

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN THOMAS HOOD'S SONNET TO OCEAN

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ABSTRACT

The research paper is about an analysis of figurative language used in Thomas Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. The aim of the study is to illustrate kind and meaning of figurative language that are used in Thomas Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean* and to find out the most dominant of figures of speech used in this sonnet.

Keywords: Figurative language, Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*.

Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*: Text, Introduction, Summary, Notion of Figurative Language and Analysis of Figurative Language Used in the Poem

Text:

Sonnet to Ocean

Shall I rebuke thee, Ocean, my old love,
That once, in rage, with the wild winds at strife,
Thou darest menace my unit of a life,
Sending my clay below, my soul above,
Whilst roar'd thy waves, like lions when they rove
By night, and bound upon their prey by stealth!
Yet didst thou n'er restore my fainting health?
Didst thou ne'er murmur gently like the dove?
Nay, dost thou not against my own dear shore
Full break, last link between my land and me?
My absent friends talk in thy very roar,
In thy waves' beat their kindly pulse I see,

And, if I must not see my England more,
Next to her soil, my grave be found in thee!

INTRODUCTION TO *SONNET TO OCEAN*

Thomas Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean* was written in 1835 after Hood's disastrous voyage to Rotterdam, in which the ship was nearly lost, and Hood's health was permanently affected. *Sonnet to Ocean* by Thomas Hood is a fourteen line, Petrarchan or Italian sonnet. The sonnet consists of two stanzas, the first one called octet having eight lines and the second one called sestet having six lines. The poem follows the rhyme scheme abbaacca in the octave stanza and dedede in the sestet stanza. In composing "Sonnet to Ocean" Hood was able to draw upon his own personal experience of the sea. In early 1835, in an effort to improve his financial situation, Hood left England for the Continent, where he was to live for the next five years, first at Coblenz in Germany—which Melville himself had visited in December 1849 and then later at Ostend in Belgium. Hood's passage across the North Sea was nearly disastrous, however, and on the night of March 4–5, 1835, his ship, coincidentally named the Lord Melville, was caught in a great storm and was almost wrecked off Rotterdam.

SUMMARY OF *SONNET TO OCEAN*

The poet begins speaking by expressing a state of disapproval of the ocean. Although the poet thinks there is an intimate relationship between the sea and him, the blustery winds and waves have been about to kill him and to bury his body into the sea and send his soul to the heaven in his voyage to get back to England. In this disastrous voyage, the poet thinks that he has been fallen like a prey caught by a predatory animal. The poet says the shore is the nexus between his country, England and him where he tries his effort to reach as possible as he can. He knows all his friends in this voyage who have been witnessed the turmoil of the sea, have had no way out for survival and been sunk dead. The poet says if he is destined not to arrive peacefully to his country, England, and dies like his friends, he desires to reach its shore and be buried next to its soil.

NOTION OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

In poetry, a poet uses a language as a medium of expressing his ideas, emotions, feelings, imaginations, and experience. Ollila and Jantas (2006) stated that poetry is any kind of verbal and written language that is structured rhythmically and is meant to tell a story or express any

kind of emotion, idea or state of being. In moments of intense and emotional excitement, man has always tended to express himself in a figurative language. Like rhythm and imaginary, figurative language might be to be the province of poetry rather than novel. For poet, words can mean more than dictionary means. Words have the power to suggest ideas and images related to their explicit meaning. Figurative language is a type of language that uses words or phrases different from the literal meaning (Mahmood,2014:212). Simile, metaphor, symbol, personification, pathetic fallacy, hyperbole ,etc. ,are the more common of the figures which have been used by poets. Using the figures of speech the poet can create his poem concrete, condensed, and interesting. Figurative language does not only decorate poems and endow them with aesthetic value, they also convey connotative meanings and produce certain special effects, which enrich the texts and make their meanings more precise and concrete (Ogunsiji,2000:56). Figurative language is language which uses figures of speech (a way of saying one thing and meaning another). In other words, it cannot be taken literally or should not be taken literally only. According to Tarigan(1985:179), figurative language is language that is used imaginatively and not literally. It is not intended to be interpreted in a literal sense. Appealing to the imagination, figurative language provides new ways of looking at the new world.

ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE USED IN THE POEM SIMILE

Dennis (1996:62-63) states that simile is a comparison of one thing with another that is always explicit because the words 'like' or 'as' are used. Here is the example of simile from Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. In the fifth and sixth line of the poem "*Whilst roar'd thy waves, like lions when they rove... By night, and bound upon their prey by stealth!*" the speaker compares the ocean to lions using the word 'like', suggesting the two things are similar. He says as the lion roar as a sign of power and predominance over the other animals in hunting and devouring his preys, the ocean shows its power and predominance through sending blustery winds and waves to destroy the ship by which the poet has travelled back to England.

PERSONIFICATION

Personification is really a special kind of metaphor. It is subtype of metaphor, an implied comparison in which the figurative term of the comparison is always human being(Perrine,1977:64).Here are the examples of personification from Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. In the first line, the speaker says "*Shall I rebuke thee*". The verb "to rebuke" means "to criticize or blame someone sharply" .It is identified as personification. In the line four, the word "darest"

means "to challenge, especially to prove courage". The ocean here is personified as a human that has dared to menace the speaker. The word "restore" in the line seven which means "to return something to an earlier condition", is identified as personification. This activity works for people ,but it is attributed to the ocean. Actually the ocean is not a human that can restore. The word "murmur" in the line eight is a form of personification. The verb "to murmur" which means " to speak quietly or at a distance" is a human action. The speaker assigns this action to the ocean that cannot murmur. The word "dear" in the line nine is usually used to refer to someone who is too loved, but it is here assigned to inanimate thing ,the shore. The word "beat" in the line twelve which means "to hit someone repeatedly to cause pain or injury" is identified as personification. The action of the verb "beat" is a human activity, but it is assigned to the ocean as if it were in frenzy and tried to kill the crew of the ship. In the last line of the poem, the adjective pronoun "her" refers to a female human ,but it is assigned to England.It is identified as personification.

APOSTROPHE

Apostrophe is a form of personification in which non-human or inanimate thing is directly addressed as if it were human or animate. Apostrophe is defined as an addressing someone absent or something non-human as if it was alive and present and could reply to what is being said (Perrine,1977:65). Apostrophe is functioned as making the content of the poem impressed and more lively. Here are the examples of apostrophe from Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. From the title of the poem '*Sonnet to Ocean*', it is clear that the poet addresses the ocean. He apostrophizes the ocean as if it were a person to whom the poet writes his poem. In the first line, the speaker says "*Shall I rebuke thee*". He uses the object pronoun "thee" .It is a form of apostrophe. The speaker apostrophizes the ocean as if it were a person . In the line one, the speaker addresses the ocean with the phrase "old love". It is a human characteristic that should assign to a person but it is attributed to non-human thing, the ocean. The word "thou" in the line "*Thou darest menace my unit of a life,*" is a form of apostrophe. The speaker addresses the ocean as if it were a human. The possessive pronoun "thy" in the line "*Whilst roar'd thy waves, like lions when they rove*" is identified as an apostrophe because the speaker addresses the ocean as if it were a person. Similarly, the word "thou" is identified as an apostrophe in the lines "*Yet didst thou n'er restore my fainting health?," "Didst thou ne'er murmur gently like the dove?" and "Nay, dost thou not against my own dear shore"*. The speaker addresses his speech to the ocean as if it were a person. In the lines "*My absent friends talk in thy very roar,*" and "*In thy waves beat their kindly pulse I see,*", the speaker addresses the ocean as if it were a human .The

word "thy" is a form of apostrophe. The speaker apostrophizes the ocean as if it were a person. In the last line "*Next to her soil, my grave be found in thee!*" the speaker apostrophizes the ocean as if it were a human. He addresses the ocean by using the object pronoun "thee".

