



A Semantic Analysis of Figurative Language in The Soundtrack of *The Phantom of The Opera*

Aulia Monica Tambunan,*¹ Bernieke Anggita Ristia Damanik²

¹²Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar

Email: auliamonikatambunan@gmail.com, bernieke.damanik@uhn.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to examine the use of figurative language in *The Phantom of the Opera* by identifying its types and meanings through a semantic lens. Employing a qualitative descriptive design with a library research approach, the analysis focuses on selected dialogues and song lyrics from the film. The findings reveal five dominant types of figurative language—symbol, metonymy, personification, metaphor, and hyperbole. These figurative elements not only enhance the emotional depth of the characters but also enrich the artistic and narrative quality of the musical. The study concludes that figurative language plays a significant role in conveying complex emotions and underlying themes, thereby fostering a deeper appreciation of nonliteral meaning in musical storytelling.

Keywords: *Figurative Language; Semantics; Musical Film*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penggunaan bahasa kiasan dalam film *The Phantom of the Opera* dengan mengidentifikasi jenis dan maknanya melalui lensa semantik. Menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan penelitian kepustakaan, analisis ini berfokus pada dialog dan lirik lagu yang dipilih dari film tersebut. Temuan-temuannya mengungkapkan lima jenis bahasa kiasan yang dominan-simbol, metonimi, personifikasi, metafora, dan hiperbola. Elemen-elemen kiasan ini tidak hanya meningkatkan kedalaman emosional para karakter, tetapi juga memperkaya kualitas artistik dan naratif musikal tersebut. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa bahasa kiasan memainkan peran penting dalam menyampaikan emosi yang kompleks dan tema-tema yang mendasarinya, sehingga menumbuhkan apresiasi yang lebih dalam terhadap makna nonliteral dalam penceritaan musikal.

Kata Kunci: *Bahasa Kiasan; Semantik; Film Musikal*

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a central role in human life—not only as a means of communication but also as a reflection of thought, identity, and cultural development. Chomsky (1972) argues that language is a uniquely human faculty that allows us to grasp the essence of being human. In social

interactions, learning, and creative expression, language connects individuals and communities, shaping how meaning is formed and shared. It operates through a structured system of symbols, signs, and gestures, allowing people to engage with one another. Language, however, is not always literal or straightforward. It often contains nonliteral expressions known as figurative language, which enhances emotional expression and aesthetic richness in communication.

Figurative language is widely used in literature, song lyrics, poetry, and theatrical works to convey complex emotions and ideas in a stylistic and imaginative manner. As Jakobson (1980) noted, language without meaning holds no significance, and figurative forms allow for deeper interpretation beyond surface-level meanings. In musical films, this type of language not only enriches the narrative but also gives voice to the inner feelings of characters. In *The Phantom of the Opera*, figurative expressions are embedded in both lyrics and dramatic dialogue, shaping the film's emotional tone and narrative depth. Understanding these elements requires a semantic approach—analyzing how meaning operates through metaphor, hyperbole, personification, and other figures of speech.

Despite the significance of figurative language in creative works, many viewers and listeners tend to focus more on visual or melodic aspects, often overlooking the linguistic choices that give substance to the narrative. This results in a limited understanding of the emotional and thematic depth intended by the creators. In educational settings, such oversight also reflects a gap in semantic awareness, particularly when analyzing multimedia texts. The central issue addressed in this study is the lack of attention given to figurative meaning in musical drama scripts, particularly regarding how such language functions semantically within character development and storytelling.

Previous studies have emphasized the role of figurative language in enriching literary texts. Kennedy (1979, as cited in Listiani, 2015) outlines various types of figurative language—such as metaphor, simile, personification, idioms, and allusion—which serve to elevate the expressive quality of language. Simatupang & Adzani (2019) analyzed semantic features in airline slogans, while Sari (2022) focused on meaning interpretation in commercial product packaging. However, fewer studies have examined the semantic functions of figurative expressions in musical film scripts, particularly those as lyrically and theatrically rich as *The Phantom of the Opera*. This gap in scholarly attention presents an opportunity to further investigate how figurative language operates within the interplay of dialogue, lyrics, and visual narrative.

