

# The Personified Petals: Communicating Self-Identity through Figurative Language in Noor Unnahar's Poetry

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**Received:**

30 December  
2023

**Revised:**

03 May  
2024

**Accepted:**

20 May  
2024

## ABSTRACT

Personification, a literary device that may give inanimate objects or abstract concepts life, has been used in poetry for an extended period of time. This research investigates the interesting realm of personification in a book of poetry in order to elicit more deep feelings, enrich thinking, and establish an intimate connection between the reader and the surroundings in a book of poetry *Yesterday I Was The Moon* (2017) by Noor Unnahar. In this study, twenty-two poetry titles were found that contain personification. This study uses the theory of figurative language by Kennedy & Gioia (1995). This research uses descriptive qualitative method where data was analysed and presented in discussion with detailed descriptions. The findings emphasize the importance of understanding the concept of self-identity wherein described from the attributes and things that are attached to a person. As well as the value of literature in understanding the characteristics of a poem based on the use of language and how a poem is interpreted with basic and general theories of language art. This study aimed to explore personification as a type of figurative language greater in depth. This investigation contributes to a growing number of studies on figurative language and semantic approaches to literature.

**Keywords:** *Figurative Language; Poetry; Personification; Self-Identity.*

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## INTRODUCTION

When dealing with poetry, many of us assume that the subject matter will be challenging, if not downright incomprehensible Buchbinder, (1991) As a consequence of the aforementioned, we may dismiss poetry out of hand even if, despite reading other types of literature, we are able to participate in meaning-making processes that are just as complex. Poetry is a form of literary expression that has been used by people for centuries to convey their thoughts and emotions in a creative and unique way. Poetry is an element of literature that may cultivate universal expressions that enhance communication between individuals by using words penned by poets Jayantini, Umbas, & Lestari, (2020). Poetry is a medium that allows writers to explore various themes and concepts in a way that is both meaningful and impactful. What distinguishes a poem from other forms of writing is the use of language. Good poetry has the power to transport the reader to another time and place or to bring them closer to their own emotions and experiences. Poetry is set aside, but it also functions and

gestures with the words we use every day, and it implies that poetry's diction is different from terms used in everyday language, which have lexical meanings and literal purposes. It is possible to say that the poet employed language in his or her poetry by utilizing words with deeper meanings Wainwright, (2004). Although the poetry is written in lyrical language, nobody else understands its deeper meaning. Poetry is a unique type of literature in which the language is used in various ways to generate a distinctive effect for the reader.

Poetry possesses the ability to serve as a source of solace, offering emotional healing to those who engage with it. Additionally, it has the capacity to instill an appreciation for language, encouraging individuals to play with words and explore their various nuances. Despite its potential significance for individuals and society at large, the unfortunate reality is that not many people recognize poetry in such a manner Nercessian, (2019). Poetry with sound and rhythm encourages readers to pay attention to it in order to gain a enhanced comprehension, as does the role of image in poetry and its power to elicit vivid mental images and emotions. Poets produce strong imagery by using sensory elements and figurative language (e.g., metaphor, simile). However, ambiguity and different interpretations are more common in poetry, so do the symbols, thereby can express greater emotional notions and deepen the meaning of the poetry Greg Johnson, (2016).

Poetry has been extensively used to question the status paradigm and encourage social change. Poetry is used to express oneself; as a result, it has recently been popular for some people to create poetry about love and other types of emotion and post it on various social media platforms in an effort to gain sympathy from the public. Several authors also advocate for and write about self-identity in their works. In addition to questions concerning mental health and self-love, assembles and clarifies the stages of tumbling and rising on the perilous modern journey from adolescence to adulthood. Feeling the pain of a broken family and the complexities of a diverse cultural upbringing. Throughout the many institutional settings of modernity, self-identity proceeds along a trajectory known as the "life cycle," a term that is far more appropriate when used in non-modern contexts than in modern ones. Each individual not only "has," but also "lives" a dynamically structured biography that stems from social and psychological information flows regarding possible life paths. Everyday choices about behavior, clothes, eating habits, and many other aspects of one's life must take the question "How shall I live?" into consideration. It must also be interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity in the post-traditional order of modernity Giddens, (1991). Therefore, one can never genuinely express themselves "autonomously." Identity is always a ceremonial issue that describes one's place in a dramatized matrix of relationships. Self-identification is a cultural identity, and claims of personal uniqueness rely on audience approval, accepted acting practices, and historical narrative techniques Stuart Hall, (1996).

