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PERSONIFICATION: HOW IS THE FIGURE OF SPEECH POSITIONED?

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ABSTRACT

Personification to distinguish between what is human and what is not. However, the most common is personification, which involves humanising objects, animals, and abstract concepts. The purpose of discussing five poems from “Selamat Ulang Tahun, Buku” by Joko Pinurbo, “Hiu” by Nirwan Dewanto, “Because I could not stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson, “The Mangroves” by Mary Oliver, and “Laughing Song” by William Blake which have personification. The method used in this article is a qualitative descriptive approach. The results obtained are that the five poems above have human nature embedded in the form of objects (such as ‘buku,’ ‘streams,’ and ‘hills’), animals (such as ‘hiu,’ ‘ubur-ubur,’ ‘cumi-cumi,’ ‘grasshopper,’ and ‘birds’), abstract (such as death), plants (such as ‘mangroves,’ ‘green woods,’ and ‘meadow’), and gas (such as ‘air’). The five forms above are examples of personification. So the conclusion is that in Joko Pinurbo's poem, there are objects that behave like humans; in Nirwan Dewanto's poem, human nature is linked to three animals; in Emily Dickinson's poem, it is said that Death has a quiet, honest, and cruel behavioural action; in Mary Oliver's poem it is said that mangroves have the nature to discuss with the narrator; William Blake gives the nature of happiness to objects and animals. Thus, personification functions as a complement to characteristics, emotions, and position as a story character.

Key words: Personification, poem, positioned, figure of speech

INTRODUCTION

Poetry has an aesthetic of words built by stylistics, one of which is through personification. Personification is to distinguish between what is human and what is not. However, the most common is that personification is a figure of speech that attaches human characteristics to non-human creatures or inanimate objects in order to convey meaning or ideas more clearly and creatively (Melion & Ramakers, 2016). If so, when an object is likened to speaking or listening, the concept of personification arises here. However, the five poems discussed in this article not only possess human-like characteristics but also become characters, playing very important roles in the storytelling. These poems are “Selamat Ulang Tahun, Buku” by Joko Pinurbo, “Hiu” by Nirwan Dewanto, “Because I could not stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson, “The Mangroves” by Mary Oliver, and “Laughing Song” by William Blake.

In Indonesian literature, Joko Pinurbo is an influential Indonesian poet. It is not surprising that his works have received many awards, both domestically (such as the Jakarta Arts Council Poetry Book, Sih Award, Lontar Literature Prize, Tempo's Choice Literature Figure, Language Agency Literature Award, Khatulistiwa Literature Award) and abroad (such as the South East Asian (SEA) Write Award). Apart from being called a modern poet, Pinurbo has the freshest works (Apsahani, 2007; Taum, 2016), as he incorporates both physical and spiritual content in his poetry (Novianty, 2022). With simple language and diction, he is considered successful in voicing social realities and cultural changes (Pramudyaseta & Azmin, 2021; Purba et al., 2022).

Then, Nirwan Dewanto is also known as a modern Indonesian poet. He has received awards from within the country (such as the Achmad Bakrie XVIII Award, the Badan Bahasa Literature

Award, Lebah, winning the Kusala Sastra Khatulistiwa) and abroad (such as the South East Asian (SEA) Write Award). However, the most important thing is that Nirwan's works have a postmodern context because they link poetry with the issue of violence against women and have sociological literary values (Andalas, 2017; Nugroho, 2024).

Then, there is Emily Dickinson. She is a renowned American poet known for her numerous poems. One of the famous ones is "Because I could not stop for Death." This poem is said to have a very dominant metaphor (Faur, 2012). However, some argue that the poem above talks about the funeral procession (Abbott, 2000). Discussing the funeral procession is almost the same as discussing death because death is a reality of life (Raina, 1985).

The next poet is Mary Oliver. She is an American poet who has won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. Oliver's poems often raise ecological issues because nature is a constant presence (Bonds, 1992). However, ecology can be interpreted as part of the problem of mysticism that stems from Christian beliefs (Usman et al., 2021). Even the poem entitled "The Mangroves" this poem is a harmony of entities and existence in the world (Kumar & Chakraborty, 2022).

Finally, there is an English poet named William Blake. This Pre-Romantic poet in 18th-century English literature is renowned for his works that explore the tension between nature and civilisation (Wang, 2022). To create the impression of conflict, Blake incorporates elements of humour in the poem "Laughing Song" (Al-Nehar, 2017).

