

Exploring semiotic metaphorical representation in John Donne's "The Flea": A Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores a semiotic metaphorical representation of John Donne's "The Flea". Considering the complexity of concepts, and the interdisciplinary nature of Stylistics, which combines elements of both linguistics and literary studies, lack of application of theoretical concepts in the literary texts as well as insufficient background knowledge in both linguistics and literary studies combined have been shown to hamper the teaching and learning of linguistic stylistics. Thus, through a detailed examination and interpretation of the linguistic features and structures used in poetical texts, this study uncovers the underlying meaning and significance behind the metaphors used by Donne. It examines the use of symbols, language choice, allusion, lexical items, and allegories and how they are recontextualized as semiotic resources to create a multi-layered representation. The study adopts a qualitative research design; with a focus on content analysis, data for the study is drawn from John Donne's poetic text, "The Flea". Using Halliday and Matthiessen's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, the study aims to deconstruct how Donne employs language to convey complex meaning through his metaphysical masterpiece. AntConc software is also used to determine the frequency of the poem's most frequently used lexical items. Findings from this study provide a deeper understanding of the poet's intention and contribute to the existing body of literature on semiotic representation, metaphorical exploration, and lexical, nominal and technical densities that help to depict the overall beauty of the structure of the poem. The study also provides insights into the complex relationship between linguistics and literary analysis and reveals how such a symbiotic relationship enhances the teaching and learning of stylistics from an SFL perspective.

Keywords: Lexical density, Metaphor, Poetic devices, Metaphorical representation, SFL, Semiotics, Stylistics

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that teaching linguistic stylistics to English Language and Linguistics undergraduate students presents several challenges (Makinde, 2024). Such challenges include the complexity of concepts, the interdisciplinary nature of the course, which combines elements of both linguistics and literary studies, the lack of application of theoretical concepts in the actual texts as well as insufficient background knowledge in

both linguistics and literary studies. As an essentially interdisciplinary field which draws on the different sub-disciplines within linguistics to varying degrees, Stylistics has come to be regarded as an ‘inter-sub-disciplinary’. There is also a growing body of studies in stylistics that combine detailed analysis at the micro-linguistic level with a broader view of the communicative context, as well as a functional perspective in the analysis of literary text. Notable works on metaphors that incorporate systemic-functional approach to studying metaphor among others include O’Halloran’s (2005) semiotic metaphor, Melrose’s (2003) grammatical metaphor, conceptual metaphor by Forceville (2006); and more recent studies looking at metaphor from multimodal perspectives (Omar and Fayyadh, 2018; Amundrud, 2020; & Makinde, 2024). However, there are limited studies on semiotic metaphorical representation of literary text. It is observed from a Google search that very limited studies of this nature have been carried out from the lens of systemic functional linguistics. Although a number of studies have examined literary texts from literary and linguistic perspectives, there exists gap in literature on semiotic metaphorical representation specifically in the application of SFL to Donne’s poetry.

In line with the foregoing, this study examines Stylistics from Hallidayan’s functionalism lens, an approach to stylistic analysis that incorporates a socio-cultural and social semiotics dimension to explain stylistic choices in literary texts. This has brought a paradigm shift in the analysis of literary texts to a more functional and applicable perspective. On this note, Stylistics has come to be interlinked with related fields such as narratology, social semiotics, critical discourse analysis, cognitive poetics, and other approaches concerned with literary and culturally important texts (Stockwell, 2020). In view of the foregoing, this study explores a semiotic metaphorical representation of John Donne’s “The Flea”. Through a detailed examination and interpretation of the linguistic features and structures used in the poem, the study uncovers how the underlying meaning and significance behind the metaphors used by Donne can be adopted in the teaching and learning of stylistics. It examines symbols, language choice, lexical items, and allegories and how they are recontextualized as semiotic resources to create a multi-layered representation.

1.1 Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study under analysis:

1. In what ways do Donne employ metaphor as a resource for making meaning?
2. How does the use of SFL enhance the teaching and learning of Stylistics, especially in relation to Donne’s “The Flea”?
3. What semiotic resources are evidence in Donne’s “The Flea” and how are they recontextualized as multi-layered representations?

2. Literature

2.1 Metaphor

The concept of metaphor has been a much-debated trope from time immemorial (Forceville, 2016). As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note, “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another”. A metaphor is a comparison that shows how two things that are not alike in most ways are similar in another important way. In this way, metaphor provides (or obscures) clarity or identifies hidden similarities between two different ideas. It involves the systematic mappings between two conceptual domains; and entails understanding one domain of experience (typically abstract) in terms of another (usually concrete).

