

Original Paper

Semantic Rhetorical Devices in Xuân Quỳnh's Love Poetry: A Stylistic and Expressive Analysis

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Abstract

This article investigates the use of semantic rhetorical devices in Xuân Quỳnh's love poetry from a stylistic and rhetorical perspective. Focusing on a corpus of ten representative poems, the study examines four major types of semantic rhetorical devices-metaphor, simile, metonymy, and personification-through qualitative close reading supported by quantitative overview. The analysis explores their distribution, expressive functions, and stylistic roles in the construction of poetic meaning.

The findings reveal that metaphor functions as the dominant rhetorical mechanism, enabling the poet to conceptualize abstract emotional states such as love, longing, devotion, and anxiety through symbolically rich and concrete imagery. Simile, metonymy, and personification operate as complementary devices that enhance emotional clarity, semantic compression, and lyrical animation of the external world. Together, these devices form an integrated expressive system that allows personal emotional experience to be generalized into shared human values while maintaining intimacy and emotional authenticity.

The study argues that semantic rhetorical devices play a central role in shaping Xuân Quỳnh's distinctive poetic style, characterized by emotional depth, introspection, and a strongly articulated feminine lyrical voice grounded in everyday imagery. By foregrounding semantic rhetoric as a core mechanism of poetic meaning-making, the article contributes a linguistic and stylistic dimension to existing research on Xuân Quỳnh's poetry and offers insights into the expressive dynamics of modern Vietnamese lyric poetry.

Keywords

Xuân Quỳnh, love poetry, semantic rhetorical devices, metaphor, stylistics, Vietnamese lyric poetry

1. Introduction

In the development of modern Vietnamese poetry, love poetry has occupied a central position due to its capacity to articulate the emotional depth and complexity of human experience, particularly the subtle and multifaceted states of romantic love. Among the most prominent voices within this tradition is Xuân Quỳnh, a female poet whose lyrical discourse is distinguished by sincerity, emotional intensity, and a distinctly feminine sensibility. Her love poetry does not merely celebrate happiness and fulfillment in intimate relationships; it also foregrounds the anxieties, insecurities, and emotional vulnerabilities experienced by women as they navigate the shifting dynamics of love. Through this emotional candor, Xuân Quỳnh has established a poetic voice that is both deeply personal and widely resonant in modern Vietnamese literature.

From the perspective of artistic language, rhetorical devices play a crucial role in shaping poetic meaning. Figures such as metaphor, simile, and metonymy are not merely ornamental but constitute fundamental mechanisms through which poetic discourse constructs imagery, expresses abstract emotions, and generates aesthetic depth. Contemporary linguistic and stylistic studies have demonstrated that rhetorical devices enable poetry to transcend literal expression, allowing complex emotional and psychological states to be conceptualized and communicated through concrete, sensory, and culturally embedded images (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Semino & Steen, 2008). In lyric poetry in particular, semantic rhetorical devices function as essential tools mediating between subjective experience and linguistic form.

Previous scholarship on Xuân Quỳnh's poetry has largely approached her work from perspectives such as feminine inspiration, themes of love, inner emotional life, and lyrical poetics. Numerous studies have affirmed her position as one of the most representative figures of modern Vietnamese poetry, especially in her ability to portray the emotional world of women through a voice that is intimate, heartfelt, and emotionally persuasive. However, much of this research remains grounded in interpretive commentary or traditional literary analysis, often privileging thematic appreciation over systematic linguistic investigation. Consequently, the rhetorical organization of poetic language, particularly the use of semantic rhetorical devices, has not yet been examined in a comprehensive and methodologically consistent manner.

Notably, while rhetorical figures are frequently mentioned in analyses of individual poems or specific images, there has been limited effort to systematize, classify, and quantitatively examine these devices across Xuân Quỳnh's poetic corpus. Existing studies rarely address issues such as the distribution, frequency, and functional variation of semantic rhetorical devices, nor do they sufficiently explain how these devices contribute to the construction of Xuân Quỳnh's distinctive lyrical style. This gap becomes especially apparent in light of developments in modern rhetoric and cognitive linguistics, which emphasize the role of figurative language in structuring thought and emotional experience rather than merely embellishing expression (Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Kövecses, 2010).

