

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN GRACE NICHOLS'S POEM

By :

GUSTI GDE AGUNG ANGGADNYANA PUTRA

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF LETTERS UDAYANA UNIVERSITY

ABSTRAK

Judul artikel ini adalah "Figurative Languages in Grace Nichols Poem" yang datanya diambil dari puisi-puisi yang ditulis oleh Grace Nichols. Jurnal ini memaparkan dan mendiskusikan tentang kata-kata kiasan yang muncul di dalam puisi dan hubungannya dengan tema dari masing-masing puisi. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan cara menganalisa data yang di dapat melalui membaca dan mencatat setiap kata-kata kiasan yang ada di setiap puisi.

Adapun judul dari puisi-puisinya adalah The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping, Island Man, and Praise Song for My Mother. Data-datanya dikumpulkan dengan metode studi pustaka dan dianalisa dengan cara metode deskriptif kualitatif. Adapun teori yang digunakan ada dua yaitu teori Figurative Language oleh Knickerbocker & Reninger (1963) dan teori Tema oleh Sybille (1985).

Hasil dari analisa tersebut ditemukan enam jenis kata kiasan dari ketiga puisi tersebut yaitu metaphora, personifikasi, hiperbola, simile, sinekdok, dan symbol. Masing-masing kata kiasan tersebut memiliki fungsi yang penting di dalam kekuatan puisi dari Nichols dan juga dapat digunakan sebagai cara yang artistic untuk menekankan setiap pesan yang ingin diungkapkan dalam puisi dari Nichol, kata kiasan juga berfungsi untuk mendukung tema dari setiap puisi. Di puisi The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping, Nichols kebanyakan menggunakan hiperbola karena tema dari puisi tersebut adalah diskriminasi. Personifikasi dan symbol banyak digunakan pada puisi Island Man dikarenakan puisi ini mencoba untuk mengungkapkan seorang pria yang rindu akan kampung halamannya. Dan di puisi terakhir Praise Song for My Mother ditemukan hanya metaphora yang digunakan untuk menggambarkan sifat seorang ibu dari Grace Nichols yang kuat dan berjiwa besar.

Kata Kunci: Kata kiasan, tema,, Grace Nichols.

1. Background of the Study

Literature represents a language or a culture and tradition. But, literature is more important than just a historical or cultural artifact. Literature introduces us to new worlds of experience. Poetry is the rhymes of praise, and the essays on the nature of poetry would cram the selves of any modest public library and overflow onto the floors as well. Talking about poetry is nevertheless rare, and even the best of it will rest lightly on fallow ground until we ourselves have learned how to penetrate that inner

life of a few poems (Knickerbockers, 1963:307). By using such figurative language, a poem can express something beyond the literal meaning of each word or sentence. In this context, figurative language seems to be very important to supporting the poet's imagination while combining the physical reality with an inner mood. And in the present study three poems of Grace Nichols entitled *The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping*, *Island Man*, and *Praise Song for My Mother* will be analyzed.

2. Problems of the Study

The problem of the present study are formulated as follows :

- a. What kinds of figurative languages are used in the three poems written by Grace?
- b. What is the theme of each poem and its relation to the figurative language?

3. Aims of the Study

The aims of the present study are :

- a. To analyze the figurative language used by the poet to express the message.
- b. To analyze what are the themes of the poems and their relation with the figurative language.

4. Research Method

The research method explains about reading, interpreting, finding, note taking, collecting and analyzing the data from the poem.

4.1 Data Source

The data of this study will be taken from the following poems written by Grace Nichols: *The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping* in 1984, *Island Man* in 1970 and *Praise Song for My Mother*. This paper is focused on the analysis of figurative language in the poems written by Grace Nichols. These poems will be chosen because they utilize many figurative languages.

4.2 Method and Technique of Collecting Data

The data were collected using library research method. The data were taken from

the data source by reading the source. The collected data which are related to the figurative language were collected through note taking process. The first thing that was done was reading the source and understanding each stanza. Next was making a list of sentence that consists of figurative language was made and the last the theme of the poem was found

4.3 Method and Technique of Analyzing Data

The collected data in this study were analyzed qualitatively based on the theory of sociolinguistics namely politeness principles proposed by Robin Lakoff and Geoffrey Leech. These two theories were focused on the language features and the politeness expressions that influence the politeness. The data in this study were analyzed descriptively.