Similar to how music connects to sound, poetry relates to language; it is language that has been created uniquely with the intent to be cherished and remembered Carey, (2020). Poets often use figurative language, such as metaphors and personifications, to

add depth and meaning to their work. Typically, figurative language is used by writers in order to express ideas other than a phrase's or word's literal meaning, and it is also used to promote specific ideas that can influence the language beauty of written and spoken work. Figurative language is occasionally employed to express a contrast in a captivating manner Dwi Putri & Sunra, (2022); Musfira, (2021). The poets also use techniques such as alliteration and assonance to add a musical quality to their words. Figurative language refers to the role of figures of speech, and as language is not always interpreted literally Alfiyani, (2021), it necessitates an additional examination of the several ways in which these figures of speech might be understood. They also use techniques such as alliteration and assonance to create a musical quality to their words. It is important to remember that poetry is meant to be enjoyed and that there is no right or wrong way to interpret it.

While some researchers and experts view figurative language as a form of rhetoric, others view it as a subtype of style whose main objective is to astonishing readers through the creation of a highly colorful and decorative image Abrams & Harpham, (2012). The use of figurative language especially personification is widespread throughout the world's languages, and it can provide insight into the level of human understanding of various aspects of life. The utilization of personification serves as a rhetorical tool that complements a predetermined framework or theory that contrasts with a pragmatic and objective perspective. Personifications do not contradict a realistic portrayal of the cosmos but substantiate the physical and ethical truths of life when considered objectively Dodson, (2008). Man's experience is mirrored in their use of specific words in an artistic and rhetorical manner Dancygier, (2014).

There are several case studies that have been conducted related to figurative language Wardani, (2021), which focus on the concept of metaphor in online press releases about the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 epidemic is described metaphorically in this article in the online press releases from Lapor COVID-19 and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo). To be more exact, it seeks to identify the conceptual metaphors offered in the online news releases from Kominfo and Lapor COVID-19, characterize the metaphorical language forms included in these releases, and explain the meaning behind the metaphors. In order to make the case more concrete and arouse readers' interest, the government in this study employed metaphors to streamline their points of view.

Setiawati & Maryani (2018) analyze the contextual significance of Taylor Swift's metaphorical language in her lyrics. According to the conclusions of this study, hyperbole is the most prominent in Taylor Swift's song, and the overall meaning of Taylor Swift's song lyrics conveys conflict, agony, heartbreak, and true betrayal. Several musicians utilize it to compare two things, namely feelings and objects with implicit meaning. There are also further research studies that refer to a metaphorical language approach in poetry Anggiamurni, (2020); Syafitri & Marlinton, (2018). This approach provides data analysis by selecting multiple poems by Maya Angelou and Edgar Allan Poe, identifying the figurative language used in the poetry. These two studies also identified types of figurative language, the most dominant of which involves

personification, and in this study, personification in poetry will be discussed in more detail, about what the meaning of interpretation is and how personification can lead people to understand the words of poetry and their correlation in everyday life. In research Jayantini, Karoh, & Umbas, (2019); Jayantini et al., (2020), the paradoxical diction and figure of speech contained in a collection of poems by a poet whose name is very well known on various social media, especially Instagram, Rupi Kaur, are revealed. In exploring the meaning of paradoxical figurative language, Jayantini et al., (2020) the choice of contradictory words used in the poem "The Sun and Her Flower" is analyzed using a stylistic approach. The analysis in this research is based on the paradox's distinguishing traits. In contrast to the more explicit technique of disclosure through diction, the rhetorical contradiction in this study appears in two forms in the anthology. The first is through diction, and the second is through paradoxical description Jayantini et al., (2019). The diction in this poetry is found at the level of meaning, nature, and lexical structure, encompassing denotative and connotative meanings, the abstract and concrete nature of the words used, and lexical structures in the form of synonyms and antonyms founded on the poet's tendency toward word choice and delivery style.

