in the lyrics, the realization of which is a part of the metaphysical journey. Therefore, the presented lyrics are a travelogue that has a complex structure, the analysis of which can reveal new meanings related to several generations.

Keywords: *travelogue, interdiscursivity, lyrics, semiotics, the image of Other, identity, intertextuality.*

Introduction. As a matter of fact it must be admitted that talking about meaningful poetry sometimes means talking about lyrics of the songs which accompany generations of people everywhere, being symbolic to a great deal of events or make a number of memories for people, becoming the system of signs to attribute certain epoch and axiology system of society.

This way it is quite clear that lyrics of songs influence humans' identities and, moreover, contain some important ideas and values which identify them and the image of Other. Still, they can be represented even as a travelogue-like collection of texts of a studio album.

In fact, travelogue has become rather a popular phenomenon in literary process and can be constructed in various ways. To put it simply, travelogue "is a film or a book about travelling to or in particular place" [7] and there exist lots of literary examples of it in national literatures all over the world.

The **purpose** of this article is to make an attempt to analyze a studio album as a travelogue and demonstrate the way both the substructure and the superstructure of it make a kind of "journey" for several generations. Due to this it is necessary to apply an interdiscursive approach as a combination of **methods** to work on the research: literary studies, semiotics, imagology, comparative literature studies, phenomenology, even hermeneutics and legit comment.

Main body. Actually, lots of lyrics are created and listened to by billions of people in the whole world, and even some of the songs are remastered after decades by other artists, which identifies the re-actualization of those texts because of their great value for generations, some of them can be taken as poetry, narrative poetry or even meta-travelogue as well. Prof. F. Hamid notes that: "The travelogue – meaning literary exposition of travel experience – may conveniently be classified again as (a) fantasy described or given as exposition of fact, (b) literature of recorded fact and (c) literature of artistic presentation of recorded impressions and feeling during travel" [3, p. 44]. Usually the trip in literary text doesn't describe just a geographical one, but it is also combined with another types of travel: metaphysical, cultural, and, anyway, identity-alternating. In this article the album "Californication" (RHCP, 1999) is taken for a short case-study on a mentioned above phenomenon.

Traditionally, any travelogue consists of two parts: fictional and documentary. Fiction element in the story always deals with the impressions, feelings, subjective attitude and artistic storytelling in a literary text. Documentary element contains geographical or historical facts, something objective that can be depicted in the travelogue.

As a substructure of the lyrics of the studio album "Californication" is a geographical element with the predominance of the topos of California, this can be clear even from the title of the album as the poetics of the title deals with the combination of two words: California and fornication. That fact even appeals to the idea that this travel is compound and includes a number of different trips in the set of texts.

The opening text is “Around the World”. The lyrics here “show the audience more traditional version of geographical travel, here we got into the several exact locations: state of Pennsylvania, California, Alabama, and Bombay [...]. Still, this text is not just about a geographical trip as any point of this travel is related to the experience gained by the personality. By the way, it must be underlined that such associations can create imagological stereotypes afterwards. Also, “Life is Beautiful” (Roberto Benigni, 1997) was the inspiration to create lyrics, so we can trace and analyze the point of intertextuality in this case, either” [6, p. 162]. It is clear that even in the first track there is the mix of different types of travel, as in addition to geographical one the recipient participates in cultural trip by means of decoding intertextual images, which makes the superstructure of this exact text.

Another lyrics to focus on can be “Scar Tissue”. That’s an example of an identity-alternating journey, as “scar tissue” can be taken as a “map” of a life experience that shapes the personality by means of surrounding, communication, works of art, events and so on and so forth. And, of course, all of that not only crystalizes the personality but can be reflected in artistic pieces through storytelling and implementing intertextual signs into the lyrics. In case of “Scar Tissue” we have an actual evidence about the creating of the lyrics of this song written in the book “Scar Tissue”: “Rick had read a theory that it was an incredibly detrimental form of humor that depresses the spirit of its proponents. We had been such sarcastic dicks that we vowed to try to be funny without using sarcasm as a crutch. I guess I was also thinking of Dave Navarro, who was the King of Sarcasm, faster and sharper than the average bear. All these ideas were in the air when John started playing this guitar riff [...] I’ll never forget looking up at the sky above that garage, out toward Griffin Park with the birds flying overhead, and getting a dose of Jonathan Livingston Seagull. I really did have the point of view of those birds, feeling like an eternal outsider” [4, p. 404]. Here can be seen the crossroad of metaphysical (influence of different intellectual and philosophical theories) and cultural (intertextual allusions to other literary text, here – R. Bach “Jonathan Livingston Seagull”) trips which cause an alternating of the identity, which is reflected in the lyrics.

