

The Analysis of Figurative Language in Audre Lorde's Poem 'From the House of Yemanjá'

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to categorize the various figurative language that Audre Lorde employed in her poem *From the House of Yemanjá*. The study of figurative languages such as paradox, personification, hyperbole, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, antithesis, and symbolism are the subject of this study. A content analysis strategy was employed in this study together with a qualitative methodology. The researcher served as the main analytical tool for figurative language. The results of the analysis showed that *From the House of Yemanjá*, a poem by Audre Lorde, employed figurative language 29 times. The researcher concludes that Lorde's use of figurative language to symbolize the sentences results in beautiful language. The majority of her poems discussed her past experiences, which were influenced by the history of prejudice against American-African women or black women.

1. Introduction

Language is a tool to interact or tools to communicate, in a sense, means to convey thoughts, ideas, concepts, or even a feeling. The language activity is a "who speaks/writes what language to Whom, when, and to what end." Therefore, from the view of sociolinguistics, language functions can be viewed from different angles, such as speakers/writers, listeners/readers, topics, codes, and purposes (Chaer and Agustina, 2004, p. 15).

In communication, people have two meanings (explicit and implicit) inside their language. Language is a common way to express ideas, feelings, and desires through a system of sounds and sound symbols. It can also be said, by language, people can share or deliver what is in their minds. Because of the importance of language, people should understand not only the form of language but also the meaning in it. There are many ways to deliver the feeling and ideas that can be caught and understand the meaning. One of the ways is to write a poem. The poem is one of the literary works that contain figurative language (Nur and Miranti, 2018, p. 19).

Figurative language is used in literature, especially in poetry where poets/writers appeal to the senses of the readers/listeners. Through figurative language, poets/writers usually use specific phrases or words to express something beyond the literal meaning. Figurative language is used in the literature to enhance the reading experience of the readers and it

allows the readers to feel the same situation/feelings that the writers expressed in the pieces of writing (Education Help, 2015, para. 1).

Figurative language serves as an excellent communication tool and is something people encounter daily that helps them convey complex descriptions or emotions quickly and effectively. Figurative language can be utilized to persuade, engage and connect with an audience and amplify the intended message. Implementing figurative language takes some careful thought and close observations to successfully convey the intended meaning (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 1). Its creative wording is used to build imagery to deepen the audience's understanding and help provide power to words by using different emotional, visual and sensory connections (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 3).

Poetry is chosen as the object of study for several reasons; one of which is that poetry contains more figurative language than other literary devices. The other reason is that poetry needs more interpretation to understand the message that wants to be delivered to the listeners/readers. The poetry writer usually uses many figurative languages to express their feelings and ideas implicitly. Listeners/readers should improve their critical thinking to understand the implicit meaning of every word in poetry (Nur and Miranti, 2018, p. 19).

Poetry also has significance in education. By understanding poetry students can develop their reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and critical thinking analysis. Poetry is a universal language used by poets to express their ideas in beautiful words. As a universal language, poetry has existed almost in all periods. Poetry is a unique medium of communication, it is created in the form of a brief language, and it differs from other literary works (Nur and Miranti, 2018, pp. 19-20).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Fifteen Figurative Languages

Fifteen figurative languages are used in this study. Metaphor is a kind of figurative language that made a comparison between two things that are different to identify one with another. Metaphors are used in poetry to explain emotions, feelings, relationships other elements that could not be described in ordinary language (Nur and Miranti, 2018, p. 20).

The metaphor is a direct comparison without using the comparative words "like" or "as." Metaphors equate the two things being compared to elicit a stronger connection and deepen the meaning of the comparison. Some metaphors, which continue for several lines or an entire piece, are called extended metaphors. Examples: Her smile is the sunrise. Your son was a shining star in my classroom. The tall trees were curtains that surrounded us during our picnic. The ants soldiered on to steal our dessert (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 7).

Personification consists of giving human characteristics to an object. Personification is a figure of speech that describes something that is not human as though it could feel, think, act, live, or die in the same way as people. For example, in Emily Dickinson's poem, the title is "Ambition cannot find him" (Nur and Miranti, 2018, p. 20). This personifies objects and makes them more relatable. Examples: The chair squealed in pain when the hammer smashed it. The tree's limb cracked and groaned when lightning hit it. My heart jumped when my daughter entered the room in her wedding dress. The computer argued with me and refused to work (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 8).

Onomatopoeia is the use of descriptive words that sound or mimic the noise they are describing. Examples: The water splashed all over the top of the car. Owls screech through the night and keep us awake when we are camping. My stomach grumbled in hunger as we entered the restaurant. Thumping and booming in excitement, my heart pounded to hear the results of the lottery (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 9).

