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Speaking to a Silent Cosmos: Shifting Modes of Lyric Address in Subagio Sastrowardoyo's *Manusia Pertama di Angkasa Luar*

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze Subagio Sastrowardoyo's poem "Manusia Pertama di Angkasa Luar" (MPAL) from the perspective of linguistic events, emphasizing the poem's performative dimension, distinct from its representational one. Employing a textual-discursive method that integrates Jonathan Culler's theory of lyrical address and Merleau-Ponty's concept of bodily perception, this study examines the lyrical persona's strategy of mediating the relationship between language, cosmic space, and existential consciousness. The textual analysis works through three modes of lyrical address—I–You, I–Self, and I–Mother—highlighting apostrophic address as a strategy that makes the operative presence explicit and simultaneously immerses the reader in the poetic event. Rather than serving as a clue to unravel communication, apostrophes intensify relational tensions and reconfigure the communicative field, transforming cosmic alienation into lived linguistic experiences. The research findings show that reading modern Indonesian poetry as a linguistic event allows for the excavation of subtle textual phenomena—such as temporal dislocation and deictic shifts—often overlooked in conventional representational approaches. Ultimately, this article offers a methodological contribution by viewing cosmic imagery as an operative mode of lyrical communication, affirming poetry as a medium for existential engagement.

Keywords: *lyric address; apostrophic address; cosmic alienation; linguistic event*

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Introduction

Manusia Pertama di Angkasa Luar (First Human in Outer Space, hereafter MPAL) by Subagio Sastrowardoyo (1995, pp. 16–17) can be read as a lyric event structured through shifts in modes of address. In this context, the poem is no longer read merely as a text of thematic meditation on outer space or modernity. Jonathan Culler's (2015) concept of lyric communication, particularly the notion of triangulated address, reveals how MPAL operates a complex relation between speaker, figures of address, and reader. At the same time, MPAL's imagery grounded in cosmic space foregrounds a mode of perception in which human existence is articulated within embodied and situational presence. This resonates with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception (1962), which regards the body as the primary site of meaning and experience. Through this combined framework, MPAL appears as a communicative and perceptual event, where lyric address and existential embodiment align as a meeting space between the reader, language, the cosmos, and the conditions of human presence.

The experience of reading MPAL, as an Indonesian poem written prior to the 2000s that explicitly engages with outer space imagery, leaves a distinct trace. Although the image of the "first human in outer space" recalls the monumental event of 1961, when the Soviet Union successfully sent Yuri Gagarin into space, there is no explicit textual indication that directly equates the lyric persona of MPAL with this historical figure. Instead, the opening lines place the persona within a broader cosmic horizon*: "Beritakan kepada dunia / Bahwa aku telah sampai pada tepi / Darimana aku tak mungkin lagi kembali …"* ["Tell the world / That I have reached the edge / From which I can never return…"]. Here, the poem constructs a space of utterance that exceeds historical reference and enters a speculative–existential register. In this sense, MPAL marks one of the early points in Indonesian poetry that explicitly engages with the ecosystem of scientific imagination, particularly astronomy.

This thematic shift becomes clearly visible when compared with works from the past two decades that operate with similar diction, such as *Asteroid Dari Namamu* (Pramudianto, 2019), *Teori Penciptaan Waktu & 37 Puisi Lainnya* (Muhammad, 2023), *Antariksa Infinitum Absurdum* (Rahmah, 2025), and *Sehelai Bulu Kosmos* (Hambally, 2025). However, MPAL, as an initial point of departure, has received relatively little attention. Studies of Sastrowardoyo's poems generally emphasize moral values or their function in teaching literary appreciation. Supriyono (2018a; 2018b; 2018c) highlights Sastrowardoyo's poetry as a medium for character education, containing values of responsibility, tolerance, and religiosity, and functioning within literary instruction at the secondary-school level. Another article worth noting in relation to this research discussion is by Zen Hae (2013), which emphasizes poetic strategies such as imagery, musicality, and the figure of the astronaut as a lonely human-scientist. Thus, previous research has not situated MPAL within the context of astronomy and lyric communication (Pietrzak, 2023; Pertile, 2023; Reames, 2022).

This article seeks to bridge the theme of astronomy and the existential horizon through the perspective of Merleau-Ponty's (1962) existential phenomenology, which emphasizes the body as the mode through which humans are present in the world. In MPAL, the cosmos is not merely an imaginative decoration, but a gateway to understanding human existence in the universe. Discussions of the cosmos in Indonesian poetry—often referred to as cosmology (Jafar, 2022; Muharudin et al., 2023)—are generally approached through particular cultural or religious lenses. One example is Fuad (2020), who analyzes Odhy's poems as guiding readers through a poetic experience of mystical contemplation of God. Such approaches affirm that cosmology in poetry facilitates existential and spiritual reflection.