This paper aims to analyze the types and functions of figurative language in the film *The Phantom of the Opera*, applying semantic theory as the analytical framework. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and data

sourced from selected dialogues and song lyrics, the study seeks to identify and interpret various forms of figurative expression—such as metaphor, personification, and hyperbole—and examine their contribution to the film’s emotional and narrative depth. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how figurative language enhances artistic storytelling and encourages greater attention to nonliteral meaning in musical drama analysis.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze figurative language in *The Phantom of the Opera* film. As Creswell and Poth (2017) state, qualitative research is suitable for exploring textual or artistic phenomena that require interpretation of meaning within a natural context. The aim of this study was not to quantify data but to understand how nonliteral expressions contribute to the emotional and symbolic elements of the film.

The researcher began by watching the film multiple times to understand the plot, characters, and emotional atmosphere. This step was crucial to ensure accurate interpretation of the context in which figurative language was used. After gaining a comprehensive understanding of the film, the researcher transcribed relevant dialogues and lyrics that appeared to contain figurative elements. These data were then examined closely to identify expressions categorized as metaphor, personification, hyperbole, symbol, or metonymy. Each figurative expression was classified based on its type and analyzed using a semantic approach to uncover its deeper meaning and contribution to the narrative.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher engaged in repeated review and careful comparison between different versions of the lyrics and script. The interpretations were also cross-referenced with existing literature on figurative language and semantics to maintain academic credibility and avoid subjective bias. Through this methodological approach, the research aimed to present an accurate and meaningful analysis of how figurative language is used in the film to express complex themes such as love, fear, identity, and psychological tension.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Summary of Figurative Language in “The Music of the Night”

1. Symbols in *The Music of the Night*

The table below shows the discovery of figurative language in the form of symbols in the lyrics of the song *The Music of the Night*. In this song, there are two symbolic expressions identified:

Table 1. Symbol

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
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Night	Time when it is dark	Escape, seduction, mystery
Light	Physical brightness	Truth, reality, exposure

In *The Music of the Night*, the lyrics employ symbolism to portray abstract concepts through concrete imagery. The word night, for example, literally refers to the time between sunset and sunrise, but symbolically represents mystery, sensuality, and emotional escape. When the Phantom sings, “Close your eyes and surrender to your darkest dreams,” the night becomes a metaphorical space where hidden desires and fantasies are released. Conversely, the word light, which usually signifies brightness or visibility, symbolizes truth, logic, or the conscious mind. The Phantom’s invitation to “leave all thoughts of the world you knew before” reflects his effort to lure Christine away from the clarity of reality into the seductive shadows of illusion. These opposing symbols of night and light deepen the conflict between fantasy and reality, desire and restraint.

2. Metonymy in *The Music of the Night*

The table below shows the discovery of figurative language metonymy in the lyrics of the song *The Music of the Night*. In this song, there are 4 metonymies of figurative language.

Table 2. Metonymy

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
Eyes	Organs of sight	Rational thinking / self-control
Mind	Human brain or thought	Imagination, emotional surrender
Soul	Spiritual or non-physical self	Deep desires, inner emotional self
Music	Sound with melody and rhythm	Emotional power, seduction, the Phantom’s influence

The first metonym comes from the word “eyes.” Literally, it refers to the organs used for seeing. In the lyric “Close your eyes and surrender to your darkest dreams,” eyes symbolize a person’s rational thoughts and mental defenses. Closing the eyes means letting go of logic and submitting to emotion, making it a metonym for consciousness or awareness. The second metonym is “mind.” In the lyric “The Phantom of the Opera is there inside my mind,” the word mind is not just about thoughts, but represents the space of imagination, vulnerability, and internal conflict. The Phantom’s presence “in her mind” means emotional and psychological possession. The third metonym is “soul.” Literally, it refers to the non-physical essence of a person. In “Let your soul take you where you long to be,” the word soul symbolizes inner longing and deep emotional desire, urging Christine to follow not her reason, but her emotional instincts. The last metonym is “music.” While it

literally means melody and sound, in “*Let the music of the night...*”, music becomes a symbol for emotional control, manipulation, and seduction. It’s not just sound, but the Phantom’s entire method of influence over Christine’s heart and mind.

3. Personification in *The Music of The Night*

The table below shows the discovery of figurative language personification in the lyrics of the song *The Music of the Night*. In this song, there are 5 personifications of figurative language.

