

## **Figurative Language Used in John Dryden's Poetry *Happy the Man***

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### **ABSTRACT**

One of the elements in poetry is the use of figurative language. This study identifies the types of figurative language used in John Dryden's *Happy the Man*. This study used textual analysis, and the present study revealed that the poem used five kinds of figurative languages, namely metaphor, synecdoche, irony, personification, and symbol. Every figurative language in this poem conveys a deep meaning about human life. These figurative languages provide the poem with the device to use limited number of words to convey multiple layers of meaning.

**Keywords:** poetry, happy the man, figurative language

### **ABSTRAK**

Salah satu elemen dalam puisi adalah penggunaan Bahasa kiasan. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi penggunaan bahasa kiasan dalam puisi *Happy the Man* karangan John Dryden. Melalui analisis tekstual, penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa puisi tersebut menggunakan metafora, sinekdoke, ironi, personifikasi, dan simbol. Setiap bahasa kiasan dalam puisis ini menyampaikan makna mendalam tentang kehidupan manusia. Bahasa kiasan ini memberi puisi perangkat untuk menggunakan kata-kata dalam jumlah terbatas untuk menyampaikan beragam makna.

**Kata kunci:** puisi, happy the man, bahasa kiasan

### **INTRODUCTION**

Poetry is one of the literary works that is almost familiar to people worldwide. People can find and read poetry in the art book, song lyrics, or art shows. In education, poetry is also used as a teaching tool. Poetry is sometimes used as a teaching tool for language development. It can improve literacy and language skills (Simecek & Rumbold, 2016). Poetry also can use as a medium for exploring experiences (Ofsted, 2007). There are many activities, experiences, moments, or just imagination which people sometimes want to share or immortalize what they have been through. All can be shared or expressed in the form of poetry. Supported by Barnett et al. (1963), poetry is a spontaneous expression of one's strong feelings. Poetry allows students to express their opinions, feelings, and emotions and expand their point of view of the human condition and world when used in learning and teaching (Jack & Tetley, 2016). Through artistic production, one of which is by writing poetry, people have done personal reflections on mental health and an understanding of the importance of compassion (Carvalho et al., 2021).

Each poem in poetry has a deep meaning about why it was written. The poet writes with many language styles to make the poetry interesting, beautiful and ensure that the meaning of

every poem is delivered to the readers. A poem is categorized as good when it can bring the readers to the meaning of the poetry (Setiani, 2020). Setiani also stated that connotation and denotation must be considered to increase language style. In terms of language, Poetry can be seen from the savings in language use, word selection, and the use of a specialized language (Lethbridge & Mildorf, 2003). Short sentences in each poem in poetry actually have a broad meaning (Suwastini & Pradnyani, 2023). Therefore, readers need to read poetry repeatedly to get true and deep meaning (Gill, 1995) The reader will feel the poem's emotion when it succeeds in getting its meaning (Perrine, 1982)).

Figurative language is one of the language styles commonly used in poetry. The connotative meaning of the poetry is usually delivered through the use of figurative language. Using figurative language in poetry is one of the poet's ways to describe or express the poet's feelings and the theme or idea of the poetry. Raisa (2017) stated that Figurative language creates a feeling or special effect. In other words, figurative language means saying one thing with meaning another. Figurative language is used to create poetic feelings or special effects in poetry. Using figurative language in poetry can attract the reader's interest to read the poetry. The poets can convey their ideas and imagination more entertainingly through figurative language. The figurative language will give a lot of meaning to the message contained in the poetry, or the poetry will have a rich meaning so that the delivery of the meaning contained in the poem is more precise and concrete and has aesthetic value. There are various languages in figurative language which can be used to develop ideas in writing poetry by poets.

Several linguists stated many opinions on figurative language. Perrine (1983) stated that figurative language is divided into twelve kinds: simile, metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, personification, allegory, paradox, symbol, irony, and hyperbole. Meanwhile, Wardoyo (2013) states four types of figurative language used in poetry: personification, metaphor, simile, and hyperbole. Of many kinds of figurative language mentioned, in this study, the researcher will focus on analyzing the use of figurative language in John Dryden's poetry.

John Dryden was an English poet and playwright in the second half of the 17th century. He was England's first Poet Laureate and was known as a satirist. He was called the "intellectual elite" of his time because of his magical art (Armistead, 1987) *Happy the Man* is one of the famous works of poetry written by John Dryden, which was published in 1685 and is familiar to the reader (Lee, 2019). This poetry consists of a stanza and eight lines. The poetry *Happy the Man* is a translation of Horace's "Ode 29". This poem is inseparable from the use of figurative language by John Dryden. The true meaning of what Dryden wants to convey in his poetry will certainly be obtained by analyzing the use of figurative language.

