

The Rival Literary Device

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Figures of Speech

Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is directly compared to another without using like or as.

Example: *"If the moon smiled, she would resemble you."*

Here, the poet compares the rival to the moon. This metaphor implies that both the moon and the rival are beautiful, but they are also distant and destructive. Both of them are **"light borrowers."** The moon has no light. It borrows light from the sun. Similarly, the rival takes attention or glory from others.

"If the moon smiled, she would resemble you."

Personification

A personification is a figure of speech that gives human qualities to non-human things.

Example: *"If the moon smiled, she would resemble you..."*

"Her O-mouth grieves at the world..."

Plath gives the moon human-like traits, saying it has an *"O-mouth"* that grieves for the world. The moon is described as if it were a person who can grieve. Plath also calls it **"she."**

"If the moon smiled, she would resemble you..."

"Her O-mouth grieves at the world..."

Imagery

Imagery means descriptive language that creates pictures/images in the reader's mind. Readers can feel the images with their senses, like touch, taste, smell, hear, or see.

Example: *"I wake to a mausoleum..."*

The speaker feels as if she is waking up in a mausoleum (tomb). It means she feels lifeless. Again, the rival's complaints or dissatisfactions are **"expansive as carbon monoxide."** It means the rival is toxic and suffocating. These images show how the rival affects the poet.

Irony

Irony means saying something in a way that usually means the opposite.

Example: *"Your dissatisfactions..."*

Arrive... with loving regularity."

Here, the word *"loving"* is ironic. The rival's dissatisfaction or criticisms are not loving at all. They are hurtful. This irony shows the speaker's bitterness and frustration.

"Your dissatisfactions... Arrive... with loving regularity."

Allusion

An allusion is a reference to a well-known story, character, or idea.

Example: *"And your first gift is making stone out of everything."*

This line reminds us of Medusa from Greek mythology, who turned people into stone with her gaze. The rival is described in the same way. The rival's beauty is harmful, and his presence makes the speaker lifeless, like a stone.

"And your first gift is making stone out of everything."

Symbols

The Moon: The moon is beautiful, but it is also distant, destructive, and fake. It borrows light from the sun. In this poem, the moon symbolizes the rival's negative sides: his uncaring and destructive nature.

Mausoleum: A mausoleum is a tomb or place for the dead. In the poem, it symbolizes lifelessness and emptiness. It shows that the rival's presence brings no warmth or love. The rival's presence makes the speaker lifeless.

Carbon Monoxide: Carbon monoxide is a deadly, suffocating gas. It has no smell, and it kills people silently. In this poem, Carbon Monoxide is the symbol of the rival's toxic and suffocating nature. The rival looks harmless, but his effect is deadly and painful.