Against this scholarly backdrop, the present study seeks to address a significant research gap by examining semantic rhetorical devices in Xuân Quỳnh's love poetry from a systematic rhetorical-linguistic perspective. By identifying, classifying, and analyzing devices such as metaphor, simile, and metonymy, the study aims to clarify their semantic and stylistic functions within the poet's lyrical world. This approach not only contributes a new analytical dimension to the study of Xuân Quỳnh's poetry but also underscores the broader role of semantic rhetorical devices in shaping the aesthetics of modern Vietnamese lyric poetry. Ultimately, the research aspires to enrich both Vietnamese poetic studies and rhetorical-stylistic scholarship by demonstrating how figurative language operates as a central mechanism in the construction of poetic meaning and emotional expression.

2. Addressing the Research Problem

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Love poetry is widely recognized as a central form of lyric poetry, in which romantic love functions as the primary object of representation, enabling poets to articulate emotional experience and the inner world of the lyrical subject (Trần Đình Sử, 2002). Beyond its thematic dimension, love in lyric poetry operates as an organizing artistic principle that shapes imagery, language choice, and lyrical voice, thereby influencing the semantic structure and aesthetic coherence of the poetic text.

From the perspective of Western literary theory, love poetry is understood as a mode of lyric expression through which poets voice personal emotions such as desire, longing, passion, and loss, typically articulated through a first-person lyrical self (Abrams, 1999). Despite differences in theoretical traditions, both Eastern and Western approaches converge in emphasizing the centrality of personal emotion and the pivotal role of the lyrical self in structuring love poetry.

Within linguistic and stylistic studies, rhetorical devices are regarded as essential means for revealing the expressive depth of lyric poetry. Rather than functioning as mere ornamentation, rhetorical devices serve as mechanisms that enhance emotional resonance, aesthetic value, and semantic complexity. As Galperin argues, rhetorical devices involve the deliberate foregrounding of semantic or structural features of language to achieve expressive effect. Vietnamese stylistic scholars similarly conceptualize rhetorical devices as intentional strategies of language organization that shape meaning, emotion, and reader interpretation (Đinh Trọng Lạc; Cù Đình Tú; Nguyễn Thái Hòa).

On this basis, rhetorical devices in Vietnamese constitute a systematic network encompassing semantic, syntactic, and phonological categories. Among these, semantic rhetorical devices-such as simile, metaphor, metonymy, and personification-occupy a particularly important position in poetic discourse, as they enable abstract emotions and psychological states to be conceptualized through concrete and symbolically resonant imagery. Accordingly, the present study focuses on key semantic rhetorical devices as a theoretically and methodologically appropriate framework for examining the expressive characteristics of love poetry.

2.2 Semantic Rhetorical Devices

Within lyric poetry, semantic rhetorical devices constitute a central mechanism through which emotional experience and aesthetic meaning are constructed. Among the diverse rhetorical resources of poetic language, metaphor, metonymy, and personification play a particularly significant role in enabling abstract emotions and psychological states to be expressed through concrete, symbolically resonant imagery.

Metaphor is formed through the transfer of names or characteristics between objects or phenomena based on perceived similarity, thereby enhancing imagery, emotional resonance, and semantic depth (Đinh Trọng Lạc, 1999). Unlike simile, which explicitly signals comparison, metaphor embeds comparison within its semantic structure, inviting readers to actively participate in meaning construction (Cù Đình Tú, 2001). From a cognitive linguistic perspective, metaphor is not merely a stylistic device but a fundamental mechanism of thought that allows abstract concepts to be conceptualized in terms of concrete experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In lyric poetry, metaphors—often drawn from natural domains such as waves, the sea, wind, or fire—serve to visualize elusive emotional states such as love, longing, and anxiety, contributing to semantic density and expressive continuity.