Table 3. Personification

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
Night-time sharpens	Night can sharpen	Night intensifies the feelings
Darkness stirs	Darkness can move or act	Darkness awakens imagination
Senses abandon their defences	Senses can leave their guards	A person becomes emotionally vulnerable
Night unfurls its splendour	Night opens something like a fabric	The beauty of night is gradually revealed
Music shall surround you	Music can wrap around a person	Music takes full emotional control of someone

The first sentence that contains personification is “*Night-time sharpens, heightens each sensation.*” In literal meaning, night-time is a time period and cannot sharpen anything. But in figurative language, night-time is given the human ability to sharpen and intensify, suggesting that the emotional and sensory experience becomes stronger at night. The next sentence is “*Darkness stirs and wakes imagination.*” Literally, darkness cannot move or act. Figuratively, darkness is personified as something alive that awakens human imagination, suggesting that in the absence of light, fantasy begins to grow. The third personification is “*Silently the senses abandon their defences.*” In literal terms, senses cannot leave or defend. But figuratively, this line means the person lets down their emotional guard and becomes open to suggestion or seduction. The next sentence is “*Night unfurls its splendour.*” Literally, night cannot “unfurl” like cloth or fabric. Figuratively, this sentence personifies night as something that gently reveals its beauty and emotional power. The last sentence is “*Music shall surround you.*” Literally, music is sound and cannot physically surround someone. Figuratively, this line means that music will emotionally and mentally engulf the listener, taking full control of their feelings.

4. Metaphor in *The Music of the Night*

The table below shows the discovery of figurative language metaphor in the lyrics of the song *The Music of the Night*. In this song, there are 4 metaphors of figurative language.

Table 4. Metaphor

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
Music of the night	Music that plays at night	Power of fantasy, seduction, emotional escape
Let your soul take you	Soul moves or guides someone	Deep desire or emotion leads the way
Sweet intoxication	Being pleasantly drunk	Overwhelming pleasure and emotional surrender
Let your mind start a journey	The mind physically travels somewhere	Let imagination explore a new world

The first sentence that contains metaphor is "*the music of the night*." Literally, this refers to musical sounds heard at night. In figurative language, it means a powerful emotional and sensual experience that removes the listener from reality and pulls them into a mysterious world. The second metaphor is "*Let your soul take you where you long to be*." Literally, the soul cannot physically take someone anywhere. Figuratively, it suggests that a person should follow their inner emotions or deepest desires to reach fulfillment. The third expression is "*Sweet intoxication*." Literally, intoxication refers to a state of being drunk. Figuratively, it means being overwhelmed by emotion, desire, or beauty, to the point of losing control in a pleasurable way. The last metaphor is found in "*Let your mind start a journey through a strange new world*." Literally, the mind cannot physically go on a journey. Figuratively, it means allowing the imagination to explore unknown emotional or psychological experiences, breaking free from reality.

5. Hyperbole in *The Music of the Night*

The table below shows the discovery of figurative language hyperbole in the lyrics of the song *The Music of the Night*. In this song, there are 3 **hyperboles** of figurative language.

Table 5. Hyperbole

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
You'll live as you've never lived before	You will live in a way you never have before	Exaggeration of transformation into a new, intense emotional world
You alone can make my song take flight	Someone causes a song to fly	Overstatement of personal emotional importance and creative power

The first hyperbole is “*You’ll live as you’ve never lived before.*” This line suggests an emotional or spiritual rebirth, implying that giving in to the night and to the Phantom’s music will make the listener experience life in a way that is completely new and overwhelming an exaggeration, of course, but effective poetically. The second hyperbole is “*You alone can make my song take flight.*” Literally, a person cannot make a song fly. Figuratively, this line shows an exaggerated dependence on Christine, as if her voice or love is the only thing that can give the Phantom’s music life and meaning.

Summary of Figurative Language in *The Phantom of the Opera*

1. Metonymy in *The Phantom of the Opera*

The table below shows the discovery of figurative language metonymy in the lyrics of the song *The Phantom of the Opera*. In this song, there is 1 metonymy of figurative language.

Table 6. Metonymy

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
the mask	a physical covering for the face	represents the Phantom's hidden identity or the role he plays to conceal himself

In the lyrics, the word “*mask*” in “*I am the mask you wear*” is a figurative expression that serves as a metonymy. Literally, a mask is a physical object worn on the face, but in this context, it stands for the concealed identity or hidden persona of the Phantom. The metaphorical usage implies that the Phantom hides his true self behind Christine, or that Christine becomes a vessel or face for the Phantom’s voice and influence. The word *mask* therefore represents not just a physical object, but the idea of illusion, performance, and secrecy all central to the themes of the opera.