The reading of MPAL is grounded in two theoretical foundations. First, a lyric discourse perspective that highlights whom the lyric *aku* [I] addresses, the position of the speaking voice, and the direction of utterance, based on Jonathan Culler's (2015). To ground Culler's

(2015) distinction, treating MPAL as a lyric event rather than a representational text means shifting focus from *what* the poem depicts to *how* its linguistic structure operates performatively in the present moment of reading.

MPAL systematically destabilizes such referential grounding. The opening imperative, *"Beritakan kepada dunia"* ["Tell the world"], lacks a plausible empirical addressee in the vacuum of space, creating a logical contradiction if read purely as a represented scenario.

Instead, the poem functions as a performative event: through deictic shifts, spatial displacement (*tepi*), and the sudden apostrophic invocation of *Bunda* [Mother], language does not merely reflect a pre-existing cosmic situation. Rather, it enacts an ongoing communicative tension that forces the reader—acting as a "re-performing reader" (Culler, 2015, p. 120)—to occupy the speaker's position and experience cosmic alienation directly within the act of enunciation.

At this point, textual communication is continuously redirected, suspended, and reconfigured through apostrophic gestures (Bellardini, 2022; Confalonieri, 2016; Culler, 2015; Jackson, 2020). Culler defined concept of *triangulated address* as a mode of addressing the reader by referring—or pretending to refer—to another person, object, or personified abstraction.

Within this framework, Culler proposes three categories of lyric address: (1) address to the reader (the I–You mode, or *blurred you* in contemporary poetry), (2) address to another figure within the textual world, and (3) apostrophic address, marked by a sudden shift of utterance toward an entity that is absent or incapable of response (Bellardini, 2022; Confalonieri, 2016; Giovannetti, 2016; Greene, 2019). Apostrophic address, or apostrophe—understood as the act of directly addressing absent or non-human entities as if they were present within the textual event (Pertile, 2023; Reames, 2022; Rowe, 2017). Operationally, apostrophe is understood as a linguistic mode used to address entities situated outside ordinary communicative situations, including inanimate objects, abstract concepts, deceased figures, or transcendent entities (Pertile, 2023; Rowe, 2017). Previous studies have shown that apostrophe plays a central role in producing unstable communicative relations and in constructing lyric subjectivity in distinctive ways (Reames, 2022).

Furthermore, the analysis of shifting modes in this article focuses on a single-poem deep analysis of MPAL, traced through Culler's conceptual account. Communicative relations in this poetry present disruptions, such as direct address to other entities that shifts the focus of address, as well as symbolizations of space and existential relations that resist immediate, conventional understanding. These distinctive phenomena of lyric communication require a reading through the I–You framework of lyric address (Culler, 2021, 2015; Nowell Smith, 2022; Bellardini, 2022; Zettelmann, 2017).

Second, Merleau-Ponty's (1962) existentialism helps to elucidate the structure of poetic experience as shaped by embodied experience, particularly in relation to the earth as the primary space of human existence. The lyric *aku*, as the center of discourse, is also the center of perceptual experience (lyric event), understood through two poles: the relation of the body to the world and psychological consciousness (Vesala, 2024; Mohajel & Asghari, 2022; Kristianto, 2022, 2023; Bertens, 2014; Wiyatmi & Kusuma, 2022). The body serves as the primary medium through which space, the world, and mysteries not fully accessible to the senses are encountered (de Campos Moura, 2024; Slatman, 2019). The body is dynamic, formed through rhythmic relations with the world—what Merleau-Ponty terms *flesh* (Vesala, 2024). In this context, poetic language, through gesture, metaphor, and physiognomic imagination, becomes an ontological medium that reveals the *flesh of the world*, rather than merely functioning as an expressive tool (Kee, 2025; de Campos Moura, 2024; Zlatev, 2023; Mohajel & Asghari, 2022; Mazis, 2022).

From this perspective, the perceptual experience of the lyric *aku* in MPAL is understood as an interaction between body, language, and cosmic space, in which the

theme of astronomy becomes a medium for expressing human existence. The reading of MPAL aligns with the *aku–kau* [I–You] model, emphasizing communicative interaction and existential entanglement. These findings reveal a discourse of cosmic alienation in Sastrowardoyo's poetry. Readers may encounter a space of pause and reflection through the lyric *aku*'s experience of estrangement and transcendence. In this way, the article fills a gap in previous scholarship by reading MPAL not merely as a moral text or religious symbol, but as a discourse that integrates the horizon of astronomy and existential experience, emphasizing the intersection of lyric communication and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.

