

## DECONSTRUCTION OF MORAL MEANING AND VALUE IN THE POEMS OF "CHAIRIL ANWAR": A HERMENEUTIC REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

Poetry is a literary work characterized by symbolic language and layered meanings that require interpretive understanding. Chairil Anwar's poems have long attracted scholarly attention because of their dense imagery, existential themes, and openness to multiple interpretations. This study aims to reinterpret the meanings embedded in selected poems by Chairil Anwar and identify the moral values they convey through a hermeneutic perspective. A qualitative library research design was employed, using six purposively selected poems: \*Aku\*, \*Doa\*, \*Derai-Derai Cemara\*, \*Senja di Pelabuhan Kecil\*, \*Diponegoro\*, and \*Krawang-Bekasi\*. Data were analyzed through close reading, data reduction, thematic categorization, hermeneutic interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The findings demonstrate that the meanings of these poems are not fixed but are continuously reconstructed through the interaction between the text, its socio-historical context, and the reader's horizon of understanding. Rather than representing individual expression alone, \*Aku\* is reinterpreted as an affirmation of existential resilience, \*Doa\* as a dialogue between human limitation and divine transcendence, \*Derai-Derai Cemara\* as a reflection on maturity and acceptance of mortality, \*Senja di Pelabuhan Kecil\* as an exploration of emotional loss and existential solitude, \*Diponegoro\* as a symbol of collective resistance and national identity, and \*Krawang-Bekasi\* as a moral reminder of sacrifice and historical responsibility. These reinterpretations reveal enduring moral values, including courage, perseverance, sincerity, faith, responsibility, patriotism, and social solidarity. This study concludes that hermeneutic interpretation enriches the understanding of Chairil Anwar's poetry by demonstrating how literary meaning evolves across historical and contemporary contexts while preserving its ethical significance.

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### INTRODUCTION

Poetry is a form of literary work that conveys human experiences, worldviews, social criticism, and ethical reflections through condensed, symbolic, and aesthetic language (Sumarsilah, 2021). Beyond functioning as a medium of artistic expression, poetry creates a dialogical space in which meaning emerges through the interaction between the text, the author, and readers across different socio-cultural and historical contexts (Launjaea, 2024; Yuliantoro, 2024). Consequently, poetic meaning cannot be reduced to its literal sense but requires interpretive engagement capable of uncovering the symbolic, metaphorical, and philosophical dimensions embedded within the text (Pitaloka & Sundari, 2020). In contemporary literary studies, interpretive approaches have become increasingly important because they explain how literary texts continue to generate new meanings while remaining relevant to successive generations of readers.

Among Indonesian poets, Chairil Anwar occupies a distinctive position due to his profound influence on modern Indonesian literature. As a leading figure of the Generation of '45, his poems explore existential anxiety, individual freedom, mortality, nationalism, and resistance to established norms (Iskandar & Pratama, 2021). His distinctive diction, condensed imagery, and multilayered symbolism allow his works to remain open to multiple interpretations (Lutfi, 2024). This openness demonstrates that meaning in poetry is dynamic rather than fixed, inviting readers from different historical periods to reinterpret the text according to their own horizons of understanding. Besides their aesthetic achievement, Chairil Anwar's poems also embody enduring moral values that continue to resonate within contemporary social life (Saptawuryandari, 2017).

Hermeneutics provides a theoretical framework for understanding how literary meaning is produced through the interaction among text, historical context, and readers. Rather than treating meaning as fixed, hermeneutics regards interpretation as an ongoing dialogical process in which readers continuously negotiate the significance of a text (Hutagalung, 2022; Ricoeur, 2021). Within this study, the notion of meaning reconstruction refers to the reinterpretation of poetic meaning through the hermeneutic process and should not be understood as deconstruction in the Derridean sense, which primarily questions the stability of linguistic structures. Instead, hermeneutic reinterpretation seeks to broaden understanding by revealing layers of meaning that emerge through historical consciousness and readers' interpretive horizons (Rostina et al., 2021). This distinction is important because the present research focuses on how meaning develops through interpretation rather than on dismantling textual structures.

Previous studies have investigated Chairil Anwar's poetry from various perspectives, including structural analysis, stylistics, semiotics, literary sociology, and character education values (Anwar, 2010). These studies have successfully explained intrinsic literary elements, stylistic characteristics, symbolism, and social representations embedded in his poems. Nevertheless, their primary emphasis remains on textual description or literary structure, providing limited discussion of how meanings evolve through the interaction between text and readers. Other scholars have employed hermeneutic approaches to interpret selected poems; however, these studies mainly concentrate on explaining textual meaning without systematically examining how historical context and readers' horizons contribute to the reinterpretation of meaning and the emergence of moral values (Rahmadi & Dewi, 2025). Consequently, moral values are generally presented as direct outcomes of textual interpretation rather than as products of an ongoing hermeneutic dialogue between the text, its historical context, and contemporary readers.