5. Analysis

5.1 The Figurative Language Supporting the Theme of *The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping* poem

The theme of *The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping* poem is discrimination and humiliation. This poem was written in the 80's when there were riots in London caused by racism and social discrimination, in the districts of Brixton and Tottenham. It explained about the stressful feeling of fat black woman when she went shopping in London.

Metaphor supported the theme as it gave a brief explanation about discrimination and humiliation. "Shopping in London winter is a real drag for fat black woman" was one metaphor that explained how the fat black woman felt about shopping.

Personification explained the discrimination and humiliation through a lifeless object. "Look at the frozen thin mannequins fixing her with grin" was one personification. The thin mannequins were given the qualities of human to fix a grin. The frozen thin mannequins that were displayed in front of the store portrayed that beauty in European culture was associated with thinness. It emphasized the

sense on humiliation for her. By giving the fat black woman a grin meant that she who was obese person did not have a place in fashion because of the concept of fashion in London.

Hyperbole made the discrimination and humiliation became more extreme. “and de pretty face salesgals exchanging slimming glances” was one of hyperbole. The fat black woman treated differently by the sales woman just because she did not like them who had white color of skin. The sense of discrimination and humiliation became more extreme because of the usage of phrase “slimming glances” and the word “pretty”.

Synecdoche described the theme using the part of the discrimination and humiliation that stood for the whole/all thing. “Nothing much beyond size 14” was one of synecdoche. Size 14 was a part of human body size. It represented small size for slimy person. Again, the fat black woman was being discriminated by European concept of beauty. She concluded that when talking about the fashion it was all about thinness only people with size not more than 14 was able to be fashionable so obese people like fat black woman did not have a place in fashion.

5.2 The Figurative Language Supporting the Theme of *The Island Man* poem

The theme of *The Island Man* poem is homesickness. This poem was written for all those Caribbean people living in London who will miss the sights and sounds of home. Whenever we spent a long time away from home we often started to miss the small things, the everyday things that made a place feel like home. We missed the sights, the noise and even the smells of home and might even start to revisit these places in our dreams, just as the island man in this poem.

Synecdoche helped the theme to be stronger. It explained the theme by using a communicative way, instead of using a general word. Synecdoche gave the theme an aesthetic sense. “to the sound of blue surf in his head” was one form of synecdoche found in the poem. The blue surf was a part of the ocean. It represented the ocean

in detail how the waves will and what color of the ocean was. The usage of phrase blue surf emphasized that the island man was really fond of the ocean. The fact that the island man heard the sound of the blue surf in his head reminded that this was merely his imagination, that he was dreaming and what he heard was not actually the ocean.

Personification made the theme more realistic. It described the homesickness of the island man through the animated object that was given human quality. In the sentence “to the sound of the blue surf in his head the steady breaking and wombing” described the sound and motion of the sea as a steady breaking and wombing which brought to mind the distinctive sound of the sea breaking onto the shore in a steady. The womb was often described as a place safety, so the word wombing suggested comfort and security and more importantly, a sense of home and belonging. The usage of this word was to describe the sea which was sometimes referred to as the mother of all life.

By using symbol, it described how the island man attitude to his homeland. “of his small emerald island” contained symbol. Emerald island stood for something approach paradise. It was a symbol for the island of perfection where the island man had lived. There was nothing in the world that could be compared with the island since the island man called the island as the emerald island. It showed his love toward the island. How the island was described as being ‘his’ that was to say belonging to the island man, reinforced the sense of home and belonging that was so central to this poem.

Metaphor described theme of the poem; homesickness by using a comparison. It compared the homesickness of island man with the other things which gave a new sense to the poem. “he always comes back groggily groggily” was the sentence that contained metaphor. The word groggily referred to someone who had had too much grog (beer) and was feeling drunk or groggy. These words suggested that the island man was groggy with sleep, possibly even metaphorically drunk

with thoughts of home and suggested that he was tired and did not want to leave his dream.

5.3 The Figurative Language Supporting the Theme of *Praise Song for My Mother* poem

The poem *Praise Song for My Mother* had a theme of love; love for mother. Written from the first person's point of view, here Nichols told the poem based on her experiences. It was attributed to her mother and tried to capture the feelings she had for her. Title suggested an obvious love of her mother and used religious term Praise to describe the reverence she felt. The idea of this being a song fitted in with Nichols' Caribbean origins where song and poems intermingled.