Through the discussion of the poet on his position as a writer and the criticism in it, the novelty of each of the poems above is how the form of personification is used. Thus, the purpose of this article is to discuss five poems that contain personification, namely "Selamat Ulang Tahun, Buku" by Joko Pinurbo, "Hiu" by Nirwan Dewanto, "Because I could not stop for Death" by Emily Dickinson, "The Mangroves" by Mary Oliver, and "Laughing Song" by William Blake.

Poetry is composed of words that are considered aesthetic and carry the most profound meaning (Sutikno, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2024). However, another unique way is to provide an idea of human life towards objects or animals. What I mean is when a hummingbird, commonly called in English as a hummingbird, dances and sings after changing the color of its feathers to mate.

Therefore, the words 'dance' and 'sing' here refer to activities that humans typically engage in. In other words, the attribution of human feelings or characteristics to abstractions or inanimate objects is called personification (Barnet et al., 2008). This quote explains the attribution of human feelings or characteristics to objects or animals. So saying "death comes to me" is part of personification because death is imagined to be something human, namely as if coming to the 'me.' Personification is also a figure of speech because it assumes or compares one thing with another. Therefore, personification may be part of a figure of speech in which a thing, an animal, or an abstract term (such as truth or nature) is made human (Kennedy & Gioia, 1995). By humanizing an object, it is given life, as seen in the word 'crawl' with the example sentence, "The lava crawled into the residential area." Through 'crawl,' the slow speed of 'lava' is likened to the speed of a human moving on hands and knees. Of course, this movement is not as fast as running.

Thus, "Abstract concepts and inanimate concrete phenomena are often personified . . . and non-human live things like trees or flowers can also be spoken of in this way" (Alm-Arvius, 2003). Alm-Arvius' statement can be illustrated by the sentence, "The dog screamed." Conventionally, the language of dogs is barking, while humans are the ones shouting. Thus, the verb 'shouting' is included in personification. In personification, something that is not human acts and speaks. It also exhibits human traits by creating a comparison between human and non-human nature (Wolosky, 2001).

Personification is a figure of speech in which an inanimate object is given the attributes of feeling, sensing, and moving as if it were human. Personification is also a form of metaphor in which human characteristics are attributed to non-human things. In other words, that objects or animals become human (Shahabi & Roberto, 2015). It enables writers to bring life and movement to inanimate objects, animals, and even abstract ideas by incorporating human behavior and emotions.

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this article is qualitative. Then "Selamat Ulang Tahun, Buku" by Joko Pinurbo, "Hiu" by Nirwan Dewanto, "Because I Could not Stop for Death" by Emily

Dickinson, “The Mangroves” by Mary Oliver, and “Laughing Song” by William Blake are the objects discussed. The steps taken to analyze the poems above are to read them in-depth, identify and determine personification figures of speech, and discuss them in this article. The presentation method in this article is to present five poems in their entirety and then discuss matters related to personification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings obtained from the five poems above are that human nature is embedded in the form of objects (such as ‘buku,’ ‘stream,’ and ‘hill’), animals (such as ‘hiu,’ ‘ubur-ubur,’ ‘cumi-cumi,’ ‘grasshopper,’ and ‘bird’), abstract (such as Death), plants (such as ‘mangroves,’ ‘green woods,’ and ‘meadow’), and gas (such as ‘air’). The five forms below exhibit properties and actions that serve as a form of personification reference. Thus, in Joko Pinurbo’s poem, some objects behave like humans who are ‘keren’ (cool), ‘cerdas’ (smart), ‘pandai meralat’ (good at correcting), ‘menceritakan dirimu sendiri’ (telling about yourself), and ‘pangling’ (surprising). Meanwhile, in Nirwan Dewanto’s poem, human nature is linked to three animals, namely ‘hiu’ (shark), ‘ubur-ubur’ (jellyfish), ‘cumi-cumi’ (squid). A cunning and careless nature characterizes these three animals. Then, in Emily Dickinson’s poem, it is said that Death has a quiet, honest, and cruel behavior. Then, in Mary Oliver’s poem, it is said that mangroves have a nature that invites discussion with the narrator. Finally, William Blake gives humanity to the poem he wrote, namely happiness.

