

Figurative Language in The Stone Roses *Self-Titled* Album: A Habitus Perspective

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*Rizky Roy Rizwaanshah, Deni Suswanto, Dian Nurrachman 

¹²³Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: rizkyroyr13@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of figurative language—specifically metaphor, symbol, and personification—in five songs from *The Stone Roses'* self-titled album (1989): “Bye Bye Badman,” “Waterfall,” “Made of Stone,” “This Is the One,” and “I Am the Resurrection.” Employing literary criticism as its methodological approach, the study classifies each figurative expression using Perrine’s (1992) framework and interprets its meaning within the lyrical context. To extend the analysis beyond textual description, the study also applies Bourdieu’s (1990) concept of *habitus*, which explains how repeated social experiences shape enduring ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting. This sociological perspective is relevant because figurative language not only conveys aesthetic meaning but also reflects socially embedded dispositions and collective experiences encoded in the lyrics. The findings reveal that metaphor is the dominant device, transforming emotional states such as resilience, confinement, and dominance into concrete imagery, while symbols broaden these meanings into representations of instability and authority, and personification portrays the surrounding environment as an active participant in emotional experience. Through the lens of *habitus*, these recurring figurative patterns represent textual expressions of resistance, social constraint, and aspirations for transformation, demonstrating how literary and sociological perspectives together provide a richer understanding of song lyrics.

Keywords: *Figurative Language, The Stone Roses, Habitus, Song lyrics, Popular Music*

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INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a tool for conveying literal information but also a medium through which meaning is shaped indirectly through figurative expression. Figurative language allows writers and speakers to communicate ideas, emotions, and experiences beyond their literal sense, often producing meanings that are richer and more layered than ordinary descriptive language could achieve. Perrine & Arp (1992) describes this quality as the capacity of figurative language to say one thing while meaning another, allowing a writer to suggest more than what the words state directly and to communicate experiences that would otherwise resist plain, literal description. This indirect quality is central to literary expression, as it invites readers to engage actively in constructing meaning rather than simply receiving it. At the same time, this same indirectness can pose a challenge: the meaning of a figurative expression is not always immediately accessible and may be interpreted differently depending on the reader's context, background knowledge, and experience (Gibbs Jr., 2017). Understanding figurative language is therefore essential not only for literary analysis but also for grasping how meaning is constructed and communicated more broadly within written and spoken discourse.

Among the various forms of literary expression in which figurative language plays a prominent role, song lyrics occupy a distinctive position. Lyrics share many structural and aesthetic qualities with poetry, including rhythm, rhyme, and condensed, evocative language,

while also functioning within a musical and cultural context that reaches a wide audience (Eagleton, 2008; Perrine & Arp, 1992). From a cognitive perspective, figurative language enables speakers and writers to conceptualize abstract experiences through more concrete domains, making metaphor and other figures of speech fundamental mechanisms of human thought rather than merely ornamental linguistic devices (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). On this basis, song lyrics have increasingly been treated as legitimate literary texts worthy of close reading, and a substantial body of empirical research has examined how figurative language operates within them to construct meaning, convey emotion, and represent the perspectives of songwriters across a range of musical genres and eras (Hanisfi et al., 2023; Pande et al., 2023; Sitepu et al., 2023; Wirayuda et al., 2025). This growing body of scholarship demonstrates that figurative language in song lyrics is not merely ornamental; it functions as a primary vehicle through which songwriters articulate complex emotional states, social commentary, and personal narratives that might otherwise be difficult to express through literal language alone (Abrams & Harpham, 2015; Gibbs Jr., 2017).

The Stone Roses, a band formed in 1983 in Manchester, England, by vocalist Ian Brown and guitarist John Squire, later joined by bassist Gary Mounfield and drummer Alan Wren. Emerging during a period of profound social, economic, and cultural transformation in Britain, the band developed a distinctive artistic identity that combined psychedelic rock, alternative rock, dance rhythms, and poetic lyricism (Gwinn, 2018; Hill, 2025). Rather than relying on straightforward narrative, their songwriting frequently employs ambiguity, symbolism, and metaphor to construct multiple layers of meaning. Across their body of work, the lyrics often engage with themes of identity, freedom, resistance, spirituality, interpersonal relationships, and, at times, broader sociopolitical concerns. Although the band rarely presents explicit political statements, their compositions have been widely interpreted as reflecting the cultural atmosphere of late twentieth-century Britain, where questions of authority, social change, and individual autonomy informed both artistic expression and popular music (Braholli, 2025; Hill, 2025). This tendency to embed complex ideas within figurative and symbolic language makes The Stone Roses an appropriate subject for the present analysis, particularly in investigating how literary devices contribute to meaning construction within song lyrics. Furthermore, from a sociological perspective, musical works can be understood as cultural products that both reflect and reproduce social structures and symbolic values (Bourdieu & Nice, 1990; Prior, 2013). Music also serves as a medium through which cultural identities and collective meanings are negotiated, making lyrical analysis inseparable from the social contexts in which songs are produced and interpreted (Storey, 2018).