Thus, to address this gap, this study formulates the central research question: How do shifts in lyrical address and embodied spatial perception in *Manusia Pertama di Angkasa Luar* reconfigure communicative relations and construct cosmic space as a performative linguistic event? Specifically, it investigates how the trajectory of address—moving from I–You, through I–Self, to an apostrophic I–Mother—mediates the tension between human isolation, cosmic alienation, and existential reflection.

Methodology

This study employs a textual–discursive analysis of *Manusia Pertama di Angkasa Luar* (MPAL) by Subagio Sastrowardoyo. The data source is the poem as published in the anthology *Dan Kematian Makin Akrab* (1995, pp. 16–17), selected as the finalized version of the text. The analysis aims to examine modes of lyric communication and relations of address, while also interpreting experiences of perception and human existence in cosmic space as mediated by the body, language, and astronomical imagery.

Culler's (2015) typology of lyric address functions as an analytical device for identifying trajectories of communication within MPAL. The term *speaker* refers to the voice that articulates the utterance within the poem, rather than the empirical poet; *addressee* designates the entity toward which the utterance is directed; and *lyric persona* denotes the textual construction of subjectivity, which is not identical with the actual poet. Linguistic elements such as spatial deixis, imperative forms, and markers of apostrophe are examined to trace the formation of communicative relations.

The analysis proceeds by tracing the communicative relations constructed within the text to reveal specific patterns of address. In MPAL, an instability of address emerges, creating interpretive gaps and highlighting the non-cohesive nature of the textual situation. This article identifies and analyzes textual cues that signal this instability of address by categorizing addressees based on Culler's (2015) framework described above.

In this analytical process, the lyric text operates as a linguistic event when the reader adopts and occupies the speaker's position (Culler, 2015, p. 37). This involves first-person utterances whose performative conditions are reconstructed by the reader as a 're-performing reader' (Culler, 2015, p. 120). Consequently, the analysis of communication between the speaker and the addressee is conducted simultaneously within the process of identifying address.

In addition, Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology is employed as an interpretive perspective to read the poetic experience of lyric *aku* as an embodied experience, with the body functioning as the center of human perception. The combination of these approaches allows the study to articulate the interrelation of language, embodiment, and the cosmos as a poetic event.

Results and Discussion

Based on the *aku–kau* (I–You) communication mode, analysis cannot immediately label the persona of the addressee as referring to the reader. It is important to note that the addressee's reference to the reader experiences textual disruption. First, *aku–reader* communication lacks a clear textual situational footing; cues supporting the relation between *aku* and the reader are absent, especially since *aku* is not on *bumi* [earth].

Second, communication deflection appears through the direct address to *Bunda* at the end of the poem, indicating that the discourse is directed toward another entity, not the reader. The presence of *Bunda* confirms a unique communication phenomenon that requires further elaboration. Additionally, several diction choices carry symbolic content that is not immediately clear. For example, *tepi* [edge] emerges as both a concrete and symbolic space. The persona *aku* seems to contemplate or re-understand what lies before it and what has been left on *bumi*.

1. Shifting Mode from You to Apostrophic Address

The poem MPAL is constructed with a close communicative distance between the speaker and the addressee. "*Beritakan kepada dunia*" ["Tell the world"], the imperative form, implies communication between *aku* and a second person in the textual event, an addressee. The identity of this discourse addressee cannot be immediately revealed. From the first line to the eighth line, the reader is presented only with *aku*'s utterances, focused on communicating the setting or spatial deixis descriptively. *Tepi* [edge] is described by imagery *di tengah ruang di mana tak terpisah malam dan siang, hanya lautan yang hampa di lingkung cemerlang bintang* [in the midst of space where night and day are inseparable, only an empty sea in a radiant starry environment], where "*Bumi telah tenggelam dan langit makin jauh mengawang, jagat begitu tenang"* ["The earth has sunk and the sky drifts ever farther, the *jagat* is so calm"].

Although the exact nature of the *tepi* cannot yet be fully comprehended, several pieces of information about outer space provide solid cues for the reader's horizon of understanding. The emerging spatial description is not far removed from astronomical facts about outer space. In fact, beyond *Bumi*'s atmosphere, outer space is a vast expanse of vacuum, lacking oxygen and significant gravity. Celestial bodies float within a dark and silent space where the absence of air prevents the transmission of sound waves. This general picture of outer space as "total silence" is easily accessible to the reader's imagination. However, where, how, and why the lyrical *aku* exists within this void remains entirely uncommunicated.