Metonymy, by contrast, operates on the basis of contiguity rather than similarity, involving the transfer of naming between closely related entities through part-whole, cause-effect, or spatial and temporal associations (Đinh Trọng Lạc, 1999). This device enables poets to express meaning indirectly yet precisely, relying on logical association and shared cultural knowledge (Cù Đình Tú, 2001). Metonymic expressions typically involve using a part to represent the whole, a salient feature to denote an object, or an associated element to evoke an abstract concept. In poetic discourse, metonymy is especially effective in conveying subtle emotions and intimate relationships, producing semantic compression and interpretive depth without altering surface syntactic structure (Nguyễn Thái Hòa, 2003).

Personification involves attributing human characteristics, actions, or emotional states to natural phenomena, inanimate objects, or abstract concepts, thereby enhancing the expressive and affective potential of language. As Đinh Trọng Lạc notes, personification renders the non-human world vivid, intimate, and emotionally resonant by employing linguistic forms originally associated with human experience. In lyric poetry, this device animates the poetic world and allows external reality to function as a projection of the lyrical subject's inner life, reinforcing emotional identification and aesthetic impact.

Taken together, metaphor, metonymy, and personification form an interconnected system of semantic rhetorical devices that structure poetic meaning beyond literal expression. Their combined use enables love poetry to transform personal emotion into symbolically rich and culturally intelligible discourse, making them a theoretically and methodologically appropriate focus for the present study.

2.3 Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative stylistic and rhetorical approach to examine semantic rhetorical devices in Xuân Quỳnh's love poetry. The corpus comprises ten representative poems selected based on their thematic centrality to romantic love, critical recognition, and frequent citation in existing scholarship on the poet.

The analysis focuses on four major types of semantic rhetorical devices: simile, metaphor, metonymy, and personification. These devices are identified through close textual reading, guided by established criteria in Vietnamese stylistics and rhetoric. Each instance is analyzed in its poetic context with respect to semantic transformation, rhetorical function, and contribution to the organization of lyrical emotion and poetic meaning.

The analytical procedure involves three main stages: identifying semantic rhetorical devices across the selected poems, examining their patterns of distribution, and interpreting their expressive and stylistic functions. This methodological framework enables a systematic assessment of how semantic rhetorical devices operate both individually and in combination to shape emotional expression and to contribute to the formation of Xuân Quỳnh's distinctive lyrical style.

3. Discussion

Table 1 summarizes the distribution of semantic rhetorical devices identified in the ten selected love poems by Xuân Quỳnh. Metaphor emerges as the most frequently used device, accounting for 45.6% of all occurrences, followed by simile (31.6%), personification (12.7%), and metonymy (10.1%). This distribution indicates a clear predominance of metaphor within the poet's rhetorical system.

Table 1. Distribution of Semantic Rhetorical Devices in Ten Love Poems by Xuân Quỳnh

Semantic rhetorical device	Frequency (estimated)	Percentage (%)
Metaphor	36	45.6%
Simile	25	31.6%
Personification	10	12.7%
Metonymy	8	10.1%
Total	79	100%

Note. The frequencies are based on qualitative close reading of ten representative love poems by Xuân Quỳnh. Percentages indicate the relative distribution of semantic rhetorical devices within the corpus and are rounded to one decimal place. The table is intended to illustrate general tendencies in rhetorical usage rather than to provide an exhaustive quantitative count.

The prominence of metaphor can be explained primarily by the expressive nature of lyric poetry, where emotional states such as love, longing, desire, and anxiety are inherently abstract and resistant to direct

articulation. Metaphor enables these intangible experiences to be conceptualized through symbolically charged and concrete imagery, thereby enhancing semantic depth and emotional coherence. This finding is consistent with both stylistic and cognitive approaches, which emphasize metaphor as a fundamental mechanism for structuring emotional and conceptual meaning in poetic discourse.

