

The Collar Literary Device

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Figures of Speech

Simile

A simile compares two different things using “like” or “as.”

Example:

*“My lines and life are free, free as the road,
Loose as the wind.”*

The speaker compares his life to a road and to the wind to show how free he thinks it could be. Roads and wind have no limits, and he wants a life like that.

Metaphor

A metaphor is a direct comparison without using “like” or “as.”

Example:

“Shall I have no harvest but a thorn...”

Here, “harvest” means the desires/rewards of his life, and “thorn” means pain. The poet compares his life’s rewards to a thorn. This metaphor means he only gets suffering instead of good fruits.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant sound at the start of nearby words.

Example:

“Call in thy death’s-head there; tie up thy fears.”

The “th” sound in “thy” and “there” and “tie” creates a musical effect.

Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical Question happens when questions are asked for effect, not for actual answers.

Example:

"What? shall I ever sigh and pine?"

"Is the year only lost to me?"

These questions show the speaker's frustration and emotional outburst. He doesn't want answers; he wants to express his feelings.

Symbols

The Collar: The collar is a symbol of religious discipline/rules, and restrictions. Priests wear white collars. Herbert compares this collar to the Dog's collar, which controls a dog. The speaker, a priest, feels trapped by the religious rules and wants to break free.

Harvest (Thorn and Fruit): The harvest is a symbol of the rewards of life and work. The poet says he only gets "thorns" (pain) instead of "fruit" (reward and joy). It shows his frustration that his spiritual life feels empty and painful.

Death's Head (Skull): The death's head (skull) is a symbol of fear and mortality. The speaker tells himself to remove this fear. He wants to stop worrying about death and punishment and live freely.

Cage and Rope of Sand: The cage symbolizes mental and spiritual restrictions, and the rope of sand symbolizes meaningless worries that still feel binding. He thinks God is false and his own thoughts have trapped him in a religious life.