

Personification and Depersonification Figures of Speech in the Poetry *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* by Theoresia Rumthe and Weslly Johannes

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Abstract

Figures of speech or language styles represent figurative expressions employed by authors as a creative medium to convey emotional nuances and intrinsic thoughts. This research aims to analyze and describe the implementation of personification and depersonification figures of speech in the poetry *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* by Theoresia Rumthe and Weslly Johannes, which is compiled in the poetry anthology *Percakapan Paling Panjang Perihal Pulang Pergi* (2021). Adopting a qualitative descriptive methodology, the data collection techniques utilized in this study comprised close reading and systematic note-taking techniques to categorize textual figures of speech. The empirical findings indicate a total of 9 occurrences, consisting of 5 instances of personification figures of speech and 4 instances of depersonification figures of speech. These results demonstrate that *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* serves as an integral poetry in the collaboration of Theoresia Rumthe & Weslly Johannes that quite intensively incorporates both personification and depersonification devices to establish vivid poetic imagery and emotional depth. Consequently, this study contributes valuable stylistic insights into the rhetorical dynamics of contemporary Indonesian poetry.

Keywords: *Poetry; Figure of Speech; Personification; Depersonification*



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INTRODUCTION

Literary works constitute forms of artistic expression through which writers communicate experiences, emotions, ideas, and perceptions through aesthetically organized language. Among the major genres of literature, poetry is characterized by linguistic economy, condensed meaning, imagery, rhythm, and the intensive use of figurative expression. Rather than merely presenting information directly, poetry frequently relies on deviations from ordinary language to create associations and meanings that invite readers to interpret the text beyond its literal surface. Pradopo (2009) explains that poetry records and expresses human experience through a highly concentrated use of language, while its structural elements work together to produce aesthetic and meaningful effects. Accordingly, understanding poetry requires not only attention to what is explicitly stated but also interpretation of the linguistic devices through which poetic meaning is constructed.

One of the most significant linguistic devices in poetry is figurative language. Figurative language enables poets to communicate meanings indirectly by transferring characteristics, associations, or experiences from one conceptual domain to another. In Indonesian literary studies, Keraf (2010) places figurative expression within the broader discussion of language style (*gaya bahasa*), emphasizing its function in producing particular expressive effects. Masruchin (2017) likewise discusses various forms of *majas* as creative linguistic devices that allow writers to present ideas and experiences more imaginatively. From a contemporary stylistic perspective, figurative language should not be regarded merely as decorative language; rather, it can contribute substantially to the construction of poetic imagery, conceptualization, and emotional meaning. Research on poetic discourse has demonstrated that personification, in particular, may involve complex linguistic and conceptual processes rather than functioning simply as the attribution of human characteristics to non-human entities (Piata & Cánovas, 2017). Personification has also been shown to participate in the formation of symbolic and interpretive meanings in poetry (Ali & Ayyed, 2021).

Personification is generally understood as a figure of speech in which non-human entities, abstract concepts, natural phenomena, or inanimate objects are presented as possessing human qualities, actions, emotions, or capacities. Keraf (2010) categorizes personification as a form of figurative expression that gives human characteristics to non-human things. In poetic discourse, such a strategy allows abstract or inanimate entities to become experientially closer to the reader. The personified entity can therefore appear to act, feel, speak, desire, or respond as a human being. Piata and Cánovas (2017) demonstrate that personification in poetry can exhibit considerable stylistic creativity and cultural variation while maintaining a recognizable conceptual structure. Thus, personification is relevant not only to the aesthetic dimension of poetry but also to the interpretation of how poets conceptualize experiences, emotions, and relationships.