These limitations reveal several important research gaps. First, many previous studies implicitly treat poetic meaning as relatively stable, leaving insufficient room for the plurality of interpretations emphasized in contemporary hermeneutics. Second, studies focusing on Chairil Anwar's poetry have largely prioritized aesthetic, structural, linguistic, or symbolic aspects while paying less attention to the dynamic relationship between meaning reconstruction and moral interpretation. Third, although hermeneutic approaches have been applied, few studies integrate multiple poems within a single analytical framework that simultaneously examines reinterpretation of meaning, historical context, readers' horizons, and the resulting moral values. Therefore, a more comprehensive hermeneutic investigation is required to explain how poetic meaning continuously evolves while maintaining its ethical relevance.

Based on these gaps, the novelty of this study lies not merely in applying hermeneutics to Chairil Anwar's poetry, but in integrating the reinterpretation of meaning with an analysis of moral values across several representative poems. Unlike previous studies that either emphasize textual meaning or discuss moral values separately, this research demonstrates how moral values emerge through the hermeneutic interaction among the poetic text, its socio-historical background, and the contemporary reader's horizon of understanding. Accordingly, this study offers a more comprehensive interpretive framework for explaining both the transformation of meaning and the continuing ethical significance of Chairil Anwar's poetry.

Based on the preceding discussion, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How are the meanings of Chairil Anwar's selected poems reinterpreted through a hermeneutic approach? and (2) What moral values emerge from the hermeneutic reinterpretation of these poems? Accordingly, this research aims to reinterpret the meanings embedded in Chairil Anwar's selected poems using a hermeneutic perspective and to identify the moral values generated through the interpretive process. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of Indonesian literary studies by strengthening the application of hermeneutics in literary interpretation and enriching discussions on the continuing relevance of moral values in Chairil Anwar's poetry. Furthermore, this study is expected to serve as a reference for researchers, academics, and educators in developing more critical, reflective, and contextual approaches to literary appreciation.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on interpreting the meanings embedded in literary texts rather than analyzing numerical data. The analysis was grounded in philosophical hermeneutics, which considers literary meaning as emerging through the interaction between the text, its historical context, and the reader's horizon of understanding. Accordingly, this research emphasizes the hermeneutic reinterpretation of meaning instead of treating poetic meaning as fixed or singular. The analytical process follows the hermeneutic circle, whereby understanding continuously moves between individual textual elements and the poem as a whole until a coherent interpretation is achieved.

### Data Sources

The primary data consisted of six poems by Chairil Anwar: *Aku*, *Doa*, *Derai-Derai Cemara*, *Senja di Pelabuhan Kecil*, *Diponegoro*, and *Krawang-Bekasi*. These poems were selected through purposive sampling because they satisfied explicit academic criteria relevant to the objectives of the study. The selection criteria included: (1) the poems represent the major philosophical themes consistently found in Chairil Anwar's works, including existence, spirituality, mortality, nationalism, struggle, and humanity; (2) each poem contains rich symbolic language and metaphorical expressions that provide opportunities for multiple interpretations within a hermeneutic framework; (3) the poems originate from different periods and socio-historical settings, enabling contextual interpretation; and (4) the selected poems have frequently been discussed in Indonesian literary scholarship, thereby allowing comparison between previous interpretations and the findings of the present study.

Secondary data consisted of books, journal articles, and other scholarly publications concerning hermeneutics, literary criticism, moral philosophy, and previous studies on Chairil Anwar's poetry.

### Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through documentation and intensive textual reading. The procedures consisted of: (1) identifying and compiling the selected poems together with relevant historical information regarding their composition; (2) conducting repeated close reading to understand textual structure, diction, imagery, symbolism, and metaphor; (3) documenting textual units, including words, phrases, sentences, symbols, and figurative expressions considered significant for interpretation; (4) organizing these textual units into thematic categories; and (5) collecting supporting literature on hermeneutics, Indonesian literary criticism, and previous research to strengthen the interpretive analysis.

### Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis combined qualitative thematic analysis with hermeneutic interpretation. To enhance transparency and replicability, the interpretation of each poem followed five operational stages.

**Stage 1: Initial textual understanding.** Each poem was first examined to identify its literal meaning, narrative situation, dominant imagery, diction, symbols, and metaphors without immediately assigning broader philosophical interpretations.

**Stage 2: Contextual interpretation.** The identified textual elements were interpreted by considering the historical background of the poem, Chairil Anwar's socio-cultural environment, and the broader intellectual context surrounding its creation. This stage allowed textual meanings to be connected with historical experience rather than being understood solely through linguistic analysis.