SYMBOL

Symbol is a concrete thing which is described for its own sake and further and suggest a meaning. According to Kennedy (1983), symbol is sign of some kind (a word or thing) that suggest something outside or beyond itself. Symbols may be of two kinds (a) traditional and (b) personal. A symbol may be traditional (its meaning defined by your common culture and heritage) or private (its meaning known only to one person) (James and Jeffry,1981). Here are the examples of symbols from Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. The speaker symbolizes the ocean as a power that inspires his imagination and at the same time ,he symbolizes it as a power of destruction. When he says "my old love" The speaker symbolizes the ocean as a source of inspiration that helps him express what is in his heart or mind through writing poetry. But, it is also a symbol of destructive power to the speaker when he says "*Whilst roar'd thy waves, like lions when they rove...By night, and bound upon their prey by stealth!*". The waves of the ocean has wrecked the ship which has carried him and his friends in his voyage to Rotterdam and made his health permanently fainted. In the lines "*Thou darest menace my unit of a life,...Sending my clay below, my soul above,*" .The phrases "my unit of a life" and "my clay" are identified as symbols. The speaker uses symbolically "my unit of a life" to refer to the rest of his life and "my clay" to refer to his body. The speaker's life has been about to get over and his body to sink into the ocean because of the disastrous winds and waves of the ocean.

EUPHEMISM

Euphemism is the use of a mild, comforting, or evasive expression that takes the place of one that is taboo, negative, offensive, or too direct (McArthur, 1996:387). Here are the examples of euphemism from Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*.The following lines shows that the speaker uses words less direct. In the line "*Yet didst thou n'er restore my fainting health?*", the poet uses the verb "to restore" to mean euphemistically "to recover or heal". In the line "*Didst thou ne'er murmur gently like the dove?*", the poet uses the verb "to murmur" to mean euphemistically "to whisper".

SYNECDOCHE

Synecdoche is a figure of speech that means literally the understanding of one thing by another. It is the substitution of a part for the whole or vice versa. As McArthur (1996:1014) defined that synecdoche is a figure of speech concerned with parts and wholes. Here is the example of synecdoche from Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. In the line "*Nay, dost thou not against my own dear shore*", the poet uses the part "shore" to refer to the whole "England" which is his home.

Litotes

Litotes is emphasizing the magnitude of a statement by denying its opposite. Litotes is an "understatement employed for the purpose of enhancing the effect or idea expressed (Lingga, 2007:287). Here is the example of litotes from Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. In the ninth line "*Nay, dost thou not against my own dear shore*", the speaker wants to emphasize that the ocean is with his desire to reach peacefully his country, England.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is a figure of speech in a question form that does not need an answer. Here are the examples of rhetoric from Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. The lines "*Yet didst thou n'er restore my fainting health?*" ... "*Didst thou ne'er murmur gently like the dove?*" and "*Nay, dost thou not against my own dear shore... Full break, last link between my land and me?*" are rhetorical questions.

Exclamation

Exclamation is a figure of speech used by the poet to emphasize the understanding of a sentence. Here is the example from Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. The speaker uses exclamation in the lines "*By night, and bound upon their prey by stealth!*" and "*Next to her soil, my grave be found in thee!*".

Tautology

Tautology is a figure of speech that repeats a word or group of words in a sentence several times. Here is the example of tautology from Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. The possessive adjective "my" in the line "*Sending my clay below, my soul above,*" is repeated two times in the same line and the preposition "by" in the line "*By night, and bound upon their prey by stealth!*" is also repeated two times in the same line.

Repetition

Repetition is a figure of speech that repeats a word or group of words several times in a different sentence. Here are the example of repetition from Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. The possessive adjective "my" is repeated several times in different lines.

Conclusion

The conclusion is based on what kind and meaning of figurative language and what the most dominant of figurative languages used in Thomas Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*. Regarding kind of figurative language in the poem, the researcher concludes that Hood's poem uses some figures of speech. They are: Simile, Personification, Symbol, Euphemism, Synecdoche, Litotes, Rhetoric, Exclamation, Tautology and Repetition. Regarding the meaning of figurative language used in Hood's poem, the researcher finds some information about it. The poem talks about the dangers that the poet has faced during his voyage to England where his ship has been caught in a great storm and has been almost wrecked off Rotterdam. After being rescued, the poet addresses the ocean and expresses his hardship in this voyage through using the figures of speech. Based on the analysis of the figures of speech used in Robert Hood's *Sonnet to Ocean*, the researcher concludes that personification and apostrophe are identified as the most dominant figures of speech that are used in the poem.

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