In contrast, depersonification involves the reverse conceptual movement: human beings or living entities are represented through the characteristics, properties, or conditions of non-human objects or other entities. Masruchin (2017) includes depersonification among forms of figurative expression in which human referents are metaphorically represented through non-human characteristics. This device may produce a particular rhetorical effect because it shifts the representation of human experience away from a purely human frame and associates it with objects, nature, or other non-human entities. The coexistence of personification and depersonification is therefore theoretically significant because the two devices establish contrasting directions of conceptual transfer. In personification, non-human entities are interpreted through human attributes; in depersonification, human entities are represented through non-human attributes. Examining both forms within a single poetry may consequently provide a more comprehensive account of the poet's stylistic choices.

The relevance of figurative language becomes particularly apparent in contemporary Indonesian poetry, where poetic expression frequently combines everyday vocabulary with metaphorical, symbolic, and imaginative constructions. The poetry *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* by Theoresia Rumthe and Weslly Johannes is one such text. The poetry is included in the anthology *Percakapan Paling Panjang Perihal Pulang Pergi*, published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2021. The publisher identifies the work as a poetry collection by Theoresia Rumthe and Weslly Johannes and records its publication on 3 March 2021. The collection is presented as an extended poetic conversation between the two poets, a feature that gives the anthology a distinctive dialogic character and establishes continuity among its poetry (Rumthe & Johannes, 2021).

The poetic context of *Percakapan Paling Panjang Perihal Pulang Pergi* is important for understanding *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* because the anthology develops poetic communication through an exchange between two writers. According to the publisher, the collection addresses diverse experiences, including death, longing, waiting, family, and other dimensions of human life, while its poetry are connected through a conversational structure. Within such a context, the use of figurative language becomes particularly meaningful because the poets need linguistic strategies capable of expressing experiences that are emotional, relational, and sometimes difficult to articulate literally. Personification and depersonification are therefore

worth examining as stylistic mechanisms through which the poetry creates poetic imagery and conveys emotional experience.

Previous scholarship supports the importance of examining personification as a central element in poetic meaning. Piata and Cánovas (2017), for example, show that personification in poetic discourse is characterized by stylistic creativity and conceptual variation across languages. Goatly (2017) further demonstrates that personification and related metaphorical structures in poetry can shape the representation of relationships between humans and the non-human world. More recently, Morris (2024) shows that personification in poetry can function as an important metaphorical strategy through which poets construct perspectives on abstract concepts and cultural experiences. These studies indicate that personification should be approached analytically as a meaning-making strategy rather than simply as a list of stylistic labels.

The analysis of figurative expressions in *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* can also be complemented by Charles E. Osgood's mediation theory. Osgood (1952) developed a mediation-based account of the sign process in which a stimulus does not necessarily produce a response directly but may activate an internal mediating process that contributes to the interpretation of meaning. His later work further developed mediation theory in relation to psychological and communicative processes (Osgood, 1953; 1971). In the present study, Osgood's theory is not used as a taxonomy for determining whether an expression is personification or depersonification. Instead, it is employed as a complementary interpretive perspective for explaining how figurative expressions may function as linguistic stimuli that evoke mediated meanings and responses in readers. This distinction is important because the identification of personification and depersonification is primarily grounded in stylistic and figurative-language theory, whereas mediation theory helps explain the possible meaning-making process resulting from those expressions.

From a stylistic perspective, the identification of personification and depersonification in *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* therefore requires close attention to the relationship between grammatical form, referents, semantic attributes, and contextual meaning. A phrase can be categorized as personification when a non-human referent is assigned an attribute or action conventionally associated with human beings. Conversely, a phrase can be categorized as depersonification when a human referent is represented through properties conventionally associated with non-human entities. Such identification must be based not only on individual words but also on the semantic relationship established within the poetic line and its surrounding context. This approach is consistent with contemporary stylistic research, which treats figurative language as a mechanism for constructing meaning and poetic imagery rather than as an isolated ornamental feature (Piata & Cánovas, 2017; Ali & Ayyed, 2021).