**Stage 3: Hermeneutic dialogue.** The researcher moved repeatedly between individual textual elements and the poem as a whole following the hermeneutic circle (Zendrato et al., 2021). During this process, provisional interpretations were continuously refined through dialogue between the textual evidence, contextual information, and the researcher's horizon of understanding until interpretive coherence was achieved.

**Stage 4: Hermeneutic reinterpretation of meaning.** After establishing contextual understanding, alternative layers of meaning emerging from symbols, metaphors, and poetic expressions were identified. Rather than dismantling textual structures in the Derridean sense, this stage sought to explain how meanings expand through hermeneutic interpretation across different historical and contemporary contexts.

**Stage 5: Identification of moral values and synthesis.** The final stage synthesized the interpretive findings by identifying moral values consistently emerging from the reinterpreted meanings of each poem. These values were subsequently compared across all six poems to formulate broader thematic conclusions regarding Chairil Anwar's ethical and philosophical perspectives.

### Trustworthiness

The credibility of the findings was strengthened through theoretical triangulation and prolonged engagement with the texts. Theoretical triangulation was conducted by comparing interpretations using concepts from philosophical hermeneutics, literary criticism, and moral philosophy to minimize subjective bias and produce more comprehensive interpretations. Prolonged engagement was achieved through repeated close reading and continuous movement within the hermeneutic circle to ensure consistency in interpreting symbols, metaphors, and contextual meanings. Furthermore, the final interpretations were compared with findings reported in previous literary studies to evaluate their consistency while identifying new interpretive contributions generated by the present research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Analysis was carried out on six poems by Chairil Anwar which were selected purposively based on the suitability of the theme with the focus of the research, namely the deconstruction of meaning and moral values. The six poems include *Aku*, *Doa*, *Dera-dera Cembra*, *Senja di Pelabuhan Kecil*, *Diponegoro*, and *Krawang-Bekasi*. The selection of poems is based on the consideration that each work represents the issues of human existence, religiosity, life, struggle, nationalism, and moral responsibility. The hermeneutic approach is used to understand the relationship between the text, the context of creation, and the reader's horizon of understanding so that a more comprehensive meaning is obtained.

### Hermeneutic Analysis of "Aku" Poetry

The poem *I* shows the construction of human identity that refuses to submit to various forms of limitation. This can be seen through the following lyricist statements:

*"I'm a bitch*

*From his collection it was wasted."*

The quote describes lyrical characters as individuals who are outside their social group. Textually, the expression indicates a person's alienation from the surrounding environment. However, through a hermeneutic approach, the meaning of "bitch" is not understood as a representation of wild or negative nature, but rather as a symbol of individual freedom that refuses to be constrained by rules that limit freedom of thought. The lyric character builds his identity as a human being who dares to accept the consequences of alienation in order to defend his beliefs and life principles. Thus, the deconstruction of meaning shows that alienation is not a form of social failure, but a manifestation of the courage to be oneself.

This meaning is further strengthened through the following array:

*"Let the bullet pierce my skin*

*I'm still inflamed."*

Hermeneutically, the word "bullet" is not only understood as a physical threat, but also symbolizes the various pressures, challenges, and problems of life that humans must face. Meanwhile, the phrase "inflamed lunging" shows an unyielding attitude and steadfastness in defending the values they believe in. Readers today can interpret the array as a symbol of courage to face social pressures, injustice, and various obstacles in their personal lives. Therefore, the poem *Aku* is no longer interpreted as a mere expression of a poet's rebellion, but develops into a reflection on the struggle of human beings to maintain integrity in the midst of life's challenges.

The moral values contained in the poem *Aku* include courage, steadfastness, independence, and the spirit of never giving up. These values are not conveyed directly, but are built through symbols and metaphors that provide space for the reader to reflect. The results of the interpretation show that the main meaning of this poem does not lie in the attitude of defiance of society, but in the courage of a person to defend his identity without neglecting his moral responsibility as a human being. Thus, my poem has a strong relevance to the life of modern society faced with various social pressures and changing values.

This interpretation reflects Gadamer's concept of the fusion of horizons, in which meaning is generated through the encounter between the historical world of the text and the reader's contemporary perspective. Rather than reconstructing Chairil Anwar's original intention alone, the present interpretation emerges from the dialogue between the poem's existential language and the reader's lived experience. This finding is consistent with (Iskandar & Pratama, 2021), who identified *Aku* as a representation of individual freedom and existential resistance. However, the present study extends their findings by demonstrating that the poem simultaneously constructs moral responsibility through the reader's

interpretive engagement. Consequently, the poem functions not only as an expression of rebellion but also as an ethical reflection on maintaining integrity amid contemporary social pressures.