## **METHOD**

This study only focuses on analyzing John Dryden's poetry entitled *Happy the Man* through textual analysis. Textual analysis is a method of analysis that focuses on how the meaning of a text is interpreted. Each text has a different context, and textual analysis is used not to find the correct interpretation but the most probable interpretation of a text (Utami et al., 2020). There is no correct interpretation of a text, but a text has a broad interpretation (Mckee, 2001). So, a text can be interpreted in many ways according to the interpreter's point of view. The data is collected by reading the poetry closely and repeatedly. The data is then analyzed and presented descriptively to gain a conclusion. The meaning of the figurative language in this poetry is used as the research object. This study is guided by Perrine's theory (1982) which states 12 kinds of figurative languages and is supported by several literature reviews.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Through repeatedly close reading, the poetry entitled *Happy the Man* by John Dryden is seen as Self-determination, happiness, Temporality, fate, and control over circumstance. Using words full of optimism, with an optimistic view of life, will ensure a "happy" life. Every message in this poetry is focused and delivered to people who have not found happiness in themselves. Happiness can be achieved when we feel optimistic about the life being lived and do not fixate on the things that have been passed. Every meaningful message is conveyed through figurative language so that the message conveyed is full of meaning and beautiful even though this poem is relatively short. The figurative language used in the poetry is presented below.

### Metaphor

A metaphor is one figurative language used to describe something difficult to understand using language that is more familiar or easy to understand (Chaerunnisah, 2020). Metaphor is also usually used to compare things that are essentially different (Perrine, 1982). One of metaphor concept stated by Lakoff and Johnson, namely metaphor conceptual theory. The source and target domains are metaphor elements (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) The source domain is transferred to the target domain. It means that both have a related meaning. The target domain is usually less structured and abstract, but the source domain is familiar (Chaerunnisah, 2020). According to Lakoff & Johnson (1982), there are three types of metaphors: orientational, structural, and ontological. An orientational metaphor is a metaphor that relates to the orientation of human experiences like up-down, on-off, front-back, etc. Structural metaphor uses an easy-structured concept to understand the less or complicated structure. A concept is formed metaphorically with another concept. Ontological metaphor is a metaphor that conceptualizes something abstract physically (making abstract nouns into concrete nouns).

*"Be fair or foul or rain or shine"*

The metaphor in the poem *Happy the Man* can be seen in Line 5 */be fair or foul/ or rain or shine*". The poet uses the weather to imagine or describe the vicissitudes of life. Unpleasant times, bad life experiences, or unhappiness are represented by the word "rain". It is usually cloudy when it rains, and the sky looks a little dark. Sometimes, the sound of thunder and flashes adds to the gloomy atmosphere. That is the description of the atmosphere of life referred to by the poet in this poem. Then, the happier days in life or best experiences are represented by the "shine". In shining weather, the sky usually looks clean, blue, and the air feels fresh. So, "shine" perfectly describes a sense of happiness and a good life experience. The words "rain" and "shine" are structural metaphors.

The existence of this metaphor in the poetry *Happy the Man* will always remind the reader to be grateful for life. Rain and shine are opposite. When a person is down with his life, has many problems, and is unhappy is represented like rain that has no light at all and is shrouded by a dark fog. However, if life is filled with pleasure, enjoyment, and happiness, then life is likened to a sunny day. It is easy to create happiness by being grateful for everything received in life. Do not regret the bad past, but make the past a benchmark to do better things in the future. That is the message to be conveyed through the figurative language of metaphor in line 5 of the *Happy the Man* poetry.

### **Personification**

Personification is a figurative language used to describe inanimate objects as alive and having a character like a human (Padillah et al., 2016). In other word, personification consists of giving human traits to something concepts, objects, or animals (Perrine, 1982). It means the objects or animals likened they can do or feel something like humans.

*“Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today”*

In the poetry *Happy the Man*, personification is applied in Line 4 */Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today/*. In this line, "tomorrow" refers to the future and influences the speaker's experiences. It means that the word "tomorrow" is the entity with the ability, like a human, to do something for the future. The speaker is like discussing something that does not exist or is abstract, as if it were an entity capable of thinking and feeling. In this poem, the poet conveys that the man's character is ready to face whatever happens the next day because he has lived well today and is ready to face the future.

### **Irony**

Irony is a figurative language whose meaning contradicts its true meaning or what actually happened. An ironic statement is a statement that is not true. When someone claims something is not valid, it is called irony. Irony is a critical language. In other words, the irony is interpreted by listeners from the speaker's meaning as criticism (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2017) This is a kind of result of asserting the contrast between real meanings and suggestions of other meanings (Laimena & Que, 2022). There are three types of irony, namely verbal, dramatic, and situational irony (Perrine, 1982). Verbal irony is irony in which one person writes and means another. Dramatic irony is irony that is used in drama to describe a dramatic situation even though in reality this is not the case. Situational irony is irony that refers to the difference between expected situations and reality.