The selection of *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* as the object of this study is thus motivated by the poetry potential to reveal how opposing directions of figurative representation operate within a contemporary Indonesian poetic text. Examining these two figures of speech simultaneously makes it possible to identify not only the forms of figurative language used by the poets but also the stylistic relationship between humanizing non-human entities and representing humans through non-human characteristics. Such an analysis can contribute to the study of contemporary Indonesian poetry, particularly by demonstrating how figurative language participates in the construction of imagery, emotional intensity, and interpretive depth.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study focuses on the personification and depersonification figures of speech found in *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* by Theoresia Rumthe and Weslly Johannes. The study aims to identify, classify, and describe the occurrences of personification and depersonification in the poetry and to explain their contribution to the poetry poetic and emotional expression.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. The design was selected because the purpose of the study was to identify, classify, and describe the use of personification and depersonification figures of speech in a poetic text without manipulating the object of study (Moleong, 2021). Qualitative descriptive research is appropriate when researchers seek a comprehensive description of a phenomenon while remaining close to the data and to the contextual meaning of the material being examined (Sandelowski, 2000). In qualitative inquiry, the research process emphasizes closeness to the phenomenon, iterative examination of data, and the development of meaningful distinctions based on the object under investigation (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

The study focused on the poetry *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* by Theoresia Rumthe and Weslly Johannes, included in the poetry anthology *Percakapan Paling Panjang Perihal Pulang Pergi* (2021), published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. The research did not involve human participants; therefore, the primary object of analysis was a literary document. The analysis concentrated specifically on linguistic expressions that could be categorized as personification and depersonification based on the theoretical criteria established in the literature review. The data consisted of words, phrases, clauses, and poetic lines in *Hati yang Kemarin*

Tertawa that exhibit characteristics of personification or depersonification. The data source was the poetry *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* by Theoresia Rumthe and Weslly Johannes in the anthology *Percakapan Paling Panjang Perihal Pulang Pergi* (2021), published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

The selection of this poetry was purposive because the study specifically investigated the occurrence and use of personification and depersonification within the selected poetic text. The unit of analysis was not the poetry as a whole but each relevant linguistic expression that fulfilled the operational criteria for either personification or depersonification. This distinction between the data source and the unit of analysis is important to ensure that the analytical procedure remains systematic and reproducible. In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary instrument because the researcher determines the relevant data, interprets its context, applies the analytical categories, and draws conclusions from the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, the researcher was supported by a data-identification and classification sheet used to organize the findings. The instrument contained several analytical fields: (1) data number, (2) quotation of the poetic expression, (3) location of the data in the poetry, (4) identified figure of speech, (5) linguistic or semantic indicator, (6) contextual interpretation, and (7) theoretical justification. This instrument was used to maintain consistency during data collection, classification, and interpretation.

Data collection was conducted through close reading and note-taking techniques. Close reading was carried out systematically rather than through a single reading. The researcher read the poetry repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of its linguistic and semantic context before identifying the figurative expressions relevant to the research questions. The data collection procedure consisted of several stages. First, the researcher read *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* repeatedly to understand the overall poetic context. Second, potentially figurative expressions were identified and marked. Third, the marked expressions were compared with the operational definitions of personification and depersonification established in the theoretical framework. Fourth, expressions that did not satisfy the analytical criteria were excluded. Finally, the relevant data were transcribed and organized in the data-identification sheet. The note-taking technique was used to record each relevant expression together with its contextual information and preliminary classification. In this way, the collection process did not merely count figurative expressions but documented the textual evidence required for subsequent interpretation.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis with a deductive orientation. Qualitative content analysis provides a systematic procedure for preparing, organizing, interpreting, and reporting textual data. Elo and Kyngäs (2008) explain that deductive content analysis is appropriate when an analytical structure has been established from previous knowledge or theoretical concepts. First, data preparation. The researcher reviewed all expressions identified during the close-reading process and selected only textual units potentially related to personification and depersonification. Second, data identification and coding. Each selected expression was assigned a code and categorized according to the predetermined analytical criteria. Third, contextual verification. Each coded expression was examined in relation to the surrounding poetic lines to ensure that the classification was supported by the contextual meaning of the poetry rather than by an isolated word. This stage was necessary because figurative meaning depends on the relationship between the expression and its textual context. Fourth, interpretation. After classification, each datum was interpreted in terms of its stylistic and semantic function. The analysis considered how personification and depersonification contribute to imagery, emotional expression, and the construction of meaning in the poetry. Osgood's mediation perspective was used only as a complementary interpretive framework to consider how the textual stimulus may mediate meaning and evoke a particular response in the reader; it was not used as the primary taxonomy for classifying the figures of speech. Fifth, synthesis and reporting. The findings were grouped into two major categories, namely personification and depersonification. The frequency of each category was then reported descriptively to show the distribution of the identified expressions. Because the study is qualitative in orientation, these numerical frequencies function only as supporting descriptive information and do not constitute statistical analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Personification in the Poetry *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa*