In literary studies, metaphorical representation has become a norm as it serves as a resource through which writers depict their intended meaning. It is a profound resource for meaning-making in literary texts, providing cultural depth and universal resonance. In African literature, for example, metaphors often function as more than stylistic devices; they encapsulate cultural values, social norms, and existential reflections. For instance, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the “ticking clock” metaphor symbolizes colonial forces' encroachment on traditional Igbo society (Achebe, 1958). This metaphor reflects the inevitable disruption of indigenous life and underscores the broader theme of cultural disintegration and resistance. Therefore, metaphorical language has been found to serve as a dynamic tool for meaning-making in literary texts, as it allows writers to express intricate social, political, and cultural realities that connect to their audiences' everyday experiences. On this note, review of literature on metaphor is useful for the analysis of Donne's “The Flea” in that it sheds light on the intricate nature of Donne systematic mapping of different domains as resources for making meaning. Thus, a review of literature on metaphors will enhance the analysis of how Donne contextualized meaning via different sources of domain.

2.2 Systemic functional linguistics (SFL)

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is an approach to language that was developed in the 1960s by M.A.K. Halliday and his followers (Makinde, 2024 qtd in O'Donnell 2012). As a theory of language, SFL centres on the idea of language function and prioritises language function – that is, what language does and how it does it. According to Halliday (qtd in Fontaine, 2013), “a theory of linguistics must incorporate the functions of language in use.” It is on this note that Matthiessen (2012) posits that SFL is an “applicable linguistics” or “a kind of linguistics where theory is designed to have the potential to be applied to solve problems that arise in communities around the world, involving both reflection and action”.

The above views show that SFL revolves around language's function in society. It involves how language influences and is influenced by social context. As a tool for corpus analysis, SFL focuses on how discourses are produced in written or oral language and what is found in the texts that are created rather than addressing how language is represented or processed in the human brain as is common with the structuralists and formalists in their postulations.

Following Matthiessen's view (2010), there is an increase in the application of SFL for use in a variety of domains, including healthcare, computational linguistics, translation, multimodal studies, and education with more scholars discovering new areas of application. This by extension includes the domain of literary texts. All of these point to the function of language as a resource for making meaning. Of prominence to this study is Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) postulation on the dimension of metafunction that consists of ideational, interpersonal, and textual components. Here, the Hallidayan dimension of metafunction depicts how language may be seen to simultaneously express three types of meaning: experiential meaning (ideational meaning), interpersonal meaning and textual meaning.

Experiential meaning (is about something) concerns itself with the way language represents – or rather constructs or construes – meaning as configurations of participants (nominals and pronominals), processes (verbals) and circumstances (adverbials) (Halliday, 1994). Interpersonal meaning (doing something) refers to our social interaction through language. Interlocutors use language in interaction to express meaning, construct, and

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reflect on their social roles in different contexts (Halliday, 1994). The third, textual meaning ('the speaker's text-forming potential'), concerns itself with the way we organise language into text. Here, the Hallidayan focal points are theme-rheme structures and cohesion (Halliday, 1994). As shown in the above review, in examining Donne's "The Flea" from an SFL lens, the review of literature on SFL is useful for the analysis of how language is used to mean. It enhances our understanding of what language does when it comes to poetic analysis and how it does it. As an "applicable linguistics", this will create an avenue for examining how three metafunctions are depicted in Donne's "The Flea". This in turn involves examining the elements of represented participants, features of processes as well as the various circumstances that contribute to the actions and events depicted in the poem under analysis. SFL will also enable the analysis of elements of mood, modality and evaluation as depicted by Donne. In a similar manner, SFL will provide avenues for analyzing how elements of theme/rheme, cohesion and information value help to project the structure and the organization of the poem to help create coherence and flow.

2.3 Semiotic metaphor

A semiotic metaphor refers to a form of metaphor within the field of semiotics, which is the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation. Semiotic metaphors occur when one set of signs or symbols is used to represent another, thereby facilitating understanding through a comparative process. It is a powerful tool employed to convey deeper meanings and evoke emotions by leveraging the associations between different signs and symbols. In essence, a semiotic metaphor involves the source domain, which refers to the set of signs or symbols from which the metaphor is drawn and the target domain, which refers to the set of signs or symbols to which the metaphor is applied. The metaphorical relationship helps in understanding complex or abstract concepts by relating them to more familiar ones. For example, using a computer interface (source domain) to understand how the human brain works (target domain).

Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, helps us understand how these metaphors function beyond their literal meaning to create layers of interpretation and understanding. In analysing literary texts, semiotic elements help readers and critics uncover deeper layers of meaning and appreciate the complexity of the author's use of language and symbols. Semiotic metaphors thus become a bridge connecting the text's surface narrative with its underlying themes and messages. In semiotics, these metaphors help decode meaning and interpret messages in various contexts, such as language, images, gestures, and cultural symbols. Mapping elements from the source domain to the target domain enhances comprehension and conveys nuanced meanings beyond literal interpretations.

