

## THE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN *BROKEN APRIL* BY ISMAIL KADARE

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### Abstract

The objective of this research is to describe the types of the figurative language found in the famous novel of Ismail Kadare, *Broken April*. Kadare, as the colossus of Albanian Literature, translated into 45 world languages, has been under the spotlight of worldwide researchers for different reasons. However, most of them have dealt with the focus on general linguistics, less on the figurative content used in his novels. Finding this gap in this aspect, this research was conducted by collecting any relevant information related to this topic. The results of the qualitative analysis show that Kadare has used a rich figurative language, dominated by metaphors and the simile. He has used simile and the rest of the figurative content in the novel to make it more attractive to the reader, to compare characters, situations and emotions. Except the simile, which seems to dominate the figurative language in the novel, there are also other figures such as hyperboles and personification. It is really important to mention that there are no idioms used, except some expressions which look like idiomatic content.

**Keywords:** Figurative language, metaphors, similes, idioms

### Introduction

Language is undoubtedly thought to be the most important means of communication in our life. Most people use language as a tool for communication, interaction and receiving information from others. Language serves to express feelings, emotions, thoughts and imagination, both orally and in writing. Written language is found in novels, newspapers, poems and magazines, while spoken language is found in poems, speeches and conversations. Man, communication and social interaction are tightly related and cannot be separated, which means that his life cannot be understood without language.

In linguistics, the study of meaning is called semantics (Rika, 2021). Semantics, as a branch of linguistics, examines the meaning of language and aims to explain how the meanings of ideas or concepts pass from the mind of the speaker to the mind of the listener through language. Semantics includes both types of meanings, the literal and non-literal meaning. When words are used in their literal sense, we are dealing with the literal meaning, while when the meaning is hidden or different from the meaning of the words, we are dealing with a non-literal meaning. We refer to figurative language when we use expressions that have a different meaning from their literal interpretation.

It is used in everyday communication, articles, advertisements, novels, and poetry. This form of language requires the reader to use his imagination to understand the author's meaning. There are several reasons for using figurative language: it provides imaginative pleasure, adds

imagery and emotional intensity to literary works, and is a concise way of expressing many ideas. In this context, literary figures are often found in novels, where authors use them to create a more vivid image and attract the reader's attention. For example, in the novel *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, figurative language is used to express the depth of thoughts and feelings, so it is imperative that readers understand these figures to fully experience the story.

## Literature review

Figurative language refers to forms of expression that deviate from the literal or conventional meaning of words. This type of language constitutes a fundamental component of human communication and includes elements such as metaphors, idiomatic expressions, clichés, innuendos, and hyperbole (Kreuz & Roberts, 1993). There is no fixed length for these expressions, and their structure and level of clarity can vary considerably.

For these reasons, understanding figurative language requires more complex cognitive processing than that required by ordinary language (Levorato & Cacciari, 2002). Even in individuals without language difficulties, developing the skills necessary to interpret this type of language takes time. This task is even more challenging for people with limitations in language expression or comprehension. Although research on this topic remains limited, several scholars have emphasized the importance of implementing intervention programs that start with basic knowledge of structural language and progress toward pragmatic skills (Kalandadze et al., 2018).

Though not very often, Kadare's figurative language has been subject of research and studies show that it is certainly highly sophisticated. Meminaj & Zisi (2019) discuss his prose in of their research, and note that Kadare introduces multi-layer figures, symbols as well as allegories, myths, and archetypes, things which according to them make his works so special. Since Kadare was writing in the era of communism in Albania, most studies stand behind the idea that it was exactly communism regime that obliged Kadare to use a high figurative language and very often go to extreme myths and figures, to express his opinions through that language (Terziu, 2010; Chaka Z, 2022; Morgan, 2010).

In terms of figures of speech, the most common and used ones are metaphors, similes and symbols. The term "metaphor" comes from Greek language *metaphoria*, which means "to carry," and represents the comparison between two elements which are not alike but share similarities, and in most cases with no explicit markers. Aristotle also saw and defined it as the transfer of a word's normal use to a new context (Richards, 1965). As figures of speech, metaphors are seen as more artistic than similes, but they share features with both similes and metonymies.