The analysis identified five expressions that were categorized as personification in *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa*: “running waves,” “the shadow of happiness passes,” “the heart that laughed yesterday,” “flying breath,” and “silent mirror.” These expressions demonstrate the poets' tendency to represent natural phenomena, abstract concepts, bodily entities, and inanimate objects through human actions or human-like capacities. Personification in the poetry does not function merely as an ornamental device; rather, it contributes to the construction of poetic imagery and to the representation of emotional experiences such as loss, loneliness, memory, disappointment, and changing perceptions of the past. This finding is consistent

with recent stylistic studies showing that personification can intensify imagery and emotional meaning in poetry.

Running Waves

The expression “running waves” constitutes a personification because the noun *waves*, which refers to a natural phenomenon, is associated with the human action *running*. Running is ordinarily an intentional bodily activity performed by living beings, particularly humans. When this action is attributed to waves, the natural phenomenon is conceptually represented as an entity capable of moving with purpose and vitality. The personification becomes meaningful when considered in relation to the emotional context of the poetry. The movement of waves can evoke instability, movement, and continuous change. By representing waves as “running,” the poets transform an otherwise natural movement into an action that appears dynamic and purposeful. This linguistic transformation allows the external natural world to mirror an internal emotional condition. The waves can therefore be interpreted as reflecting emotional unrest, the movement of memories, and the difficulty of holding on to something that has already passed. The expression also illustrates how personification can establish a relationship between the physical environment and human emotion. Rather than describing grief or loss directly, the poets project the emotional condition onto a natural phenomenon. The waves consequently become an image through which emotional disturbance is made visible. In this sense, the personification contributes to the poetry imagery by transforming an observable natural movement into a representation of an unstable inner state. This finding supports Piata and Cánovas (2017), who argue that personification in poetic discourse is characterized by conceptual creativity and involves the projection of human-oriented structures onto non-human domains. Personification thus enables poets to construct alternative perspectives on otherwise ordinary phenomena.

The Shadow of Happiness Passes

The expression “the shadow of happiness passes” represents another instance of personification, particularly through the attribution of the action *passes* to *happiness*. Happiness is an abstract emotional state and does not literally possess the physical capacity to move from one place to another. The expression therefore converts an abstract experience into an entity that appears capable of movement. The expression can also be interpreted as a conceptual fusion between *shadow* and *happiness*. A shadow ordinarily functions as a visual trace or image produced by the interaction of light and an object, whereas happiness represents an emotional state. By combining these two domains, the poets create an image of happiness as something temporary, fleeting, and difficult to retain. The verb *passes* intensifies this interpretation because it suggests transience: happiness appears momentarily and then disappears. Within the context of the poetry, the expression may be associated with recollection and the experience of change. Happiness is not presented as a permanent condition but as something that once existed and subsequently moved beyond reach. The personification consequently reinforces a sense of impermanence and loss. The emotional experience is not expressed through direct exposition but through an image in which happiness appears to behave as an autonomous entity. This interpretation corresponds with stylistic research demonstrating that personification may transform abstract concepts into more concrete and experientially accessible entities. In poetic discourse, such transformation enables abstract emotional states to be visualized and experienced through movement, action, and spatial relations.