The key concepts in semiotic metaphors include Signs and Symbols as well as Metaphoric Processes. While the sign is the form which the sign takes, "signifier", and the concept it represents the "signified", a symbol is a type of sign where the relationship between the signifier and the signified is not intrinsic but culturally learned, as in a heart symbolizing 'love'. The metaphoric process involves the *Source Domain*, the familiar, concrete set of signs and symbols from which meaning is drawn and the *Target Domain*, the unfamiliar, abstract set of signs and symbols to which meaning is applied. How all of these are woven together in Donne's "The Flea" contributes to literature on the role of signs and symbols as resources for representation of meaning in literary texts. By tapping on how Donne draws on two domains as resources for stylistic effects, we are able to

reflect on comparison made between two things upon which meaning is drawn and to which meaning is applied. Thus, the application of semiotic metaphor as a resource for literary analysis from an SFL lens will enhance better understanding of literary texts as students and teachers in this field interact with literary works from a linguistic perspective. In this way, teachers and students of Stylistics would benefit from how meanings are decoded and interpreted from the domain of literature which incorporates imagery, language, signs, symbols and other semiotic metaphorical representations that are laced with cultural and general interpretation.

2.4 Using SFL as a resource for teaching Stylistics

In teaching Stylistics for better understanding, Hori (2004) suggests using incremental learning approaches, where basic concepts are introduced first and then built upon with more complex ideas. He points out that regular formative assessments can help ensure students grasp foundational concepts before moving on, whereas Clark and Zyngier (2003) advocate for integrating teaching methods that bridge the gap between linguistics and literary studies via workshops and collaborative projects. The concern here is how far these approaches can go in enhancing students' perceptions in the learning of linguistic stylistics.

In another study, Burke (2014) emphasizes the importance of using diverse and contemporary texts in teaching stylistics. Such diverse and contemporary texts to be used are not clearly stated by Burke. Thus, it is essential to point out here that continuous professional development to stay updated on the latest research and teaching strategies in linguistic stylistics is indispensable. On this note, the researcher proposes a systemic functional linguistic approach by exploring semiotic metaphorical representation. In this way, the integration of metaphor, semiotics and SFL is perfect for representation of literary texts. For the analysis of Donne's "The Flea", the integration of these concepts serves as resourcefulness for creation of multi-layered meanings; reflecting on how Donne manipulates metaphorical representation, signs and structures of the poem to construe the crucial issues of love and desire in a witty but pungent manner. It is in view of this gap in literature, as outlined above, that this study aims at exploring semiotic metaphorical representation in John Donne's "The Flea" from a Systemic Functional Linguistic perspective.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design. A secondary source of data backup with a literature review is used. The corpus for this study is drawn from the poetic text "The Flea" by John Donne. The choice of this poem stems from the poet's peculiarity in employing metaphorical representation as resources for depicting social issues. Thus, the poem serves as data for exploring semiotic metaphorical representation in John Donne's "The Flea" from a Systemic Functional Linguistic lens. The justification for the choice of *The Flea* as the focal text for analysis stems from its being the most famous of John Donne poems, and for its metaphysical conceit nature, which reinforces it as an ideal poem for semiotic metaphorical representation.

The study also uses AntConc software to determine the occurrence of the poem's most frequently used lexical items. AntConc software is used to analyse the Key Words In Context (AntConc's KWIC concordance) tool. This tool helps search for words and phrases and see how they are used within the corpus. Through the aid of control tools, we are able to search for terms, words, case options for upper case options, and Regular expression

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language. Therefore, examining the linguistic cues employed in the poem enables us to present a tabular and statistical analysis of the corpus and, in turn, help to advance the objectives of the study. Thus, via the Key Word In Context (KWIC), that constitutes the list of the most frequently used lexical items in poem, we are able to identify and simplify the lexical patterns as well as metaphorical structures employed by the poet as resources for meaning-making.

4. Data presentation and analysis

The text below represents the corpus for exploring semiotic metaphorical representation of John Donne's "The Flea". Using this text, we are able to x-ray Hallidayan tri-metafunction as a semiotic metaphoric representation, explore a discursive analysis of lexical density, nominal density and technical density, as well as visualization of Wordcloud result of the text generated from the KWIC to provide an accessible overview of the frequent words of this poem.

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is;
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
Thou know'st that this cannot be said
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,
Yet this enjoys before it woo,
And pampered swells with one blood made of two,
And this, alas, is more than we would do.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, nay more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that, self-murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since
Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?
Wherein could this flea guilty be,
Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?
Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou
Find'st not thy self, nor me the weaker now;
'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be:
Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

4.1 Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual Metafunction as Semiotic Metaphorical Representations

John Donne's "The Flea" is a prime example of metaphysical poetry, rich in metaphor and layered meanings. Donne uses language to create meaning, and how these meanings function within the text contributes to its unique nature. From an SFL point of view, Donne's "The Flea" exudes how language functions in social contexts and shows how the three metafunctions - ideational, interpersonal, and textual - depict the applicability of SFL as a resource for creating stylistic effects.

