

Exploring Jesus Christ in Indonesian Poetry: Transcending Religious Boundaries in the Portrayal of Divinity

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is known as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world and where Christians comprise only 10.29% of the national population. Consequently, the figure of Jesus Christ is not particularly popular among the Indonesian public. This study aims to examine the portrayal of Jesus Christ in Indonesian poetry. The analysis will close read 25 poems, written by 10 Indonesian poets representing diverse Christian and Muslim backgrounds. Through the examination of these literary works, it becomes evident that the depiction of Jesus Christ in Indonesian poetry revolves around five prevailing themes: as the Savior of all humanity, as a member of specific communities, as a catalyst for sinners' repentance, as a figure whose sanctity is questioned, and as a stern judge of humanity. This paper's investigation reveals that Jesus Christ has permeated Indonesian cultural production, albeit with depictions that do not align with the official teachings of Christianity.

Keywords: Jesus Christ, religiosity, poetic experience, cultural production, Indonesian literature

INTRODUCTION

Religious literature in Indonesia is dominated by literary texts rooted in the values and teachings of Islam, spanning from the classical period to the modern Indonesian literary era. This is why various terms have emerged to refer to Islamic-themed literature in Indonesia, such as Islamic religious literature, Islam-influenced literature, literature with Islamic themes, or simply, Islamic literature. According to scholars, Islamic literature in Indonesia began and developed concurrently with the influence of Islam on various traditions and cultures in the archipelago (Salad 2-15; Mahmud 41-50; Syarifudin 1260-79). This is evident in the cultural traditions of the archipelago, including Malay literature (*syair, pantun, gurindam*), Javanese literature (*babad, serat, suluk*), and Pesantren literature (*scriptural literature, singiran, nadhoman*). When modern Indonesian literature emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, several

Muslim writers developed Islamic literature, including literature of worship (*sastra ibadah*), literature of proselytization (*sastra dakwah*), literature of remembrance (*sastra dzikir*), comprehensive literature (*sastra kaffah*), prayer rug literature (*sastra sajadah*), Quranic literature (*sastra qurani*), prophetic literature (*sastra profetik*), and Sufi literature (*sastra sufi*). As such, Teeuw (*Sang Kristus dalam Puisi* 119-35) and Atmosuwito (32-60) explain that Indonesian culture is not significantly influenced by Christianity. Christians are only 10.29% of the total population of Indonesia, and their minority status suggests that Jesus Christ and the Gospel are not widely recognized or understood among the Indonesian populace. The objective of this research is to critically analyze and reevaluate the imagery of Jesus Christ in modern Indonesian poetry.

Discussing the figure of Christ in modern Indonesian poetry means delving into the symbols and aspects of religiosity in literature. In this regard, Fiorenza highlights the significance of the reconstructive rhetorical model, which does not adhere to historical positivism or dogmatic theology (Fiorenza 343-58). According to her, historical objectivity can only be approached through careful rhetorical analysis. Rhetorical reconstruction of literary works, including poetry, can avoid interpretations that are neo-orthodox, apologetic, or power-dominated in nature. Rhetorical reconstruction opens opportunities to discover textual spaces within complex identities.

In the rhetorical reconstruction of the imagery of Jesus in poetic texts, one dominant element that requires serious attention is the figure of Jesus within the domain of religiosity. The term religiosity, as defined by *The World Book Dictionary* (Barnhart 367-70), refers to “religious feeling or sentiment,” which encompasses emotional or sentimental aspects of religion. Religious sentiment comprises all feelings connected to God. These sentiments are often manifested in guilt, fear of God, and the glorification of God (Barnhart 368).

The experience of religiosity varies from one culture to another. As Teeuw points out, Jesus and Christianity have been inseparable for centuries in the Western world (*Sang Kristus dalam Puisi* 119-45) and has permeated the Western literary tradition. This is not the case in Indonesia with a population of various religious beliefs. Data from 2022 shows that the population in Indonesia are as follows: Islam (87.2%), Protestant Christianity (6.9%), Catholic Christianity (2.9%), Hinduism (1.7%), Buddhism (0.7%), and Confucianism (0.5%).