The next study Nuzulia & Firmonasari (2023) is about investigating the metaphor of Queen Elizabeth's death in two news sources using cognitive analysis. The BBC and The Guardian's death metaphors illustrate the same idea by describing the moment the queen passed away. Because these were the prevalent cognitive opinions regarding death, the death concept serves as a metaphor for universality. The funeral is portrayed as taking a long procession across multiple towns while being escorted by many people. This position, which is a social one, encourages internet news outlets to present the queen's funeral as a journey and spectacle notion. How will personification be further explored, as in previous studies on figurative language, personification is only known to explore inanimate objects as having human characteristics, or literary devices wherein abstract or non-human concepts are given human-like traits or behaviors. To gain a deeper understanding of how figurative language, particularly personification, is utilized in poetry. This study explores self-identity, heritage, and culture, even love and its losses.

## METHOD

In this research, the researcher uses the descriptive qualitative method. Bogdan et al., (2007); Moleong, (2014) asserted that descriptive qualitative research is a method for gathering information that is holistic and comprehensive with the aim of understanding the phenomenon of the research subject. How to properly convey the findings of the researcher's research in the form of words or sentences. In qualitative descriptive research, the problem being examined is described in great detail by the researchers Yuliani, (2020).

This study classifies personification-containing phrases or sentences from Noor Unnahar's poetry. Poetry is also textually analyzed in this study. Textual analysis can help researchers discover more about how other people experience the world. It's a methodology and a means of data collection for researchers who want to know how individuals from various cultures and subcultures perceive themselves and their place

in the world. Researchers studying the fields of mass communication, media studies, the study of culture, sociology, and philosophy can all benefit from textual analysis. Textual analysis involves conjecturing about some of the most likely readings that could be made of the text to gain an understanding of how individuals in particular cultures at particular periods make sense of their surroundings McKee, (2003). In this study, the literary theory regarding figurative language used is the theory of Kennedy & Gioia, (1995).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Noor Unnahar's poetry is written in a form reminiscent of a diary, complete with doodles and abstract drawings, giving each reader a very personal touch. It appears that this occurs in order for every reader to sense the continuity of the narratives that the poem's lines are attempting to convey. Here, personification illustrates how a person's identity speaks louder than tradition or culture because the concept of identity can be perceived as a means of understanding a facet or component of self-concept Leary & Tangney, (2012). Each stanza of a brief poem tries to catch the reader's attention by using relatable experiences that people might have when attempting to express their identity to others. The data collected is from Noor Unnahar's first debut book entitled Yesterday I Was the Moon, was released in 2017. There are 22 poems that use personification, there are several representative data were purposely chosen to support how personification is able to be utilized in communicating self-identity.

### The Personified Petals: Race, Religion, Ethnic

Establishing a personal story that incorporates several facets of one's life, such as cultural and ethnic backgrounds, is a common phase in the identity process. These narratives are employed by people to relay their individual stories to others while providing a sense of their experiences and place in the world. In these narratives, race, ethnicity, religion, and culture all play significant roles. And these aspects can also become symbols of personal pride and sources of self-esteem. Additionally, based on individual experiences, beliefs, and personal histories, people's relationships with these components might differ substantially. The personification petals in this poem explain a person's identity based on the attributes they have to demonstrate their social identity, their speaking accent, and their use of multiple kinds of languages. Even for civilians who are unfamiliar with poetry, it is quite easy to identify the personification in this poem and it has an inferred meaning.