#### **Hermeneutic Analysis of 'Doa' Poetry**

Prayer poetry describes the spiritual relationship between man and God that is built through an awareness of self-limitations. These nuances are seen from the beginning of the poem through the confession of the following lyrical characters:

*"My Lord  
In Darkness  
I still call on Your name."*

The quote shows that the lyrical characters still remember God even though they are in a state of confusion and inner struggle. Hermeneutically, the state of "termangu" can be understood as a symbol of the human life journey filled with doubts, uncertainties, and the search for the meaning of life. The mention of God's name not only shows religious activity, but also a form of recognition that humans have limitations in dealing with life's problems. Thus, this poem deconstructs the view that a relationship with God only arises when man is in perfect condition. On the contrary, it is precisely in the weak state that man finds a deeper spiritual consciousness.

This meaning is further emphasized through the recognition of the lyrical characters in the following sections:

*"My Lord  
I'm out of shape  
Crushed."*

The phrases "lost shape" and "crushed" can be interpreted as a symbol of the destruction of the human ego in the presence of God's greatness. From a hermeneutic perspective, this condition does not indicate despair, but rather a process of mental transformation that leads man to a new understanding of himself. Destruction is the beginning of a more mature spiritual consciousness. Therefore, the meaning of poetry does not stop at sadness or suffering, but develops into a reflection on the importance of humility and surrender to God when facing various problems in life.

The moral values found in the Prayer poem include faith, humility, patience, and hope. This poem teaches that man cannot fully rely on his own strength because each individual has limitations. Through a hermeneutic approach, this study found that the religious meaning in poetry is not only related to worship activities, but also concerns the formation of human character who is able to accept his weaknesses, surrender to God, and still have hope in facing life. These values make Doa poetry still relevant as a medium of moral reflection for society in various eras.

The reinterpretation of Doa also illustrates Ricoeur's view that symbols possess meanings exceeding their literal expressions. The symbolic representation of darkness and human weakness becomes meaningful because readers continuously reinterpret these images according to their own existential situations. Similar observations were reported by Rahmadi and Dewi (2025), who emphasized the spiritual dimension of Chairil Anwar's poetry. Nevertheless, the present study demonstrates that spiritual awareness cannot be separated from the emergence of moral values such as humility, patience, and hope, thereby extending previous interpretations beyond theological reflection toward ethical formation.

#### **Hermeneutic Analysis of the Poetry of Derai-Derai Cemara**

The poem Derai-Derai Cemara presents a reflection on the journey of human life that continues to move towards the end of life. The picture appears in the following array:

*"The fir rushes far away,  
It feels like it's going to be a night."*

The quote presents a symbol of nature as a representation of the unstoppable passage of time. The molting fir tree not only depicts the changes of the seasons, but also symbolizes the constant changes in human life. From a hermeneutic perspective, the coming of night is not solely interpreted as a change of time, but as a symbol of the increasing age and getting closer to the end of human beings. Through this reading, the meaning of poetry shifts from a description of natural phenomena to a philosophical reflection on human mortality.

This meaning is further emphasized through the image of lyric characters who realize that the journey of life is always accompanied by change. Time awareness is not interpreted as something scary, but as a reminder that life has unavoidable limits. The hermeneutic approach suggests that the symbols of nature in this poem contain meanings that are so open that each reader can relate them to his or her own life experiences. For some readers, time travel can be interpreted as a process of maturation, while for other readers it can be understood as an invitation to appreciate life more before time ends.

The moral values found in the poem *Derai-Derai Cemara* are wisdom, patience, gratitude, and the ability to accept change as part of life. This poem teaches that every human being will experience various phases of life that do not always go according to expectations. Therefore, humans are required to use time wisely, appreciate every experience, and live a responsible life. Through a hermeneutic approach, this study found that the meaning of life in poetry does not end with the awareness of death, but instead encourages humans to live a more meaningful life.

The interpretive process also demonstrates the operation of the hermeneutic circle, whereby the meaning of individual symbols such as *cemara* and *night* becomes fully understandable only when interpreted within the entire structure of the poem. This supports Gadamer's argument that understanding develops through continuous movement between textual parts and the whole (Warnke, 2013). Compared with previous studies focusing primarily on symbolism, the present research highlights how these symbols generate broader moral reflections through the interaction between historical context and readers' contemporary experiences.