4.1.1 Ideational Metafunction

The ideational metafunction concerns the representation of reality and experience. In "The Flea," Donne uses the flea as a central metaphor to explore themes of love, sex, and marriage. The ideational metafunction is depicted via the elements of three represented participants, as well as the incorporation of process types and circumstances, which provide insight into the metaphorical representation of the poem. These elements are further elaborated on thus:

- Participants: The flea, the speaker, and the woman are the primary participants. The flea – *source domain* serves as a metaphorical intermediary, symbolizing their physical and spiritual connection – *target domain* (Donne, line 3).
- Processes: The poem features various processes, such as the flea biting ("Mark but this flea, and mark in this"), and metaphysical processes where the flea symbolizes their union ("This flea is you and I"). The poem describes actions and events involving the flea biting both the speaker and the woman – *source domain* ("Mark but this flea, and mark in this," Donne, line 1). The metaphysical processes imbue the flea with symbolic significance, representing their union – *target domain* ("This flea is you and I," Donne, line 12).
- Circumstances: Circumstances provide the setting and background for the processes. For example, the setting is intimate and personal, focusing on the flea and the interaction between the speaker and the woman. The setting is intimate – *SD*, focusing on the minute yet significant interaction centered around the flea – *source domain*, which enhances the metaphorical significance of their union – *target domain*.

4.1.2 Interpersonal Metafunction

The interpersonal metafunction deals with the interactions between people, including the roles they take and the relationships they establish. The interpersonal metafunction is portrayed in the poem via the elements of mood, modality and evaluation as elaborated on below.

- **Mood:** The poem uses a persuasive mood, with the speaker attempting to convince the woman of his viewpoint. The use of imperatives ("Mark but this flea" Donne, line 1) and rhetorical questions ("And in this flea, our two bloods mingled be" Donne, line 4) reflects this persuasive effort.
- **Modality:** Modality in "The Flea" is evident in the speaker's assertions and assumptions about the woman's feelings and the significance of the flea. The speaker asserts certainty and tries to downplay the woman's potential objections, presenting their union as trivial yet meaningful ("How little that which thou deny'st me is," Donne, line 9)
- **Evaluation:** The speaker evaluates the flea's significance, attempting to persuade the woman by attributing symbolic meaning to it ("This flea is our marriage bed and marriage temple," Donne, line 13). Here, the poet persona employed a direct comparison between This flea – as the SD and our marriage bed and marriage temple as the TD.

4.1.3 Textual Metafunction

The textual metafunction concerns how the text is structured and organized to create coherence and flow. For this reason, elements such as theme/rheme, cohesion, and information value are employed to depict the structure and organization that help create the poem's coherence and flow.

- **Theme and Rheme:** The theme is what the clause is about, and the rheme is what is said about the theme. In "The Flea," the theme often revolves around the flea itself and its symbolic representation. For instance, "This flea is you and I" places the flea as the theme, with its symbolic meaning unpacked in the rheme (you and I) (Donne, line 12).

- **Cohesion:** Donne uses various cohesive devices, including repetition ("flea"), conjunctions ("and"), and parallel structures, to bind the poem together and reinforce the central metaphor throughout the text.

- **Information Focus:** The poem strategically places new and important information towards the end of lines or stanzas, maintaining the reader's interest and guiding them through the argument. "Though parents grudge, and you, we're met / And cloistered in these living walls of jet," Donne, lines 15-16.

Table 4.1: Showing Tabular Representation of Donne's Metafunction

	Ideational			Interpersonal			Textual		
Domains	Participants	Processes	Circumstances	Mood	Modality	Evaluation	Theme/Rheme	Cohesion	Information
Source Domain	The flea	the flea's biting both	intimate and personal	-	trivial (union)	our marriage bed	This flea	-	-
				persuasive mood	Union	-		and	Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee
Target Domain	physical and spiritual connection	representing their union	their union	-	yet meaningful	marriage temple	You and I	-	-

The table above depicts the tabular representation of the three metafunctions in Donne's "The Flea". It exudes how language functions in social contexts within structural elements embodying the characteristics of metaphysical poetry, rich in metaphor and layered meanings. This illustration shows the two domains (*source* and *target*) of meaning as well as their metafunction elements with their data representations.

4.2 Semiotic metaphorical representation

In "The Flea", semiotic metaphors abound as Donne uses the flea as a signifier for more complex ideas. Such signifiers with their semiotic metaphorical representations are:

- **Union and Sexual Intercourse:** The flea's bite *SD*, mixing their blood, serves as a metaphor for sexual union *TD*, implying that their physical union is as inconsequential as the mixing of blood within the flea.