The Stone Roses' self-titled debut album, *The Stone Roses* (1989), is widely recognized as one of the defining works of British alternative rock and a landmark release associated with the emergence of the Madchester movement. Released at the end of the 1980s, the album combined alternative rock, psychedelic influences, dance rhythms, and poetic lyricism, reflecting the cultural and political atmosphere of Britain during a period of profound social and economic transformation (Gwinn, 2018; Hill, 2025). Beyond its musical innovation, the album has attracted critical attention because its lyrics intertwine vivid imagery, symbolism, and metaphor with themes of identity, freedom, resistance, spirituality, and interpersonal relationships (Braholli, 2025). Songs such as "Bye Bye Badman" and "I Am the Resurrection" employ layered figurative language that extends beyond aesthetic expression to construct symbolic meanings associated with historical memory, personal emancipation, and collective experience. From a literary perspective, figurative devices such as metaphor, symbolism, and personification function not merely as stylistic ornaments but as important mechanisms for conveying complex emotional and ideological meanings (Gibbs Jr., 2017; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Perrine & Arp, 1992). Moreover, literary texts—including song lyrics—derive meaning through their interaction with cultural and historical contexts, making popular music an appropriate subject for literary criticism (Eagleton, 2008). Examining the album from both literary and sociocultural perspectives therefore provides deeper insight into how popular music operates as a form of poetic discourse that reflects broader cultural realities while

simultaneously expressing symbolic struggles over identity, power, and social values (Bourdieu & Nice, 1990; Prior, 2013).

There are recent research applying Perrine's framework to song lyrics continues to expand across a wide range of artists and genres, further confirming the productivity of this approach. Sitepu et al. (2023) examined figurative language in Joji's song "Glimpse of Us," while Wirayuda et al. (2025) analyzed the lyrics of James Arthur, both identifying metaphor among the most frequently occurring devices. Pande et al. (2023) similarly applied Perrine's theory to the song "White Swan," and Hanisfi et al. (2023) extended this line of research to Adele's album 25, identifying thirteen types of figurative language within its lyrics. While these studies, together with those discussed earlier, demonstrate the productive use of figurative language analysis across a wide range of musical genres, artists, and national contexts, none of them examine The Stone Roses' self-titled album, nor do they incorporate a sociocultural perspective alongside the close analysis of figurative language. Most existing research in this area treats figurative language primarily as a literary or thematic device, without considering how such patterns might also be read in relation to the broader social conditions from which a given work emerges.

Although the initial stage of data identification revealed instances across a broader range of Perrine & Arp (1992) categories, this study narrows its focus to three categories: metaphor, symbol, and personification on the basis of their significantly higher frequency of occurrence and their greater interpretive productivity in relation to the album's thematic concerns. These three devices were also found to interact coherently with one another: metaphor transforms abstract emotional states into concrete images, symbol extends these images into broader conceptual meaning, and personification animates the surrounding environment as an active participant in the songs' emotional landscape. Together, they form a unified figurative strategy that most substantially shapes meaning construction across the album, and are therefore treated as the primary categories of analysis in this study.

The present study addresses this gap by combining Perrine & Arp (1992) theory of figurative language with Bourdieu & Nice (1990) concept of habitus. In simple terms, habitus refers to the ingrained habits, tastes, and ways of thinking that a person develops over time as a result of their upbringing, social class, and everyday surroundings and dispositions that come to feel natural or instinctive, even though they are shaped by social conditions rather than chosen freely. This approach is consistent with broader applications of Bourdieu's concept within the sociology of music, where habitus has been used to explain how musical taste, production, and consumption are shaped by the social conditions from which they emerge, rather than functioning as a self-contained explanatory system applied indiscriminately to all musical texts (Prior, 2013). In this study, habitus is used as a supplementary interpretive lens rather than an equally weighted framework: it is applied only where a figurative pattern identified through Perrine's framework appears to plausibly reflect such a socially shaped disposition, offering an additional layer of insight without claiming to explain every finding. It is important to clarify that habitus in this study is not applied biographically to the songwriters themselves, but rather as an interpretive lens directed at the textual patterns of the lyrics; the analysis does not claim to reconstruct the actual social dispositions of the band members as individuals, but explores how recurring figurative patterns within the lyrics can be read as textually encoded dispositions. In addition, brief sociohistorical notes are occasionally provided as supplementary background to situate selected songs within their broader context of production; these notes remain distinct from the habitus reading and are not intended as biographical explanation. This combination has, to the researcher's knowledge, not been applied in previous studies of figurative language in song lyrics, offering a novel contribution to the field.