This spatial description also develops as a sort of situational foundation. The reader now equally perceives the image of a person and their place of existence. In the next section, *aku*'s utterances move toward more personal matters, about feelings, memories, even anxieties: *"…Makin jauh, makin kasih hati kepada mereka yang berpisah…*" […The farther away, the more affectionate [my] heart grows toward those who are separated…*"*]. Awareness of physical distance generates nostalgia. *Aku*'s mind moves to memories of life on *Bumi*. At this point, the reader gains more detailed information about the persona *aku*. First, that it has a wife, a child, and a mother. Second, *aku*'s childhood was close to storybooks and fairy tales. Third, *aku*'s romantic side can be observed from how things are remembered: roses, love letters, *Elisa* with *Alex* and *Leo* at the window gazing at the sky with *sia* [in vain], and so forth.

The shadow of *Elisa*, *Alex*, and *Leo* gazing at the sky with *sia* sparks a sharper "deflection" in *aku*'s mind. The stability at the beginning of the poem wavers*: "…Masihkah langit mendung di bumi seperti waktu/ Kutinggalkan kemarin dulu?/ Apa yang kucita-cita? Tak ada lagi cita-cita…*" ["…Is the sky still cloudy on earth as when / I left the day before yesterday? / What do I aspire to? There are no more aspirations…*"*]. When the rhetorical question refers to 'things that are future-bound', *aku* expresses a final condition. Completed. This is important to note in comparison with 'things that have passed'. In other words, it can be understood that in this situation, what exists now are only memories. Things that have passed. Ambitions, as something carrying imagery of the future, will, continuation: do not exist.

How the past (that has passed) and the future (that will come) are presented essentially stems from the spatial imagery forming the textual situation: *tepi*. The diction *tepi* also appears to carry imagery of limits, edges, even what is of final value. Uniquely, the condition of absence of the future and all that

accompanies it is immediately contradicted by *aku* shortly after mentioning its reason:

> *"…*
> *Apa yang kucita-cita? Tak ada lagi cita-cita*
> *Sebab semua telah terbang bersama kereta*
> *ruang ke jagat tak berhuni. Tetapi*
> *ada barangkali. Berilah aku satu kata puisi*
> *daripada seribu rumus ilmu yang penuh janji*
> *yang menyebabkan aku terlontar kini jauh dari bumi*
> *…"*
> (Sastrowardoyo, 1995 p. 16)
> *(English translation by author)*
> *…*
> *What do I aspire to? There are no more aspirations*
> *For all have flown away with the space car into an uninhabited cosmos. But*
> *perhaps there is one. Give me a single word of poetry*
> *rather than a thousand promising scientific formulas*
> *that have cast me now so far away from Earth.*
> *…*

Although not entirely certain, *aku* expresses the possibility of a future. And this possibility manifests through *satu kata puisi* [a single poetic word]. The comparison between *satu kata puisi* and a thousand formulas of knowledge full of promises appears to exist on a positive–negative pole related to the reason *aku* was hurled far from *bumi*. The information obtained at the beginning of the poem initially suggests a sublime condition of *aku*'s existence. However, it now erodes into a negative quality. The value of *aku*'s existence becomes intertwined with imagery of being expelled, abandoned, isolated, and so forth.

In the following situation, *aku*'s awareness recognizes space and distance again. A repetition emerges containing spatial information, similar to the opening of the poem: *"…Tetapi aku telah sampai pada tepi/ Darimana aku tak mungkin lagi kembali./ Ciumku kepada istriku, kepada anak dan ibuku/ Dan salam kepada mereka yang kepadaku mengenang…."* ["…But I have reached the edge / From where I can no longer return. / My kisses to my wife, to my child and my mother / And greetings to those who remember me…."]. These lines imply a decision to release the past, to no longer be bound to memories. Uniquely, this awareness does not erase the fact that within such a deep and silent *jagat*, *aku* feels the heart grow lonelier. And in that situation, suddenly appears a statement containing a direct address, which simultaneously serves as the poem's closing: *"…Bunda,/ Jangan biarkan aku sendiri"* ["…Mother, / Do not leave me alone"].