In Western artistic works, Jesus is depicted as God, the shepherd, the savior of the world, the path of righteousness, a friend, a humorous figure, and the crucified one. How do Indonesian writers depict Jesus? Christianity in poetry is certainly not a form of proselytization. The study of Jesus’s image in literature should be

approached as “beyond dogma.” Christianity, in this sense, as articulated by T.S. Eliot, is “an unconscious Christianity in literature” (Atmosuwito 53). Is Christ too sensitive a topic that it becomes a “discussion only for certain groups.” According to Sitor Situmorang, literary works that functions as a form of evangelism is “a kind of emasculated literature” (Situmorang, *Rindu Kelana* 55).

Therefore, the research question at hand is whether in the predominantly Muslim Indonesian society, there exists a portrayal of Jesus Christ in the poetic tradition. If such a portrayal exists, how is Jesus Christ understood and experienced? Examining the religious background of the poets included in the study, from which religious groups do these portrayals of Jesus Christ originate? What are the implications of these findings for Indonesian society?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Studies on the imagery of Jesus Christ in art in general, and literature in particular, have been conducted by several scholars. Wilfred Tooley reveals that in the Bible, Jesus refers to or portrays Himself as a shepherd (Tooley 15), which signifies three things: His mission as the Good Shepherd, His death as the Great Shepherd, and the eschatological judgment as the Guardian of Human Souls. Meanwhile, Gerald O’Collins compares the imagery of Jesus in the reflections of poets and philosophers (160). Through their imagination and perception of the world, poets and philosophers help us dwell on the nature of language because it is considered the subject of contemplation as it is the primary means by which humans express their thoughts and emotions. The difference between how poets and philosophers portray Jesus is that poets express emotions directly (e.g., by depicting how Jesus once wept for Jerusalem) whereas philosophers focus on the more rational concepts in discussing Christ. This is why how poets reflect on Jesus must be analyzed. Poets are more capable of depicting Jesus not only with their thoughts but especially with their feelings.

Looking at other aspects of Jesus’s life, Amelia Glaser analyzes the metaphor of death without trial—in the Christian tradition the crucifixion of Jesus is considered death without trial, and thus an injustice—in the poetry of left-wing Jewish writers, particularly the poet Berish Weinstein (Glaser 44). Glaser demonstrates how racial violence and brutal massacres against African Americans and Communists are imagined in these poems as the crucifixion of Jesus. Similarly, Peggy Rosenthal conducted a study on the portrayal of Jesus as a humorous figure in the poems of Kathleen Norris and Annie Dillard. In their poetry, Jesus is represented in a new and delightful way, departing from the traditional image of a suffering Savior with intense passion (Rosenthal 383). For both poets, the sacred is too awe-inspiring to be directly gazed upon. We can only catch a fleeting glimpse of it.

Likewise, the changing physical image of Jesus in North America was studied by Burton et al., who point out that the typical representation of Jesus in North America is a tall, slender Caucasian man with long flowing light brown hair, fair skin, and light-colored eyes (94). However, this image has undergone changes. For example, the painter Stephen Sawyer portrays Jesus wearing a white robe, sandals, and laughing heartily. Janet McKenzie has also painted Jesus in a robe surrounded by a halo of light, with a yin-yang symbol in the background.

In J. Harley Chapman's study, the symbolism of Jesus is examined in the works of Robert Cummings Neville, particularly focusing on the symbol of Jesus as a friend. The main objective of the research is the pursuit of authentic religiosity. Chapman emphasizes the importance of the imagination in the search for genuine religious experiences that generate images of Jesus, both normative and innovative (Chapman 75). Neta Stahl, on the other hand, reveals a shift in the Jewish perception of Jesus. In traditional Hebrew, Jesus is referred to as an anonymous figure, "Oto ha-Ish," i.e., "That Man," or by the name "Yeshu," which is commonly interpreted as an acronym meaning "May his Name and Memory be obliterated."

