

## **Week one (1.5 hrs): Figurative language**

As opposed to literal language, which relies on the dictionary meaning of the words used, figurative language depends on the connotative (non-literal) meaning of words. Usually, it triggers the reader's mind to surpass the literal interpretation in order to reach a complex and a powerful effect of texts. We distinguish five types of figurative language (speech):

### **1. Phonological figures (sound-oriented figures)**

- Alliteration: Repetition of initial consonant sounds in neighboring words. A subtype of 'consonance' (see below).
  - Love's Labour's Lost (Shakespeare)
  - Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper
- Assonance: Repetition of vowel sounds.
  - *mad as a hatter*
  - I *saw* old *autumn* in the musty *morn* (T. Hood)
- Consonance: Repetition of consonant sounds.
  - *last* but not *least*.
  - Has your soul *sipped* / Of the sweetness of all *sweets*? / Has it well *supped* /  
But yet hungers and *sweets*? (W. Owen)
- Onomatopoeia: Imitation of the sound associated with a thing or an action.
  - Cock a doodle doo! My dame has lost her shoe. (Nursery rhyme)
  - The moan of doves in immemorial elms/ And murmuring of innumerable bees  
(Tennyson)

### **2. Morphological figures (word-oriented figures)**

- Anadiplosis: Use of the last word of the previous verse or sentence to begin a new verse or sentence.
  - Love give me strength! and strength shall help afford. (*Romeo and Juliet*)
  - She walks with Beauty - Beauty that must die (Keats)
- Anaphora: Repetition of a word or expression at the beginning of successive phrases, sentences, or verses.
  - Help! I need somebody/ Help! Not just anybody/ Help! You know I need someone (Song)
  - And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,/ And she forgot the blue above the trees,/ And she forgot the dells where waters run,/ And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze. (Keats, "Isabella")
- Epiphora: Repetition of a word or expression at the end of successive phrases, sentences, or verses.
  - Little Lamb, who made thee?/ Dost thou know who made thee? (Blake, "The Lamb")
  - Whirl your pointed pines/ Splash your great pines (H.D.)

### 3. **Syntactical figures** (arrangement figures)

- Ellipsis: Omission of a word or phrase.
  - Beauty is truth, truth Beauty (Keats)
- Inversion: Deviation from normal word order.
  - No living man/ all things can.
  - Strange fits of passion have I known. (Wordsworth)
- Parallelism: Repetition of syntactical units (phrases, clauses, sentences).
  - Easy come, easy go. Out of sight, out of mind.

- O well for the fisherman's boy,/ That he shouts with his sister at play!/ O well  
for the sailor lad,/ That he sings in his boat on the bay! (Tennyson)

#### 4. **Semantic figures** (meaning-related figures)

- **Antonomasia**: a descriptive expression to substitute a name of a person
  - “You know who”, “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named”...referring to Voldemort in Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series.
- **Simile**: A comparison of things or actions introduced by "like" or "as".
  - Like a bridge over troubled water/ I will lay me down.
  - I wandered lonely as a cloud (Wordsworth)
  - My love is like a red red rose (Burns)
- **Metaphor**: A comparison of things or actions *not* introduced by "like" or "as".
  - You are a machine. (Shaw)
  - Sometime too hot the eye of heaven (= the sun) shines (Shakespeare)
- **Personification**: Attribution of human qualities to a thing or an abstraction.
  - Fortune is blind.
  - The dish ran away with the spoon.
  - Because I could not stop for Death --/ He kindly stopped for me (E. Dickinson)
- **Metonymy**: Substitution of a word by a spatially or causally related term.
  - to read Shakespeare (= Shakespeare's works)
  - The crown will find an heir (= the monarch will ...) (*Winter's Tale*)
  - What action has Whitehall (= the British Government) taken?
- **Synecdoche**: Substitution of a part for the whole or the whole for a part; use of a narrower or wider concept (*pars pro toto* or *totum pro parte*).
  - Let's count noses; there were many new faces at the meeting. (= people)
  - The western wave (= sea) was all aflame. (Coleridge)

- Hyperbola: Use of an exaggerated expression.
  - An hundred years should go to praise/ Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze./  
Two hundred to adore each breast;/ But thirty thousand to the rest. (Marvell)
  - this/ fine specimen of hyper magical/ ultra omnipotence (Cummings)

5. **Pragmatic figures** (speaker-hearer related figures)