#### **Hermeneutic Analysis of the *Senja di Pelabuhan Kecil***

The poem of *Twilight* in *Pelabuhan Kecil* describes the experience of loss conveyed through natural symbols and the atmosphere of twilight. The picture is seen at the beginning of the following poem:

*"This time no one is looking for love  
Between the warehouses, the old houses, on the story."*

The quote shows a quiet atmosphere that represents the end of a hope. Textually, the lyrical characters describe a space that is no longer filled by the presence of people who used to give meaning to their lives. From a hermeneutic perspective, the atmosphere of the port is not only understood as a physical place, but also a symbol of the stopover of human life filled with encounters, farewells, hopes, and losses (Al Munir, 2021). Therefore, the meaning of loss in this poem develops into a universal experience that can be felt by every reader.

Through hermeneutic readings, twilight symbolizes the end of one phase of life as well as the beginning of the next. Loss is not positioned as the end of everything, but rather as the process that shapes a person's maturity. The lyrical characters show that humans are not always able to maintain everything they love. However, the experience of loss actually gives birth to a new awareness of the meaning of life, memories, and acceptance of reality. This meaning shows that every separation has a reflective value that can enrich the human inner experience.

The moral values contained in the poem *Senja di Pelabuhan Kecil* include sincerity, patience, fortitude, and the ability to accept reality. Through a hermeneutic approach, this study found that the meaning of loss is not directed at grief alone, but becomes a learning process that shapes a person's emotional maturity. Thus, this poem teaches that humans need to accept every change in life with open hearts and make every experience a means to grow into a wiser person. These values make the poem *Senja di Pelabuhan Kecil* remain relevant as a medium of moral reflection in the life of modern society.

From Ricoeur's perspective, the harbour functions as a symbolic space rather than merely a physical location. Its significance expands through interpretation, allowing readers from different generations to associate the image with personal experiences of separation, memory, and emotional transformation. This finding broadens previous literary analyses that primarily interpreted the poem as an expression of romantic loss by demonstrating its wider existential and ethical implications.

#### **Hermeneutic Analysis of Diponegoro's Poetry**

Diponegoro's poem represents the spirit of struggle that is not only related to resistance to the colonizers, but also describes the courage of human beings in defending their self-esteem and belief. This spirit is manifested through the following array:

*"During this construction period,  
The master comes back to life."*

The quote shows that the figure of Diponegoro is not seen solely as a historical figure, but as a symbol of struggle that is always present in every era. In a hermeneutic perspective, the expression "revived" is not interpreted literally as a physical awakening, but as the re-presence of the values of struggle in people's lives. The deconstruction of meaning shows that the figure of Diponegoro has shifted from a historical figure to a moral symbol that inspires courage, steadfastness, and a spirit of devotion to the nation. Thus, this poem not only talks about the past, but also offers a new meaning that remains relevant to the life of today's people.

The meaning of struggle is further strengthened through the invitation contained in the next section:

*"Moving forward"*

*Raid  
Attack  
Attack."*

The repetition of the verb builds an atmosphere of enthusiasm and optimism. Hermeneutically, the invitation is not only interpreted as a call to fight physically, but also as an encouragement for humans to have the courage to face various challenges in life. Struggle can be manifested in the form of maintaining honesty, upholding justice, fighting for education, and maintaining integrity in the social environment. Therefore, the meaning of struggle has expanded so that it is not limited to the context of war, but includes all forms of human effort in defending the values of truth.

The moral values found in Diponegoro's poems include courage, patriotism, responsibility, sacrifice, and leadership. These values show that a true leader is not only able to move others, but also be an example in defending principles and fighting for common interests. Through a hermeneutic approach, this study found that Diponegoro's poem contains a universal moral message, namely the importance of having the courage to fight for the truth and prioritizing the interests of society over personal interests.

This finding illustrates Gadamer's notion that historical texts remain meaningful because every generation encounters them with new questions and new horizons of understanding. Accordingly, Diponegoro is interpreted not only as a historical hero but also as a moral symbol whose significance continues to evolve. Unlike earlier studies emphasizing nationalism within the colonial context, this research demonstrates that the poem also encourages contemporary forms of civic responsibility and ethical leadership.

#### **Hermeneutic Analysis of Krawang-Bekasi Poetry**

The Krawang-Bekasi poem is a reflection on the sacrifices of the fallen fighters in defending Indonesia's independence. The atmosphere is depicted through the following array.

*"We are now lying between Krawang-Bekasi  
You can't shout 'Merdeka' and take up arms again."*

The quote presents the voices of the fallen warriors as lyrical characters. Textually, this poem describes the state of heroes who can no longer continue the struggle directly. However, through a hermeneutic approach, the voice is not interpreted as a lament, but as a symbol of trust that is passed on to the next generation. The deconstruction of meaning shows that the death of the fighters is not the end of the nation's struggle, but the starting point for the emergence of moral responsibility for the community to continue the ideals of independence.

