

# Poetry as a means of social criticism and medium for learning literature in high school

*by* Lite Journal

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**Submission date:** 25-Jul-2024 02:33PM (UTC+0700)

**Submission ID:** 2422185456

**File name:** 3\_Diplan.pdf (371.23K)

**Word count:** 5236

**Character count:** 28885

## Poetry as a means of social criticism and medium for learning literature in high school

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### Article History

Submitted date:  
2024-07-05  
Accepted date:  
2024-07-24  
Published date:

### Keywords:

literature learning;  
poetry; social  
criticism

### Abstract

The message of criticism can be conveyed in various ways, one of which is through the medium of poetry. As a literary work, poetry conveys a message in a series of beautiful languages, short but full of meaning, and able to touch the feelings of its readers. This research examines a poem entitled *Selfish* by Misnawati. In this poem, there is a social critique of the phenomenon of selfishness that occurs in modern society without leaving aesthetic value with the use of metaphors that can touch the reader's feelings. This study aims to explore the use of metaphors in poetry that convey social criticism and its implications for learning literary works. The method used in this study is a literature study with a semiotic design to identify the metaphorical meaning contained in the poem. Analysis data is in the form of words, phrases, or expressions that contain metaphors. The results of this study show that the use of metaphors in this poem was created to strengthen the message or meaning of social criticism so that it can foster social awareness, feelings of empathy, critical thinking, develop creativity, and foster the reader's sense of aesthetics. The implications of these findings can be used in literary learning in the framework of (1) fostering students' social awareness, (2) improving students' literary ability, (3) arousing student empathy, (4) developing student creativity, and (5) fostering students' critical awareness.

### Abstrak

### Kata Kunci:

pembelajaran sastra;  
puisi; kritik sosial

### Puisi sebagai sarana kritik sosial dan implikasinya terhadap pembelajaran sastra di SMA

Pesan kritik dapat disampaikan dalam berbagai cara, salah satunya adalah dengan media puisi. Sebagai karya sastra, puisi menyampaikan pesan dalam rangkaian bahasa yang indah, pendek tetapi sarat makna, dan mampu menyentuh perasaan pembacanya. Penelitian ini mengkaji puisi berjudul *Egois* karya Misnawati. Di dalam puisi ini terkandung kritik sosial terhadap fenomena sifat egois yang terjadi di masyarakat modern, tanpa meninggalkan nilai estetika dengan penggunaan metafora yang mampu menyentuh perasaan pembacanya. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi penggunaan metafora dalam puisi yang menyampaikan kritik sosial, dan implikasinya dalam pembelajaran karya sastra. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah studi kepustakaan dengan ancangan semiotik untuk mengidentifikasi makna metafora yang terkandung di dalam puisi. Data analisis berupa kata, frasa, ataupun ungkapan yang mengandung metafora. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan metafora dalam puisi ini diciptakan untuk memperkuat pesan atau makna kritik sosial, sehingga mampu menumbuhkan kesadaran sosial, perasaan empati, berpikir kritis, mengembangkan kreativitas, dan menumbuhkan rasa estetika pembacanya. Implikasi dari temuan ini dapat dimanfaatkan dalam pembelajaran sastra dalam rangka (1) menumbuhkan kesadaran sosial siswa, (2) meningkatkan kemampuan sastra siswa, (3) membangkitkan empati siswa, (4) mengembangkan kreativitas siswa, dan (5) menumbuhkan kesadaran kritis siswa.

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## 1 Introduction

Misnawati is a writer who has written many literary works. Many of the works he creates sometimes contain elements of criticism of parties deemed responsible for a problem, such as the government or certain groups. Misnawati's *Egois* poetry is a literary work that uses figurative language intended to convey social criticism of selfishness in society. In the poetry, Misnawati describes a very selfish figure by using metaphorical descriptions that visually and emotionally describe selfish behavior. The use of metaphorical style in *Egois* aims to strengthen the message of social criticism the author wants to convey (Wiyatmi, 2006). By using such metaphorical descriptions, Misnawati can make readers feel the terribleness of selfish behavior and the bad impacts it causes on society. Misnawati's *Egois* poetry is a literary work that has high aesthetic critical value, can touch readers' hearts, and conveys important messages for social life. Social criticism is a form of criticism made to criticize or evaluate existing social problems in society (Wiyatmi, 2006). Social criticism can be conveyed through various forms, including poetry. Misnawati, an Indonesian poet, is one of those who uses metaphorical style in her poetry to convey social criticism. She is known by her famous cultural poetry work. Her poetic expressions resonate with readers, bridging cultural gaps and celebrating Indonesia's natural wonders. Since her work contributed to the vibrant literary scene, she is being an internal reference of poetry in cultural aspects. This article discusses social criticism in the style of metaphorical style in Misnawati's poetry.