Sure, it is important to pay attention to the lead single of the studio album as it usually is the essence of the set of the texts. It is clear, that: “hit-single of this studio-album is – obviously – “Californication”. This text continues developing the image-mirage of “California-dreaming”, which is quite popular in the world, and especially in music and cinema industries. This text is full of references and can be one of the outstanding examples of the intertextuality nowadays. For instance, “Psychic spies from China try to steal your mind elation” – The Manchurian Candidate, (Movie, 1962); “Celebrity skin is this your chin or is that war your waging” – Celebrity Skin (Album, 1998); “A teenage bride with a baby inside getting high on information” – Education Rita (Movie, 1980); “Space may be the final frontier but it’s made in a Hollywood basement” – Star Trek (Series, 1966); “Cobain can you hear the spheres singing songs off station to station” – reference to Kurt Cobain and “Station to Station”

(Album, D. Bowie, 1976); “And Alderaan’s not far away” – Star Wars (Movie, 1977); “And earthquakes are to a girl’s guitar they’re just another good vibration” – Earthquake (Movie, 1974) [11]. These are some of the references-interpretations those could be found in the text by fans and researchers. Of course, the lyrics can be called the “intersection” of intertextual references or even the “crossroad” of this Travel across an exotic image-mirage of California” [6, p. 162]. According to all of those facts it is necessary to admit that this text is predominantly a cultural travel in spite of the fact that the first association of the recipient can create a geographical image of California. Furthermore, it has been already mentioned that the title here combines two words (California and fornication) and has a notion to depict a kind of “dark side” of life in city-“mirage”, focuses on its sinful nature. As C. Walthall implies “... about the underbelly of American society. There’s deceit, plasticity, and desperation under the gilded face of the American Dream. The Red Hot Chili Peppers saw that California represented these extremes – both the elaborate gilded nature of it all and the darkness underneath. In essence, it’s a song about the rot that lies just underneath the surface” [9]. Thus, in this case we can identify at least four types of the image of travel in one lyric text: geographical, cultural, metaphysical and identity-alternating according to the codes those can be decoded.

One of the most important texts on the studio album containing the elements of fictional travel is “Otherside” which is based on metaphysical binary oppositions “life – death”, “good – evil”, “eros – thanatos”. It deals with the problem of experiencing lyric hero’s own and his friends’ drug trips and consequently passing one of them which had a huge effect on all the members of the group. Manuel Vieni states in the article: “the problem of drug addiction mentioned in the lyrics refers mainly to the band in general, from the fallout of Anthony to the black period of Frusciante, passing through Slovak’s overdose. The interpretations given to this song are multiple and apply to every aspect, from the title to the video. “Otherside” is written in the only word, depicting good and evil as one thing, two sides of the same coin, two inseparable bodies” [8]. This text, as it can be seen, correlates directly with the philosophical theory of S. Freud revealed in his book “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, as it tells about two main drivers: life/sex and death. S. Freud writes: “... we cannot disguise another fact from ourselves, that we have steered unawares into the haven of Schopenhauer’s philosophy for whom death is the ‘real result’ of life and therefore in so far its aim, while the sexual instinct is the incarnation of the will to live” [2, p. 40]. The lyrics of the song are filled with the signs and symbols on sexual and mortal codes, and combination of them, for example: “I heard your voice through the photograph” [5] (sign of memories which is created by the verb of real action and the noun that defines a lifeless being, the mixture of life/death code), “a cemetery where I marry the sea” [5] (two frontiers are mentioned: cemetery and the sea, - both are the symbols of otherside as cemetery symbolizes the world of the dead and the sea is a traditional topos of the otherside starting at list from the epoch of the Romanticism), “pour my life into a paper cup / the ashtray’s full and I’m spilling