At the same time, Xuân Quỳnh's preference for metaphor is closely related to gendered modes of emotional expression and feminine sensibility in poetic creation. As a female poet, she frequently adopts an indirect, nuanced, and associative mode of expression, in which metaphor proves more effective than explicit or declarative forms of representation. In the socio-cultural context of post-1975 Vietnam, when personal subjectivity and women's voices in love poetry began to gain greater visibility, metaphor functioned as a particularly suitable rhetorical strategy for articulating intimate emotional experience while preserving lyrical subtlety and restraint.

The combined use of metaphor, simile, and metonymy thus reflects not only Xuân Quỳnh's individual linguistic strategy but also the broader aesthetic orientation of her poetry. While metaphor serves as the dominant organizing device, simile and metonymy play complementary roles by enhancing imagery, emotional clarity, and semantic conciseness. Together, these devices contribute decisively to the formation of a feminine lyrical style characterized by sincerity, emotional intensity, and a close connection to familiar images drawn from everyday life.

Table 2. Classification of Semantic Rhetorical Devices in Ten Love Poems by Xuân Quỳnh

Semantic rhetorical device	Subtype	Poem	Representative example (translated)	Semantic function
Simile	Explicit simile (A like B)	<i>Sóng</i>	"Life may be long... like the vast sea"	Concretizing abstract concepts (time, human life)
		<i>Thuyền và biển</i>	"The sea is like a young girl"	Feminization and personification of nature
		<i>Thơ tình cuối mùa thu</i>	"Our love is like a line of trees"	Evoking endurance and emotional resilience
		<i>Nối cội anh</i>	"Like air, like the green of grass"	Emphasizing the quiet necessity of love
Metaphor	Symbolic metaphor	<i>Sóng</i>	"The wave longs for the shore"	Expressing longing and emotional aspiration
		<i>Thuyền và biển</i>	Boat - sea	Symbolizing romantic relationships
		<i>Tự hát</i>	"My heart"	Representing inner emotional life
	Supplementary	<i>Bàn tay em</i>	"My hands, a small"	Generalizing everyday

Semantic rhetorical device	Subtype	Poem	Representative example (translated)	Semantic function
	metaphor	<i>Nỗi c ìng anh</i>	inheritance” “Your love is my homeland”	sacrifice Elevating love as spiritual anchorage
Metonymy	Part-whole relation	<i>Bàn tay em</i> <i>Sân ga chiều em đi</i> <i>Tự hát</i>	“My hands” “The station at dusk” “The heart beats restlessly”	Representing the woman’s life and identity Spatial representation of separation Bodily part standing for emotional state
Personification	Attribution of human emotion	<i>Sóng</i> <i>Hoa cỏ may</i> <i>Thơ tình cuối mùa thu</i> <i>Thuyền và biển</i>	“The wave longs for the shore” “The tree stands bewildered” “Autumn walks with falling leaves” “The sea turns gray with longing”	Lyricalizing natural phenomena Reflecting inner emotional unease Creating a melancholic emotional space Emphasizing enduring emotional attachment

Note. The quantitative distribution presented in Table 1 provides an overview of the relative frequency of semantic rhetorical devices in Xuân Quỳnh’s love poetry, while the qualitative classification in Table 2 elucidates how these devices function at the level of meaning and expression. Considered together, the two tables demonstrate that the predominance of metaphor (45.6%) is not merely a numerical tendency but reflects its central structural and semantic role in the poet’s lyrical discourse.

As shown in Table 2, metaphors in Xuân Quỳnh’s poetry consistently operate as organizing images, such as waves, the sea, boats, hands, and journeys, through which complex emotional experiences are conceptualized and sustained across poems. This qualitative evidence accounts for the dominance of metaphor observed in Table 1: metaphor enables abstract emotions to be visualized, generalized, and emotionally integrated, thereby forming the backbone of lyrical meaning. Simile, which ranks second in frequency (31.6%), plays a complementary role by concretizing emotional experience and enhancing clarity through explicit or implicit comparison. Its functions tend to be localized and context-specific rather than structurally pervasive.