Metaphor is defined as the use of words or phrases that contain figurative meanings or parables to describe something that does not correspond to the literal meaning of the words. There are several types of metaphors discussed in this research, including direct metaphors, implied metaphors, and personified metaphors (Pratiwi et al., 2019; Rachmawati, 2019; Saifudin, 2012). In short, metaphors can be used to give an artistic effect, clarify language, and strengthen the conveyed message ((Mahendra et al., 2022). In literature, metaphors are used to create clearer descriptions, increase texts' appeal, and express feelings or experiences that are difficult to express in ordinary words ((Mahendra et al., 2022).

In poetry, social criticism can be conveyed through metaphorical styles. Metaphor is the use of words or phrases that do not describe what is being said literally. In addition, metaphors are often used to describe something in a beautiful and evocative way. Through metaphors, poets can criticize social problems more elegantly and powerfully. Rendra's poetry is heavily influenced by social and political conditions at that time (Wiyatmi, 2006). Rendra expresses his views on injustice and inequality in society through his poetry. Rendra also shows resistance to existing power abuse and corruption in society. Social criticism in Rendra's poetry is closely related to Rendra's political views, which tend toward socialism, Rendra views that social justice can only be realized through a joint struggle to overthrow the capitalist system, which benefits a few rich people and impoverishes many poor people. He can combine symbolism, metaphor, and irony in his poetry so that the combination describes social conditions very strongly and clearly (Endraswara, 2022).

Wiyatmi's (2006) research is one of the author's references which provides an overview of the importance of poetry in conveying social and political criticism, that is, as a means of expressing views and struggles against injustice and social inequality. Poetry is a form of literary art that is believed to be a means of conveying social criticism. In poetry, metaphor is often used as a tool to convey a message implicitly. One of the Indonesian poets who often uses metaphorical style in her work is Misnawati. Her work is believed to be a source of inspiration for other poets in conveying social criticism. Therefore, research on the use of metaphorical figurative language in Misnawati's poetry as a means of social criticism needs to be carried out ((Mahendra et al., 2022).

Misnawati's poetry entitled *Egois* is considered to contain sharp social criticism because it shows that humans are increasingly trapped in selfish behavior and do not care about others currently. This

poetry criticizes the human tendency to be so increasingly attracted to materialism and power that ignore the values of togetherness and tolerance that used to be part of human morality. The poetry also criticizes business which is increasingly becoming the king of the world and prioritizes profit regardless of the miserable human condition. This shows how humans are increasingly trapped in an economic system that is only profit-oriented and puts humanity aside ((Mahendra et al., 2022).

In addition, the poetry also criticizes humans who attack and hurt each other without thinking about the consequences. The poem makes people aware of the importance of respecting diversity and creating brotherhood to create true peace in the world. Misnawati's poetry entitled *Egois* contains sharp social criticism because it shows that humans are increasingly trapped in selfish and materialistic behavior. Furthermore, it can also show that humans ignore the values of togetherness and tolerance that used to be part of human morality. This poetry also shows that humans are increasingly trapped in an economic system that is only profit-oriented and excludes humanity. Therefore, this poetry serves as a reminder for humans to pay attention to human values, respect diversity, and maintain brotherhood to create true peace in the world (Maghfiroh et al., 2021).

Metaphor is figurative language that compares empirical objects with other objects that have value. Metaphors do not just play a role as a concept that offers a definition comparison of texts; metaphors are born from patterns of experience at once the poet's observations of the environment around them. Meanwhile, to analyze poetry full of patterns, pronunciation is sometimes difficult to understand; the researcher collects some symbols first before entering a series of metaphorical events. These symbols are inseparable from interrelated poetic structures to form the overall meaning. To find symbols, researchers trace the relationship between text structures and other texts. This is a symptom of communication related to the author and the reader saying that literary works are a sign system and readers. Apart from that, literary works are one form of using a symbol system that has a structure.