This study aims to examine how metaphor, symbol, and personification are constructed in five selected songs from The Stone Roses' self-titled album: "Bye Bye Badman," "Waterfall," "Made of Stone," "This Is the One," and "I Am the Resurrection" and to interpret the meanings constructed through these figurative expressions. Where relevant, selected findings are further examined through the lens of habitus to offer additional interpretive insight,

illuminating how certain figurative patterns may be read in relation to broader social dispositions, without claiming that such a reading applies uniformly across all findings.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How are metaphor, symbol, and personification constructed and employed to convey meaning in the lyrics of The Stone Roses' self-titled album? (2) To what extent can the meanings constructed through these figurative devices be further illuminated through the perspective of habitus? By combining a detailed literary analysis of figurative language with a supplementary sociocultural reading, this study contributes to the broader body of literary research on song lyrics, while also offering a methodological example of how close textual and sociocultural perspectives may be productively combined in the analysis of popular music as a literary text.

METHOD

This study employs literary criticism as its methodological approach to examine the selected song lyrics as literary texts. Literary criticism is concerned with the systematic interpretation and evaluation of literary works through careful textual examination and theoretical inquiry (Eagleton, 2008). This design is appropriate because the study aims to identify, classify, and describe the forms and functions of figurative language found in song lyrics. By emphasizing close engagement with the text, this approach enables the researcher to examine how literary elements function in constructing meaning rather than merely describing textual content. Within this literary criticism framework, content analysis is employed as a supporting technique for organizing and categorizing the identified figurative expressions prior to close interpretive reading. As a technique for systematically identifying and classifying recurring patterns within textual data, content analysis assists in the initial stage of data categorization, while the subsequent interpretation of meaning remains grounded in the close reading principles of literary criticism.

The main object of this study is song lyrics from The Stone Roses *self-titled* album (1989), which consists of thirteen tracks. From this album, five songs were selected as the primary data source: "Bye Bye Badman," "Waterfall," "Made of Stone," "This Is the One," and "I Am the Resurrection." In selecting the data, this study applies purposive sampling. According to Sugiyono (2019), purposive sampling is a technique of selecting samples based on specific considerations to ensure that the data align with the research objectives. Therefore, only relevant and significant utterances that clearly demonstrate implicature are chosen for analysis. The five songs in this study were selected based on the following criteria: (1) the richness and variety of figurative language identified within the lyrics, (2) the thematic significance of each song within the broader narrative and tonal range of the album, and (3) the relevance of the lyrical content to Perrine & Arp (1992) theory of figurative language, with selected songs also offering potential, where relevant, for supplementary interpretation through Bourdieu & Nice (1990) concept of habitus. It should be noted that purposive sampling, while effective for focusing analysis on data-rich sources, does not aim for statistical representativeness; the five songs analyzed in this study are not intended to represent the album as a whole, but rather to provide sufficiently rich data for an in-depth analysis. The data were analyzed using content analysis, a method commonly applied in literary and linguistic studies to systematically identify and interpret recurring patterns within textual data. Content analysis is a research method used to systematically interpret and analyses various forms of communication, including text, images, audio, and video.

The researcher will analyse the lyrics of selected song in of The Stone Roses *self-titled* album. The following steps detail the data collection process conducted by the researcher: 1. Listening to songs from The Stone Roses *self-titled* album through the streaming service, that is Spotify. 2. Discovering song lyrics of the album online, and 3. Finding song lyrics of the album from the website, that is Genius. 4. Collecting the lyrics of the album.

The selection of the five songs – *Bye Bye Badman*, *Waterfall*, *Made of Stone*, *This Is the One*, and *I Am the Resurrection* – was guided by purposive sampling, a technique commonly used in qualitative research to select information-rich data that best address the research objectives

(Patton, 2015). These songs were chosen because they contain a high density and diversity of figurative language, particularly metaphor, symbol, and personification, which are central to Perrine & Arp (1992) theory of figurative language. In addition, the selected lyrics consistently explore themes of resistance, identity, transformation, freedom, and social experience, making them particularly suitable for interpretation through Bourdieu & Nice (1990) concept of *habitus*, which explains how enduring social dispositions are reflected in cultural practices and symbolic expressions. Unlike other tracks on the album that focus more on narrative simplicity or emotional expression, these five songs provide richer textual complexity and recurring symbolic patterns. Consequently, they offer the most appropriate corpus for examining both the literary functions of figurative language and its relationship to broader sociocultural meanings within *The Stone Roses'* debut album.

After collecting the lyrics of the album, the next step is to analyse the lyrics of each song. The researcher will proceed with the following stages: (1) identifying lines or phrases within the lyrics that exhibit the three types of figurative language, (2) classifying each identified instance according to the categories of figurative language established by Perrine & Arp (1992), with each instance assigned to a single category to maintain analytical clarity, (3) interpreting the literal and figurative meaning of each instance within the context of the song, and (4) where relevant, examining selected findings through the supplementary lens of Bourdieu & Nice (1990) concept of *habitus* to provide additional sociocultural insight, (5) providing a brief sociohistorical note situating each song within the broader cultural and historical context of its production, presented as a contextual supplement distinct from the textual *habitus* reading in the previous stage, and not intended to substitute interpretive claims about the lyrics with biographical explanation.