Hyperbole is the term used by someone who has a desire and expectation for the thing that happens to make an object greater than the real object. For example: "I will die if I don't meet him tomorrow", the word "die" is overexpression if the reader wants to think that in the real life (Nur and Miranti, 2018, p. 20). A hyperbole is an over-exaggeration used to emphasize an emotion or description. Sometimes hyperbole also implements the use of simile and comparative words. Examples: I am so hungry I would eat dirt right now. My brother is taller than a skyscraper. The concert was so loud the drums echoed in space. Racing through the day was a marathon run for me (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 11).

A simile is a figure that makes a comparison between two different things, just like a metaphor but in simile usually uses the word *as*, *then*, *like*, *seem*, *so*, *appear*, and more than. In an example of the simile "He is as hard as nails", the adjective here used to describe behavioral and attitudinal characteristics of a person referred to as "he" via comparison with concrete, physical hardness of nails, which are made of metal, typically steel (Nur and Miranti, 2018, p. 20). The simile is often used to highlight a characteristic of one of the items, similes rely on the comparison and the audience's ability to create connections and make inferences about the two objects being discussed and understand the one similarity they share. For example, they fought like cats and dogs (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 6).

Litotes are figures of speech that use understatement to make a point. It is often sarcastic in tone. The statement is affirmed by negating the opposite. Examples: I can't say I disagree with what you're saying. My dog is not the friendliest. He's not even a little tired after staying up all night watching television. She's not unkind (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 12).

Metonymy is a word or complex expression that stands for one thing, or it is also used for one lexical thing connected with another through experience. It is also about part-whole relationships, the kind which allows the same word to be used in many languages for "hand" and "arm", " or for "foot" and "leg" (Nur and Miranti, 2018, p. 20).

An idiom is a commonly used expression that has acquired a meaning different from its literal meaning. Idiomatic phrases vary by culture and language. They are often difficult to grasp for language learners because the expression's true meaning is so different than what is being expressed. Examples: My grandmother's garden is flourishing because of her green thumb. The children could not play baseball because it was raining cats and dogs outside. You must play your cards right to win at the game of life. Some people throw in the towel before they should and never learn the value of working hard for success (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 13).

Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant sound at the start of one or more words near one another. It is often used to emphasize an emotion or reveal a stronger description. Examples: The pitter-patter of paws echoed down the hallway and woke me from my slumber. The clamoring clash of dishes cracking on the concrete burned my ears. Old

creaking crates carry ages of dust within them and are about to burst open. The babble of babies brings joy to my ears (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 14).

An allusion is a reference to a well-known person, place, thing, or event of historical, cultural, or literary merit. It requires the audience to use their background knowledge to understand the meaning. Examples: You stole the forbidden fruit when you took his candy. He didn't do anything as bad as chopping down a cherry tree. She was Helen of Troy in the class and made all the boys fight. My little girl ran faster than a speeding bullet when she grabbed my lipstick (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 15).

Synecdoche is a figure of speech that a part that refers to a specific whole. Synecdoche expresses either more or less than it is literary denotes. For example, In the sentence "I got a new wheel from my father", the word "wheel" represents the meaning of a car, so she got a new car (Nur and Miranti, 2018, p. 20). Less commonly, synecdoche can be used when a whole is used to refer to a part. The most common types of wholes and parts include a physical structure and its parts, an object and the material it is made out of, a container and what it holds, and a category and the items in those categories. Examples: The company needs a more hands-on deck to get complete this project in time. The White House issued a statement today. The captain commands 70 sails (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022, para. 16).

Antithesis is a figure speech that combines two things that are different or contradictory in one sentence or negation. Antithesis is a device for placing opposing ideas in grammatical parallel. Antithesis results when a pair or more strongly contrasting terms are presented together, for Example: "Speech is silver, silence is golden" (Nur and Miranti, 2018, p. 20).

Irony statements are untrue, based on the reasoning that is interpreted by the hearer from the speaker's meaning. The irony is not praising but usually criticism. For example: "no doubt, you are the best person that ruined my life" (Nur and Miranti, 2018, p. 20).

Symbolism is a kind of figure speech that uses symbols of animals, plants, or things to substitute something. Symbolism is established from the result of personal; experience or fantasies". For example, Word "Rose" is a referent for beauty destroyed by time, sexuality, secrecy, and guilt, all seem drawn in by the implications of these words (Nur and Miranti, 2018, p. 20).

A paradox is a figure speech that delivers two things which contradictory but this figure reveals the real fact that makes sense even if the speaker or the writer uses a word that is absurd. For example, "Experience is simply the name we give to our mistakes" by Oscar Wilde. This quotes the fact that when we have to do something wrong in our life, we always take it as an experience (Nur and Miranti, 2018, pp. 20-21).