- Apostrophe: The addressing of an absent person or a personified object.
  - O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being (Shelley)
  - With how sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the skies! (Sidney)
  - Milton! Thou should'st be living at this hour (Wordsworth)
- Rhetorical question: A question that has an obvious answer.
  - If you prick, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? (*Merchant of Venice*)
- Irony: A statement that expresses the opposite of what is literally stated.
  - Wonderful day, isn't it? (it's really raining outside)
  - Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest -/ For Brutus is an honourable man;/  
So are they all, all honourable men -/ Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral. (*Julius Caesar*)

**Poems to analyze:**

1. "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" by William Wordsworth
2. Sonnet XII by Shakespeare
3. "Upon Westminster Bridge" by William Wordsworth
4. "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" by Emily Dickinson (group work)

## Week two (1.5 hrs)

“I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”  
William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud ←  
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,   b  
When all at once I saw a crowd,           a  
A host of golden daffodils;               b  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees, ←  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze ←   c  
  
Continuous as the stars that shine ←  
And twinkle on the milky way,           d  
They stretched in never-ending line       e  
Along the margin of a bay:               d  
e  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance, ←       f  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance. ← f

The waves beside them danced, but they  
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed- and gazed- but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude,  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

In line 1: we have a **simile**, the persona is comparing himself to a cloud that has no destination to go to, freely walking around and coming across the sight of the daffodils.

An instance of **parallelism**

In line 7: another **simile**, daffodils are compared to stars in their shining and twinkling

The first three stanzas are dedicated to the daffodils themselves. The way they appear, their movements, their location...

We have an instance of **inversion** as if the speaker has lost the ability of composing words due to the sublime scene

In line 6 and 12: The daffodils are **personified**. They are being attributed the trait of having “heads” and the action of “dancing” as though they are described as dancers. So the movements of the daffodils are compared to those of a dancer

The words that are highlighted in red are instances of **visual images**

The last stanza is devoted to the persona and his feeling after recalling the scene he has viewed.

The words highlighted in green further indicate the **joyful tone** of the poem; showing the effect they have on the persona and by extension on the reader (creating a happy mood)

- **William Wordsworth<sup>1</sup>** is one of the first generation romantic poets. His poem provided above, which is commonly entitled “Daffodils”, is one of his famous works.

The poem was first published in 1807 and it is deemed as a romantic poem.

- **Romanticism<sup>2</sup>**

The concept of romanticism<sup>3</sup> has nothing to do with the idea of love. It is an international movement that started in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The movement coincided with the revolutions around the world mainly the French and the American revolutions that inspired poets and writers. In addition, romantic works reacted to the Industrial Revolution, which took place in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and to the considerable changes it brought. Romanticism challenged the dominant philosophy of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

- **What is the poem about**

So far as the form is concerned, the lyric poem is composed of four sestet with the rhyme scheme of **a-b-a-b-c-c** (1<sup>st</sup> stanza as an example). It is written in a strophic form.

The speaker in the poem is reflecting on a past experience he witnessed when he was wandering alone. He takes us back to a scene of nature he has viewed; a field of daffodils lying beside a lake. The number of the daffodils, which is referred to as “crowd” and which is emphasized in the 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza, along with their movements in the breeze is what attracted the persona’s attention and made it a memorable scene to be recalled. The persona first observes the sublime scene, which leads him to meditation and contemplation, then an inspiration to record it, once on his couch, in a form of a text. Thus, we notice a shift in time in the last

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<sup>1</sup> The following link provides a short biography of the poet:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-wordsworth>

<sup>2</sup> Read the chapter that is entitled “The Romantics” (165-177). The chapter is found in the

following source:



<sup>3</sup> Consult the following for more information about the movement’s tenets



The Romantic ethos.pdf

stanza of the poem as we go to present time where the persona has a flashback in a pensive mood. The personal experience of the persona is filled with joy and tranquility; in fact, even though this experience is passed, he is still receiving the feeling of pleasure and joy. This feeling is delivered due to nature and his connection to it. Therefore, nature, here, is a source of a poetic inspiration and a refuge from the outside world.

The poem is full of literary devices as demonstrated above. These figures are employed to convey a powerful effect and to help the reader deeply imagine and live what the persona has lived since he is not just describing what he sees, but he is also describing his feelings of joy and happiness.

**Week three (1.5 hrs)** Shakespearean sonnet

“Sonnet XII”

William Shakespeare<sup>4</sup>

**Iamb** → When I do count the clock that tells the time, a  
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night; b  
When I behold the violet past prime, a  
And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white; b  
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves c  
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd, d  
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves c  
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard, d  
Then of thy beauty do I question make, e  
That thou among the wastes of time must go, f  
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake e  
And die as fast as they see others grow; f  
And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence g  
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence. g

The lines of the sonnet are written in iambic pentameter

In line 4: there is an instance of a **synecdoche**; “curls” that are part of human bodies substitute the whole human beings. The idea is that with these curls turning grey, the person is aging

The ideas of the passage of time and time leading to the mortality of beings in life are referred differently to in the three quatrains.