This meaning develops when the reader understands that the nation's struggle is not always realized through war. In the context of modern life, defending independence can be done through various forms of service, such as improving the quality of education, upholding justice, maintaining unity, and contributing to the development of the nation. Hermeneutics allows the reader to connect historical experiences with the realities of present life so that the meaning of poetry continues to evolve without losing the essence contained in it (Nugroho, 2026). Therefore, nationalism in this poem is understood as a collective responsibility that must be realized through real action.

The moral values contained in the Krawang-Bekasi poem include love for the homeland, sacrifice, social responsibility, solidarity, and respect for the services of heroes. These values teach that independence is the result of a struggle that must be maintained by every generation. Through a hermeneutic approach, this study found that Krawang-Bekasi poetry not only serves as a reminder of history, but also as a medium of moral education that encourages people to appreciate the sacrifices of fighters and implement nationalist values in daily life.

The reinterpretation of Krawang-Bekasi further supports Ricoeur's proposition that historical narratives acquire renewed significance through symbolic interpretation. Rather than functioning solely as a memorial text, the poem becomes a moral dialogue between past sacrifices and present civic responsibilities. This finding extends previous scholarship by demonstrating that patriotism is reconstructed through readers' contemporary ethical engagement rather than remaining confined to its historical setting.

#### **Synthesis of Research Results**

Based on the overall analysis, the deconstruction of meaning through a hermeneutic approach shows that Chairil Anwar's poems have a dynamic meaning and are not limited to the context of their creation. Each poem presents symbols, metaphors, and diction that allow the birth of various interpretations according to the reader's experience and horizon of understanding. The poem *Aku* represents the meaning of individual existence and freedom, *Prayer* displays the dimension of religiosity and spiritual awareness, *Dera!-Dera! Cemara* depicts a reflection on the journey of life, *Senja di Pelabuhan*

Kecil interprets loss as a process of maturation, Diponegoro presents the spirit of struggle, while Krawang-Bekasi represents nationalism and sacrifice as universal human values.

The results of the study also show that the moral values in Chairil Anwar's poems are not conveyed explicitly, but are built through symbols that require an in-depth interpretation process. The values of courage, faith, constancy, sincerity, wisdom, patriotism, responsibility, and social concern are the dominant values found in this study. Thus, the hermeneutic approach succeeded in revealing that Chairil Anwar's poems not only have aesthetic value as literary works, but also contain moral messages that remain relevant as a reflection of human life in various social and cultural contexts.

The findings demonstrate that the meanings of Chairil Anwar's poems are produced through a hermeneutic process involving continuous interaction between textual structures, historical context, and readers' horizons of understanding. This confirms Gadamer's concept of the fusion of horizons and Ricoeur's theory of symbolic interpretation, both of which explain why literary meanings remain dynamic across different historical periods. Compared with previous studies that primarily focused on structural, stylistic, or symbolic analysis, the present research contributes by integrating hermeneutic reinterpretation with the identification of moral values, thereby providing a more comprehensive explanation of the enduring relevance of Chairil Anwar's poetry.

## Discussion

### Deconstructing the Meaning of Human Existence in a Hermeneutic Perspective

The results of the study show that the poems *Aku*, *Derai-Derai Cemara*, and *Senja di Pelabuhan Kecil* both represent the problem of human existence, even though they are conveyed through different symbols and settings. In the poem *Aku*, existence is manifested through the courage of individuals to maintain their identity despite having to face social rejection. In contrast, *Derai-Derai Cemara* describes existence as a journey of life that is inseparable from the change of time and the consciousness of mortality. The *Twilight at the Small Port* represents existence through the experience of loss that leads humans to the process of reflection and acceptance of the reality of life. The difference in the way of delivery shows that Chairil Anwar does not view existence as a singular concept, but as a life experience that continues to develop according to human conditions.

In a hermeneutic perspective, the meaning of existence is not only born from the structure of the language of the poem, but is also formed through the interaction between the text and the reader. The reader does not just understand the meaning based on the author's intentions, but also brings his experiences, values, and social background into the interpretive process (Hidayat, 2020). Therefore, the symbols used by Chairil Anwar allow the emergence of various new meanings without eliminating the substance of the text. For example, the symbol of alienation in the poem *Aku* can be interpreted as a struggle to maintain the principles of life, while for other readers it can be understood as a critique of social pressures that limit individual freedom. The flexibility of interpretation shows that the meaning of poetry is dynamic and always open to re-reading according to the development of the times (Permata et al., 2026).

These findings show that the deconstruction of meaning results in a broader understanding than literal reading. The existence of humans in Chairil Anwar's poems does not only speak about individual courage, but also about the ability of humans to find the meaning of life through various experiences, both in the form of struggle, loss, and change. Thus, the hermeneutic approach succeeds in showing that existential meaning in Chairil Anwar's work has a universal nature so that it remains relevant for readers in various generations.