The Heart That Laughed Yesterday

The expression “the heart that laughed yesterday” is more complex and requires contextual interpretation. At the surface level, the expression attributes the human action *laughed* to *the heart*. In ordinary usage, laughter is an activity associated with a human being, whereas the heart is a bodily organ that does not literally perform the act of laughing. From a strict stylistic perspective, this datum differs from “running waves” or “silent mirror” because the heart is already a constituent of the human body. Consequently, the expression can be understood more precisely as anthropomorphic representation or personification of a bodily organ, rather than as the straightforward attribution of human characteristics to a wholly non-human object. Nevertheless, within the analytical framework of this study, it is included as personification because a non-agentive bodily organ is presented as possessing an explicitly human emotional action.

The expression produces a strong association between bodily existence and emotional memory. The phrase “laughed yesterday” establishes a temporal contrast between a past emotional condition and the present condition experienced by the speaker. Laughter functions as a marker of happiness, intimacy, or emotional fullness, while “yesterday” places that experience within a past that can no longer be recovered. The heart therefore becomes a symbolic location where past happiness and present loneliness intersect. The stylistic effect lies in turning an internal emotional experience into a concrete image. Instead of simply stating that the speaker once experienced happiness, the poetry locates that experience in the “heart” and gives the heart the capacity to laugh. The resulting expression deepens the emotional dimension of the poetry because

the heart becomes an active representation of remembered happiness and subsequent emptiness. The use of personification in this form is consistent with the broader understanding that poetic personification can involve creative conceptual mappings rather than only simple substitutions of human actions for non-human actions. The poetic expression creates a perspective in which an internal or bodily entity appears to possess agency, thereby intensifying the reader's access to the speaker's emotional state.

Flying Breath

The expression "flying breath" personifies *breath* by associating it with the capability of *flying*. Breath is not a human being and does not literally possess wings or intentional mobility. Although air naturally moves, the lexical choice *flying* gives the movement a distinctly animated and imaginative quality. The poetic effect of this expression emerges from the transformation of breath into a mobile entity. Breath is intimately connected with human existence because breathing signifies life, but in this expression it is represented as though it can move freely through space. The expression therefore creates an image of release, movement, or departure. In the broader emotional context of the poetry, "flying breath" may be interpreted as an image of an experience that is difficult to hold or control. Breath can enter and leave the body, and the representation of breath as "flying" intensifies this quality of movement and transience. The expression thus allows the poets to transform an ordinary physiological process into an emotionally charged image. The result demonstrates one of the important functions of personification in poetry: an otherwise ordinary phenomenon can acquire imaginative agency. Rather than merely informing the reader that breath moves, the expression invites the reader to visualize breath as an active entity. Recent research on Indonesian poetry similarly shows that personification serves to strengthen visualization and emotional resonance by giving non-human entities human-like agency.

Silent Mirror

The expression "silent mirror" presents the mirror as an entity capable of *silence*. A mirror is an inanimate object and therefore cannot literally choose to remain silent. Silence, by contrast, is conventionally associated with an animate subject that possesses the capacity to speak or communicate. The attribution of silence to a mirror consequently creates a personified representation. The expression is particularly powerful because a mirror is normally associated with reflection and visual revelation, whereas *silence* suggests the absence of verbal communication. The combination of these qualities creates a paradoxical image: the mirror appears to witness something but does not speak about what it sees. In this way, the mirror can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of memory, secrecy, or an inability to articulate emotional experience. The emotional significance becomes stronger when the expression is connected with the themes of the poetry, particularly memory, absence, and loss. The mirror may be interpreted as silently preserving an image of the past while remaining incapable of returning that past to the present. The personification consequently gives the inanimate object a psychological and relational role. The mirror does not merely reflect an image; it symbolically "keeps silent" in the presence of something remembered. This finding reinforces the argument that personification in poetry can serve a conceptual and interpretive function. Rather than simply making an object appear "alive," personification can provide the object with a role within the emotional structure of the poetry. Similar findings have been reported in recent studies of poetic language in which personification strengthens imagery and enables non-human entities to participate in the representation of human experiences.