my guts”, “a scarlet starlet and she’s in my bed / a candidate for my soul mate bled / mmm, push the trigger and I pull the thread / I gotta take it on the otherside” [5] (the quotation is a range of signs which depict the addiction that leads to the death, the combination of pleasure and pain, the simultaneous desire to feel alive (sex/life driver) and to self-harm (death driver). This type of travel is a metaphysical one, connected with a certain kind of philosophy implemented in life-experience perception, but it must be also admitted that the travel to the Other World is one of the most typical literary travelogues, for instance, in myths, legends, folklore, fairy-tales and so on.

The other text from this studio album that is important to focus on is, for sure, “Emmit Remmus”. It is constructed, basically, on binary opposition “California - London” to stress on the difference between two people trying to build relationship. In subtext – again – there are some clearly geographical locations that make the documental element of this kind of meta-travelogue text: Leicester Square, Primrose Hill, Thames and, of course direct naming: London, California and another binary opposition “English girl – American man” who have real prototypes. Still, even in this lyrics there are signs dealing with superstructure and here it is connected with the totemic and pagan ideas: “the California animal is a bear” [1] or “the California flower is a poppy” [1] – they serve as a documentary facts on the one hand, but as literary symbols on the other hand. But it is even more necessary to highlight that they add to the studio album as a “trip”, here we have the continuation of geography-cultural mash-up.

In other lyrics of texts there are lots of signs which create the imagotheme of the main topos, for example: Hollywood, Big Sur, Dracula and Darla Hood etc. But this studio album doesn’t integrate you into the image-mirage of California-dreaming (intertextual allusion), but, on the contrary, it breaks the stereotype showing the dark side of a dream-like location, with fornication-type relationships, drug-addicted people (even if they are celebrities and successful ones, they have lots of troubles with their so-called shadow identities), deaths (often – suicides). This is really complicated set of texts which makes another type of communication between the writer and the reader. Andrew West in his work “The Art of Songwriting” states: “Sean Devine, vice president of international membership at the American Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers, firmly believes that songwriting is about communication. ‘The people who write popular songs’, he says, ‘are masters of communication who communicate in ways that most of us are unable to do.’ As previously discussed, while a lyric writer may have a highly developed sense of conversational or written language, he or she is not entitled, within the multidimensional format of song construction, to convey lyrics on extra-musical terms. Rather the presence of music in song requires the songwriter to mediate and adapt a melodically structured verbal language to create a new form of communicative language. Further to the previously emphasized areas of music, lyric and structure, the dimensions of arrangement, performance and production are key in allowing songs to communicate. With the

addition of these complementary elements, each of which compete to occupy our attention, how songs communicate meaning becomes a more complex study” [10, p. 45–46]. Thus, this studio album is a kind of a travelogue – with a number of objective facts mentioned – we also read / listen to the fiction element, created by implementing authentic impressions and attitudes which alter a great many of stereotypes and it is another unique feature of this travelogue-like studio album.

Conclusions and perspectives. This short research shows that, firstly, travelogue can be represented in any genre and is really one of the most popular types of literature currently. Secondly, lyrics of the songs are – obviously – very influential texts for generations of different people of all over the world, they create stable images to represent various things and issues. It is really pivotal to understand that travel is not just geographical one, but also usually cultural and metaphysical journeys. Moreover, this crossroad of types of travel generally becomes an identity-alternating travel and studio album can be such a travelogue-like story. In perspective lots of iconic studio albums can be studied and the results of these investigations can show the image of country or generation, values and beliefs etc. To conclude, any lyrics from a studio album can be a great system of signs which represent society and its profound identity.