This *habitus*-based reading was applied selectively, only to findings in which such an interpretation emerged organically from the textual patterns identified, rather than being imposed uniformly across all data. It is acknowledged that not all twelve categories of figurative language identified by Perrine & Arp (1992) were found within the five songs analyzed. This study therefore reports only the categories that emerged organically from the data, without forcing the analysis to account for categories that were not present in the lyrics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the figurative language identified in five selected songs from The Stone Roses' self-titled album, "Bye Bye Badman," "Waterfall," "Made of Stone," "This Is the One," and "I Am the Resurrection." focusing specifically on three types of figurative language: metaphor, symbol, and personification. These three types were selected as the primary focus of analysis on account of their recurrence and interpretive richness across the data. For each type, the data identified are presented first, followed by an interpretation of the literal and figurative meaning constructed in each instance, in line with Perrine & Arp (1992) framework. Where relevant, selected findings are further read through Bourdieu & Nice (1990) concept of *habitus* a system of dispositions shaped by one's accumulated social experience presented separately as a supplementary perspective rather than a parallel framework of equal weight to the literary analysis. In addition, brief sociohistorical notes are occasionally provided to situate selected songs within their broader context of production; these notes are offered as supplementary background rather than as a primary object of inquiry, and remain distinct from the textual *habitus* reading

Metaphor

The following lines were the data that identified as containing metaphor across the five songs analyzed:

"She's a waterfall" - Waterfall

"Race from this hole she calls home" - Waterfall

"To lift up the lids of your eyes" - Waterfall

"A girl consumed by fire" - This Is the One

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"No room for you inside my house" - *I Am the Resurrection*

"Cut loose 'cause you're no use" - *I Am the Resurrection*

"Are you all alone, are you made of stone?" - *Made of Stone*

"You've been bought and paid, you're a whore and a slave" - *Bye Bye Badman*

"Gonna bring you down to your knees" - *Bye Bye Badman*

Figurative Language Interpretation

Metaphor is the most dominant figurative device found across the five songs, serving as the primary means through which emotions, relationships, and personal experiences are transformed into vivid poetic images. Rather than describing psychological states directly, the lyrics consistently express them through elements drawn from the natural world, physical spaces, and material objects. This figurative strategy encourages listeners to experience abstract emotions as concrete realities, allowing resilience, confinement, emotional awakening, and personal struggle to be imagined through images that are both familiar and symbolically rich. Consequently, the metaphors do not merely embellish the lyrics but establish the imaginative framework through which the songs communicate their emotional and thematic concerns.

The metaphorical pattern is particularly evident in *Waterfall*, where three interconnected metaphors construct a narrative of movement, confinement, and awakening. The opening declaration, "She's a waterfall," immediately identifies the female figure with a natural force rather than simply comparing her to one. This image evokes continuity, motion, and persistence. A waterfall is defined by constant movement; it cannot exist without flowing. Its identity is inseparable from its motion, suggesting that resilience is not portrayed as an extraordinary act of endurance but as an essential quality of the woman's character. She continues forward because movement itself has become part of who she is. The metaphor therefore presents perseverance as something instinctive rather than heroic, emphasizing continuity instead of struggle.

This image of unrestricted movement is contrasted sharply by the metaphor "Race from this hole she calls home." If the waterfall belongs to an open landscape, the hole represents enclosure and limitation. The lyric transforms the familiar idea of home into a space associated with emotional confinement, replacing comfort with restriction. Rather than functioning as a place of belonging, home becomes somewhere that prevents growth and must therefore be escaped. The urgency implied by the act of racing reinforces this interpretation, suggesting that remaining within this confined space is emotionally suffocating rather than reassuring. Read together, the two metaphors create a powerful spatial contrast between freedom and entrapment, illustrating a journey from restriction toward self-liberation.

The final metaphor, "to lift up the lids of your eyes," completes this movement by shifting the focus from physical space to inner perception. The image presents awareness as an active process rather than a passive realization. Before genuine understanding can emerge, something must first be lifted away, implying that vision has long been obscured by emotional blindness, denial, or limited perspective. Awakening therefore becomes both psychological and emotional, marking the moment when the individual begins to perceive realities previously hidden from view. Together, these three metaphors form a coherent sequence in which movement, escape, and renewed perception become interconnected stages of personal transformation. Rather than functioning independently, they build a unified poetic landscape that portrays resilience not simply as survival but as the continuous process of breaking free from limitation and discovering a clearer understanding of oneself and the surrounding world.

