



ANALYSIS OF W.S. RENDRA'S COLLECTION OF LOVE POEMS THROUGH A HERMENEUTIC APPROACH AND ITS RELEVANCE TO LITERATURE EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Tria Anisa^{1*}, Faisal Kemal², Zahroh Nurhillal³

^{1*,2,3} Indonesian Language Education Study Program, Muhammadiyah A.R. Fachruddin University, Tangerang Regency, Banten, Indonesia.

Corresponding Author: tria.annisa2006@gmail.com^{1*}

Abstract: This paper analyzes a collection of love poems by W.S. Rendra using the hermeneutic approach as the primary method for interpreting the hidden meanings within the poetic texts. The hermeneutic method was chosen for its ability to uncover deep layers of meaning derived from symbols, poetic language, and emotional context found in literary works. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method combined with an interactive-dialectical hermeneutic model based on Paul Ricoeur's theory, enabling a comprehensive interpretation through a continuous circle of understanding between text and context. The analysis focuses on several of Rendra's love poems such as *Papaya*, *Tobat*, and *Ayam Jantan*, revealing human experiences in love, repentance, and emotional reflection. The results indicate that the hermeneutic approach effectively exposes the inner dimensions and moral messages in Rendra's poetry, which are not only personal but also universal in nature. Furthermore, this approach is shown to be highly relevant in literature education at the junior high school level, as it encourages students to think critically, build empathy, and understand humanistic values through in-depth interpretation of literary texts.

Keywords: W.S. Rendra, love poems, hermeneutics, literary analysis, secondary education.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a medium of expression that allows individuals to convey ideas, experiences, emotions, and thoughts through the medium of language, both oral and written. It is not limited to

imagination alone; literary works often reflect social conditions and life realities, aesthetically packaged to enhance their value and impact (Jumala & Junaidanur, 2022). According to Sudjiman (in Al-Ma'ruf & Nugrahani, 2017), literature is a work that excels in originality and artistic value in its delivery. Therefore, literature can be regarded as a creative expression of human imagination imbued with beauty in both content and form.

In practice, literary works often represent the realities of human life through the creative and poetic use of language. Literary writers transform their experiences, personal ideas, and surrounding social conditions into narratives or poems that touch upon moral, cultural, social, and psychological aspects (Novitasari, 2021). Literature is a reflection of society and the values that develop within it, as the process of creation is inseparable from the social contexts that shape it (Syah & Noor, 2022). As such, literature frequently portrays societal issues honestly and profoundly.

Poetry, as one of the most striking forms of literature, possesses a unique power in its condensed and meaningful use of language. The hallmark of poetry lies in its aesthetic and symbolic diction, as well as a distinct and evocative style (Handiani, 2023). Through poetry, poets are able to convey emotions, thoughts, and messages in an imaginative and emotional manner, making poetry a medium through which reality is understood from a deeper and more personal perspective.

Hermeneutics is a branch of philosophy that focuses on the interpretation of meaning within a text. The term "hermeneutics" itself originates from the Greek word *hermeneuein*, which means to interpret, understand, or translate (Dewi et al., 2022). Thus, the hermeneutic approach can be understood as a method to uncover and explain hidden meanings within a work, both directly and symbolically, through a deep process of interpretation (Hidayat, 2020).

The teaching of literature, especially poetry, at the junior high school level is often perceived as difficult for students due to its symbolic language and implicit meanings. Students tend to interpret poetry only on the surface, without grasping the deeper messages intended by the poet. In this context, the hermeneutic approach serves as an appropriate method to assist students in interpreting poetry more comprehensively.

METHOD

The analysis process begins with repeated and systematic reading of the poems to understand This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze a collection of love poems by W.S. Rendra. This approach is chosen because it enables accurate interpretation of the facts within the research object (Kemal et al., 2024). The purpose of this approach is to describe and interpret the data based on a predetermined object, namely poetic texts analyzed from a hermeneutic perspective.

The analysis process begins with repeated and systematic readings of the poems to gain a comprehensive understanding of their meanings. After conducting deep reading, the next step is to classify data in the form of words, phrases, or sentences that contain symbolic, emotional, or contextual meanings. All of this data is then analyzed using the hermeneutic approach, which focuses on interpreting meaning in relation to the poet's inner, social, and cultural experiences.

The analysis model used in this study is the interactive-dialectical hermeneutic approach. In this model, data collection and analysis are conducted simultaneously, repeatedly, and in a back-and-forth manner, following the principle of the hermeneutic circle. This study refers to the interpretative model developed by Paul Ricoeur (1981), which emphasizes the importance of gradually constructing deep understanding through multiple layers of meaning within the analyzed literary texts.