Apart from that, social criticism from poetry can be used as a medium for high school learning. The activity of writing or reading poetry can be done by expressing the ideas you want to express through writing. Apart from that, in learning, poetry can be used as a medium for the development of student creativity. This is because poetry primarily has the potential to be a fun learning tool and also provides motivation for readers. So, in the realm of metaphor, researchers identify metaphorical symbols, which is the result of the discovery of structure in poetry as a medium for criticism. This research focuses on the stylistic analysis of the metaphorical language used in Misnawati's poetry as a means of social criticism.

## 2 Methods

The research methodology used in this article is a literature study. The research method used is library research, which takes or collects data in the form of documents and uses a semiotic approach in data analysis techniques (Hamdanah et al., 2023). In this research, the writer searches for Misnawati's poetry which uses metaphorical language to convey social criticism. Then, the poetry is analyzed to identify the metaphors used and to understand the conveyed social criticism. After the writer identifies the metaphor, the comparison is made. The writer finds implied meaning in the poetry by comparing the object to something else. This literature study approach enables the writer to analyze existing materials by focusing on the themes and language used in poetry. In this research, the writer intensively searches for Misnawati's poetry containing social criticism by using search keys relevant to the theme. Furthermore, the poetry found is analyzed qualitatively by identifying the metaphors and understanding the meaning of the conveyed social criticism. This research is expected to contribute to the development of literary studies, especially in using figurative language in poetry as a means of social criticism. In addition, the results of this study are also expected to provide new insights for poets into the use of metaphorical language in poetry as a means of social criticism and a

source of reference for readers in understanding the message of social criticism through Misnawati's poetry.

### 3 Results

#### 3.1 Metaphoric Language in Misnawati's Poetry as a Means of Social Criticism

The figurative language in Misnawati's poetry as a means of social criticism is depicted in the poetry entitled *Egois*.

Table 1. Egois Poetry

Egois Karya: Misnawati	Selfish By Misnawati
Dari hutan beton tumbuh rindu Hidup manusia semakin mati Materi dan kuasa kian menggila Seakan harga diri tak lagi berarti	Longing grows from the concrete jungle Human life is getting lifeless Materialism and power are getting crazier As if self-esteem were no longer priceless
Lupa manusia akan kebijaksanaan Saling menjatuhkan tanpa henti Sikap egois semakin merebak Saling melukai tanpa ampun	Humans forget wisdom They are always tackling each other's steps Selfishness grows stronger They hurt each other mercilessly
Bisnis menjadi raja dunia Merasa segalanya bisa dibeli Tidak peduli manusia merana Hanya uang dan kekuasaan yang dikejar	Business becomes the king of the world It feels like anything is affordable Humans' sorrow is neglected People fight only for money and power
Terlupakan kebersamaan dan toleransi Yang dulu kental dalam budi Kini hanya kepentingan sendiri Yang terus membelenggu peradaban ini	Togetherness and tolerance are forgotten People used to be noble Nowadays, they are selfish Something that shackles this civilization
Mari bangun dari tidur panjang Lihatlah dunia dengan mata hati Kembalikan keindahan persaudaraan Untuk menciptakan perdamaian sejati	Let's wake up from this long sleep Look at the world with the eyes of the heart Bring back the beauty of brotherhood To create true peace

Misnawati is an Indonesian poet known for her poetry works which are full of social criticism about modern society. One characteristic of Misnawati's poetry is the effective use of metaphorical language in conveying messages of social criticism. She uses metaphors in her poems to describe a certain situation or condition in modern society. For example, in the poetry entitled *Egois* Misnawati describes modern life as a concrete jungle that symbolizes rigidity and materialism in society. Misnawati's *Egois* poetry conveys a message of social criticism about human selfish behavior in modern life, which is increasingly dominated by materialism and power. In the poetry, Misnawati uses figurative language by describing humans living in a concrete jungle which symbolizes a modern and materialistic life (Saputra et al., 2022).

In the second line, Misnawati writes that human life is getting lifeless. It illustrates the loss of moral values and wisdom in modern life. The madness of materialism and power is described in the third line, which shows that people are increasingly prioritizing wealth and power over human values. In the fourth and fifth lines, Misnawati describes that humans forget wisdom and they are always

tackling each other's steps. On the other hand, egoism grows stronger. People tend to think about themselves and hurt each other mercilessly. Business becomes the king of the world, which is controlled by personal interests. In addition, they do not care about others' suffering. The sixth and seventh lines describe that humans forget togetherness and tolerance, and they only think about their own interests. As a result, human civilization is shackled by human selfishness and personal interests (Manik et al., 2023).