The exploration of personal transformation continues in *This Is the One* through the metaphor "a girl consumed by fire." Fire functions as one of the song's most evocative images, embodying a force that is simultaneously creative and destructive. Unlike ordinary descriptions of passion, the metaphor suggests an experience that exceeds emotional intensity and becomes deeply transformative. The girl is not merely surrounded by flames but entirely consumed by them, dissolving the boundary between the individual and the force acting upon

her. As a result, the image portrays desire, ambition, or emotional conflict as experiences capable of reshaping identity rather than simply influencing one's feelings. Fire becomes a symbol of irreversible change, suggesting that profound emotional encounters inevitably leave lasting marks upon the self. Within the broader emotional landscape of the song, the metaphor captures the unsettling reality that transformation often emerges through experiences that are as painful as they are illuminating.

A different perspective on personal identity appears in *I Am the Resurrection*, where the metaphors shift from transformation to emotional separation. The declaration "no room for you inside my house" imagines the self as a domestic space whose boundaries can be opened or closed. Instead of expressing rejection through direct confrontation, the lyric frames emotional distance as the act of denying entry into one's most private world. The house therefore becomes more than a physical structure; it represents memory, intimacy, and personal identity. Refusing someone access to this space signifies the deliberate establishment of emotional boundaries, suggesting that reclaiming the self sometimes requires limiting who is allowed to remain within it.

This movement toward emotional independence continues in "cut loose 'cause you're no use." The image evokes the severing of a bond that once connected two people, transforming separation into an act of liberation rather than defeat. Rather than dwelling on the pain of loss, the metaphor emphasizes the possibility of movement that becomes available once restrictive attachments are released. Read alongside the image of the house, the two metaphors present emotional recovery as a gradual process of reclaiming personal space and autonomy. Together, they construct a narrative in which healing is achieved not through reconciliation but through the difficult decision to let go of relationships that have ceased to nurture individual growth.

The metaphorical exploration of identity reaches its most introspective moment in *Made of Stone* through the question "are you all alone, are you made of stone?" Rather than presenting emotional detachment as a fixed characteristic, the lyric invites reflection on the relationship between isolation and emotional resilience. Stone evokes an image of permanence, hardness, and immobility, transforming an invisible emotional condition into something tangible and immediately recognizable. Yet the metaphor does not simply equate emotional restraint with strength. By pairing the image of stone with the experience of loneliness, the song suggests that emotional hardness may emerge as a response to prolonged isolation rather than an inherent quality of the individual. The metaphor therefore carries a quiet sense of vulnerability, implying that the attempt to protect oneself from emotional pain may ultimately result in deeper disconnection from others. Instead of celebrating emotional invulnerability, the lyric questions the human cost of becoming seemingly impervious to feeling.

A more confrontational use of metaphor appears in *Bye Bye Badman*, where personal identity is imagined through images of domination and submission. The line "you've been bought and paid; you're a whore and a slave" portrays the loss of autonomy through the language of ownership and exploitation. Rather than describing compromise as a simple moral failure, the metaphor suggests that surrendering one's independence fundamentally reshapes personal identity. The imagery of commerce and servitude reduces the individual to an object of exchange, emphasizing how external power can erode dignity and self-determination. This concern with domination continues in "gonna bring you down to your knees," where defeat is expressed through bodily posture rather than abstract language. Kneeling functions as a visible image of submission, transforming power into something physically enacted and emotionally experienced. Together, these metaphors construct a portrait of oppression in which domination extends beyond external control to influence the individual's sense of self and agency.

Taken together, the metaphors across the five songs reveal a coherent poetic vision in which emotional experiences are consistently understood through concrete and familiar images. Natural landscapes, domestic spaces, elemental forces, physical materials, and bodily gestures all become vehicles for exploring resilience, transformation, confinement, rejection, alienation, and domination. Rather than explaining these experiences directly, the songs invite

listeners to encounter them through images that encourage reflection and emotional engagement. The metaphors therefore serve not merely as stylistic embellishments but as the principal imaginative framework through which the songs articulate their exploration of identity and the complexities of human experience.

Habitus Interpretation

Read through the lens of habitus Bourdieu & Nice (1990), the recurring metaphors of escaping a confining point of origin, in "Waterfall" song, "race from this hole she calls home" may be read as expressions of a disposition shaped by a sense of social or economic constraint, in which one's place of origin is figured not as a source of belonging but as a structure to break away from. Similarly, the metaphors of economic domination in "Bye Bye Badman," particularly "you've been bought and paid, you're a whore and a slave," suggest a disposition wary of commercial or economic forces as instruments of control. These readings remain interpretive rather than biographical; they are drawn from recurring patterns within the lyrics themselves, not from claims about the songwriters' personal histories.