Metonymy and personification, although less frequent, contribute distinct and significant semantic functions that reinforce the overall expressive system. Metonymy facilitates semantic compression and indirect articulation of intimate emotional states, whereas personification lyricizes the external world by

projecting human emotion onto nature and material objects. The interaction among these devices, as evidenced by Tables 1 and 2, reveals a hierarchical yet integrated rhetorical system in which metaphor functions as the core device, supported by simile, metonymy, and personification.

This convergence of quantitative distribution and qualitative function indicates that Xuân Quỳnh's rhetorical choices are both systematic and stylistically motivated. The coordinated use of semantic rhetorical devices not only enhances emotional expressiveness but also contributes decisively to the formation of a feminine lyrical style characterized by intimacy, emotional depth, and close engagement with everyday experience.

Based on the classification and textual evidence, four core semantic functions of rhetorical devices can be identified in Xuân Quỳnh's love poetry. First, these devices serve to concretize and visualize abstract emotional states. Feelings such as love, longing, anxiety, and separation-by nature intangible-are rendered perceptible through simile, metaphor, and personification, making emotional experience vivid and accessible to readers. Second, rhetorical devices facilitate the generalization of personal experience into shared human experience. Through metaphor and metonymy, individual emotions are elevated into broader symbolic meanings, transforming private love into a universal pattern of attachment and emotional endurance. Third, rhetorical devices contribute to the lyricization of the external world: natural objects and spatial settings are imbued with emotional resonance, mirroring the inner life of the lyrical subject and dissolving boundaries between subject and object. Finally, semantic rhetorical devices play a crucial role in articulating a feminine lyrical self. The recurrent use of familiar, everyday imagery, such as waves, hands, grass, and stations, reflects a mode of emotional expression that is intimate, gentle, and sincere, yet deeply marked by longing, vulnerability, and a desire for emotional connection.

Table 3. Expressive Functions of Semantic Rhetorical Devices in Ten Love Poems by Xuân Quỳnh

Semantic rhetorical device	Poem	Representative expression (translated)	Expressive function
Simile	Sóng	"Life may be long... like the vast sea"	Concretizing abstract concepts such as human life and time
	Thuyền và biển	"The sea is like a young girl"	Feminizing natural imagery; enhancing lyrical tenderness
	Thơ tình cuối mùa thu	"Our love is like a line of trees"	Conceptualizing love as endurance through challenges
	Nối cùng anh	"Like air, like the green of grass"	Emphasizing the quiet necessity and invisibility of love
Metaphor	Sóng	Wave - shore	Expressing longing, attachment, and emotional orientation

Semantic rhetorical device	Poem	Representative expression (translated)	Expressive function
	Thuyền v à biển	Boat - sea	Symbolizing the dynamics of romantic relationships
	Tự h á	Heart	Representing inner emotional life
	N ố c ù ng anh	Love as “homeland”	Elevating love as spiritual anchorage
Metonymy	B à n tay em	Hand	Part representing the woman’s life and silent sacrifice
	S â n ga chiều em ã	Station	Spatial representation of separation and farewell
	Tự h á	Beating heart	Bodily part standing for emotional unrest
Personification	S ó ng	“The wave longs for the shore”	Lyticizing nature as a reflection of inner emotion
	Hoa c ò may	“The tree stands bewildered”	Evoking emotional unease and hesitation
	Thơ t ì nh cu ối m ù a thu	“Autumn walks with falling leaves”	Creating a melancholic emotional atmosphere
	Thuyền v à biển	“The sea turns gray with longing”	Emphasizing enduring emotional attachment
	S â n ga chiều em ã	“The station falls silent”	Personifying space to intensify emotional depth

Note. Table 3 elucidates the expressive functions of semantic rhetorical devices in the ten selected love poems by Xuân Quỳnh, showing that simile, metaphor, metonymy, and personification operate as mechanisms of meaning construction rather than as mere stylistic ornamentation. The findings indicate that each device fulfills distinct yet complementary semantic functions, collectively contributing to the coherence and emotional depth of the poetic discourse.