“a piece of cloth on my head  
screams an identity  
louder than words printed  
on any document  
even the sky outside knows  
where i come from”  
**{hijab}**

The above poetry discusses clothing as an instrument for expressing one's self-identity. Self-identity that alludes to where somebody originates from, the heritage, and even the religious beliefs in light of poetry are the most noteworthy and richly nuanced aspect of our spiritual practice Dewi, (2021). The poetry above further illustrates how a person's clothes convey to people who they are and how the clothes define man more than a term that every word printed on the fundamental paper does to identify who somebody is. The phrase "*a piece of cloth on my head screams an identity*" addresses personification. We know that "*a piece of cloth on my head*" and "identity" transmit the denotative meaning that what a woman wears on her head can define an identity. This stanza comprises personification because the term "screams" indicates that the screaming feature is frequently executed by human beings.

A component of the attire on her head shouts or exposes who she is. "*Even the sky outside knows where I come from.*" This line contains an obvious personification because it implies that the sky knows where the "I" comes from. The term "sky" purports to shed light on how everyone understands who the "I" is and where it arises from.

"i walk on two bridges everyday  
one is easy; like my mother tongue  
the other is scary; like a foreign language  
it creaks  
and my soul is split  
between these two bridges  
i cannot stop sounding  
like the language i grew up with  
and i cannot stop speaking  
this foreign language  
for it helps me  
survive"  
{bilingual}

This poem might seem to explore what it feels like to lead a bilingual or multilingual existence, where the subject "*I*" transitions back and forth between two languages and the emotions that go along with it. The two metaphorical bridges used in the poem to represent these languages have different meanings and feelings. The second line, "*easy; like my mother tongue*" is likely the one the subject grew up with, the language she or he is most comfortable and familiar with. It symbolizes a sense of belonging, ease, and intimacy, much like the relationship with one's own mother. And there is an unfamiliar territory, perhaps a language that the subject has learned later in life or one that is not as natural to them. The feeling of fear associated with this bridge can be seen as a reflection of the challenges, uncertainties, and insecurities that can arise when using a language that isn't as innate. The poet gives the bridge a human-like quality of creating a sound by using the phrase "it creaks," specifically a creaking

sound. It gives the bridge the appearance of being a living thing that may emit sounds in reaction to pressure or movement. The "scary" bridge's personification is meant to provoke feelings of tension, apprehension, or fragility.

The poem gains depth and enthusiasm courtesy of the personification of the bridge through the cracking sound. It points out the dual nature of the bridges—one comforting and the other daunting—and binds the reader to the subject's psychological struggle. This personification assists in emphasizing the obstacles of the bilingual journey by enabling the reader to identify with the subject's experience. It also creates a vivid and relatable image.

*“history  
i want it to reflect in my eyes  
echo in my words  
grown on my skin  
for my mirror needs to know  
where i come from  
where i have been  
and where i am going”*

The personification of history in this poetry shows up in the lines *“history / i want it to reflect in my eyes / echo in my words / grown on my skin.”* In this case, the idea of "history" is personified by giving it human characteristics and behaviors. By stating that they want history to *“reflect in my eyes,”* the subject is expressing the desire for her or his own history and legacy to be visibly and instantly recognizably present in the appearance. This shows a strong connection between their history and present and a desire for their identity and background to be an essential component of their outer look. "Echo in my words" communicates an individual's desire for their history to resonate and echo in their spoken language. This shows a desire for their statements to have the authority and cultural context of their heritage, generating a meaningful dialogue between their individual experiences and the experiences of their people as a whole. The concept that history has *“grown on my skin”* expresses the strong desire for their past to be instilled so deeply that it becomes an integral part of who they are. In order to represent a solid and enduring connection to their roots, the subjects aspire for their past to be as inherent and necessary as their own skin.

These lines embrace the personification of "history" to emphasize the speaker's strong emotional connection to their past and heritage. It illustrates their desire for their history to be more than just a faded memory but rather a tangible force that permeates every contact and facet of who they are. The poem's final lines about the mirror needing to *“know / where I come from / where I have been / and where I are going”* highlight this yearning for a solid connection to their roots. The speaker's reflection in the mirror takes on a symbolic significance that represents the continuation of their journey as it is influenced by their knowledge of their past.