> *"…*
> *Dan salam kepada mereka yang kepadaku mengenang.*
> *Jagat begitu dalam, jagat begitu diam.*
> *Aku makin jauh, makin jauh*
> *Dari bumi yang kukasih. Hati makin sepi*
> *Makin gemuruh.*
>
> *Bunda,*
> *Jangan membiarkan aku sendiri."*
> (Sastrowardoyo, 1995 p. 17)
>
> *(English translation by author)*
> *…*
> And greetings to those who remember me.
> The cosmos is so deep, the cosmos is so silent.
> I am farther and farther away, farther and farther
> From the earth I love. My heart grows lonelier,
> Growing ever more turbulent.
>
> Mother,
> Do not leave me alone.

The address *Bunda* [mother] appears abruptly, raising questions about who this *Bunda* is. Is it the same as the mother mentioned on *bumi*? Is this *Bunda* the intended communicator from the beginning of the discourse? Furthermore, upon closer examination, this final statement implies a strange intention. If *aku*'s condition of being sent to the edge is essentially being expelled, abandoned, and so forth, what is *Bunda*'s relation to that fact? Moreover, is *aku*'s request likely to be fulfilled, or is the statement merely a rhetorical complaint from someone who is lonely?

In MPAL, several points of change in the communication flow are evident. The beginning shows symptoms of *aku–kamu* communication. Then, the utterance shifts to a more personal tone, where *aku* appears to speak to itself (marked by rhetorical questions). Subsequently, spatial awareness "restores" the communication trajectory to *aku–kamu*. Finally, at the poem's end, the direct address *Bunda* emerges as if the figure is

present, able to hear and respond to *aku*. In summary, the communication trajectory moves from *aku–kamu* (I-You)→ *aku–diri sendiri* (I-self) → *aku–Bunda* (I-Bunda), forming a three-stage pattern of lyrical address transformation.

Culler (2015) notes that such shifts in the addressee are one of the primary qualities of lyric poetry. One indication of this unique lyrical communication is the presence of an apostrophic address, calling upon non-human entities, abstractions, or even death. Furthermore, the appearance of the direct address *Bunda* in MPAL can be identified as an apostrophic address.

Zen Hae (2013) identifies the closing line of MPAL as "drawing power" from Jesus' words on the cross: *Eli, eli, lama sabakhtani* ("My God, my God, do not leave me"). Zen Hae adds that *Bunda* in MPAL's line carries a dual meaning: mother as the parent who gives birth to a child, and also as a symbol of *bumi*. Furthermore, considering the apostrophic phenomenon described, it can be understood that *Bunda* is not actually present in the textual event. *Bunda* is also not the mother mentioned mid-poem. As is generally the case with apostrophic address, *Bunda*'s function is linguistic: to build or sharpen the emotional impression and expressive quality of the poem. The address *Bunda* possibly refers to Mary, the mother of Jesus, considered a special intermediary close to God. In the concept of intersection or mediation in prayer, Mary is often asked to intercede or convey human petitions to Allah. As an apostrophic phenomenon, the address *Bunda* signals a spiritual relation that *aku* attempts to establish with a transcendent entity greater than itself. According to Zen Hae (2013), on a semiotic level, *Bunda* can also symbolize *bumi*, often associated with feminine values, mother of life, fertility (land-water), and so forth. The transcendent entity that *aku* refers to may be Mary and/or *Bumi* in a spiritual perspective. What is noteworthy is how the state of being alone experienced by *aku* evokes awareness of the Transcendent. *Bunda* is not a physically present entity but a rhetorical device evoking the poem's emotional and spiritual quality.

Moreover, recognizing the apostrophic phenomenon gives the reader new clues for understanding *aku*'s communication trajectory. The shift in *aku*'s existential value, initially sublime, becoming expelled, abandoned, etc., now casts doubt on the imperative line at the beginning of the poem.

Finding a parallel situation with textual oddities like those in MPAL is difficult, even impossible. In what logical event could a reader encounter someone uttering such lines? Additionally, representational reading often leaves unanswered questions that place the text under the compulsion of interpretation. This is also the basis for Culler's (2015) assertion that poetry reading (analysis) should be treated as a linguistic event, in which the textual event continuously occurs with each moment of reading. The reader's role is not to seek situational footing but to experience the poem. A reader assumes a dual role as both speaker and addressee. Culler (2015) further notes that a poem's communication trajectory can dynamically shift because of meditative devices allowing the lyrical persona to seemingly communicate directly with the audience. This generates overlapping dimensions of addressee (lyrical address) and audience (reader).

In MPAL, for instance, the imperative line at the poem's start seems to indicate the presence of a figure interacting directly with *aku*. However, considering the textual events and the previously identified apostrophic address, it is understood that *aku* is alone at the edge. The imperative line functions as a meditative device bridging the poetic dimension with the reader audience. In the discourse flow, this phenomenon blurs the communication trajectory. However, it also marks a ritual aspect distinguishing poetry from other textual forms (non-fiction texts such as letters, speeches, news, etc.). In MPAL, this also signals an important idea regarding dialogical space and cosmological reflection, to be further elaborated.