Existense	Reference	Nature and Action
Object	‘Buku’ on Joko Pinurbo’s poem ‘Stream,’ ‘hill,’ on William Blake’s poem	Joko Pinurbo’s poem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buku (keren, cerdas, pandai meralat, menceritakan dirimu sendiri, pangling)

Animal	‘Hiu,’ ‘ubur-ubur,’ and ‘cumi-cumi’ on Nirwan Dewanto’s poem ‘Grasshopper,’ and ‘bird’ on William Blake’s poem	Nirwan Dewanto’s poem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiu (makhluk kampung, tak suka main jagoan, diciumnya perenang, pamer giginya) Ubur-ubur (menyerobot) Cumi-cumi (mengotori karpetnya)
Abstract	‘Death’ on Emily Dickinson’s poem	Emily Dickinson’s poem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Death (he, stopped for me, he knew, passes Us)
Plants	‘Mangroves’ on Mary Oliver’s poem ‘Green woods’ and ‘meadow’ on William Blake’s poem	Mary Oliver’s poem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mangroves (discourage entrance, whisper, so leggy, answer)
Gas	‘Air’ on William Blake’s poem	William Blake’s poem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green woods (laugh) Stream (dimpling, laugh) Air (laugh) Meadows (laugh) Grass (laugh) Birds (laugh)

Below are some Indonesian poems (“Selamat Tahun, Buku” by Joko Pinurbo and “Hiu” by Nirwan Dewanto) and English poems (Emily Dickinson’s “Because I Could not Stop for Death,” Mary Oliver’s “The Mangroves,” William Blake’s “Laughing Song”) those contain

personification. I will start with the personification in "Selamat Ulang Tahun, Buku."

Selamat Ulang Tahun, Buku

Selamat ulang tahun, buku. Makin lama

kau makin keren saja. Tambah cerdas pula.
Aku saja yang tambah payah
dan sekarang mulai pelupa.
Maaf, aku tak bisa kasih hadiah apa-apa

selain sejumlah ralat dan catatan
yang aku tak tahu akan kutaruh di mana
sebab kau sudah pandai meralat
dan menceritakan dirimu sendiri.
Kau bahkan sudah tak seperti dulu

ketika aku berdarah-darah menulismu.
Jangan-jangan kau pangling denganku.
Selamat ulang tahun, buku. Anggap saja
aku kekasih atau pacar malangmu.
Selamat panjang umur, cetak ulang selalu.

(2003)

(Pinurbo, 2016)

The attribution of human life to the 'buku' (book) is by greeting, namely through the title "Selamat Ulang Tahun, Buku" (Happy Birthday, Book). This greeting seems to be a friend who can discuss and be familiar with the 'I' lyrics. The character 'I' in the book is getting 'cerdas' or brighter than before. Through the lines '*Makin lama / kau makin keren saja. Tambah cerdas pula. / Aku saja yang tambah payah / dan sekarang mulai pelupa*' (The longer / you are getting cooler. Even smarter. / I am the one who is getting worse / and now starting to forget), there exists personification. The main character does not only compare with 'keren' (cool) and 'cerdas' (smart) as opposed to 'payah' (jaded) and 'pelupa' (forgetful), but also positions himself as a binary and old subject.

Next is '*sebab kau sudah pandai meralat / dan menceritakan dirimu sendiri*' (because you are good at correcting / and telling yourself). The 'buku' in lines eight and nine can make changes (pandai meralat (good at correcting)) and also tell stories (menceritakan diri sendiri (telling about yourself)). Both activities are also personifications created by the 'I' lyrics. Then by saying 'Jangan-jangan kau pangling denganku' is also a

personification of the attribute 'pangling'. Because basically, the forgetful one is a human being, not an object. So 'pangling' (overlook) is an additional meaning that the presence of the 'buku' is like its existence beyond the 'I' of the lyrics. Thus, the body of this poem has a close relationship with the attribute of humans as subjects who greet, age, become tired, and senile. However, that is to describe the 'I' of the lyrics, who is the narrator. So what might be more appropriate is through the personification of 'keren' (cool), 'cerdas' (smart), 'pandai meralat' (good at correcting), 'menceritakan dirimu sendiri' (telling about yourself), dan 'pangling' (overlook).

Hiu

Mereka yang bilang bahwa hiu berbahaya

Pastilah pendusta.