However, in the last line, Misnawati is sure that humans still have hope to rebuild the beauty of brotherhood and create true peace. This message illustrates the importance of moral values and togetherness in human life (Romadhona et al., 2023). Besides, it is also essential to reduce people's selfishness and self-interest. Misnawati's Egois poetry discusses the condition of modern humans in which they increasingly turn to be more selfish and do not care about the environment and fellow human beings. The poetry states that humans are dying because they pay more attention to materialism and power than to wisdom and self-esteem. This causes humans to tackle and hurt each other mercilessly.

This poetry also highlights business or transactional aspects that have become the king of the world, and humans are increasingly alienated from togetherness, tolerance, and brotherhood. People pay more attention to their own interests than mutual ones (Poerwadi et al., 2023). Such a condition causes human civilization to be shackled by ego and unhealthy competition continuously. Nevertheless, this poetry invites people to wake up from their long sleep, to be aware of the bad conditions, and to see the world with the eyes of the heart. People must be able to restore the beauty of brotherhood and create true peace in this world. Therefore, this poetry can be considered a social critique that provokes readers to care about the surrounding environment more and maintain the values of togetherness and harmony among human beings (Romadhona et al., 2023).

### 3.2 The Message of Social Criticism in Misnawati's Poetry Entitled *Egois*

The message of social criticism Misnawati wants to convey through the use of metaphorical language in her poetry is illustrated in the following explanation. The metaphorical line *Dari hutan beton tumbuh rindu* (Longing grows from the concrete jungle) is a metaphor that illustrates that a dense urban environment which is full of buildings has taken away the beauty of nature and the harmony between humans and nature (Romadhona et al., 2023).

The metaphorical line *Hidup manusia semakin mati* (Human life is getting lifeless) shows that human life is increasingly losing its true meaning and value as a result of human greed and selfishness. The metaphorical line *Bisnis menjadi raja dunia* (Business becomes the king of the world) shows business and economic interests in human life today have so big influence that they defeat human values and justice (Wiyanto et al., 2022). This metaphorical line *Sikap egois semakin merebak* (Selfishness grows stronger) illustrates that human selfishness is spreading and destroying the social order that should be based on empathy and brotherhood. This metaphorical line *Terlupakan kebersamaan dan toleransi* (Togetherness and tolerance are forgotten) shows that humans increasingly forget the importance of maintaining togetherness and tolerance in social life. As a result, detrimental conflicts and injustices occur in society (Norlaila et al., 2022).

### 3.3 The Impacts of Metaphoric Language Use in Misnawati's Poetry on Readers

In Misnawati's poetry entitled *Egois*, the use of metaphorical language can strengthen the conveyed message. Besides, it can emphasize the impact of literary work. Metaphors are used figuratively to describe existing social situations in society, especially in the context of selfishness and neglect. For example, in line, *Dari hutan beton tumbuh rindu* (Longing grows from the concrete jungle), the use of the metaphor "concrete jungle" describes that cities and their skyscrapers have

replaced nature and natural beauty. This can indicate that human selfishness and lust have neglected nature and the environment (Romadhona et al., 2023)

Then, the lines *Bisnis menjadi raja dunia* (Business becomes the king of the world) and *Hanya uang dan kekuasaan yang dikejar* (People fight only for money and power) also show metaphors that emphasize that humans are increasingly greedy for wealth and power (Romadhona et al., 2023). This can lead to negative impacts such as social injustice, imbalance in the distribution of resources, and poverty. Metaphors in poetry can also help to awaken readers' feelings and awareness to appreciate togetherness and brotherhood in society and stimulate the desire to create peace and harmony in a selfish society (Muriyana, 2022). The results of the research show that Misnawati's poetry entitled *Egois* with the use of metaphorical language can successfully convey sharp social criticism. The metaphors used by Misnawati provide strong and emotional descriptions of human social conditions.

### **3.4 The Implications of Metaphoric Language Use in Misnawati's Poetry Entitled *Egois* as a Means of Social Criticism on Literature Learning in High Schools**

Morals and manners have a very important role in human life. It is a concept about the rules of human behavior in establishing life together. It can come from religion or other sources of value that are agreed upon by a group of people (Mazrur et al., 2023). The research results show that the use of metaphorical language in Misnawati's poetry entitled *Egois* as a means of social criticism on literature learning in high school is as follows:

#### **3.4.1 Growing Social Awareness**

The use of metaphor in Misnawati's *Egois* poetry has important implications for social criticism. Misnawati explores the theme of egoism in society, which often results in injustice and social inequality. Through metaphors, she raises awareness about social problems and explores the causality of selfishness. This can help students in SMA (senior high schools) to understand the importance of social awareness and its effect on social changes (Fahrianur et al., 2023). On the contrary, poetry has a role as a mediating variable, including Individual engagement and level of communication, which can be examined to examine their well-being and life satisfaction (Anwar & Surawan, 2024).