Another key point in understanding MPAL's poetic message is the claim in the title: the reader learns that *aku* is the first human in outer space. Alone, as the first human in outer space, *aku* experiences a moment of

meditation, rereading and comparing experiences on *bumi* and *tepi*. As observed in MPAL, *bumi,* marked by love letters, fairy tales, storybooks, angels, giants, and *bota* (referring to blindness or giants, Javanese language), emerges as the marker of living, moving things—readable through the people in *aku*'s life, ambitions, and imbued with romantic and imaginative qualities. Meanwhile, *tepi,* as a vast, empty, quiet, uninhabited *jagat* [cosmos], marks the opposite pole from *bumi*.

How *aku* shapes perception of existence at the edge and on *bumi* recalls Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on *lived body* and *lived space*. Merleau-Ponty asserts that humans' direct, embodied experiences are central to forming the meaning of existence. Thus, he rejects the separation of mind and body. Mind and body are unified. Through perception, humans engage directly with the world, understanding it: sensing, seeing, and interacting with the environment and *the Other [Liyan]*. The body is understood not merely as an object possessed, but as a subject experiencing.

At the *tepi*, *aku* rereads itself, recalling what it has experienced (memories) and imagining what it will experience (ambitions). It is observable how *aku* becomes aware of its body, *"...melayang di tengah ruang/ di mana tak terpisah malam dan* siang…" ["…floating in the midst of space / where night and day are inseparable…"]. *Aku*'s body experiences contact with a new, different space. At this moment, new perceptual production should occur. However, the erasure of night and day affects this production. Upon closer examination, awareness of the body also changes. The statement *tidak lapar* marks an essential condition of the body. Hunger is part of the biological, natural process, undeniable. What happens to *aku*'s body so that it no longer feels hunger?

In line with Merleau-Ponty's perspective, perception cannot be separated from the living body and the space in which it exists. Until now, *aku*'s perceptual scale is the "earthly" experience, terrestrial experience. Hunger and the alternation of day and night are inevitabilities perceived in life on *bumi*. Now, *aku* is in a place far from *bumi*, far from the devices that previously filled its perception of space and existence. The edge uproots, tearing all terrestrial perception within *aku*. *Bumi* has rooted itself in marking what exists; now the edge marks what does not. *Aku*'s current space is the space of nonexistence. At that moment, it becomes aware of a fracture in its attempt to form meaning of space and existence. When *aku* recognizes that *bumi* marks memory, the edge does not indicate time moving forward. The edge marks stagnation: *"...Sebab semua telah terbang bersama kereta/ ruang ke jagat tak berhuni. Tetapi…"* ["...For all have flown away with the space car into an uninhabited cosmos. But…"]. The diction *semua* appears to refer to ambitions and all associated elements. What existed has gone to the non-existent *jagat*.

Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty notes that experience cannot be understood individually alone. Perceptual experience always involves others. Our understanding of ourselves and the surrounding world results from interaction with others. Moreover, in MPAL, the edge is a space where such interaction is no longer possible. What occurs is longing for *bumi* and loved ones. At that moment, apostrophic address arises. The uprooting of bodily perception that then generates the impulse for apostrophic communication shows the integration of phenomenological experience and the poem's rhetorical strategy. When *aku* realizes it can no longer return to reach *bumi*, the urge to connect with a larger, transcendent entity also emerges.

This section shows that MPAL constructs complex lyrical communication: the *aku–kau* trajectory becomes blurred, apostrophic address generates emotional intensity, and bodily-living space perception reinforces the lyrical persona's existential experience.

2. Poetry as Alienation Space

This subsection examines how the relationship between *kata* and poetry functions as a medium for cosmic experience in *Manusia Pertama di Angkasa Luar* (MPAL).

At this point, the concept of "alienation" in this study is framed through an existential-phenomenological tradition rooted in Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenology of

perception. Within this framework, cosmic alienation is conceptualized as a radical spatial and bodily estrangement (*Entfremdung* in its existential register). It occurs when the lived body (*corps propre*) is dislodged from its grounding terrestrial horizon (*bumi*), causing the collapse of familiar perceptual anchors—such as diurnal cycles and biological hunger—and confronting the subject with the vast, non-responsive cosmos as a silent Other.