Kukira si hiu makhluk kampung belaka
Gemar pameran giginya tajam tak beraturan
Maka wajarlah ia suka nyasar ke tepian

Mengira ibu-ibu mau memperhatikan ia.

Tapi yang ia temui ternyata cuma para
perenang

Yang di hari libur itu berotak agak miring
Merasa bisa mondar-mandir di laut
Seenak jidat mereka.

Padahal luas benar rumah si hiu
Dan ia pun tak suka main jagoan
Tapi tetamu datang dan pergi tanpa aturan
Kadang ubu-ubur menyerobot kasurnya
Kadang cumi-cumi mengotori karpetnya.

Sesekali ia kepingin juga pasang wibawa.

Maka diciumnya perenang laki paling
berkilauan
Tapi karena hidung dan mulut hiu selereng
belaka
Maut pun datang dalam darah
berhamburan.

Haraplah si hiu tahu bahwa sesal dahulu

Pendapatan dan sesal kemudian tak berguna
Supaya ia lebih menghayati hukum alam.

Wahai kalian yang gemar menampik dusta
 Dengarlah kesaksianku: di masa kanakku
 Pernah kulihat di perut hiu yang dibedah

Sepotong kain merah alangkah merah.

Pakaian siapakah melangkah sejauh itu?
 Pakaian orang kiri yang diburu serdadu?

Janganlah mendendam kepada mayat hiu
 Biarlah ia tetap berpaham kanan

Walau sudah puas ia pamer giginya
 Dalam mati pun matanya terkesima.

Panjang umurlah para pendusta
 Dan hiduplah kita dari bahaya.

(1995)

(Dewanto, 2010)

'I' in the lyrics try to convince that sharks are not dangerous and that those who say that this animal is dangerous are 'pendusta' (liars). This poem also employs a personification figure of speech, as seen in the fourth line, namely 'Gemar pamer giginya tajam tak beraturan' (Likes to show off its sharp, irregular teeth). Although the 'hiu' (shark) teeth are shown to be unattractive, this unattractiveness is part of what must be shown off to others. It is called a 'kampungan' (rural) figure.

The next personification is evident when the shark has a desire to show off that he is both great and humble. It is shown when he occasionally wants to put on airs. This line seems sufficient to lead to the opinion that the shark has prestige and, on the other hand, is not too arrogant because 'desire' is only what is desired and not necessarily done.

'Maka diciumnya perenang laki paling berkilauan' (Then he kissed the most sparkling male swimmer) in the seventeenth line is a personification because there is the word 'diciumnya' (kissed). This attribute is something that humans usually do, namely, putting their lips to something. Next is 'Maut pun datang dalam darah berhamburan' (Death also came in scattered blood). The word 'maut' refers to death, and in essence, death never does any activity, let alone 'picking up.' So, when 'death' has an activity to go to someone, then this becomes a personification.

Below is an untitled poem by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). However, many people have given it the title "Because I Could Not Stop for Death." Written in 1863, this work explores the concept of death. Death personified.

Because I could not stop for Death—

He kindly stopped for me—
 The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
 And Immortality.

We slowly drove—He knew no haste

And I had put away
 My labor and my leisure too,
 For His Civility—

We passed the School, where Children
 strove
 At Recess—in the Ring—

We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain—
 We passed the Setting Sun—

Or rather—He passed Us—
 The Dews drew quivering and chill—
 For only Gossamer, my Gown—

My Tippet— only Tulle—

We paused before a House that seemed
 A Swelling of the Ground—
 The Roof was scarcely visible—
 The Cornice— in the Ground—

Since then—'tis Centuries—and yet
 Feels shorter than the Day
 I first surmised the Horses' Heads
 Were toward Eternity—

1863

(Dickinson, 1976)

The first thing to note is the use of the word 'he' refers to 'Death,' even though death is an abstract thing and has no gender. The attribute of mention to humanize an abstract thing is through the use of personal pronouns. Not only that, but he also does work like 'stopped for me—.' It is a

movement to prevent the 'I' of the lyrics from living forever.

In the second stanza, especially in line 5, the 'I' of the lyrics says that He [namely Death] knew no haste. Death is described as a patient subject because he knows when it is time to take a life. Therefore, the attribute of being 'no haste' (not in a hurry) seems appropriate for personification. Still in the same stanza, namely in line 8, there is 'For His Civility—.' In addition to the use of the capital letter His as a form of glorification, Dickinson also uses the word 'Civility' (politeness) to describe death. This word seems to still refer to 'no haste' because if 'Death' is polite, then it will not be hasty or reckless in taking death.