2.2 Statement of the Problem

Audre Lorde's poems have been a significant impetus behind the development of postcolonial and cultural studies. There may have been much stated about Lorde's poetry, but to the researcher's knowledge, figurative language has never been demonstrated enough in any of them. Poems are intended to be examined and analyzed using the proper tools. When given a thorough contextual study, 'From the House of Yemanjá' poetry of Audre Lorde can be better understood for its rich meanings, background, and themes. Therefore, the issue acknowledged by this study is that figurative language has not been used to analyze and understand Lorde's work. The researcher started studying 'From the House of Yemanjá' poetry by Audre Lorde to find a solution to this issue.

2.3 Biography of Audre Lorde

Audre Lorde (1934–1992), who identified as "black, lesbian, mother, warrior, and poet," devoted her life and her artistic talent to confronting and resolving the inequities of race, gender, class, and homosexuality. Lorde was born to West Indian immigrants in New York City. Indeed, Lorde weaves her personal experiences with more overarching political objectives in her contributions to feminist theory, critical racial studies, and queer theory. In canonical essays, Lorde was the one to discuss how race, class, and gender intertwine. Lorde campaigned against the marginalization of identities like "black woman" and "lesbian" (Poetry Foundation, 2022).

Audre Lorde played a crucial role in numerous activist groups and liberation movements, such as second-wave feminism, the Black cultural and civil rights organizations, and the fight for LGBTQ equality. The strength of Lorde's poetry's appeal for social and racial justice, as well as its representations of LGBT experience and sexuality, are particularly well-known. In 1997, Audre Lorde's *Collected Poems* was published. The black lesbian feminist poet and activist reminds her audience that they risk their safety by ignoring human distinctions. Differences in race or class should be a "cause for celebration and advancement," according to Lorde (Poetry Foundation, 2022).

Lorde was a particularly talented narrator of childhood who, throughout her career, wrote from personal experience. Her autobiographical lyrics frequently have a striking sense of immediacy; in "Hanging Fire," for example, Lorde uses the voice of her 14-year-old self to make the past present tense. The title of this poem from *The Black Unicorn* (1978) adopts a more mythical viewpoint; it compares her mother to the mother Orisha, the Yoruba goddess of rivers and oceans, and the opening stanza describes her as having "two faces" and "cooking up her daughters / into girls / before she fixed our dinner." Such duality evokes Lorde's mother, a light-skinned immigrant who instilled tenacity in Lorde but also despised her daughter's darker skin tone (Voigt, 2022).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Subject

The object of the study is poetry from Audre Lorde entitled 'From the House of Yemanjá'.

3.2 Instruments

To conduct this research, the design content analysis with a qualitative approach is used. Content analysis is the intellectual process of categorizing qualitative textual data into categories of similar concepts, to identify consistent patterns or relationships between variables of themes (Given, 2008).

Qualitative research is the understanding of social phenomena based on the participant's point of view. To increase information about a particular phenomenon, such as an environment, a process, or even a belief (Gay, 2006).

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher read line by line the poetry to find figurative language in it. After that, the researcher put it in a table and classifies it based on figurative indicators. In analyzing the data, the researcher uses qualitative data analysis theory by Miles & Huberman (1994), this analysis uses three steps, data reduction, data display, or data representation, and conclusion drawing and verification.

The researcher chose the poem "From the House of Yemanjá" by Audre Lorde, which was found on the website <https://www.poetryfoundation.org>, for the reduction process. In order to identify any figurative language in the words, phrases, or sentences, the researcher carefully read line by line. The data was then entered into a checklist table that includes figurative categories as a means of data representation. The information is organized by describing meanings, based on each figurative category. The researcher comes to a conclusion about which figurative appears among fifteen figurative languages and which figurative is primarily used in Audre Lorde's poetry from "From the House of Yemanjá."

4. Findings

In Audre Lorde's poetry entitled 'From the House of Yemanjá', the letter (P) codes poetry; the letter (L) codes a line of poetry, and the symbol Σ (Sigma) is a code for the sum of the outcomes.

The poetry from "From the House of Yemanjá" contains 19 metaphors, 4 antitheses, 3 symbols, 1 allusion, and 2 similes. There was a total of 21 sentences that used figurative language. The most figurative type of language was a metaphor. Several figurative indicators were lacking a foundation because there was no sentence demonstrating how they were indicated.