References

1. *Red Hot Chili Peppers – Emit Remmus lyrics.* (n.d.). AZLyrics. Retrieved October 13, 2025, from <https://cutt.ly/nr45XOpk>
2. Freud, S. (2015). Beyond the pleasure principle. In E. Jones (Ed.), *The international psycho-analytical library* (No 4, C. J. M. Hubback, Trans., 56 p.). London, Vienna. https://www.libraryofsocialscience.com/assets/pdf/freud_beyond_the_pleasure_principle.pdf
3. Hamid, F. (2022). Travelogues: the fully emerged and innovative literary genre. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Scientific Research*, 5(1), 40–47. <https://doi.org/10.31426/ijamsr.2022.5.1.5015>
4. Kiedis, A., & Sloman, L. (2004). *Scar tissue* (465 p.). New York: Time Warner Books.
5. *Red Hot Chili Peppers – Otherside lyrics.* (n.d.). AZLyrics. Retrieved October 13, 2025, from <https://cutt.ly/kr45CnKP>
6. Tombulatova, I. (2021). The image of the travel in the “Californication” lyrics (RHCP, 1999). *Doslidzhennia riznykh napriamiv rozvytku filolohichnykh nauk: Mizhnarodna naukovo-praktychna konferentsiia, Odesa, 26–27 lystopada 2021 r.* (pp. 161–164). Odesa: Pivdenoukrainska orhanizatsiia “Tsentri filolohichnykh doslidzhen”.
7. Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). Travelogue. English meaning. In *Cambridge dictionary*. Retrieved October 13, 2025, from <https://cutt.ly/Sr45BHas>
8. Vieni, M. (2019, June 5). *Red Hot Chili Peppers, Otherside: beyond the meaning of the lyrics.* Auralcrave. Retrieved October 16, 2025, from <https://cutt.ly/kr46yLiX>
9. Walthall, C. (2022, August 11). *The dark meaning of “Californication” by the Red Hot Chili Peppers.* American songwriter. Retrieved October 16, 2025, from <https://cutt.ly/Br45N2Oy>
10. West, A. (2016). *The art of songwriting* (256 p.). Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.
11. Knut Foseide. (2017, June 27). *Californication – Lyrics Analysis / Interpretation* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved October 16, 2025, from <https://cutt.ly/Wr46i4md>

Іраїда ТОМБУЛАТОВА

СТУДІЙНИЙ АЛЬБОМ ЯК ТРЕВЕЛОГ: ІНТЕРДИСКУРСИВНИЙ ПІДХІД

Це коротке дослідження фокусується на особливостях художнього втілення жанру «тревелог» та можливості його вдалої художньої репрезентації у ліриці. Загалом, у статті зазначено, що лірика популярних пісень — це окремий вид літературного мистецтва та унікальний канал комунікації з реципієнтом. Лірика такого типу часто набуває популярності по всьому світу, що сигналізує про те, що вона є якимось чином близькою великій кількості людей. Дослідження таких текстів може продемонструвати основні складові аксіологічної системи цілих поколінь та культурних епох. Також може пояснити, які з цінностей важливі для людства назагал, оскільки деякі нові покоління переосмислюють лірику, яка могла бути популярною для поколінь десятиліття тому. У дослідженні йдеться про студійний альбом як про художню репрезентацію тревелога, наголошується на тому, що художня подорож має мати дві основні складові: документальну та фікційну. Цікавим є той факт, що художня подорож часто розширено з суто географічної до культурної чи/та метафізичної тощо. Ба більше, будь-яка подорож є частиною досвіду, а отже, може певним чином вплинути на ідентичність як автора, так і реципієнтів. У статті увагу приділено студійному альбому 1999 року “Californication” гурту Red Hot Chili Peppers, продюсером якого був Рік Рубін. Цей студійний альбом проаналізовано з точки зору того, що його можна ідентифікувати як тревелог. Окрім виключно імагологічного плану, за посередництвом якого можна говорити про певні домінуючі географічні топоси (вочевидь, Каліфорнія є центральним топосом), у цьому альбомі у ліриці часто стикаємося з інтертекстуальним виміром, що залучає реципієнта до культурної подорожі. Варто також підкреслити й те, що в ліриці авторами відрефлексовано ряд інтелектуальних аспектів, філософських теорій, усвідомлення яких є частиною й метафізичної подорожі. Отже, представлена лірика є тревелогом, який має складну структуру, аналіз якої може відкрити нові сенси, пов’язані одразу з кількома поколіннями.

Ключові слова: тревелог, інтердискурсивність, лірика, семіотика, образ Іншого, ідентичність, інтертекстуальність.