2. Personification in *The Phantom of the Opera*

The table below shows the discovery of figurative language personification in the lyrics of the song *The Phantom of the Opera*. In this song, there are 3 personifications of figurative language.

Table 7. Personification

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
That voice which calls to me	A voice calling	The Phantom’s voice is personified as if it actively calls or summons her
Speaks my name	A voice utters her name	Voice is given human traits, suggesting intimacy and supernatural presence

The sentences above are clear examples of personification, where non-human elements are given human characteristics. The first sentence “*That voice which calls to me*” presents the voice as if it actively calls and communicates like a person, reinforcing the eerie and mystical tone of the

Phantom's influence. It emphasizes his psychological presence that haunts Christine even in her dreams. The second lyric "*And speaks my name*" continues the personification by attributing the ability to speak directly to an abstract "voice." This deepens the intimacy of the moment and illustrates how the Phantom invades Christine's subconscious in a personal and intense way.

3. Symbol in *The Phantom of the Opera*

The table below shows the discovery of figurative language symbols in the lyrics of the song *The Phantom of the Opera*. In this song, there are 2 symbols of figurative language.

Table 8. Symbol

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
the mask	a physical face covering	symbolizes concealment, dual identity, or emotional disguise
the phantom inside the mind	the phantom is located in the brain	represents psychological influence, obsession, or internal struggle

The first symbol appears in the phrase "*I am the mask you wear.*" Literally, a mask is an object worn to cover the face. However, in figurative meaning, it represents the idea of hidden identity, duality, or emotional disguise. The Phantom uses Christine as a way to project his voice to the public, making her his "mask" a symbol of performance, illusion, and secrecy. The second symbol is found in the repeated lyric "*The Phantom of the Opera is there, inside your/my mind.*" Literally, it may imply physical presence in the brain, but figuratively it symbolizes the Phantom's psychological grip, obsession, and haunting presence. The mind becomes a symbolic space of both fear and fascination, reflecting Christine's inner conflict and the Phantom's control.

4. Metaphor in *The Phantom of the Opera*

The table below shows the use of metaphor in the lyrics of the song *The Phantom of the Opera*. In this song, there are 2 metaphors.

Table 9. Metaphor

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
The Phantom of the Opera is inside my mind	The Phantom is inside the brain	Shows that the Phantom deeply influences Christine's thoughts and feelings
Our spirits and our voices in one combined	Spirits and voices are physically joined	Symbolizes a strong emotional and musical bond between Christine and the Phantom

The first metaphor appears in the lyric “*The Phantom of the Opera is there inside my mind.*” Literally, it means the Phantom is inside Christine’s head. But figuratively, it means the Phantom controls her mind and emotions, making her feel haunted by his voice and presence. The second metaphor is found in the lyric “*Our spirits and our voices in one combined.*” This doesn’t mean their spirits and voices are truly one. It describes how emotionally and musically connected they are, like two souls singing as one. The lyric shows how they are united through music and emotion.

Summary of Figurative Language in *All I Ask of You*

1. Personification in *All I Ask of You*

The table below shows the discovery of personification figurative language in the lyrics of the song *All I Ask of You*. In this song, there are 3 personifications.

Table 10. Personification

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
Let daylight dry your tears	Let daylight dry your tears	The presence of love or hope can relieve sadness
My words will warm and calm you	My words will warm and calm you	Words filled with affection bring emotional safety and comfort
Forget these wide-eyed fears	Forget these wide-eyed fears	Letting go of overwhelming fear, symbolized by wide-open eyes

Several expressions in the song use personification to project human qualities onto abstract concepts. The line “Let daylight dry your tears” attributes a comforting, healing ability to daylight. Figuratively, it suggests that hope and love symbolized by daylight can ease pain and emotional sorrow. In “My words will warm and calm you”, words are personified as capable of providing emotional security. This emphasizes Raoul’s desire to protect Christine not just physically, but emotionally. The phrase “Forget these wide-eyed fears” personifies fears as childlike or innocent, portrayed with wide eyes. It implies that Christine’s fear is irrational or overly sensitive and can be soothed by love. These personifications help portray Raoul as a source of emotional stability, contrasting with the Phantom’s intense and controlling affection.