RESULT AND DICSUSSION

Literature is a form of human expression that serves not only as a means of entertainment but also as a medium for conveying thought, social criticism, and reflection on life. By utilizing the aesthetic power of language, literature can depict the complexity of human experiences across personal, social, and universal dimensions (Putri, 2025). Rahmanto (in Al-Ma'ruf & Nugrahani, 2017) states that the term "literature" has a broad meaning as it is used in various contexts and describes a wide range of phenomena, and thus cannot be understood narrowly or unilaterally.

Through literary works, authors can express inner experiences, deep thoughts, and life events in reflective and evocative written forms. Readers often feel emotionally connected to characters or the atmosphere in the work, as the themes explored are human and relatable to everyday life. One of the most powerful literary forms for expressing emotions and inner experiences is poetry (Kemal et al., 2024). (Ahyar, 2019) also affirms that literature reflects the human soul, which not only explains human existence but also pays attention to life's realities across time.

Poetry holds a special place in the literary world due to the aesthetic nature of its language. Poets carefully select words to create beauty and depth of meaning. Language becomes the main material that is creatively and symbolically crafted, resulting in dense, imaginative, and evocative poetry (Handiani, 2023). According to Inderasari (in Hasanah et al., 2019), poetry is not only perceived as an art that conveys beauty through language but also as a medium to express ideas and feelings artistically and meaningfully, in line with the poet's intuition and emotions.

Etymologically, the word "hermeneutics" derives from the Greek *hermeneuein*, meaning to interpret. The Greek root relates to the mythological figure Hermes, the messenger tasked with conveying Jupiter's messages to humans (Hidayat, 2020). From the verb *hermeneuein*, three core meanings emerge: to express, to explain, and to translate. While all three are synonymous with "to interpret" in English, each offers an independent and significant nuance essential to interpretation (Nurhidayat et al., 2022). Hermeneutics bridges abstract or complex meanings and renders them understandable to the reader or listener.

At its core, hermeneutics is an approach focused on the deep interpretation of texts. Its primary goal is to build understanding through the process of interpretation, where the reader attempts to uncover meaning behind the words and symbols in the text. According to (Tahira et al., 2022), a hermeneut must fully understand both the context and content of a text so that its meaning can be clearly conveyed to others. In practice, hermeneutics moves beyond literal understanding and involves both philosophical and contextual explanation. As (Dewi et al., 2022) explain, this approach connects understanding and explanation within the interpretive process, resulting in a

more holistic meaning. Hermeneutics enables readers to comprehend not only the explicit content of a text but also the social, cultural, and psychological backgrounds surrounding it.

Analysis Of Poems

The poem Papaya appears in W.S. Rendra's Collection of Love Poems, written in 1958 and found on page 7. The title Papaya suggests a theme of hope and tranquility. Just like the fruit itself known for its health benefits and ability to aid digestion this poem symbolizes something nurturing and healing.

*Aku bilang pada bujangku
tak usah memanjat papaya.*

In the first line, the words "*aku*" and "*bujangku*" indicate a directive relationship: the speaker gives a command, while the *servant* is the receiver. The instruction not to climb is more than just a literal safety warning it symbolizes protection, guidance, and an effort to prevent harm. Climbing a tree, here, may represent risky actions or decisions that could lead to danger.

*Aku sendiri akan memanjatnya.
Akan kupilih yang paling ranum dan tua*

These lines explain why the servant was forbidden to climb the speaker intends to take the risk and responsibility personally, ensuring the best outcome. The fruit being "*ranum dan tua*" symbolizes experience and fulfillment something ready to be enjoyed. Climbing the tree here becomes a metaphor for personal effort and sacrifice. The ripest fruit signifies both desire and discernment the willingness to take risks for the sake of quality and personal satisfaction.

*Lalu kucuci sendiri
dan kumasukkan ke dalam
tas laken hijau.*

These lines emphasize the speaker's thoroughness not only does he pick the fruit himself, he also cleans it and stores it with care. The act of washing symbolizes purification or the cleansing of intentions. The green laken bag, traditionally used in military contexts, adds depth. The bag's durability and its green color may represent endurance, memory, hope, and care.

*Kemudian,
akan kuantar ke rumah kekasihku.
Supaya ia sembuh dari sakitnya.*

The final lines express the purpose of the earlier actions: to heal and care for a beloved. The *papaya*, now a symbol of sacrifice and devotion, is offered as a gift of love and healing. This gesture reflects not just romantic affection, but also empathy and emotional depth. On the surface, the poem may appear to show possessiveness or control, but a deeper reading reveals a sincere motivation rooted in love, selflessness, and healing.

The poem *Tobat* ("Repentance") is found on page 15 of W.S. Rendra's Collection of Love Poems. When analyzed through the lens of hermeneutics, the title *Repentance* does not merely signify a confession of sins or a plea for forgiveness it also reflects a complex inner journey, involving personal downfall, realization, and a transformation toward becoming better.