## Analysis of figurative language

### METAPHORS

**Figure 1**  
*Metaphors*

1. *"Blood has been transformed into merchandise"*
2. *"Beauty that kills"*
3. *"The lakes, he thought, for a second only. That old carpet of leaves, hopelessly rotten, covered over with that deceptive gold."*
4. *"Like a leaf in the wind, she had gone inside—or rather, fallen across the threshold."*
5. *The crushed roses beyond the clouds had grown a little darker."*
6. *"Something dark, having to do with the ordeal of millions of souls during long centuries."*
7. *"Like a butterfly touched by a black locomotive, she had been stricken by the ordeal of the High Plateau."*
8. *"Now the crushed roses beyond the clouds had grown a little darker."*
9. *"He felt a wave of warmth flooding his chest"*
10. *"He had seen the beginning of a tragedy"*
11. *"The waves of warmth, of a kind he had never felt before, flooded through him"*

1. The doctor uses this metaphor to express human's life merchandise in terms of blood feuds. He tries to show that the blood of the people is equalized with goods that can be exchanged, suggesting that life and honour get converted to financial things, monetary terms under the harsh logic of the Kanun.

2. In the paragraph where this metaphor is used, the doctor expresses an act of accusation toward Bessian in terms of him romanticizing death and violence in literature. This analogy refers to the destructive attraction of beauty that Bessian discovers in the mountains. The beauty of the nature, art and culture is deadly, a proposal that teaches us that even looking for beauty can lead to death when it cuts of moral issues.

3. This metaphor here shows Bessian's temporary disappointment. The scene describes rotten leaves with golden coverage and this symbolizes the hidden rot under an outer beauty, similar to the rotting of the morals.

4. Through this metaphor the author tries to tell us that Diana's entrance in the tower was not easy and natural, but instead, it looked like a leaf in the wind, not a master of her own movements. This comparison reveals Diana's feeling of separation, lack of power, and maybe her bad fortune that brought her toward making these dangerous and inevitable choices.

5. **This metaphor compares the sun to a bouquet of crushed roses. The sun light is metaphorically compared to something delicate which also gets darker, to show the loss of Gjorg's hope and the fall of his temporary freedom. The image of roses is used to describe Gjorg's life, from flourishin to vanishing.**

6. This metaphor is used to reinforce the belief that the Kanun bears an undeniable deadly circle. For Bessian, this is the burden of holding something deep and dark, as the historical suffering connected to blood feuds. It adds to the novel an existential burden, as if the individual fate of Gjorg is tied with a collective timelessness struggle. This makes the tragedy and the Kanun more firmly established.

7. Here, Kadare choose the metaphor to contrast fragility of the butterfly, which is very delicate, opposing the immense destructive feature of a locomotive. The delicateness of the butterfly is Diana's soft nature overwhelmed by the harsh things in the High Plateau. So this metaphor expresses clearly Diana's emotional and spiritual destruction.

8. We deal with the metaphor of the "crushed roses" again, this time to show deepening the sense of foreboding. This poetic image is used to convey the beauty of the sky, darkening

with the setting sun and Gjorg's time left under the bessa, every time getting smaller. It contains a shady, almost melancholic tone.

9. This metaphor shows a powerful emotion of Bessian, who after being worried for the relationship with his wife, feels a sudden relief in his chest, hoping that the relationship can be easier than what he thought at the beginning. This is an indicator to show the need he had to be emotionally connected to his wife.

10. Bessian compares his worries about his marriage to a tragedy, a literary form associated with unavoidable failure. This metaphor emphasizes how deeply he has been seen overcomplicating things, especially with the thought of potential break down of his relationship.

11. And again, a metaphor related to the importance that Bessian gives to his wife's responses. His emotional attachment to her reactions is so deep, as we can see that the use of the metaphor "wave of warmth" which reflects his sense of happiness and calm state when Diana seems to agree to his plans.

## SIMILES

**Figure 2**  
*Similes*

1. *"His voice sounded all the more threatening, coming through his lips as if he were whistling"*
2. *"As lightly as a moth fluttering towards a lamp"*
3. *"Your books, your art, they all smell of murder"*
4. *"It flowed evenly along a dark-green rock, like thick massed tresses, that reminded Gjorg of the hair of the beautiful traveller from the capital."*
5. *"His eyes would be so weakened that he would be able to see no more of it than a dim spot, like the bouquet of crushed roses that the sun drew today against the background of the clouds."*
6. *"An inn, even a dirty one that smelled of cattle, would bring them closer together... with its dire poverty in whose depths there gleamed ten times more bright the happiness of temporary guests"*
7. *"She had become so distant... he was rediscovering her as she had been when he had known her before they were married"*

1. The doctor's tone is compared to whistling, suggesting a sinister and eerie undertone to his calm but forceful speech. This simile contributes to the tension in the conversation and the growing sense of menace in the doctor's words.