The use of metaphor in the poems showed her mother in other way it also showed how deep Nichols's love to her mother. It described the persona's mother indicating that the Nichols's mother had great strength and also great variants and beauty in her personality. "You were water to me deep and bold and fathoming" compared Nichols's mother with water which was quite cool and was considered feminine. The adjectives were added to this metaphor in order to get more masculine sense. "deep and bold and fathoming" could allude to how the personal's mother fulfilled both a motherly and a fatherly role in her upbringing.

Comparing Nichols's mother to the moon through the sentence "you were moon's eye to me pull and graining and mantling" suggested that her mother was a force of nature and was extremely powerful.

The sentence "you were sunrise to me rise and warm and streaming" metaphorically described the image of the sunrise which suggested Nichols's mother was there for her everyday and her love was as certain as the sun rising. The metaphor conjured up an image of the sun that was beautiful, positive and reassuring just like her mother's love felt to her.

The metaphor appeared in sentence "you were the fishes red grill to me". The gill is the part of the fish that controls breathing. It was inferring that Nichols's

mother was as essential to Nichols's life as the red fish that would be a staple part of the Caribbean diet, but also that the very breath of Nichols's life was linked to her mother. She provided Nichols with sustenance through food and love. The color red in "red fish" symbolized the maternal love.

The sentence "the flame tree's spread to me" likened Nichols's mother to the "flame tree". It demonstrated how Nichols felt sheltered by the love and presence of her mother. She felt protected from life. "The crab's leg/the fried plantain smell" provided metaphor. The food used as the metaphor was typical food found in the Caribbean and would be fond and comforting memories associated with Nichols's past and her mother's cooking. The idea that she could smell the food showed that her mother's love affected all of her senses and reminded the reader that a smell could be just as evocative as a sight or sound.

6. Conclusion

Figurative language was necessary to convey the exact meaning in artistic manner; it was a special way of using words. The writer used figurative language to create an image in the reader's mind and got their attention. So did Grace Nichols, she used figurative language in writing her poem. And from three of her poems six figurative languages will found, they were metaphor, personification, hyperbole, simile, synecdoche, and symbol. Each figurative language has an important role in strengthen Nichols's poem.

Theme is the main idea or the main point in a poem. A theme must represent the whole part of the poem, because theme is a basic development of a whole poem. As the theme is the prime element in a poem, it has to be bold and strong. And it is figurative language's job. Figurative language support the theme by modified the content of the poem; every stanzas and sentences. It carries meaning of the sentences beyond their literal meaning.

The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping's theme is discrimination and humiliation. Metaphor, personification, hyperbole, synecdoche, and metaphor were used in this poem. Homesickness is the theme of The Island Man poem. To support the theme synecdoche, personification and symbol were used in this poem. The poem Praise Song for My Mother had a theme of love; love for mother. The use of metaphor in all the poems showed Nichols's mother in other way it also showed how deep Nichols's love to her mother.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barnet, Sylvan. 1992, et.al. 1963. *An Introduction to Literature Fiction, Poetry, Drama. Second Edition*. Little, Brown and Company Inc.
- Di Yanni, Robert. 1994. *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Essay. Third Edition*, New York: Mc Graw — Hill, Inc.
- Hornby, A.S.2000. *Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary of Current English. Six Edition*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Knickerbocker, K.L. & Williard Reninger H. 1963. *Interpreting Literature*. New York. Chicago. San Francisco. Toronto: Holt, Richard and Winston.
- Lazard, Gillian. 1996. *Using Figurative Language to Expand Students' Vocabulary*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Lestari, Sri Ayu. 2006. *The Analysis of Intrinsic Elements of Poem "Only A Petal" by Kathleen Partridge*. Denpasar: Udayana University.
- Restriani, Ketut Dewi. 2003. *The Analysis of Types and Purposes of Figure of Speech in Sidney Sheldon's Nothing Last Forever*. Denpasar: Udayana University.
- Sari, Puput Retno. 2004. *The Use of Figurative Language in English Greeting Cards*

and Printed Advertisements on Magazine. Denpasar: Udayana University.

Setiawan, Wayan Angga. 2012. *Figurative Expressions with Reference to Songs by Tome Delonge in Two Different Bands (Blink 182 and Box Car Racer).* Denpasar: Udayana University.