Table 1: Figurative Language Used in the Lines

No	Kind of Figurative Language	Lines	Σ
1	Metaphor	(L1), (L1), (L2), (L3), (L4), (L5), (L6), (L7), (L9), (L10), (L11), (L12), (L13), (L15), (L19), (L20), (L32), (L33), (L34)	19
2	Personification		
3	Hyperbole		
4	Simile	(L29), (L30)	2
5	Metonymy		
6	Synecdoche		
7	Irony		
8	Antithesis	(L12), (L13), (L17), (L34)	4
9	Symbolism	(L1), (L12), (L13)	3
10	Paradox		
11	Onomatopoeia		
12	Litotes		
13	Idiom		
14	Alliteration		
15	Allusion	Title	1
Total			29

5. Discussion

The researcher summarized the information and found that Audre Lorde primarily uses metaphor in her poems from "From the House of Yemanjá." Nevertheless, Audre Lorde did use some figurative language in her poetry. Metaphor, antithesis, symbolism, simile, and allusion were among the five types of figurative language used in the poetry. Twenty of the sentences had twenty-nine figurative languages. A metaphor is made up of 19 sentences, while an antithesis is made up of 4, a symbol is made up of 3, a simile is made up of 2, and an allusion is made up of 1 sentence. The poetry did not have all fifteen figurative language indicators due to some sentences' lack of figurative language.

Table 2: Meanings of Figurative Language Used in the Lines

Lines	Sentences	Types of Figurative Language	Meanings
Title	From the House of Yemanjá	Allusion	Yemanja, the mother of all other gods in Yoruba mythology (Njeng Eric Sipyinyu, 2004, para. 4).
1	My mother had two faces and a frying pot	Metaphor Symbolism Metaphor	The speaker's mother is employing social construction to mold her girls into the stereotype of white society. Symbolizes the mother's desire to mold her daughters, into something they are not. One concentrated on being white and its benefits, the other on being black.
2	where she cooked up her daughters	Metaphor	The mother tried to mold her girls into the shapes she preferred.
3	into girls	Metaphor	The mother tried to mold her girls into the shapes she preferred.
4	before she fixed our dinner.	Metaphor	The mother tried to mold her girls into the shapes she preferred.
5	My mother had two faces	Metaphor	One concentrated on being white and its benefits, the other on being black.
6	and a broken pot	Metaphor	The pot is broken, as the speaker's inadequacy has damaged the bond between mother and daughter.
7	where she hid out a perfect daughter	Metaphor	Her mother was shaping her other daughters to be better than the speaker was.
8	who was not me		
9	I am the sun and moon and forever hungry	Metaphor	Desire her mother's approval and love.
10	for her eyes.	Metaphor	Desire her mother's approval and love.
11	I bear two women upon my back	Metaphor	Two dual identity.
12	one dark and rich and hidden	Antithesis Metaphor Symbolism	The speaker's conflict with the cultural divide between whites and blackness. One is dark, rich, and genuine, whereas

			the other is white, fake, and tainted. Black society.
13	in the ivory hungers of the other	Antithesis Metaphor Symbolism	The speaker's conflict with the cultural divide between whites and blackness. One is dark, rich, and genuine, whereas the other is white, fake, and tainted. White Society.
14	mother		
15	pale as a witch	Metaphor	One is dark, rich, and genuine, whereas the other is white, fake, and tainted.
16	yet steady and familiar		
17	brings me bread and terror	Antithesis	Dual identity of her mother (good and bad).
18	in my sleep		
19	her breasts are huge exciting anchors	Metaphor	Her mother is terrifying to her.
20	in the midnight storm.	Metaphor	Her mother is terrifying to her.
21	All this has been		
22	before		
23	in my mother's bed		
24	time has no sense		
25	I have no brothers		
26	and my sisters are cruel.		
27	Mother I need		
28	mother I need		
29	mother I need your blackness now	Simile	The child's black skin tone is likened to the august dirt in that both require water to be more appealing.
30	as the august earth needs rain.	Simile	The child's black skin tone is likened to the august dirt in that both require water to be more appealing.
31	I am		
32	the sun and moon and forever hungry	Metaphor	The speaker is like the "sun and moon" that are being split apart from her mother.
33	the sharpened edge	Metaphor	The speaker is like the "sun and moon" that are being split apart from her mother.
34	where day and night shall meet	Metaphor Antithesis	Even though day and night may meet, the speaker may never get her mother's care. The eternal separation between mother and daughter.
35	and not be		
36	one.		

6. Conclusion

The researcher discovered some figurative language in Audre Lorde's poem "From the House of Yemanjá" based on research findings. The researcher employed fifteen different types of figurative language (Metaphor, Personification, Hyperbole, Simile, Metonymy, Synecdoche, Irony, Antithesis, Symbolism, Alliteration, Onomatopoeia, Litotes, Idiom, Allusion, and Paradox). First, 29 sentences in total contained figurative language. A

metaphor is composed of 19 sentences, whereas an antithesis is composed of 4, a symbol of three, a simile of two, and an allusion consisting of one sentence. Second, only five of the fifteen indications were found in the selected poetry since some sentences do not fit into the other indicators' categories. This indicates that not all of the figurative language was offered in the poem. In Audre Lorde's poetry, the speaker describes her conflicts with her mother, society, and her own dual identity, which might serve as inspiration for poetry enthusiasts.

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