"And in this flea our two bloods mingled be," Donne, line 4

The metaphorical representation in the "Mingling of Blood" as shown in Lines 3-4 – "It sucked me first, and now sucks thee, / And in this flea our two bloods mingled be" symbolizes the consummation of their relationship, a metaphor for their physical union.

This metaphor suggests that their physical union is as natural and harmless as the mingling of blood within the flea.

- **Marriage and Sanctity:** The speaker elevates the flea to a sacred status, suggesting that their union within the flea is akin to marriage ("This flea is our marriage bed and marriage temple") Donne, line 13.

The metaphorical depiction of "Marriage Bed and Temple" in "This flea is you and I, and this / Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is" (lines 12-13), elevates the flea from a mere insect to a sacred space, suggesting that their union inside the flea is as sacred and significant as a marriage.

It challenges the societal and religious norms surrounding sex and marriage by implying that their union is already consecrated.

- **Life and Death:** The flea's life and death are used to dramatize the significance of their relationship and the triviality of her resistance. The speaker argues that killing the flea would be tantamount to destroying their bond, thereby making her objections seem trivial "Though parents grudge, and you, we're met /

And cloistered in these living walls of jet" Donne, lines 15-16

The flea's body is described as "living walls of jet," which metaphorically serves as a cloister or a private, sacred space. This description suggests that within the flea, their union is innocent and free from societal judgment. The metaphor of the flea as a cloister implies that their intimate act, like a religious life, should be beyond reproach.

Also, symbolic use of "Cruel and sudden, hast thou since / Purpled thy nail in blood of innocence?" (lines 19-20) explores the metaphorical relation between killing of the flea as the *SD* for rejection of their union and the innocence of their mingled blood.

Evidence in the poem is the depiction of Societal Norms and Defiance via Metaphorical representation. This is showcased in the excerpt: "Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me, / Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee" (lines 26-27). Here, the speaker argues that yielding to him would result in no more loss of honor than the death of the flea. Thus, the flea's death is a metaphor for the triviality of societal concerns about honour and virginity. This metaphor serves to minimize the significance of societal norms regarding premarital sex and to emphasize the speaker's view that their union would be as inconsequential as the flea's death.

4.3. Discussion on Lexical Density, Nominal Density and Technical Density in "The Flea"

In applying SFL as a tool for linguistic analysis, studies have shown that the lexical contents of the text provide insight into the complexity and informational content of a text. Lexical density is a term in computational linguistics proposed by Halliday and Hasan in their study on cohesion and coherence. It involves using functional (grammatical units) and content (lexical units, lexemes) words to estimate the linguistic complexity in a written or spoken composition. Lexical density is a significant feature of written texts, particularly those aimed at expert audiences, contrasting with spoken language, which generally has a lower lexical density (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The lexical density of the text is presented below:

Nouns	= 31
Verbs	= 42
Adjectives	= 13
Adverbs	= 12

Total number of lexical words = 98

Total number of words in the poem=211

Lexical density = (Number of lexical words/Total number of words) \times 100

98/211 = 0.464

0.46 \times 100 = 46

Lexical density= 46%

The lexical density of Donne's "The Flea," approximately 46%, indicates a high concentration of content words typical of literary and formal texts. This density of lexical items depicts the text's complex argument and rich imagery, which characterizes Donne's metaphysical style. In the next, we present the nominal density which constitutes the number of nouns in a composition in relation to the number of lexical words in that text.

Nominal density is a crucial component of text form; for poetic analysis, nominal density can help determine a poem's rhythm, pacing, and overall effect on the reader. Thus, with a total number of 31 nouns and a lexical number of 98, as shown below, we are able to arrive at the nominal density of the poem "The Flea".

Nouns = 31

Verbs = 42

Adjectives = 13

Adverbs = 12

Total number of lexical words = 98

Nominal density = (Number of nouns/ Total number of lexical words) \times 100

31/98 = 0.316

0.32 \times 100 = 32

Nominal density = 32%

The nominal density above, at 32%, is appropriate enough to shape the poem's complexity, formality, and informational content. The moderate use of nominal words helps enhance how the text's information is packaged for construing meaning.

Furthermore, discussion on technical density has been found to enhance the complexity and intricacy of poet's language, form, and structure. This can include elaborate metaphors, unusual syntax, intricate rhyme schemes or meter, and other devices that require a deeper understanding of the mechanics of poetry. We present the technical density of the poem below:

Number of technical words = 15

Total number of lexical words = 98

Technical density = (Number of technical words/Total number of lexical words) \times 100

15/98 = 0.15

0.15 \times 100 = 15

Technical density = 15%

With a technical density of 15% in the text, we are able to unpack the poet's use of technical items as metaphorical resources for making meaning. Thus, the technical density enhances the poem's overall effect by creating a rich, layered texture that allows for multiple interpretations and readings.