### The Personified Petals: Human Nature, Characters

Aside from what has always been known about any aspect that can form a consciousness of a person's identity, such as where the person comes from and the dialect, the skin color, or even the religion that plays a powerful role, the fact that feelings, emotions, hopes, memories, plans, the acceptance of others, and spiritual experience all contribute to confirming identity, Lindholm (2001).

Each human being has a unique personality since every individual think and acts differently. Humans are similar to one another in various aspects and have a common nature. Humans, however, are absolutely distinctive and uncommon in other aspects. For instance, some people have earned a name for being loud and gregarious, whereas others are particularly quiet and reserved. Diverse human beings have unique traits. Because it is different, personality is referred to as a human identity Sagimin & Damayanti, (2019).

“there are days when i am a flag of victory  
standing firm on a familiar ground; my fabric  
without a single crease  
winds bringing me pride and attention  
from foreign eyes  
but such days do not stay and then come  
the days of being a flag of surrender  
deprived of glory; i stand as a symbol  
of what time is capable of doing  
that with a new wind  
comes a new victor  
comes a new victim”  
**{flags}**

This poetry recounts days when the 'I' felt like a "flag of victory," proudly standing tall on familiar terrain without a single crease in their cloth, in the first stanza. The visual representation of a triumphant flag signifies triumphs and accomplishments in life. The "*winds bringing me pride and attention from foreign eyes*" assume that during these prosperous times, the individual obtains respect and admiration from others, particularly those who are not intimately related to them ("foreign eyes"). The following line, however, contrasts the prior victory with the inescapable cycles of existence. The "I" recognizes that such triumphant days do not endure forever and that "*the days of being a flag of surrender*" will arrive. They serve as a sign of surrender in these moments, shorn of glory and pride. This depicts the reality of setbacks, failures, or having to succumb to situations beyond one's control. "*winds bringing me pride and attention from foreign eyes*" The winds are personified as if they may convey pride and attention to the flag. This personification paints a clear picture of how the flag is affected by external factors, implying that the wind can cause the flag to shine out and be observed by others. It gives the narrative of the flag's experiences and interactions with the environment around it more depth and emotional impact, and it is also

connected with human nature and characteristics. The title "flags" may refer to the fact that the message of this poetry is not limited to a particular individual but rather reflects the shared experiences and life cycles that everyone encounters. The poetry reminds that both victory and surrender are normal components of a human's journey through life, and that fortunes change as the winds do. It promotes acceptance of these variations and the realization that human experiences are inextricably connected to the growth of time and the environment.

"when you've heard the  
heartbreak coming  
do not close the door  
invite it in  
make it a big warm mug  
of your favorite tea  
ask why it came  
and ask how would it like  
to leave  
let your heartbreak know  
that it has arrived  
at the very wrong door  
that the dweller here isn't  
afraid of the things  
that have been  
broken before"  
{heartbreak}

This personification was created to invoke feelings of strength and fortitude in the face of heartbreak. This poem seems to be trying to enlighten the reader to face heartache head-on and not run from it. It offers a proactive strategy for coping with emotional pain by treating the sadness as though it were a conscious creature that is capable of comprehension and decision-making. In the line "*let your heartbreak know*"//"*that it has arrived*"//"*at the very wrong door*" the heartbreak gains human-like awareness and the ability to be informed or knowledgeable. This is a form of personification in this poetry. This personification enables the reader to confront and process sadness rather than avoid it by giving them a sense of agency and control over their feelings and experiences. The poet personifies grief even further by urging that one should ask it why it came and how it wants to depart, as if conversing with an actual human being. The heartbreak is personified as a guest who unintentionally attends a home where past emotional trauma has been confronted and conquered.

### Personification Petals: Artist, the Story, the Struggle

The unique features, experiences, and attributes that make a person an artist are referred to as artist identity. It encompasses not only their creative works but also their personal beliefs, values, influences, and the way they perceive and express the world

around them through their art. An artist's identity can be molded by a variety of factors, such as styles, influences, theme, medium, process, personal background, and even values or beliefs. The tale of Noor Unnahar's poem is based on some rather intriguing artist identities and the background to works that may or may not be made.