- In the first two lines of quatrain 1, the image that shows the passing of time is that of day becoming night
- In lines 3 and 4, the idea of growing old (due to time) is connected to humans as well as nature. The notion of youth and blossom vanishing with time is juxtaposed in these two lines

In the second quatrain, the image of the passage of time is shown in the passage of year, specifying it with the passage of seasons  
The 3<sup>rd</sup> quatrain demonstrates the image of decaying beauty and how it appears to face the wreck of time as having grey hair (“silvered with white” as alluded to in line 4) and showing wrinkles

In the concluding couplet, the speaker talks about having children as being the way to defeat time. **Death**, which is compared to a “scythe” reaping lives (**metaphor**), is unstoppable; however, “save[ing] breed” is away to stay immortal in life.

<sup>4</sup>The following link provides a short biography of the poet:  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-shakespeare>



➤ **What is the poem about**

In a nutshell, the persona is speaking about the themes of aging and the short-lived or the passing notion of beauty. Using figures, the persona hints to the idea that with the passing of time, which is uncontrollable and unfaceable (line 13); all creatures get old and die. He refers to the aging of humans as well as other living creatures. The vanishing of the external beauty is another idea hinted at in lines (9 to 12); no matter how pretty a person can be time will eventually seize that beauty. In the three quatrains, the poet uses many images to conceptualize the idea of time and how life is aging. However, in the concluding couplet, the poet presents a kind of a solution in order to defend ourselves against aging and by extension death. The solution lies in the process of ‘breeding’ and giving birth to generations that will genetically carry us with time. The offspring, for Shakespeare, can also be interpreted as his own writings that have outlasted him.

**Week four (1.5 hrs) Petrarchan sonnet**

**“Composed Upon Westminster Bridge”**  
William Wordsworth

Earth has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth like a garment wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Instances of inversion

Visual images

In lines 1, 9, and 11 we have instances of **hyperbole**. The persona is exaggerating in his description of the city's view from the bridge

The use of the **simile**, here, is to compare the way the city wears the beautiful morning (or the way the beautiful morning lies over the city) like a garment or a piece of clothes covers a body

The words in **red** indicate an **enjambment**, mainly to demonstrate a flow of feeling and a shortness of breath in reporting what the persona is witnessing

In line 10: we have a **personification**; the sun is compared to humans by referring to it as “his”  
In line 13: the houses are also **personified**. They are compared to people who sleep, in a reference to state of calmness and tranquility

By juxtaposing man-made with nature's elements, the persona is trying to hint to the idea that city and nature can coexist together

➤ **What is the poem about**

As the title indicates, the Petrarchan sonnet was composed in London, 1802. The speaker, in the poem, describes a view that is seen from the Westminster Bridge. The persona seems mesmerized by the beauty of the natural landscape as he uses hyperbolic expressions to portray what lies in front of his eyes. He starts with an exaggerated image “Earth has not anything to show more fair”, putting the reader in the mood and paving the way for more hyperbolic portrayals and powerful effects. Due to the images used in the poem, the reader is able to imagine the city of London, back then, at dawn when everybody is still sleeping; the workday has not started yet, and the city is showing its indigenous facet far from the “smokeless air” and all the drastic effects on nature that the Industrial Revolution<sup>5</sup> had started having. Wordsworth, being a romantic poet, depicted the metropolis as pure and sublime regardless of the nature’s damage cause by the revolution. In other words, he romanticized in an idealistic way what might be deemed as homely; making the picture more appealing and attractive. Moreover, the poem’s tone is peaceful and quiet just like the city seems to be.



An illustration of the poem’s setting (British-library)

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<sup>5</sup> Check the following file for a brief introduction to the Industrial Revolution

**Week five** (group work)

Based on your knowledge regarding form and content, analyze the following poem by Emily

Dickinson:

“Because I Could Not Stop for Death”

Because I could not stop for death  
He kindly stopped for me –  
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –  
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste  
And I had put away  
My labor and my leisure too,  
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove  
At Recess – in the Ring –  
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –  
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –  
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –  
For only Gossamer, my Gown –  
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed  
A Swelling of the Ground –  
The Roof was scarcely visible –  
The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet  
Feels shorter than the Day  
I first surmised the Horses' Heads  
Were toward Eternity –

### References

“William Wordsworth's 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge' | The British Library.” *British Library*, [www.britishlibrary.cn/en/works/westminster-bridge/](http://www.britishlibrary.cn/en/works/westminster-bridge/).

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