Below is a poem by Mary Oliver entitled "The Mangroves." This writing discusses mangrove trees, more precisely, through the lens of ecofeminism discourse, as it explores the preservation of nature and the admiration for trees. Unfortunately, in this writing, I will only talk about forms of personification.

The Mangroves

As I said before, I am living now

in a warm place, surrounded by
mangroves. Mostly I walk beside
them, they discourage entrance.
The black oaks and the pines

of my northern home are in my heart,
even as I hear them whisper, "Listen,
we are trees too." Okay, I'm trying. They
certainly put on an endless performance
of leaves. Admiring is easy, but affinity,

that does take some time. So many
and so leggy and all of them rising as if
attempting to escape this world which,
don't

they know it, can't be done. "Are you
trying to fly or what?" I ask, and they

answer back, "We are what we are, you
are what you are, love us if you can."

(Oliver, 2016)

This seventeen-line poem begins with the lyrical 'I' living surrounded by dense mangrove trees. Oliver's way of showing that these

mangroves are dense is that they discourage entrance (they prevent [me] from entering). 'Discourage' can be interpreted as to dissuade, block, or prevent. This attribute of doing something is also included in personification. Preventing this because there are not a few mangrove trees. Then Oliver gives human attributes in 'even as I hear them whisper, "Listen, / we are trees too.'" Inside these double quotation marks is the whisper of the trees: 'The black oaks and the pines.' They claim to be like mangroves and trees. The sentence 'Admiring is easy' reminds me of the poem "My Heart Leaps up When I Behold" (Wordsworth, 2010) because it contains content admiring nature so quickly.

On the other hand, these trees are referred to as 'so leggy and all of them rising as if / attempting to escape this world which.' Being described as 'so leggy' or long-legged, and as if wanting to get out of the world, is part of giving a personification attribute. The last is when 'I' in the lyrics asks, 'Are you / trying to fly or what?' with the intention of why they look up into the sky and as if they want to leave the earth. The following form of personification is the answer to 'they / answer back, "We are what we are, you / are what you are, love us if you can.'" The point is that these trees are talking to the narrator.

Laughing Song

When the green woods laugh with the voice
of joy
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by,
When the air does laugh with our merry
wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of
it.

When the meadows laugh with lively green
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry
scene,
When Mary and Susan and Emily,
With their sweet round mouths sing Ha, Ha,
He.

When the painted birds laugh in the shade
Where our table with cherries and nuts is
spread
Come live & be merry and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of Ha, Ha, He.

(Blake, 1967)

Blake's poem above shows how the word 'laugh' is repeated several times. 'Laugh' functions as a builder of a happy atmosphere. However, 'laugh' does not stop at being an atmosphere builder but instead shows how nature is a very happy living creature. By attributing human traits to 'green woods,' 'streams,' 'air,' 'hills,' 'meadows,' 'grasshoppers,' and 'birds' that laugh and rejoice, the poem above employs personification. The four poems above employ personification to explain or describe abstract concepts and to describe animals and objects around them. The material above is endowed with traits and behaves like humans because the 'I' of the lyrics is close and familiar with what is mentioned above. The concept of explanation using this human attribute may be that the 'I' of the lyrics or the author is familiar with the discourse.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are five categories of existence: objects, animals, abstract concepts, plants, and gases. In Joko Pinurbo's poem, some objects behave like humans who are 'keren,' 'cerdas,' 'pandai meralat,' 'menceritakan dirimu sendiri,' dan 'pangling.' In Nirwan Dewanto's poem, he associates human nature with three animals: 'hiu,' 'ubur-ubur,' and 'cumi-cumi.' These three animals are covered in cunning and careless natures. Then, in Emily Dickinson's poem, it is said that Death has a quiet, honest, and cruel behavioral action. Then, in Mary Oliver's poem, it is said that mangroves have a nature that invites discussion with the narrator. Finally, William Blake gives human nature to the poem he wrote, namely happiness. Thus, the personification in the poems above is not only used as a figure of speech to describe something but also as a complement to the nature, emotions, and position of the personified character in the story.

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