**“the idea of destruction**

keeps running through my veins like blood  
yet my bones hold the will to create  
everyday blood and bones in me clash  
to create something; to destroy something”

**{the struggling artist}**

In the provided poetry, the personification can be found in the lines "*the idea of destruction keeps running through my veins like blood*" and "*yet my bones hold the will to create*". In this case, the idea of destruction is being personified as if it is actively flowing through the veins like blood and as if the bones possess the capacity to hold a will to create. This poem's overarching theme appears to center on the inner turmoil and dualities of the "struggling artist." The artist may be tormented or preoccupied with ideas of destruction if the phrase "*running through my veins like blood*" is used. This might represent the self-doubt, internal conflict, or fear of failure that frequently afflicts creative people. In this regard, destruction may stand in for the uncertainties and pessimistic ideas that pose a threat to the artist's efforts to express himself or herself creatively. In contrast, the phrase "*yet my bones hold the will to create*" expresses the artist's natural motivation to produce something significant despite the predominance of negative ideas.

The bones are figuratively represented as the source of fortitude and willpower, indicating that the artist has a resolute will to create and express themselves artistically, even in the face of skepticism. The final lines, "everyday blood and bones in me clash to create something; to destroy something," perfectly capture the artist's continual conflict. The contrast between "create" and "destroy" represents the ongoing conflict between an artist's desires for creativity and the nagging doubts that try to crush those dreams. This conflict is portrayed as a daily battle between conflicting elements in the artist's mind. Overall, the poem demonstrates the intricate relationship between creation and destruction in the field of artistic expression, capturing the inner upheaval and strain experienced by artists as they battle their own creative urges and concerns.

**“art doesn't ask**

to be perfect  
poetic  
precise  
*it asks to exist*  
to breathe  
to be  
this is what it has always been about”

The poetry above embodies the truth that we have already absorbed pertaining to a work of art, because some principles that have been used as standards will make an art beneficial, but obtaining perfection is not what an artist or a work of art necessitates the most. Because art is created with its own purpose and contains values, the work of art itself can already be utilized, and connoisseurs of a work of art will pay attention to that work because the work has its own value and meaning. As a consequence, there is no need to be precise or attain perfection merely to enjoy an artwork of art. As the line above tries to say in "*art doesn't ask to be perfect*," The poet anthropomorphizes art by contending that it "asks to exist, to breathe, to be," as if it were a living entity with its own desires and aspirations. This personification underlines the idea that art, in its purest form, does not require adherence to rigid perfection or eloquent criteria. Instead, it aspires to be genuine, to have its own presence, and to freely express itself. It serves as a reminder that art is more about the spirit of creation and self-expression than it is about following rigorous rules or expectations. Furthermore, the most prevalent word "asks" in this poem explicitly points out that personification is a part of it.

## **CONCLUSION**

Poetry is a form of literature that never fades out of style; it continues to grow and be appreciated from time to time. The most profound artwork of civilization that society possesses is the discussion of poetry, which is beyond question Bercovitch, (2008). Poetry once could only be appreciated by aristocrats or elite groups, but today poetry can rule all spheres because it is more widely available and tends to relate to human life since the beginning of time, regardless of socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, or religion.

The poetry in this research expresses one's identity in language that is simple to understand, but figurative language can't be separated from its function of rendering sentences exquisite in the poetry's verses. The development of identity is a complex and non-linear process. At its most basic level, it encompasses the dedication to a sexual orientation, an ideological position, and a vocational path. The synthesis of these elements into one's identity involves both affirmation and negation Marcia, (1980). Every word or sentence in this poem, Yesterday I Was The Moon, uses figurative language, primarily personification, to explore universal truths that serve as a frame of reference for expressing one's self-identity. It expected that this study would offer a fresh perspective on personification's deeper investigation because personification can explore an extensive spectrum of topics, from the general to the specific, about everything that exists in our own immediate surroundings.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We would like to express our gratitude to the Dean of Faculty of Foreign Languages and Head of English department, Universitas Mahasaswati Denpasar. We are grateful for the opportunity and encouragement given to us so that the present research can be conducted well as it is planned.

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