These findings are consistent with Gadamer's concept of the fusion of horizons, which argues that textual meaning emerges through the interaction between the historical world of the text and the reader's contemporary perspective rather than being fixed by the author's original intention (Ricoeur, 2021). This dynamic process also reflects the operation of the hermeneutic circle, whereby understanding develops through continuous movement between individual symbols and the poem as a whole. Similar conclusions were reported by (Iskandar & Pratama, 2021), who interpreted *Aku* as an expression of existential freedom. However, the present study extends their findings by demonstrating that existential meanings simultaneously generate ethical implications, including personal integrity, resilience, and responsibility. Therefore, the contribution of this study lies in integrating existential interpretation with the emergence of moral values within a single hermeneutic framework.

### Religiosity as a Form of Existential Consciousness

The results of the analysis of the poem *Doa* show that religiosity in Chairil Anwar's work is not only manifested through human relationships with God, but also through human awareness of their limitations. The lyric character displays a humble attitude when realizing that human abilities have limits so they need higher strength as a place to lean on. This

condition shows that the religious dimension in poetry is not ritualistic, but rather emphasizes the spiritual experience born of inner struggle.

The hermeneutic approach views the spiritual experience as a process of dialogue between the text and the reader's experience (Supriatin, 2020). Therefore, the religious meaning contained in poetry can develop according to the context of the reader's life. For people in times of struggle, religiosity may be interpreted as a source of strength to face suffering. Meanwhile, for modern society, religiosity can be understood as the ability to maintain inner balance in the midst of various pressures of life. These differences in interpretation show that religious meaning in poetry is contextual without losing its basic value.

The findings of this study show that Chairil Anwar presents religiosity as a process of forming human character. Awareness of one's weaknesses gives birth to an attitude of humility, patience, and hope in God. Therefore, the poem of Doa not only conveys a religious message, but also builds moral values that can be a guideline in daily life.

The present findings also reinforce Ricoeur's view that symbols possess meanings beyond their literal expressions because they invite continuous reinterpretation according to readers' lived experiences (Ricoeur, 2021). The symbolic language of Doa therefore functions not merely as a representation of religious devotion but also as an expression of existential dependence and moral transformation. This interpretation supports the findings of (Rahmadi & Dewi, 2025), who emphasized the spiritual dimension of Chairil Anwar's poetry. Nevertheless, the present study broadens previous interpretations by showing that spiritual awareness simultaneously shapes moral values such as humility, patience, and hope through the hermeneutic interaction between text, historical context, and readers' horizons.

#### **Deconstructing the Meaning of Struggle and Nationalism**

The poems of Diponegoro and Krawang-Bekasi show that the meaning of struggle is expanded when read through a hermeneutic approach. At the textual level, the two poems are related to the struggle to defend the independence of the Indonesian nation. However, the results of the study show that the struggle is no longer understood solely as physical resistance to the colonizers, but has developed into a symbol of steadfastness in defending the values of truth, justice, and humanity. The deconstruction of meaning shows that the spirit of struggle remains relevant even though the historical context has changed.

In the process of interpretation, the symbol of heroism is no longer limited to historical figures, but can be understood as a representation of every individual who seeks to make a positive contribution to society (Andana et al., 2025). Therefore, the struggle can be realized through various forms of actions such as maintaining integrity, improving the quality of education, carrying out work professionally, and participating in nation building. Thus, the meaning of nationalism undergoes a transformation from a historical orientation to a broader moral orientation.

The results of the study show that the poems contain the values of patriotism, social responsibility, solidarity, and sacrifice. These values remain relevant in the life of modern society because nationalism is no longer measured only through involvement in wars, but also through concern for the progress of the nation. The hermeneutic approach proves that literary works are able to present new meanings in accordance with the development of social conditions without eliminating the main message contained in the text.

The reinterpretation of nationalism in this study confirms Gadamer's argument that historical texts remain meaningful because every generation approaches them with new questions and different horizons of understanding. Consequently, Diponegoro and Krawang-Bekasi are interpreted not only as historical narratives but also as ethical texts that inspire contemporary civic responsibility. Previous studies generally emphasized the historical and patriotic dimensions of these poems (Andana et al., 2025). In contrast, this study demonstrates that nationalism is reconstructed through hermeneutic interpretation as a broader commitment to justice, integrity, and social responsibility in present-day society.