General Discussion of Personification

The five expressions identified above reveal a recurring stylistic pattern in *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa*: the poets externalize emotional experiences by assigning human-oriented actions or capacities to entities that do not ordinarily possess them. Natural phenomena appear to move intentionally, abstract feelings become capable of passing, bodily entities are given emotional agency, breath is presented as having autonomous movement, and an inanimate mirror is endowed with the capacity for silence. The findings indicate that personification in the poetry operates through at least three major functions. First, it constructs concrete imagery from abstract emotional experiences. Feelings such as happiness, loneliness, loss, and memory are difficult to visualize when expressed literally. Personification provides these abstract experiences with recognizable actions and qualities. Second, personification externalizes the speaker's psychological condition. Instead of stating directly that the speaker is experiencing grief or recalling the past, the poetry transfers aspects of that psychological condition to waves, happiness, breath, and the mirror. The external world consequently becomes a reflection of internal experience. Third, personification intensifies emotional depth through conceptual interaction between human and non-human domains. The effectiveness of these expressions lies not simply in the presence of human attributes but in the new relationships created between the referent and the attributed action. This observation is consistent with Piata and Cánovas (2017), who emphasize that poetic personification involves a structured conceptual projection while allowing

considerable stylistic creativity. The pattern found in this study is also consistent with recent research on Indonesian poetry. Rahayu *et al.* (2026), for instance, report that personification in *Rindu yang Dalam* functions to animate natural objects and abstract ideas while simultaneously strengthening imagery, aesthetic effects, and emotional meaning. A similar tendency appears in the present study, although the emotional orientation of *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* is more strongly associated with memory, loss, transience, and recollection. The findings further suggest that personification in *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* should not be understood merely as a decorative element. Each expression participates in the construction of the poetry semantic field. The movement of waves represents emotional unrest; passing happiness signifies transience; the laughing heart evokes remembered emotional fulfillment; flying breath suggests movement and impermanence; and the silent mirror symbolizes memory that remains present without verbal response. Personification thus becomes a central mechanism for translating psychological experience into poetic imagery.

Table 1. The five personification expressions

No.	Expression	Personified Referent	Human Attribute/Action	Dominant Poetic Function
1	Running Waves	Waves	Running	Represents movement, unrest, and emotional turbulence
2	The Shadow of Happiness Passes	Happiness	Passing/Moving	Represents the fleeting nature of happiness and memory
3	The Heart That Laughed Yesterday	Heart	Laughing	Represents remembered happiness and present emotional emptiness
4	Flying Breath	Breath	Flying	Represents movement, release, and transience
5	Silent Mirror	Mirror	Being Silent	Represents memory, absence, and unspoken experience

Overall, the five data demonstrate that personification in *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* functions as a major stylistic strategy for transforming non-human, abstract, or bodily entities into participants in the poetry emotional world. The poets use this strategy to make intangible experiences more concrete, visual, and emotionally accessible. The result is a poetic language in which the boundary between human experience and the surrounding world becomes deliberately fluid. This characteristic is compatible with contemporary stylistic research that views personification as a productive mechanism of meaning construction in poetic discourse rather than as merely ornamental language.