5. Discussion of Findings

Using AntConc software to distribute the frequency of occurrence of textual elements in the poem under analysis, Fig. 2 and Tab. 1 below present a visual and tabular

representation of the distribution of the various lexical terms employed by the poet to convey his metaphysical ideology in “The Flea.”

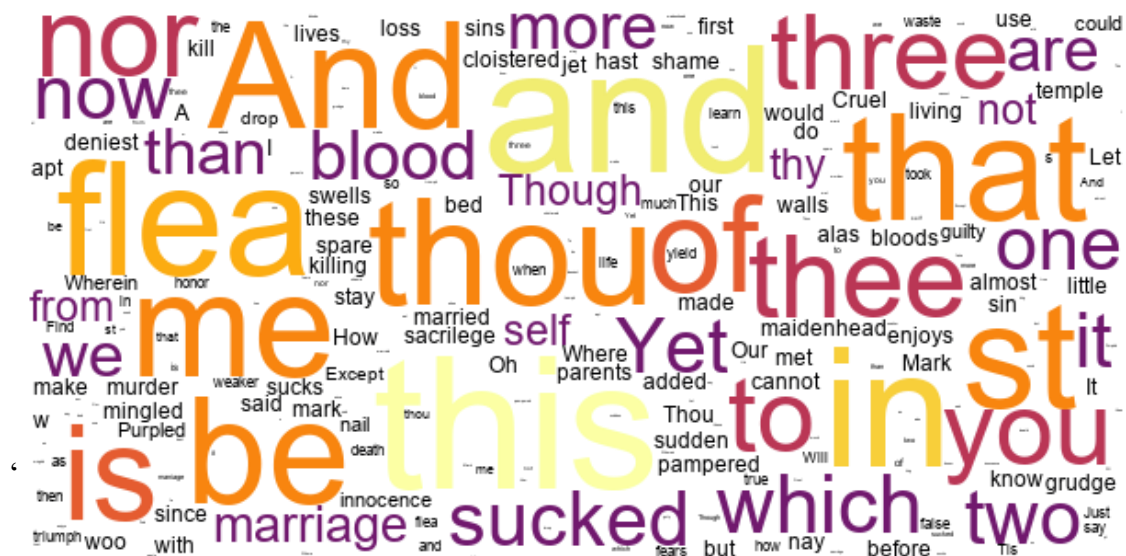


Fig. 2: Showing Wordcloud Result of the Text – The Flea

In the above, we are presented with the Wordcloud result of the text under analysis. The Wordcloud result helps to visualise the results generated by the KWIC, File, Cluster, and N-Gram, showing patterns in the most frequently occurring words, thus providing an accessible overview of the frequent words that appear in the text of this poem. The most frequently used words are projected via silence, colour, and size and are thus made prominent in the cloud. As indicated above, such commonly used words always rank highly, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Showing token distributions of the most frequently used linguistic items

S/ N	File Type	Clusters		Plot		N-Gram	
	Tokens	Frequency	NormFreq	NormFreq	Dispersion	Frequency	NormFreq
1	This	10	0.1	45662.1	0.742	10	4761.905
2	and	13	0.077	59360.731	0.696	13	4761.905
3	that	5	0.2	22831.05	0.667	5	4761.905
4	flea	6	0.167	27397.26	0.728	5	4761.905
5	thou	6	0.167	27397.26	0.728	6	4761.905
6	be	5	0.2	22831.05	0.553	5	4761.905
7	me	5	0.2	22831.05	0.553	5	4761.905
8	in	7	0.143	31963.47	0.695	7	4761.905
9	is	4	0.25	18264.84	0.447	4	4761.905
10	'st	5	0.2	22831.05	0.553	5	4761.905

Table 1 above represents token distributions of the ten most frequently used linguistic items in the corpus under analysis. As indicated, the token *and* with frequency of 13 and Plot NormFreq 59360.731 is the most frequently used word followed by *this* with cluster frequency of 10 and Plot with NormFreq 45662.1. Also, token *in* with Cluster Frequency of 7 in KWIC ranks the third while *is* ranks as the 10th most frequently used token in our corpus. In all, the tables outlined in the appendices of this study represent the Key Word In

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Context (KWIC), that constitute the list of the most frequently used lexical items identified in Donne's "The Flea".

6. Conclusion

From the discussion so far, this study contributes to both literary and linguistic scholarship as it sheds light on the application of semiotic metaphor in the analysis of literary texts. Through the lens of systemic functional linguistics, we are able to depict how John Donne's "The Flea" reveals intricate layers of meaning and functions. Via Halliday's metafunction, the study examines how SFL enhances the teaching and learning of Stylistics, especially in relation to Donne's "The Flea". As "applicable linguistics" the application of SFL enables us to incorporate a kind of linguistics that reflect how the ideational metafunction showcases the symbolic representations, the interpersonal metafunction highlights the persuasive nature of the discourse, and the textual metafunction underscores the poem's cohesive structure.