Symbol

Symbol appears across three of the five songs, representing abstract ideas, conditions, or experiences through concrete images. The following lyric excerpts were identified as containing symbols:

"Will you drown me in your sea?" (*Bye Bye Badman*)

"Your dock's not a holy shrine" (*Bye Bye Badman*)

"Stands on shifting sands" (*Waterfall*)

"The scales held in her hands" (*Waterfall*)

"The cars, they burn below me" (*Made of Stone*)

Figurative Language Interpretation

Unlike metaphor, which fuses one image with another to create meaning, symbolism allows ordinary objects, places, and images to acquire broader conceptual significance throughout the songs. The symbols found across the selected lyrics do not merely function as descriptive details but become recurring points through which ideas of power, instability, identity, and belonging are explored. Their meanings emerge gradually from the emotional contexts in which they appear, encouraging listeners to interpret familiar images as representations of broader human experiences. Through these symbolic constructions, the songs expand beyond personal narratives and invite reflection on social, emotional, and existential conditions.

The symbolic imagination of *Bye Bye Badman* is built around images of the sea and the shrine, both of which transform physical places into expressions of power and authority. In the line "Will you drown me in your sea?", the sea extends beyond its literal meaning as a natural landscape to represent an overwhelming force capable of engulfing the individual. Its vastness and unpredictability create an atmosphere in which the speaker appears small and vulnerable, suggesting an encounter with a power that exceeds personal control. Rather than symbolizing freedom or exploration, as the sea frequently does in literary tradition, it becomes an image of domination, where the possibility of drowning reflects the fear of being completely overwhelmed by forces beyond one's ability to resist.

This symbolic tension continues in "Your dock's not a holy shrine," where the lyric contrasts an ordinary commercial space with a place traditionally associated with reverence and spiritual devotion. A shrine conventionally signifies sanctity, faith, and unquestioned respect. By explicitly denying these qualities to the dock, the song dismantles any claim that worldly power deserves sacred status. The image therefore challenges attempts to elevate human institutions beyond criticism, exposing the gap between material authority and genuine moral value. Read together, the sea and the shrine construct a symbolic landscape dominated by unequal power relations. One image evokes the threat of being consumed by overwhelming external forces, while the other questions the legitimacy of the authority from

which those forces originate. Together, they establish one of the song's central concerns: the refusal to accept domination as something natural or worthy of unquestioned reverence.

A related symbolic tension emerges in *Waterfall* through the image "stands on shifting sands." Unlike solid ground, sand is inherently unstable; it shifts underfoot, offering no fixed point upon which one can safely remain. As a symbol, shifting sands transforms the ground itself into an expression of precariousness, suggesting that the woman's position, whether emotional, social, or existential, is never fully secure. Rather than symbolizing failure or weakness, however, this instability aligns with the song's broader portrayal of her as a figure defined by movement rather than permanence. To stand on shifting sands is to exist in a state of continuous adjustment, reinforcing the idea introduced earlier through the waterfall metaphor: that her identity is inseparable from motion, and that stillness itself would be a kind of contradiction to who she is.

This sense of precarious positioning is immediately followed by a contrasting symbolic image, "the scales held in her hands." Traditionally associated with justice, judgment, and the weighing of moral or emotional consequences, scales introduce a symbol of deliberation into a context otherwise defined by instability. Placed in her own hands rather than an external authority's, the scales suggest that she herself becomes the agent of judgment, actively weighing decisions or consequences rather than having them imposed upon her. Read alongside the shifting sands beneath her, the image constructs a striking symbolic contrast: although the ground she stands on offers no certainty, she nonetheless retains the capacity for discernment and self-determined judgment. Instability and agency are thus held in tension, suggesting that a lack of external stability does not necessarily equate to a lack of internal control.

Considered together, these two symbols position *Waterfall* as a song concerned not only with escape, as expressed through its earlier metaphors, but also with the ongoing negotiation between precariousness and self-possession. The shifting sands and the scales, one destabilizing, the other asserting agency, extend the song's exploration of resilience into the symbolic register, suggesting that autonomy can be exercised even in the absence of secure footing.

In *Made of Stone*, the image "the cars, they burn below me" functions as more than a description of a dramatic scene. Burning cars have long been associated with moments of unrest, violence, and the collapse of public order, making them a powerful symbol of collective instability. Positioned "below" the speaker, the image creates both physical and emotional distance, allowing the destruction to become something observed rather than directly experienced. This perspective introduces an atmosphere of tension and uncertainty, where the surrounding environment appears fractured and volatile. Rather than focusing on individual conflict, the symbol expands the emotional landscape of the song by suggesting that personal experience unfolds within a world already marked by disorder and disruption. The burning cars therefore become a visual representation of a society in turmoil, reinforcing the song's persistent atmosphere of alienation and unease.