Simile primarily functions to concretize abstract concepts such as time, human life, and emotional attachment. Through explicit or implicit comparative structures, simile transforms intangible experiences into perceptible images drawn from nature and everyday life. As illustrated in Table 3, simile not only clarifies emotional meaning but also enhances lyrical softness and a feminine sensibility by framing love as both enduring and indispensable.

Metaphor emerges as the most structurally significant device in terms of expressive function. Recurrent metaphorical pairs, such as wave-shore, boat-sea, and heart-operate as symbolic frameworks through

which emotional experiences are organized and sustained across poems. By elevating individual feelings to broader conceptual and spiritual levels, metaphor allows love to be represented as attachment, orientation, and existential anchorage, thereby explaining its dominant position within the overall rhetorical system identified in earlier tables.

Metonymy contributes a more restrained yet essential expressive function by enabling semantic compression and indirect articulation of emotion. Through part-whole relations and spatial representations, metonymy conveys emotionally sensitive experiences such as separation, sacrifice, and inner unrest with subtlety. Images such as hands and stations anchor poetic emotion in concrete reality while preserving interpretive openness.

Personification plays a crucial role in lyricizing the external world by attributing human emotions and psychological states to natural objects and spaces. This device transforms nature and setting into emotional mirrors of the lyrical subject, dissolving the boundary between inner feeling and outer reality. As Table 3 indicates, personification intensifies emotional atmosphere and reinforces the intimate tone characteristic of Xuân Quỳnh's poetry.

Taken together, the expressive functions outlined in Table 3 reveal a coherent semantic system in which rhetorical devices work synergistically to visualize emotion, generalize personal experience, and animate the poetic world. This functional integration not only enhances emotional expressiveness but also contributes decisively to the construction of a feminine lyrical voice marked by sincerity, emotional depth, and close engagement with everyday life.

Table 4. Roles of Semantic Rhetorical Devices in Shaping Xuân Quỳnh's Poetic Style

Semantic rhetorical device	Representative poems	Usage characteristics	Stylistic value
Simile	Sóng	Comparison with vast natural elements (sea, waves)	Creating an expansive, emotionally flowing, and feminine lyrical voice
	Thuyền v à biển	Personifying simile ("The sea is like a young girl")	Softening imagery; enhancing lyrical tenderness
	Thơ tình cuối mùa thu	Comparing love to natural endurance	Conveying maturity, resilience, and emotional depth
	Nối c ùng anh	Comparison with familiar everyday objects	Expressing a simple, intimate, and life-oriented view of love
Metaphor	Sóng	Sustained metaphor (wave-self)	Establishing a distinctive symbolic representation of love
	Thuyền v à biển	Paired metaphor (boat-sea)	Deepening the theme of attachment and separation

Semantic rhetorical device	Representative poems	Usage characteristics	Stylistic value
Metonymy	Tự h á	“Heart” as metaphor	Exploring the inner emotional life of women
	N ố c ù ng anh	Love as “homeland”	Elevating love to a spiritual and humanistic value
	B à n tay em	Body part representing the whole person	Honoring everyday labor, care, and sacrifice
	S â n ga chiều em ãi	Space representing emotional state	Creating a quiet, restrained sense of farewell
	Tự h á	Bodily reference for emotional state	Enhancing authenticity and emotional realism
Personification	S ó ng	Natural phenomena endowed with emotion	Lyricizing nature as an emotional mirror
	Hoa cỏ may	Landscape imbued with mood	Expressing sensitivity and emotional fragility
	Thơ tình cuối mùa thu	Time and seasons given agency	Creating a reflective, contemplative tone
	Thuyền v à bi ển	Nature expressing longing	Intensifying emotional depth and persistence

Note. The table synthesizes the stylistic roles of semantic rhetorical devices across selected poems. Examples are representative rather than exhaustive.