As part of the semiotic metaphorical representation, the study elaborates on how Donne employs metaphor as a resource for making meaning. This enables the analysis of semiotic resources that are evident in Donne's "The Flea" and how they are recontextualized as multi-layered representations. Thus, Donne's masterful use of semiotic metaphors in "The Flea" exemplifies his poetic ingenuity and demonstrates the richness of meaning that can be uncovered through an SFL analysis. In addition, discussion on lexical, nominal and technical densities of the text provides insight into the complexity and informational content of the literary text. These densities provide intricate arguments and rich imagery; help determine the poem's rhythm, pacing, and overall effect on the reader; and enhance the complexity and intricacy of language, form, and structure, which characterizes Donne's metaphysical style. All of these enable us to unpack how the poet uses lexical, nominal and technical items as metaphorical resources for making meaning. Overall, the application of AntConc software contributes to the visual and computational distribution of the various lexical terms employed by the poet as he conveys his metaphysical ideology in "The Flea". In this way, teachers and students of Stylistics are presented with the lexical patterns as well as metaphorical structures, grammatical, and computational elements of the literary text from a multifaceted perspective to enhance their understanding and teaching of literary texts.

Thus, via a detailed exploration and interpretation of the linguistic features and structures used in the poem, this study uncovers how the underlying meaning and significance behind the metaphysical conceit employed by Donne can be adopted in the teaching and learning of stylistics. In this way, findings from the study provide a deeper understanding of the poet's intention and contribute to the existing body of literature on semiotic representation, metaphorical exploration, and lexical density that help to depict the overall beauty of the structure of the poem. The significance of this study provides insights into the complex relationship between linguistics and literary analysis and reveals how such a symbiotic relationship enhances the teaching and learning of stylistics from an SFL perspective.

The researcher suggests that further studies could be conducted to examine the multimodal nature of literary texts. Further researchers could also focus on transitivity analysis of literary texts as well as social semiotic analysis to enable more robust and symbiotic relations between literature and linguistic studies.

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Appendices

Table 2: Hit 1 showing the KWIC of the represented corpus ‘this’

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
The Flea.txt	flea spare, Where we almost, nay more than married are.	This	flea is you and I, and this Our marriage
The Flea.txt	honor, when thou yield’st to me, Will waste, as	this	flea’s death took life from thee.
The Flea.txt	Mark but	this	flea, and mark in this, How little that which

The Flea.txt	since Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence? Wherein could	this	flea guilty be, Except in that drop which it
The Flea.txt	It sucked me first, and now sucks thee, And in	this	flea our two bloods mingled be; Thou know'st
The Flea.txt	flea our two bloods mingled be; Thou know'st that	this	cannot be said A sin, nor shame, nor loss
The Flea.txt	said A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead, Yet	this	enjoys before it woo, And pampered swells with one
The Flea.txt	than married are. This flea is you and I, and	this	Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is; Though parents
The Flea.txt	And pampered swells with one blood made of two, And	this,	alas, is more than we would do. Oh stay,
The Flea.txt	Mark but this flea, and mark in	this,	How little that which thou deniest me is; It

Table 3: Hit 2 showing the KWIC of the represented corpus 'and'

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
The Flea.txt	temple is; Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,	And	cloistered in these living walls of jet. Though use
The Flea.txt	almost, nay more than married are. This flea is you	and	I, and this Our marriage bed, and marriage temple
The Flea.txt	me is; It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,	And	in this flea our two bloods mingled be; Thou
The Flea.txt	Mark but this flea,	and	mark in this, How little that which thou deniest
The Flea.txt	flea is you and I, and this Our marriage bed,	and	marriage temple is; Though parents grudge, and you, w'
The Flea.txt	that which thou deniest me is; It sucked me first,	and	now sucks thee, And in this flea our two
The Flea.txt	nor loss of maidenhead, Yet this enjoys before it woo,	And	pampered swells with one blood made of two, And
The Flea.txt	kill me, Let not to that, self-murder added be,	And	sacrilege, three sins in killing three. Cruel and sudden,
The Flea.txt	drop which it sucked from thee? Yet thou triumph'st,	and	say'st that thou Find'st not thy self,
The Flea.txt	added be, And sacrilege, three sins in killing three. Cruel	and	sudden, hast thou since Purpled thy nail, in blood
The Flea.txt	more than married are. This flea is you and I,	and	this Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is; Though
The Flea.txt	woo, And pampered swells with one blood made of two,	And	this, alas, is more than we would do. Oh
The Flea.txt	Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is; Though parents grudge,	and	you, w'are met, And cloistered in these living