Taken together, the symbols examined across the five songs demonstrate how familiar images are transformed into vehicles for broader thematic exploration. The sea, shrine, shifting sands, scales, and burning cars, all extend beyond their literal functions to express ideas of power, uncertainty, justice, social unrest, and personal belonging. Rather than offering fixed meanings, these symbols invite interpretation through the emotional contexts in which they appear, allowing concrete images to illuminate abstract human experiences. Collectively, they enrich the poetic texture of the songs by connecting individual narratives with wider reflections on identity, conflict, resilience, and the conditions through which people understand themselves and the world around them.

Habitus Interpretation

Read through the lens of habitus Bourdieu & Nice (1990), the symbolic imagery of "*Bye Bye Badman*" extends a disposition already suggested in the metaphor findings discussed earlier. The sea in "will you drown me in your sea?" and the dock denied the status of a "holy shrine"

both construct authority as something overwhelming yet illegitimate, a force to be resisted rather than revered. This pairing of vastness with unearned reverence may be read as reflecting a disposition wary of institutional or economic power, consistent with the pattern of resistance to domination already identified through the metaphors "you've been bought and paid, you're a whore and a slave" and "gonna bring you down to your knees" in the same song. A related, though distinct, disposition emerges from the symbols of instability in "*Waterfall*" and "*Made of Stone*." The "shifting sands" beneath the central figure and the "cars, they burn below" both figure the surrounding environment as inherently precarious rather than settled. Considered together, these symbols suggest a disposition attuned to instability as a basic condition of one's surroundings, one in which security is not assumed but must be continually negotiated. This reading aligns with the earlier metaphor of fleeing "this whole she calls home," reinforcing a broader pattern across the album in which place and environment are consistently figured as unstable or constraining rather than secure.

Personification

Personification appears across two of five songs selected. The following lyric excerpts were identified as containing Personification:

"To be whipped by the winds of the west" (*Waterfall*)

"The wind it just whips her an' wanes" (*Waterfall*)

"This American satellite's won" (*Waterfall*)

"When the streets are cold and lonely" (*Made of Stone*)

"Tin twisted grills grin back at me" (*Made of Stone*)

Figurative Language Interpretation

Personification appears as a significant figurative device in the selected songs, transforming non-human elements into active participants within the lyrical world. By attributing human actions, emotions, and forms of agency to natural forces, technological objects, and urban environments, personification allows the surrounding world to interact with human experiences rather than merely functioning as a passive setting. Through this device, landscapes and objects become capable of expressing conflict, influence, and emotional atmosphere, creating a closer relationship between external environments and internal states. In this sense, personification expands the poetic dimension of the songs by suggesting that human experiences are constantly shaped through interactions with the world beyond the self.

In *Waterfall*, personification is primarily used to portray nature and technology as forces with their own forms of agency. The images "to be whipped by the winds of the west" and "the wind it just whips her an' wanes" transform the wind from a natural phenomenon into an active presence capable of affecting the central figure of the song. Rather than simply describing weather conditions, the lyrics present the wind as something that acts upon the woman, creating the impression of an encounter between two forces. The wind becomes almost human in its ability to interact, challenge, and influence, turning the natural environment into an active participant within the narrative.

This personification also strengthens the broader imagery of movement that defines *Waterfall*. Earlier images in the song present the female figure through continuous motion and natural force, and the wind contributes to this same imaginative landscape. However, unlike the waterfall itself, which represents persistence and inner continuity, the wind introduces unpredictability. It moves freely, changes direction, and affects the world around it without being controlled. By giving the wind human-like action, the song creates a dynamic relationship between the individual and the environment, suggesting that personal experience is shaped not only by internal strength but also by encounters with forces beyond one's control.

The personification of the wind also contributes to the emotional atmosphere of the song. Wind is traditionally associated with movement, change, and uncertainty, and by presenting it as an active force, the lyric intensifies the sense that the protagonist exists within a constantly shifting world. The environment does not simply surround her; it participates in

her journey. Through this personification, nature becomes a companion, an obstacle, and a force of transformation at the same time.

A different form of personification appears in the line "This American satellite's won," where a technological object is represented as possessing human ability and achievement. The satellite is not presented merely as a machine designed for communication or observation, but as an entity capable of success and victory. By assigning the satellite the ability to "win," the lyric transforms technology into an active participant within a larger social and political landscape. The object becomes associated with human ambition, competition, and power. The significance of this personification lies in the way it blurs the boundary between human agency and technological advancement. The satellite becomes more than an instrument created by people; it represents the larger systems of influence and authority connected to technological progress. Through this image, technology appears almost alive, carrying symbolic weight beyond its physical existence. The satellite becomes a representation of human achievement while simultaneously suggesting how technological objects can embody broader forms of power.

While *Waterfall* personifies natural and technological forces, *Made of Stone* extends the device into the urban environment, where the physical world reflects emotional isolation. The line "when the streets are cold and lonely" gives the streets human emotional qualities, transforming an ordinary urban space into something capable of experiencing loneliness. Streets do not possess feelings in a literal sense, yet the personification allows the environment to mirror the emotional condition of the speaker. The city is no longer simply a physical location; it becomes a reflection of emptiness and detachment.