#### **Moral Values as a Result of Hermeneutic Interpretation**

An analysis of all poems shows that moral values are not conveyed explicitly, but are constructed through symbols, metaphors, imagery, and the experiences of lyrical characters. Readers are required to carry out an interpretation process to find the moral message hidden behind the structure of the poem's language. This condition shows that moral values in literary works are not something absolute, but are born through active interaction between the reader and the interpreted text.

The hermeneutic approach provides space for the reader to develop a moral understanding according to his or her life experience (Rahayu, 2021). Courage in the poem *Aku* can be interpreted as personal integrity, while in Diponegoro it is understood as the courage to fight for common interests. Similarly, sincerity in *Twilight in Small Port* and religiosity

in prayer show that moral values have different forms, but they complement each other in building human character. This shows that moral meaning is not static, but develops with changes in the reader's horizon of understanding.

The present findings indicate that Chairil Anwar's poems contain the values of courage, honesty, responsibility, faith, patience, sincerity, patriotism, and social concern. These values have high relevance to various problems in people's lives today. Therefore, Chairil Anwar's works not only have an aesthetic function as literary works, but also function as a medium of moral education that is able to form critical, reflective, and humanist attitudes.

From a hermeneutic perspective, moral values are not directly extracted from literary texts but emerge through the interpretive dialogue between textual symbols and readers' experiences. This finding corresponds with (Rahayu, 2021), who argued that ethical understanding develops through interpretive engagement rather than literal reading. However, unlike previous studies that identified moral values as fixed messages embedded in literary works, the present research demonstrates that moral meanings are continuously reconstructed through the interaction between textual structures, historical contexts, and readers' horizons of understanding. This finding represents the principal theoretical contribution of the study by integrating moral interpretation within philosophical hermeneutics.

#### **Implications of Research on Literary Studies**

The results of the research contribute to the development of Indonesian literary studies, especially in the application of the hermeneutic approach to poetry analysis. This research shows that the meaning of literary works does not stop at the author's intention or the literal meaning of the text, but continues to develop through the process of dialogue between the text, the historical context, and the reader's experience. Thus, hermeneutics is an approach that is able to explain why Chairil Anwar's works are still relevant even though they were written decades ago.

In addition to making a theoretical contribution, this research also has practical implications in the field of education. Chairil Anwar's poems can be used as a learning medium that not only develops literary appreciation skills, but also builds critical, interpretive, and reflective thinking skills. Teachers and lecturers can direct students to understand that every literary work contains layered meanings so that the reading process is not only aimed at understanding the content of the text, but also finding moral values that can be applied in life. Thus, the results of this study strengthen the function of literature as a means of character formation as well as the development of humanitarian insights.

Compared with previous studies that primarily adopted structural, stylistic, semiotic, or sociological approaches, this research demonstrates that philosophical hermeneutics offers a broader analytical framework because it simultaneously explains symbolic meaning, historical consciousness, readers' interpretation, and moral values. Consequently, this study contributes not only to the interpretation of Chairil Anwar's poetry but also to the methodological development of Indonesian literary criticism by illustrating how hermeneutic interpretation can generate comprehensive literary and ethical understanding.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that the meanings embedded in Chairil Anwar's selected poems are dynamic and continuously reconstructed through hermeneutic interpretation. Rather than representing fixed messages, the meanings of *Aku*, *Doa*, *Derai-Derai Cemara*, *Senja di Pelabuhan Kecil*, *Diponegoro*, and *Krawang-Bekasi* evolve through the interaction between textual structures, socio-historical contexts, and readers' horizons of understanding. This hermeneutic reinterpretation reveals that the poems extend beyond personal expression to articulate broader reflections on human existence, spirituality, mortality, struggle, nationalism, and ethical responsibility. The interpretive process also demonstrates that moral values including courage, perseverance, faith, humility, sincerity, wisdom, patriotism, responsibility, and social solidarity emerge through readers' engagement with symbolic language rather than from explicit moral statements.

This study contributes to Indonesian literary scholarship by strengthening the application of philosophical hermeneutics in poetry interpretation. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasized structural, stylistic, or symbolic analysis, this research integrates textual interpretation, historical context, readers' horizons, and moral value construction within a single hermeneutic framework. This integrated perspective provides a broader understanding of how literary meanings continue to evolve while maintaining their ethical relevance across different historical periods. Practically, the findings suggest that Chairil Anwar's poetry can serve not only as an object of literary appreciation but also as an effective medium for fostering critical thinking, reflective interpretation, and character education in literature classrooms.

Future studies are recommended to extend hermeneutic analysis to Indonesian literary works from different literary periods in order to examine the continuity and transformation of meaning across historical contexts. Furthermore,

combining philosophical hermeneutics with complementary approaches such as semiotics, reader-response criticism, or reception theory may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how literary meanings and moral values are constructed, negotiated, and interpreted by diverse communities of readers.

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