Table 4: Hit 3 showing the KWIC of the represented corpus 'flea'

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
The Flea.txt	Mark but this	flea,	and mark in this, How little that which thou
The	Purpled thy nail, in blood of	flea	guilty be, Except in that drop which it

Flea.txt	innocence? Wherein could this		sucked
The Flea.txt	spare, Where we almost, nay more than married are. This	flea	is you and I, and this Our marriage bed,
The Flea.txt	sucked me first, and now sucks thee, And in this	flea	our two bloods mingled be; Thou know'st that
The Flea.txt	when thou yield'st to me, Will waste, as this	flea'	s death took life from thee.
The Flea.txt	than we would do. Oh stay, three lives in one	flea	spare, Where we almost, nay more than married are.
The Flea.txt	Mark but this flea, and mark in this, How little	that	which thou deniest me is; It sucked me first,

Table 5: Hit 4 showing the KWIC of the represented corpus 'thou'

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
The Flea.txt	this flea, and mark in this, How little that which	thou	deniest me is; It sucked me first, and now
The Flea.txt	from thee? Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that	thou	Find'st not thy self, nor me the weaker
The Flea.txt	thee, And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;	Thou	know'st that this cannot be said A sin,
The Flea.txt	sacrilege, three sins in killing three. Cruel and sudden, hast	thou	since Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence? Wherein
The Flea.txt	Except in that drop which it sucked from thee? Yet	thou	triumph'st, and say'st that thou Find'st
The Flea.txt	learn how false, fears be: Just so much honor, when	thou	yield'st to me, Will waste, as this flea'

Table 6: Hit 5 showing the KWIC of the represented corpus 'be'

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
The Flea.txt	to kill me, Let not to that, self-murder added	be,	And sacrilege, three sins in killing three. Cruel and
The Flea.txt	nail, in blood of innocence? Wherein could this flea guilty	be,	Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?
The Flea.txt	the weaker now; 'Tis true; then learn how false, fears	be:	Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to
The Flea.txt	two bloods mingled be; Thou know'st that this cannot	be	said A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,
The Flea.txt	sucks thee, And in this flea our two bloods mingled	be;	Thou know'st that this cannot be said A

Table 7: Hit 6 showing the KWIC of the represented corpus 'me'

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
The Flea.txt	How little that which thou deniest me is; It sucked	me	first, and now sucks thee, And in this flea
The Flea.txt	and mark in this, How little that which thou deniest	me	is; It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
The Flea.txt	walls of jet. Though use make you apt to kill	me,	Let not to that, self-murder added be, And

The Flea.txt	say'st that thou Find'st not thy self, nor	me	the weaker now; 'Tis true; then learn how false,
The Flea.txt	be: Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to	me,	Will waste, as this flea's death took life

Table 8: Hit 7 showing the KWIC of the represented corpus 'in'

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
The Flea.txt	three. Cruel and sudden, hast thou since Purpled thy nail,	in	blood of innocence? Wherein could this flea guilty be,
The Flea.txt	to that, self-murder added be, And sacrilege, three sins	in	killing three. Cruel and sudden, hast thou since Purpled
The Flea.txt	is more than we would do. Oh stay, three lives	in	one flea spare, Where we almost, nay more than
The Flea.txt	blood of innocence? Wherein could this flea guilty be, Except	in	that drop which it sucked from thee? Yet thou
The Flea.txt	Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met, And cloistered	in	these living walls of jet. Though use make you
The Flea.txt	is; It sucked me first, and now sucks thee, And	in	this flea our two bloods mingled be; Thou know'
The Flea.txt	Mark but this flea, and mark	in	this, How little that which thou deniest me is;

Table 9: Hit 8 showing the KWIC of the represented corpus 'is'

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
The Flea.txt	mark in this, How little that which thou deniest me	is;	It sucked me first, and now sucks thee, And
The Flea.txt	swells with one blood made of two, And this, alas,	is	more than we would do. Oh stay, three lives
The Flea.txt	and I, and this Our marriage bed, and marriage temple	is;	Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met, And
The Flea.txt	Where we almost, nay more than married are. This flea	is	you and I, and this Our marriage bed, and

Table 10: Hit 9 showing the KWIC of the represented corpus 'st'

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
The Flea.txt	in this flea our two bloods mingled be; Thou know'	st	that this cannot be said A sin, nor shame,
The Flea.txt	it sucked from thee? Yet thou triumph'st, and say'	st	that thou Find'st not thy self, nor me
The Flea.txt	that drop which it sucked from thee? Yet thou triumph'	st,	and say'st that thou Find'st not thy
The Flea.txt	Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou Find'	st	not thy self, nor me the weaker now; 'Tis
The Flea.txt	false, fears be: Just so much honor, when thou yield'	st	to me, Will waste, as this flea's death