Words can generate specific emotional, aesthetic, or visual resonances. In discussions on the relationship between words and poetry, certain creative experiments emphasize words as a medium of poetic experience, such as Lewis Carroll's concrete poetry or John Cage's silent poetry. This approach is relevant for understanding MPAL, where Sastrowardoyo employs *kata* to present an existential experience, allowing readers to feel cosmic alienation and existential reflection through the language itself.

Sastrowardoyo seems to pour his most intense ideas about the relationship between *kata* and poetry into the poem "Kata": *"Asal mula adalah kata/ Jagat tersusun dari kata/ Di balik itu hanya/ ruang kosong dan angin pagi…"*. *Kata* emerges as a metaphorical figure that holds an important role in structuring the *jagat*. The relationship between *kata* and the *jagat* is thus noteworthy as part of the textual situation in MPAL.

Reconsidering the *tepi* as a primary space, the internalization experienced by *aku* as the "first human in outer space" can be read as a cosmological meditation. Uniquely, MPAL employs the astronomical ecosystem as a poetic construct. However, the discussion of cosmology in this text does not confine itself to ideas about how and when the universe began, nor to the structure of the cosmos or its constituent matter. In a broader sense, cosmology also encompasses philosophical discussions about the meaning of human existence and its relationship with the cosmos and other entities. It is within this domain that *aku*'s poetic experience occurs. Thus, the cosmos is not merely a backdrop but a medium for meditating on the body-living space of the lyrical persona.

Although not explicitly addressing cosmology, Merleau-Ponty's thought helps bridge MPAL's philosophical reflection in this direction. One point worthy of deeper discussion is the statement *tidak lapar* [not hungry]. Previously, it was explained how *tidak lapar* signals a change in physical or biological conditions. When linked to cosmological discussion, hunger can be read as carrying a symbolic quality marking desire and longing broadly. Hunger may not only be about eating. As observed, *aku* states that there are no longer ambitions, and that a thousand formulas of knowledge full of promises are what caused *aku* to be thrown far from *bumi*. Thus, *tidak lapar* may also signify the loss of desire or aspiration for the future and (scientific) knowledge, while simultaneously affirming the lyrical persona's cosmic alienation.

Hence, this situation not only reveals the reality of embodiment but is also essential to the meaning of *aku*'s existence as a human being. In the story of humanity's origins and the Tree of Knowledge (*khuldi*), there is an implicit relation between "hunger" and "curiosity" as part of human nature. In this way, humans are destined to possess curiosity, to feel hunger, as part of their attachment to the world, to *Bumi*.

Cosmological discussion places considerable emphasis on the existence of *Bumi* as the only planet, at least currently, that supports human life. However, to this day, all matters of humanity—disappointment, arrogance, memory, anxiety, gratitude—occur on *Bumi*. On a cosmological scale, *Bumi* is merely one of billions of planets in the universe. However, philosophically and spiritually, *Bumi* often carries deeper meaning. *Bumi* remains the only *rumah* [home]. *Rumah* is a space of collective memory, where *ibu*, Elisa, Alex, and Leo, along with all events and experiences (and their meanings), manifest.

Another unique point is observed in *"…Berilah aku satu kata puisi/ daripada seribu rumus ilmu yang penuh janji/ yang menyebabkan aku terlontar kini jauh dari bumi/ yang kukasih…"* ["…Give me a single word of poetry / rather than a thousand promising scientific formulas / that have cast

me now so far away from earth / that I love…"]. Why does *aku* ask for *satu kata puisi* [a single word of poetry] while the MPAL text is already a poem? What is conveyed by comparing *satu kata puisi* and knowledge full of promises?

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty (1962) speaks of a "primitive contact" between the body and the world. Primitive contact indicates that perception is not purely cognitive, not merely the result of mental processes, but always rooted in bodily experience prior to reflection or rational interpretation. From this perspective, knowledge full of promises can be seen as a perceptual domain that has undergone reduction. Meanwhile, *satu kata puisi*, residing in the artistic domain, offers direct contact, pure sensory engagement with the world.

This perspective recalls Jonathan Culler's (2015) account of poetry as a linguistic event. Responding to poetry as a work of art means treating it as an experience in which the reader participates. Poetry is not an imitative utterance representing events in real life but a linguistic event unfolding in the present of reading.

Through this interaction between embodied perception and lyric discourse, *kata* becomes the entry point through which readers experience cosmic alienation alongside the lyrical persona.

At the *tepi*, there are no others *[liyan]* as mirrors of interaction and difference. The *tepi* is better read as a space of alienation where *aku* feels estranged from the cosmos. The universe appears as a silent Other *[Liyan]* that cannot be fully comprehended.