*“Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today”*

*“Be fair or foul or rain or shine”*

*“Not Heaven itself upon the past has power”*

The poem Line 4 */Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today/* and Line 5 */Be fair or foul or rain or shine/* use irony, especially situational irony. The situational irony is "the happy man", unswerving and confident, dares to live a hard life rather than asking for luck or happiness from the god, which might happen. The Line 7 */Not Heaven itself upon the past has power/* is another situational irony in which heaven, which might be expected to be omnipotent, is declared to have no control over the past.

### **Synecdoche**

Synecdoche is a figurative language used to describe a whole thing by mentioning only a few of them (Perrine, 1982). Synecdoche means to receive together (Laimena & Que, 2022). In other words, a part is used to express the whole or vice versa (synecdoche pars prototo and synecdoche totem pro parte). When the parts of something are used to express the whole of the

parts, it is called synecdoche pars prototo. When the whole part of something is used to express its small parts, it is called synecdoche totem pro parte.

*“But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour”*

The poem in Line 8 */But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour/* contains figurative language of synecdoche, specifically synecdoche pars prototo. The word "hour" belongs to synecdoche, which refers to one's time of fame or success (often longer than an hour). The word "hour" in this poem represents a time for the whole of life. The time that has passed is the journey of life that we have passed, and it is impossible to return or change our lives in the past. While the time we are currently living is the true source of happiness. By reaching the time in the present, we have gone through many difficult, happy things in the past. We should be grateful for that. By not regretting the past and being grateful for the present, happiness will come to us. While for the future time, we must prepare ourselves to face it. Make the past a lesson to face the future.

### **Symbol**

Symbol is a kind of figurative language that uses object, animal, plant, or others to substitute one thing (Laimena & Que, 2022). Symbol can also be defined as an object that stands for or changes some situation ((Perrine, 1982); Sulaiman, 2019). The poetry *Happy the Man* contains two symbols. The first one is *the weather*. In line number 5, “Be fair or foul or rain or shine”, the readers can find the word “rain” and “shine”. These two words are not merely a description of the weather, but the words rain and shine refer to the good and bad life or positive and negative in living life. No life is really bad, or no life is perfect. Everything has its time. There are times when we are facing many problems, and there are times when we live calmly and happily without problems. And the second one is *Heaven* in Line 7 *Not Heaven itself upon the past has power*, there the word heaven refers to the divine/the god *and* does not to the skies like in the literal meaning. The speaker argues that there truly isn't anything in the universe with the power to go back to the past or even change it. Furthermore, brooding or regretting one's past is pointless.

The true meaning of this poem is deeply conveyed through all the figurative language used. Through the poem *"I have my hour"* implies that humans may have traveled a long journey and experienced many things. The use of the words "*shine*" and "*rain*" are very well chosen to express good and bad experiences. Perhaps many people spend precious time regretting the past, even wishing they could change it. However, the poem *"Not Heaven itself upon the past has power"* implies that the things that have been passed by humans cannot be changed, but the future can be determined by the humans themselves. Humans can use experiences to encourage doing better things in the future.

### **CONCLUSION**

Poetry is a literary work used to share feelings, emotions, experiences, or just the imagination of humans. Figurative language is one of the elements in poetry. Figurative language is used to create a feeling or special effect, or it can be defined as the way of saying one thing with



meaning to another. Using figurative language in poetry may help readers better understand every poem. Figurative language is an essential element in poetry that makes the delivery of meaning in poetry more beautiful. In the poetry *Happy the Man* by John Dryden, five figurative languages are used, namely metaphor, Personification, Irony, Synecdoche, and Symbol. In the poem *Happy the Man*, the poet uses weather (rain and shine) to imagine or describe the vicissitudes of life. The poet also uses the figurative language of personification. The poet used the word “tomorrow” to refer to the future and influence the speaker’s experiences. The poet imagined a situational irony with the words of heaven and fair, foul, shine, and rain. Then, the word “hour” belongs to the idiomatic Synecdoche that refers to one’s time of fame. Weather and heaven are used as a symbol in this poetry. Weather symbolizes excellent and bad life or positive and negative in living life in this world, and heaven symbolizes the divine/the god and does not to the skies like in the literal meaning. The use of this figurative language makes this poetry more exciting and beautiful and has a deep meaning. Many different messages can be drawn from the poem based on the figurative language used in this poetry.

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