Depersonification in the Poetry *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa*

Depersonification is generally understood as the reverse conceptual process of personification. In depersonification, a human being is represented through the characteristics, forms, states, or properties of an animal, natural object, or inanimate object. In other words, the direction of comparison moves from human - non-human, whereas personification moves from non-human - human. This distinction is important because not every metaphorical expression involving a human-related word can automatically be classified as depersonification. The classification must be based on the direction of the semantic transfer and the relationship between the entities being compared.

The Neck of a Lamppost Withers

The expression “the neck of a lamppost withers” requires careful consideration because its classification depends on the exact syntactic and semantic structure of the original Indonesian line. If the original expression represents a human being as a lamppost or transfers the characteristics of a lamppost to a human referent, it can be classified as depersonification. Such a construction would conform to the basic definition of depersonification because a human entity is conceptualized through an inanimate object. The semantic relationship described in the preliminary analysis is based on the common functional association between a human body and a lamppost: both may be represented as structures that “support” or stand upright. The differentiating component is that the human is a living entity with consciousness and reason, whereas a lamppost is an inanimate structure designed to provide illumination.

If the poetic context establishes a human figure as a lamppost, the expression can be interpreted as reducing or transforming human agency into the static, structural, and functional qualities of an object. The human being is no longer represented primarily through emotional or psychological characteristics but through an external physical object. Such a conceptual shift may suggest emotional rigidity, immobility, endurance, or the reduction of human existence to a particular function. This interpretation is consistent

with the fundamental principle of depersonification in which the human is metaphorically represented through an object or other non-human entity.

A Broken Heart

The expression “a broken heart” cannot automatically be classified as depersonification. The phrase represents an emotional condition through the image of something being physically damaged or fractured. However, the expression does not clearly represent a human being as an object. Rather, it metaphorically conceptualizes emotional pain through the physical condition of “brokenness.” The relevant semantic transfer is therefore between an emotional state and a physical condition. A human being experiences disappointment, grief, or loss, while the adjective *broken* is associated literally with objects that have been damaged, separated, or fractured. The expression creates an analogy between emotional suffering and physical damage. Consequently, this datum is more appropriately treated as a metaphorical expression of emotional injury rather than as a prototypical example of depersonification. Depersonification requires a stronger human-to-object correspondence, such as a human being explicitly represented as stone, wood, a flower, a machine, or another non-human entity. The poetic value of “a broken heart,” nevertheless, lies in its capacity to make an abstract emotional experience tangible. Emotional suffering becomes imaginable as physical damage. Thus, although the expression is relevant to the poetry emotional semantics, it should not be counted as depersonification unless the original poetic context demonstrates a more explicit transformation of the human referent into an object.

The Face of a City

The expression “the face of a city” presents the opposite direction from depersonification. The city is a non-human entity, while *face* is a part of the human body. By assigning the human bodily attribute *face* to a city, the expression conceptualizes the city as if it possessed a human body. Therefore, “the face of a city” is more appropriately categorized as personification, not depersonification. The semantic transfer proceeds from human - city, giving the non-human entity a human attribute. This is consistent with the general definition of personification as the representation of objects, natural entities, or abstract concepts through human characteristics. In the context of the poetry, the expression may nevertheless have important emotional significance. A city can become associated with home, memory, belonging, and personal history. Giving the city a “face” allows the poets to transform an impersonal geographical space into something recognizable and emotionally intimate. The city becomes something that can metaphorically be seen, remembered, and emotionally encountered. This finding is important methodologically because it demonstrates why classification should not be based merely on the researcher’s intended interpretation. The direction of semantic transfer must determine the category. A non-human entity receiving a human attribute is personification, even when the larger context concerns human memory or experience.