#### **3.4.2 Improving Literary Skills**

The use of metaphor in Misnawati's *Egois* poetry can help students in high school to improve their literary skills. Misnawati uses metaphors in creative and effective ways which explore complex and abstract themes. This can help students develop better skills in reading, interpreting, and evaluating literature. They can also develop their writing skills better through the use of metaphors in their writing (Khair et al., 2022).

#### **3.4.3 Evoking Empathy**

The use of metaphors in Misnawati's *Egois* can help students arouse empathy. Misnawati explores experiences and emotions that can be associated with egoism, such as sadness, injustice, and feelings of isolation. This can help students feel empathy for people who may have similar experiences. This is important for building better social relationships and better understanding our role as individuals in society (Manik et al., 2023)

#### **3.4.4 Developing Creativity**

The use of metaphors in Misnawati's *Egois* can help high school students develop their creativity. Misnawati uses metaphors in unusual and original ways, which can help students develop creative and innovative thinking skills. This can help them solve problems more creatively and generate new ideas that can be useful in their daily lives (Romadhona et al., 2023).

### 3.4.5 Growing Critical Awareness

The use of metaphor in Misnawati's *Egois* can help students in high school develop a critical awareness regarding the world around them. Misnawati uses metaphors to explore complex social themes and encourages students to question social situations and conditions that exist in society. This can help students develop critical and analytical skills in evaluating social situations and making better decisions (Rohim & Rahmawati, 2020).

## 4 Discussion

For some poets, poetry is often used as a communication tool used to convey messages to readers. Even though the message is sometimes delivered abstractly, for them, poetry has become the medium most effective for channeling what they want to convey. In that communication carried out through literary works in the form of Poetry, there are various forms of messages that can be conveyed, one of them namely social criticism. Social criticism usually carried out by the community as an effort to criticize social conditions in the surrounding environment. Therefore, sensitive sections of society to the inappropriateness of social conditions will criticize, fine openly or closed. However, for poets, poetry is a medium able to convey social criticism to these conditions.

Therefore, from the poem above it can be seen from the dimensions of social cognition and social context. Based on social cognition, the author discovers the author's opinions and ideologies in poetry text by making meaning to the events he sees, hears, and feels during the Marsinah murder case sticking out. This is motivated by some things like knowledge and his assessment of the event. This means that the writing of *Egois* poetry is based on awareness high that those situations that should not happen and overwrite in the poem "*Egois*," thus creating resistance in the form of criticism of society in the poem. Then, based on the social context, the author found that which made its birth. This poem is closely related to the discourse developing in the wider community regarding inequality between rich and poor society. Social awareness is increasingly diminishing, and even the culture of showing off, especially on social media, has become a thing. This matter makes the author of the text create "*Egois*" poetry as a means of social criticism.

## 5 Conclusion

Misnawati's *Egois* poetry is a work that criticizes human behavior which is increasingly selfish in modern life and is dominated by materialism and power. This poetry uses metaphorical language effectively to describe the condition of modern society, which is increasingly alienated from moral values and togetherness. This article can provide a deeper understanding of Misnawati's poetry, which contains social criticism. In analyzing Misnawati's poetry, the writer successfully identifies the metaphors used and understands the social criticism conveyed in the poetry. This research can be a good example for other researchers who plan to conduct a study of poetry's social criticism using the literature study method. The results of the study show that the use of metaphorical language in Misnawati's poetry entitled *Egois* as a means of social criticism in high school literature learning can: (1) foster students' social awareness; (2) improve students' literary skills; (3) evoke students' empathy; (4) develop students' creativity; and (5) grow students' critical awareness. This poem aims to rebuild brotherhood and create true peace in this world by reducing selfish behavior and personal interests. Therefore, we need to pay attention to moral values and togetherness in everyday life and try to avoid materialistic things and power. We also need to learn to respect each other, be tolerant of other people's differences, and build a life that is more sustainable and environmentally friendly.



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