2. In this situation, the center of attention is given to Diana's approach to the tower which is compared to a moth drawn to a lamp. It is quite possible that the aim is to emphasize her helpless attraction to danger. The intense simile expresses her tragic fate, linking her action to a sense of fatal attraction and self-destruction which cannot be evitable.

3. This simile is extracted from a conversation between the doctor and Bessian, related to his artistic works embodied with death, carrying its scent. It can also be seen as a metaphor and simile at the same time in the sense of evoking a sensory experience.

4. Gjorg sees Diana and he is lingered to see her again, keeping her in his thoughts as a beautiful mysterious woman. The waterfall is used here as a comparison to a woman's hair flowing smoothly, drawing Gjorg's thoughts to the mysterious woman he had seen. This simile interconnects nature with the human's beauty, where the flowing water also mirrors the flow of time and fate, both unstoppable by the human nature.

5. In this example, the expression "bouquet of crushed roses" is used as a simile to show Gjorg's envision of his future as fading and weakened perception. This simile intends to capture the inevitable decline.

6. This simile tends to reflect Bessian's positive mindset that even when things are not working right, are uncomfortable he still finds a way to highlight happiness that he needs and

longs with his wife so much for. The inn, as a poor and unappealing environment is exactly like his character, bringing the best in people who visit it.

7. This situation here shows how Bessian goes through a second discovery of the wife he got married to. He sees a complete different woman, drifted drastically from what and who she was before they married.

## PERSONIFICATION

**Personification is not as often found in literature as metaphors and similes are, that's why there are only two examples extracted from the novel.**

***"The day would shatter and die"***

In this extract, the day is personified as a something living, which is able to "shatter" and "die." This personification manages to tie Gjorg's perception of time to his inner thoughts and the sense of things slipping away from him in an uncontrolled way.

***"The world about him began to dissolve swiftly"***

This example is taken from a situation where Gjorg is fixated on his death, through detaching from reality. The personification is where the world is personified as something that can melt away, just as Gjorg's impeding thoughts.

## IMAGERY

***"A dull sound, rolled over two or three times on its axis"***

This is a sensory description enhanced by the auditory experience of Gjorg's action while he places the stone on the *mouranë*. It is used as a strong emphasizing of his intense focus on this ritual as well as showing the absurdity that he feels during this ritual.

***"Bluish band stretching above the Alps"***

The imagery is spotted here because Alps are described beautifully covered with a blue band, as Kadare manages to convey both natural beauty and Gjorg's unbearable depression.

## SYMBOLISM

Just as mentioned above, symbolism is less present than Metaphors and similes, so below are only two examples shown.

**The cairn (*mouranë*) and The axe and the woodcutting profession.**

The first one, originally used as **mouranë** in the novel, is used to symbolize Gjorg's inability to escape his own future, more clearly, the death of his own future. In other words, it shows his inability to escape the harsh cycle of violence. The second example is undoubtedly still related to Gjorg, but reflecting the harshness and brutality of many situations in his life, through the axe and the option of becoming a wandering woodcutter, which is obviously considered labor in very hard conditions.

## Conclusions

The use of figurative language in the novel, with particular emphasis on metaphors, similes, personifications, imagery, symbolism, etc., serves as a literary source for enriching and deepening its emotional and thematic layers. With these stylistic figures, the author not only achieves a rich figurative tone in the text, but also reinforces the harsh realities of tradition, violence, love, fate, and betrayal. Metaphors play a central role in social and existentialist criticism.

Expressions such as "blood has been given the value of a commodity" or "Beauty kills" demonstrate the inhuman effect of the Kanun and the seductive and deadly nature of aestheticism and romantic ideals. With these metaphors, the power of aestheticism enhances honor and decadence with fate. Comparisons provide striking descriptions that highlight the emotional and psychological evolution of the characters. A serious illustration of these descriptions is the way Diana is presented, who is "like a butterfly approaching a lamp" or "like a butterfly touched by a black locomotive", indicating her symbolic role as a victim of patriarchal culture and suicide. What is left outside in this novel are idioms. Idiomatic language is not present in this novel and this is also proven in some ways by the lack of analysis in terms of idiomatic language in Kadare's works by other researchers too.

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