The Eyes of the Lamp

The expression “the eyes of the lamp” similarly does not constitute depersonification under the operational definition used in this study. The *lamp* is an inanimate object, while *eyes* are a human or animate bodily attribute. The expression therefore assigns a human body part to an object. The semantic direction is again non-human - human, which places the expression within personification rather than depersonification. The lamp is represented as though it possesses eyes and consequently acquires a human-like capacity for seeing or observing. The expression may create an image of the lamp as a silent observer. A lamp illuminates its surroundings, and the conceptual association between illumination and seeing makes the metaphor particularly effective. By calling the illuminating part of a lamp its “eyes,” the poets transform illumination into an apparently perceptive activity. The finding also demonstrates that an expression may simultaneously contain an association with a human characteristic and carry a strong symbolic meaning. However, symbolic or emotional significance should not override the basic classification criterion. Since the lamp is endowed with a human bodily feature, the expression belongs more appropriately to personification.

Reassessment of the Depersonification Data

The preliminary analysis proposed four depersonification expressions. However, applying the theoretical definition consistently produces a different result. The expressions “the face of a city” and “the eyes of the lamp” clearly involve the attribution of human bodily characteristics to non-human entities and should therefore be classified as personification. “A broken heart” represents emotional suffering through physical damage but does not, by itself, demonstrate the transformation of a human referent into an object. The classification of “the neck of a lamppost withers” depends on the original Indonesian wording and on whether the grammatical subject is actually a human referent being conceptualized as a lamppost. This reassessment is essential for maintaining methodological consistency. Depersonification is not defined simply by the presence of words associated with objects, nature, or physical states. Instead, the defining

feature is the direction of conceptual comparison, namely the representation of a human being through a non-human entity. Studies of comparative figures of speech similarly distinguish personification and depersonification according to this direction of semantic transfer. Contemporary analyses of literary texts continue to identify depersonification through expressions in which human subjects are characterized using properties conventionally associated with objects or non-human entities.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the use of personification and depersonification figures of speech in the poetry *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* by Theoresia Rumthe and Weslly Johannes, included in the poetry anthology *Percakapan Paling Panjang Perihal Pulang Pergi* (2021). Using a qualitative descriptive approach and deductive qualitative content analysis, the study focused on the identification, classification, and interpretation of figurative expressions based on their semantic and contextual functions. The analysis demonstrates that personification is an important stylistic strategy in the poetry. The identified expressions, including “running waves,” “the shadow of happiness passes,” “the heart that laughed yesterday,” “flying breath,” and “silent mirror,” show how the poets attribute human actions, capacities, or experiential qualities to non-human, abstract, or bodily entities. These expressions do more than embellish the poetic language. They transform abstract psychological experiences into concrete and evocative images, allowing feelings of happiness, loneliness, loss, memory, transience, and emotional unrest to be represented through natural phenomena and objects. Personification therefore contributes substantially to the poetry imagery and emotional depth.

The analysis of depersonification, however, indicates that classification must be based strictly on the direction of semantic transfer. Depersonification requires a human referent to be represented through the characteristics of a non-human object, natural entity, or other non-human domain. Several expressions initially categorized as depersonification, such as “the face of a city” and “the eyes of the lamp,” are more appropriately interpreted as personification because they transfer human bodily characteristics to non-human entities. Similarly, “a broken heart” does not, by itself, constitute a prototypical case of depersonification. Consequently, the final number of depersonification occurrences should be established only after the original Indonesian lines have been verified against the operational definition. Overall, the findings suggest that figurative language in *Hati yang Kemarin Tertawa* functions as a central mechanism for constructing poetic meaning rather than merely as an ornamental feature. The poets blur the boundary between human experience and the surrounding non-human world, enabling objects, natural phenomena, abstract emotions, and bodily entities to participate in the representation of memory, loss, and emotional experience. This study therefore contributes to the stylistic study of contemporary Indonesian poetry by demonstrating how figurative language can mediate emotional and conceptual meaning through creative semantic transfer. Future research may extend this analysis by examining other forms of figurative language in the anthology, comparing the stylistic tendencies of Theoresia Rumthe and Weslly Johannes, or investigating how figurative expressions contribute to broader themes such as homecoming, separation, memory, and grief in contemporary Indonesian poetry.

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