*Tuhan,
aku telah bertobat
aku telah merasakan apakah neraka itu.*

In the first stanza, the invocation "*Tuhan*" symbolizes a higher power or ultimate forgiveness. The line "*aku telah bertobat*" immediately reveals a personal acknowledgment of wrongdoing, signifying a shift from darkness to enlightenment. The line "*aku telah merasakan apakah neraka itu*" implies deep emotional suffering, possibly guilt, sorrow, loneliness, or alienation from the divine. Here, hell is not only a theological reference but a metaphor for the anguish experienced

through internal turmoil. Repentance, in this context, is not a simple statement it is the outcome of intense emotional experience.

*Sebab kemarin,
pacarku menangis
di hadapanku.*

In the final stanza, the reason behind the speaker's repentance is revealed: his lover cried in his presence. The phrase “*sebab kemarin*” indicates a past event with emotional weight, a turning point in the speaker's conscience. The line “*pacarku menangis*” expresses a moment of vulnerability and emotional pain not merely physical tears but a profound inner wound. The act of crying, especially “*di hadapanku*”, suggests both physical closeness and emotional distance. It reflects the speaker's existential tension the inability or uncertainty in responding to such pain highlighting emotional disconnection and guilt.

Overall, the poem Repentance presents an internal transformation sparked by emotional confrontation and the realization of harm caused to a loved one. Through this lens, repentance is portrayed not as a religious ritual, but as a human, relational, and emotional awakening.

The poem *Ayam Jantan (The Rooster)* appears on page 21 of W.S. Rendra's Collection of Love Poems. When analyzed through a hermeneutic lens, the title The Rooster literally refers to the male chicken, commonly known for crowing at dawn. Symbolically, the rooster represents time, awakening, masculinity, dominance, and the beginning of a new day.

*Kekasihku sangat payah
setelah bersamaku menyusuri kota.*

The first stanza portrays a shared experience a journey through the city that left the speaker's lover deeply tired. The word “*payah*” here implies not only physical fatigue but also emotional and mental weariness. The phrase “*menyusuri kota*” can be interpreted symbolically: the city may represent

modern life, its chaos, and emotional or existential struggles. Hence, this shared walk becomes a metaphor for facing life's harsh realities together.

*Sekarang tidur nyenyak melepas lelah
dalam bahagia dan mimpi.*

This stanza continues the previous imagery, showing that after their long and weary journey, the lover finally finds peace in sleep. Hermeneutically, *sleep* may symbolize rest after suffering or emotional healing. The phrase “*bahagia dan mimpi*” implies a transformative state a moment of comfort, renewal, or spiritual release. *Dreams* are not merely imagined scenes during sleep; they may represent hopes, freedom, or the reconstruction of wholeness after fragmentation.

*Sebab itu,
wahai ayam jantan,
janganlah berkokok terlalu pagi!*

The final stanza is a poetic plea to delay the morning. The *rooster*, typically a symbol of time and the start of a new day, is asked not to crow too soon. This request reflects the speaker's desire to extend the night allowing his beloved to rest longer and more peacefully. The crow of the rooster symbolizes the arrival of obligation, responsibility, or disruption, and thus this plea becomes a metaphor for wanting to preserve a moment of tranquility and intimacy before facing the world again.

In essence, this poem uses domestic and natural imagery to explore themes of love, fatigue, and emotional tenderness. It also emphasizes how small acts of care like letting someone sleep longer can carry profound emotional meaning.

CONCLUSION

The hermeneutic approach is a relevant and effective method for analyzing poetry, particularly when interpreting literary works rich in symbolism, hidden meanings, and emotional contexts such as the love poems of W.S. Rendra. Hermeneutics guides readers to interpret texts deeply by considering

various aspects, including social background, cultural context, the poet's experiences, and psychological conditions that influenced the creation of the poems. This process not only enhances the understanding of the poem's content but also develops students' interpretive sensitivity toward life messages implied in literary works.

In the context of Indonesian language learning at the junior high school level, the hermeneutic approach can improve students' ability to read and appreciate poetry critically and reflectively. Teachers play the role of facilitators who guide students to explore textual meanings, discuss personal interpretations, and connect the poem's content to everyday life experiences. Through such activities, students learn to express their opinions in a structured way, build empathy with the characters in the poems, and comprehend the moral values contained within the text.

Therefore, the hermeneutic approach not only enriches literature learning in schools but also supports the achievement of literacy and character-building competencies. This method makes poetry learning more meaningful, lively, and relevant to students' psychological development during adolescence. For this reason, the application of the hermeneutic approach in poetry learning is essential and should be continuously integrated into the junior high school Indonesian language curriculum.

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