2. Metaphor in *All I Ask of You*

The table below shows the discovery of figurative language metaphor in the lyrics of the song *All I Ask of You*. In this song, there are 4 metaphors of figurative language.

Table 11. Metaphor

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
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Let me be your light	To become a source of light	A metaphor for hope, love, and emotional guidance
Let me be your shelter	To provide a place to hide	A metaphor for protection, safety, and emotional comfort
Turn my head with talk of summertime	To make someone turn their head with talk about summer	A metaphor for being charmed or swayed by beautiful, warm, romantic imagery
A world with no more night	A world that no longer has night	A metaphor for a peaceful life without sorrow, fear, or emotional darkness

Metaphorical expressions in the lyrics deepen the emotional and symbolic connection between the two characters. In “Let me be your light”, Raoul offers himself as a metaphorical light, representing hope, emotional clarity, and guidance. Similarly, “Let me be your shelter” metaphorically positions Raoul as a place of safety and emotional refuge. These metaphors depict his love as both illuminating and protective. The line “Turn my head with talk of summertime” is a metaphor for being emotionally swayed by romantic, joyful imagery. Summer here symbolizes warmth, ease, and happiness. Another metaphor, “a world with no more night”, suggests a longing for a life free from darkness where night symbolizes fear, sadness, and past trauma. Altogether, these metaphors construct an image of a loving relationship rooted in peace, safety, and mutual support.

3. Symbols in *All I Ask of You*

The table below shows the discovery of figurative language symbols in the lyrics of the song *All I Ask of You*. In this song, there are 4 symbols of figurative language.

Table 12. Symbol

Figurative Expression	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
Light	A source of illumination	Hope, love, and guidance
Shelter	A place to take cover	Protection and emotional security
Night	A time of day (darkness)	Fear, sadness, or emotional isolation
Freedom	The state of being free	Life without fear, control, or constraint

Symbolism in the song reinforces the emotional contrast between Raoul’s world and the Phantom’s. The word light, already used metaphorically, also functions symbolically as a representation of emotional clarity, honesty, and hope. Shelter symbolizes protection and emotional safety, reinforcing the nurturing tone of Raoul’s proposal. Conversely, night

symbolizes emotional darkness, fear, and the psychological manipulation Christine experienced with the Phantom. When Raoul offers “a world with no more night”, it symbolizes his desire to protect Christine from the haunting presence of the Phantom. The concept of freedom in “All I want is freedom” is also symbolic it reflects Christine’s yearning to escape the emotional entrapment of the Phantom’s influence and live a life of autonomy, peace, and love. These symbols deepen the emotional resonance of the lyrics and clarify the opposing forces at work in Christine’s internal conflict.

CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed the use of figurative language in selected lyrics and dialogues from *The Phantom of the Opera* using a semantic approach within a descriptive qualitative framework. The findings revealed five dominant types of figurative language—symbol, metonymy, personification, metaphor, and hyperbole—which served both artistic and psychological functions in the narrative. These nonliteral expressions enriched the emotional tone of the film, deepened character portrayals, and illuminated key themes such as love, identity, fear, desire, and inner conflict. As Kennedy (1979) argues, figurative language enhances the expressive power of language beyond literal meaning—a claim supported by this study through examples like metaphors (“Let your soul take you where you long to be”) and symbols (e.g., “the mask”) that conveyed nuanced psychological and thematic depth. In line with Jakobson’s (1980) emphasis on the centrality of meaning in language, this research confirms that figurative expressions serve as essential tools for emotional articulation and symbolic storytelling.

Beyond its contribution to film analysis, this research adds to the broader field of semantics and figurative meaning by demonstrating how nonliteral language functions in multimodal texts like musical films. It highlights the pedagogical potential of using song lyrics and scripts to teach English, especially in fostering interpretive and cultural awareness. As Kramsch (1998) noted, language is both a communicative and cultural medium—an idea reinforced by the role figurative language plays in revealing character psychology and constructing symbolic meaning. Future studies may extend this research to other musical works, adopt alternative linguistic frameworks such as pragmatics or discourse analysis, or explore how audiences interpret figurative meaning across media contexts.

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