This estranged self-awareness leads *aku* to reflection on the meaning of self and *bumi*. In the presence of an uninhabited *jagat*, silent and distant, *aku* finds itself disconnected from grounding meanings. In MPAL, alienation ultimately invites transcendental awareness.

Thus, estranged self-awareness becomes the doorway through which humans explore the meaning of existence. The lyrical persona refers to *satu kata puisi* as that door. Just as readers experience when reading MPAL, together with *aku*, we discover poetry as a space of cosmic meditation. *Kata* [word] serves a dual function: as a medium of poetic communication and as the starting point of cosmic meditation.

Read through this configuration, MPAL confirms Jonathan Culler's (2015) proposition that lyric poetry operates not as a representation of events but as a linguistic event. The cosmic situation staged by the poem cannot be stabilized as a concrete empirical scenario without contradiction. These tensions do not indicate failure but signal the limits of representational reading when applied to lyric discourse.

Positioning MPAL as a linguistic event foregrounds the reader's role as both voicing and receiving the utterance, allowing cosmic space to function as a medium for lyric address, perception, and existential exposure rather than as thematic ornamentation.

Conclusion

The analysis of *Manusia Pertama di Angkasa Luar* (MPAL) demonstrates that this poem operates as a lyrical communication event, uniquely providing a more complex textual apparatus than the perspective of thematic representation of space or descriptive cosmological reflection. The "I-you" relationship identified at the beginning of the poem does not settle in a fixed referential situation. Instead, it undergoes continuous deflections and redirections in the flow of communication. This pattern seemingly creates the illusion of a dialogical exchange, but subsequently, the communication relationship experiences disruption, suspension, and ultimately shifts through apostrophic mechanisms. The direction of address moves from "I-you," shifting to "I-self" through meditation and recollection, and culminating in "I-Mother." In this respect, "MPAL" demonstrates, according to Jonathan Culler (2015), fundamental characteristics of lyrical communication include the instability of the addressing figure (pp. 13–16, 64) and the overlap between the addressing position and the reader's role (pp. 138–139).

The Mother figure at the poem's conclusion does not function as a concrete character or persona within the narrative universe. The sudden appearance of the Mother is a linguistic device that condenses the emotional and spiritual intensity centered on the persona of the "I." As a form of apostrophic address, the Mother marks the point at which cosmic alienation reaches its limit and compels the lyrical self, within the limits of human experience, to seek a relationship with a transcendent entity. Rather than presenting a narrative resolution, this poem produces a performative effect by confronting the reader with an experience of solitude, disconnection, and longing that resists semantic finalization of meaning.

This reading also demonstrates that the lyrical communication strategy in MPAL is inseparable from the articulation of bodily experience and spatial perception. "The Edge" and "Earth" carry not only imaginative background content but also perceptual conditions that restructure the scale of the lyrical self's experience. The analysis of terrestrial signifiers—hunger, the alternation of day and night, and orientation toward the future—produces a rupture in the process of meaning. It places the body in a state of suspension. As a consequence of this condition, the apostrophe emerges as a rhetorical response to relational and perceptual dislocation. These findings indicate a unique mode of communication in MPAL, a representative form of modern Indonesian poetry.

Overall, MPAL can be understood as a poem that combines the dynamics of lyrical address and bodily-based existential experience within a single linguistic event. The cosmos present in the lyrical I-experience is a medium that reveals the boundaries of communication, perception, and human presence. The findings of MPAL analysis emphasize lyrical discourse as a performative act that stimulates the reader to engage in the tension between understanding and inaccessibility. Furthermore, the interconnectedness between the reader and the reading experience positions the reader as a participant in the lyrical event itself, not merely an external observer outside of language.

Beyond its specific reading of MPAL, a key methodological implication—and primary limitation—of this study highlights the risks of conventional representational readings, such as that by Zen Hae (2013), which tend to prematurely fix the figure of *Bunda* to Mary or a literal mother. Although contextual matching can produce plausible referential identifications, such shortcuts bypass the intricate trajectory within lyric communication. In this case, for instance, such a reading fails to capture the intense dialogic progression of the lyric address trajectory—moving from dialogic estrangement (I–You), through reflection on the body and terrestrial memory (I–Self), to ultimately being thrown into an apostrophic gesture (I–Mother).

This study underscores that because lyric poetry operates through shifting modes of address—which are far more arbitrary than other textual forms—referential boundaries should only be established after the communicative flow has been mapped thoroughly. Future research should extend this event-centered framework to a broader corpus of poetry with even more complex trajectories of address, investigating how shifting modes of address reconfigure meaning before external referential contexts are applied, particularly within modern Indonesian poetry.

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