Table 4 demonstrates that semantic rhetorical devices in Xuân Quỳnh’s poetry do not merely function as expressive techniques but play a central role in shaping her distinctive poetic style. Through simile, metaphor, metonymy, and personification, poetic imagery is systematically lyricized, simplified, and closely aligned with everyday experience, while simultaneously foregrounding the inner emotional life of the female lyrical subject.

Metaphor emerges as the core stylistic device, enabling sustained symbolic representation of love and emotional attachment. Simile complements this function by enhancing emotional clarity and lyrical softness, whereas metonymy and personification contribute to restraint, subtlety, and emotional intimacy. Together, these devices create a poetic style characterized by closeness, emotional depth, and introspection-features that define Xuân Quỳnh’s unique feminine voice and humanistic sensibility within modern Vietnamese poetry.

Taken together, Tables 1-4 provide a coherent and multi-layered account of the role of semantic rhetorical devices in Xu ân Quỳnh’s love poetry. Table 1 establishes the overall distribution of rhetorical

devices, highlighting the predominance of metaphor, while Table 2 classifies their formal and functional types within the poetic corpus. Table 3 further elucidates how these devices operate at the level of expressive meaning, and Table 4 demonstrates their cumulative contribution to the formation of Xuân Quỳnh's distinctive poetic style. Viewed in combination, the findings reveal a systematic rhetorical strategy in which metaphor functions as the core organizing mechanism, supported by simile, metonymy, and personification. This integrated system enables the poet to concretize abstract emotions, generalize personal experience into shared human values, lyricize the external world, and articulate a feminine lyrical self characterized by intimacy, emotional depth, and humanistic sensibility. The convergence of quantitative patterns and qualitative analysis thus confirms that semantic rhetorical devices are central to both the expressive power and stylistic identity of Xuân Quỳnh's poetry, rather than peripheral or decorative elements.

4. Conclusion

This study has examined semantic rhetorical devices in Xuân Quỳnh's love poetry from a systematic stylistic and rhetorical perspective, with a focus on metaphor, simile, metonymy, and personification. Through qualitative close reading combined with quantitative overview, the research has demonstrated that these devices are not merely decorative elements but constitute core mechanisms for organizing poetic meaning, emotional expression, and stylistic identity.

The findings show that metaphor plays a dominant role in Xuân Quỳnh's poetic discourse, both in frequency and in structural function. By transforming abstract emotional states-such as love, longing, anxiety, and devotion-into symbolically rich and concrete images, metaphor enables emotional continuity and semantic depth across poems. Simile, metonymy, and personification function in complementary ways: simile enhances clarity and emotional accessibility, metonymy provides semantic compression and indirect expression, while personification lyricizes the external world by projecting inner emotion onto nature and space.

Taken together, the interaction of these semantic rhetorical devices forms an integrated expressive system that allows personal experience to be generalized into shared human values, while maintaining intimacy and emotional authenticity. This system contributes decisively to the formation of Xuân Quỳnh's distinctive poetic style, characterized by closeness, emotional depth, introspection, and a strongly articulated feminine lyrical voice grounded in everyday imagery.

By foregrounding semantic rhetorical devices as central to poetic meaning-making, this study contributes a linguistic and stylistic dimension to existing research on Xuân Quỳnh's poetry, which has often focused primarily on thematic or interpretive analysis. More broadly, the findings underscore the importance of semantic rhetoric in understanding modern Vietnamese lyric poetry as a form of discourse in which emotion, cognition, and aesthetic expression are closely intertwined. Future research may extend this

approach through comparative analysis with other poets or by integrating corpus-based methods to further explore patterns of rhetorical usage in Vietnamese poetry.

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