This relationship between environment and emotion becomes even more striking in "tin twisted grills grin back at me." By giving damaged car grilles, the ability to smile, the lyric creates an unsettling image in which an inanimate object appears to respond to the speaker. The word "grin" introduces a human expression, but placed within the context of damaged metal and urban decay, the image becomes ambiguous. Rather than creating comfort, the personification produces an atmosphere of discomfort, as though the surrounding environment is strangely alive but incapable of genuine communication.

Through these images, *Made of Stone* constructs an urban landscape that reflects the psychological state of alienation. The streets and damaged objects appear to possess human qualities, yet they remain incapable of providing meaningful connection. This creates a tension between presence and absence: the environment seems alive, but it cannot truly respond. The personification therefore reinforces one of the song's central emotional concerns, where the individual exists within a world filled with signs of life but marked by emotional distance.

Taken together, the personifications across *Waterfall* and *Made of Stone* demonstrate how the songs transform external elements into active components of human experience. The wind, satellite, streets, and damaged vehicles are not merely background details but become expressive elements that participate in constructing meaning. Through personification, natural forces become agents of movement and change, technology becomes a representation of human ambition, and urban spaces become reflections of emotional isolation. Rather than separating the human subject from the surrounding world, these songs present identity and experience as something continuously shaped through interaction with the environments and objects that surround them.

Habitus Interpretation

Read through the lens of habitus Bourdieu & Nice (1990), the personification of the urban environment in *Made of Stone* extends a disposition already suggested by the symbolic imagery discussed earlier in this study, particularly the burning cars in the same song. Both "when the streets are cold and lonely" and "tin twisted grills grin back at me" construct the city not as a neutral backdrop but as an unwelcoming, almost hostile presence, one that mirrors rather than shelters the individual within it. This recurring figuration of urban space as cold, fractured, or strangely animate may be read as reflecting a disposition shaped by an experience of the city as alienating rather than nurturing.

Socio-Cultural Context

Among the five songs analyzed, documented historical and biographical background could be identified for two: "*Bye Bye Badman*" and "*Waterfall*." These notes are presented as supplementary context for the album's production and are treated as distinct from the habitus reading developed earlier; they are not intended to serve as evidence for, or confirmation of, the textual habitus interpretation, but rather as additional background that may enrich the reader's understanding of the songs' themes.

"Bye Bye Badman" was reportedly inspired by the May 1968 protests in Paris, after Ian Brown encountered a former participant in the demonstrations while hitchhiking across Europe; the man told him that sucking on a lemon could counteract the effects of CS gas used by police against the students, a detail the band later adopted as a symbol on the album's cover. Read against this background, the metaphors of domination and resistance identified earlier in the song, particularly "you've been bought and paid, you're a whore and a slave" and "gonna bring you down to your knees," resonate with Gwinn (2018) observation that the song reflects a broader "desire to rebel, to challenge the establishment and status quo" associated with the May '68 demonstrators.

A comparable background emerges for "*Waterfall*." Brahholli (2025) reads the line "free from the filth and the scum" as a critique of the class divides of Thatcher-era Britain, while Hill (2025) similarly identifies the line as an expression of anger at the erosion of community under Thatcherism. Both sources further note that the personification "this American satellite's won" refers to Britain's perceived subservience to United States foreign policy during the Reagan-Thatcher alliance, with the image of being "whipped by the winds of the west" reinforcing this sense of external domination (Brahholli, 2025; Hill, 2025). This background offers an additional layer of context to the metaphor of escaping a confining point of origin, "race from this hole she calls home," identified earlier in the findings, suggesting that the song's imagery of confinement may also resonate with the broader socioeconomic conditions of late-1980s Britain from which it emerged.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that metaphor, symbol, and personification function as interconnected literary devices in *The Stone Roses* (1989), collectively expressing themes of resilience, confinement, transformation, power, and identity. The first objective was achieved by identifying metaphor as the dominant figurative device, while symbols extended conceptual meanings and personification animated natural and surrounding elements to strengthen emotional and thematic expression. The second objective was addressed by employing Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus as a complementary interpretive framework. The analysis demonstrated that recurring figurative patterns, particularly in *Waterfall*, *Bye Bye Badman*, and *Made of Stone*, reflect socially embedded dispositions shaped by experiences of resistance, liberation, and identity formation. Rather than replacing close textual analysis, the sociocultural perspective enriched the interpretation by linking literary expression with broader cultural contexts where appropriate. These findings contribute to literary criticism by demonstrating that figurative language in song lyrics can be interpreted through an integrated textual and sociocultural approach. However, the study is limited to five purposively selected songs and three categories of figurative language. Future research should examine additional songs, broader figurative devices, and different musical genres.

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