

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN GOO GOO DOLLS SONG *IRIS*: A LITERARY AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the use of figurative language in the lyrics of the song "Iris" by Goo Goo Dolls (1998). Figurative language is an essential component of literary expression, especially in song lyrics, as it conveys emotions and ideas in a more imaginative and impactful way. The study focuses on identifying the types of figurative language found in the song and interpreting their meanings within the context of the lyrics. Using a qualitative speech, including metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, and symbolism. The findings show that these literary devices enrich the lyrical content and deepen the emotional resonance of the song. Ultimately, the study highlights how figurative language enhances the listener's understanding and emotional connection to the song's themes of love, vulnerability, and longing.

Keywords: figurative language, Goo Goo Dolls, *Iris*, song lyrics, literary.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a powerful tool for artistic and emotional expression. In literary and musical contexts, language often goes beyond its literal meaning, employing various stylistic and rhetorical strategies to convey deeper emotional and conceptual messages. One of the most prominent techniques used in such contexts is figurative language, which includes metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, and symbolism. These devices enrich the song lyrics, transforming them into literary texts that resonate with listeners on multiple levels.

Figurative language plays a vital role in transforming ordinary song lyrics into powerful literary expressions. It enables songwriters to convey emotions, thoughts, and experiences in imaginative and symbolic ways that resonate deeply with listeners. The song "Iris" by the American band Goo Goo Dolls is a compelling example of how figurative language can enrich lyrical content and evoke complex emotional responses. Released in 1998 as part of the City of Angels soundtrack and later included in the album Dizzy Up the Girl, "Iris" has become one of the band's most iconic songs, known for its poetic and emotionally charged song lyrics.

The song "Iris" by the American rock band Goo Goo Dolls, released in 1998, exemplifies the use of figurative language in popular music. The song has gained widespread recognition not only for its melodic and emotional appeal but also for its deeply expressive and poetic lyrics. Through its use of figurative language, "Iris" conveys complex themes of vulnerability, longing, love, and existential identity. As Simpson (2004) points out, figurative language in song lyrics often serves a dual purpose—enhancing aesthetic value while reinforcing the thematic content of the text. Similarly, Moore (2012) argues that analyzing song lyrics as literary texts reveals layers of meaning that might otherwise be overlooked in casual listening.

This research aims to explore and analyze the use of figurative language in "Iris" by Goo Goo Dolls from a literary perspective. The analysis seeks to identify the types and functions of figurative expressions in the song lyrics and to examine how they contribute to the emotional tone and thematic depth of the composition. Drawing on previous studies such as Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) and Leech's *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (1969), this study situates figurative language as a central feature of poetic expression in music.

By treating "Iris" as a literary text, this paper contributes to the growing body of research that bridges the gap between linguistics and literary analysis in music. It offers insight into how figurative language operates not only as a stylistic ornament but also as a crucial vehicle for meaning-making in popular song lyrics.

B. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative *descriptive method* to analyze the use of the figurative language of the song "Iris" by Goo Goo Dolls. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this research because it focuses on interpreting meanings, identifying patterns, and understanding the expressive function of a language in context, rather than relying on numerical data. The descriptive aspect allows for a systematic identification and explanation of the types and function of figurative language within the song lyrics.

The primary data for this research consist of the official lyrics of "Iris" retrieved from verified lyric databases and official publications to ensure authenticity. The song was selected because its critical acclaim, emotional depth, and frequent use of poetic and figurative expressions, making it a suitable object for literary and linguistic analysis.

The analysis was conducted using a content analysis approach, guided by theoretical frameworks from Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Leech (1969), and Perrine (1974). Each instance of figurative language was classified and interpreted to determine its meaning, function, and contribution to the emotional and thematic development of the song. The analysis also considered how these devices interact with the overall message and tone of the lyrics.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the song "Iris" by Goo Goo Dolls revealed several prominent uses of figurative language that contribute to the emotional depth and poetic quality of the lyrics.

- **Metaphor:**

"And I don't want the world to see me, 'cause I don't think that they'd understand."

Here, the phrase "*I don't want the world to see me*" is not meant literally. Instead, it metaphorically expresses the speaker's vulnerability and fear of emotional exposure. The "*world*" represents society or people in general, and "*seeing*" symbolizes judgment or misunderstanding. This metaphor highlights the internal conflict between wanting connection and fearing rejection.

- **Hyperbole:**

“You’re the closest to heaven that I’ll ever be.”

This line exaggerates the impact of the beloved by equating their presence with a heavenly experience. It emphasizes the depth of love and emotional attachment the speaker feels. Such hyperbole serves to elevate the romantic idealization, making the emotion feel larger than life.

- **Symbolism:**

Another important element is symbolism. The title itself, *“Iris”*, may symbolize vision or perception. Though the word *“Iris”* does not explicitly appear in the lyrics, its choice as the title may reflect the theme of seeing and being seen, which recurs throughout the song. The eye becomes a symbol of emotional exposure and the desire to be understood on a deeper level.

- **Personification:**

“Everything feels like the movies.”

Here, *“everything”* is given a human-like attribute—feeling—which implies that life feels scripted or unreal, much like a film. This personification evokes a sense of detachment from reality, reflecting the speaker’s inner turmoil and disconnection.

- **Simile:**

Interestingly, the song contains few, if any, direct similes, which may indicate the songwriter’s preference for stronger metaphoric structures. While similes use *“like”* or *“as”* to draw comparisons, the lyrics of *“Iris”* tend to merge subject and meaning more intimately through metaphors and symbolism.

D. CONCLUSION

The analysis of *“Iris”* by Goo Goo Dolls reveals that figurative language plays a significant role in conveying the emotional and thematic depth of the song. Through the use of metaphor, hyperbole, personification, and symbolism, the lyrics express complex feelings of vulnerability, longing, and emotional intensity. These literary devices help transform the song into more than just a musical composition—they turn it into a poetic narrative that resonates with listeners on a personal level.

The absence of similes and the prominence of metaphoric expressions suggest a stylistic choice aimed at creating a more immersive and emotionally powerful experience. This reflects the idea that figurative language is not merely ornamental but central to meaning-making in artistic texts.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of analyzing song lyrics as literary texts, offering insight into how language functions not only as a communicative tool but also as a means of emotional and artistic expression. It encourages further exploration of figurative language in popular music as a rich field of literary and linguistic study.

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