However, in the past two decades, Modern Hebrew writers, such as Moses Mendelssohn, have referred to Jesus as a relative of the Jewish people and Judaism, highlighting the religious and national roots of his teachings (Stahl 65). This is an important development in Yiddish and Modern Hebrew historiography. In the context of other cultures, Zhange Ni looks at the Chinese nationalist project and native cultural movement that tended to be anti-religious and anti-Christian (Ni 232). In China, Jesus was considered a foreign figure by poets and readers. Non-Christian writers even viewed Jesus as a premodern, non-native, and even imperialistic symbol. However, some Chinese writers tended to sympathize with the suffering of Jesus during his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Junhyoung Michael extends this study by investigating the portrayal of Jesus as the Lord in the works of Chinese writers from the late Ming Dynasty. The texts date back to 1637, particularly focusing on the painting "Salvator Mundi" (Savior of the World), which is a rare example of a Jesus icon produced by the Chinese missions in the seventeenth century. "The painting demonstrates the cultural adaptation and catechism teachings of the Jesuits in China. The Jesuit adaptation utilized elements of Confucianism to present Catholicism as a complement to and an enhancement of Confucianism" (Shin 195).

The studies mentioned demonstrate that the figure of Jesus in artistic works tends to be dynamic, changing over time and across different cultures, and is influenced by sociocultural contexts and political ideology. These depictions are so far limited to Yiddish, European, North American, Chinese, and African-American cultures.

This study thus asks: “How is Jesus portrayed in modern Indonesian poetry?” This question is significant, considering that Indonesia is home to the largest Muslim population in the world. As a nation with diverse cultures, Indonesia’s depiction of Jesus as a figure that transcends religion and culture can provide a way for sharing experiences of faith within the global community.

The term “religiosity” has a broader meaning than “religion.” The latter specifically refers to the formal and juridical aspects of worshiping God, such as doctrines and laws within an institutional context of a particular faith. On the other hand, a religious person refers to someone who is serious, pious, conscientious in their inner deliberations, and concerned with devotion to the divine (Mangunwijaya 4-8). Therefore, when referring to a religious person, it is not necessary to specify their affiliation with a particular religion. The term carries a more personal and dynamic meaning as it emphasizes the existential aspect of being human. In fact, there are individuals who may not formally adhere to a specific religion but demonstrate a religious nature in their ideals, attitudes, and daily actions (Mangunwijaya 12-13).

Religion primarily refers to the institutional worship of God or the “Divine Realm” in its formal, juridical aspects, including regulations, laws, and the entire organizational interpretation of sacred texts, encompassing societal aspects. Religiosity, on the other hand, focuses on the “depths of the heart,” the inner vibrations of personal conscience. It encompasses personal attitudes that may be mysterious to others, as it reflects the intimacy of one’s inner soul (Hartoko 1991 54). Thus, religiosity surpasses the formal and official aspects of religion. It moves within a communal framework (*Gemeinschaft*) characterized by greater intimacy (Hartoko 1982 56-63).

A careful examination of the relationship between literature and religion in Indonesia has been conducted by Goenawan Muhamad. According to him, the connection between literature and religion can be attributed to two main reasons or motivations (Mohamad 138-40). Firstly, this connection can be found in literary motifs, specifically the issue of identity-search among literary writers. To establish a distinct and daring self-identity, authors immerse themselves in experiences from the religious realm, often referred to as a “territory that has not been extensively explored in the world of literature” (Muhamad 139). Secondly, the overlap of religion and literature involves external factors beyond the realm of literature, such as the influence of categorization and inter-group rivalries, which are racial and political in nature. The process of literary categorization and inter-group rivalries began in the 1950s with the advent of the 1955 elections, which likewise involved religious issues. This period witnessed the emergence of terms such as “Islamic literature,” “Christian/Catholic literature,” and “proletariat literature,” which often proved challenging to define. There arose an awareness of the need for literature from religious groups, which held a strong commitment to their respective faiths.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher collected poems about Jesus authored by modern Indonesian poets, originally written in Indonesian, and published in various books. The primary data supporting the analysis were collected from various relevant sources (Taum, *Dynamical of Truth*, 676). The poets in this study were evaluated using the following criteria: 1) recognition by literary critics or academics and in Indonesian society; 2) significant contributions to the development of literature, such as creating a new writing style or influencing the direction of literature; and 3) ways of addressing issues related to Jesus Christ in their works.

Based on these criteria, the researcher selected twenty-five poems, written by ten poets of various religious backgrounds for analysis. Of these ten Indonesian poets, five are from an Islamic background, two are Protestants, and three, Catholics. Further details of the collected data are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Modern Indonesian Poets, Their Religion, and Works

1. Chairil Anwar (1922-1949)	Islam	1. "Isa" (Jesus) 2. "Doa" (Prayer)
2. Sitor Situmorang (1924-2014)	Protestant	3. "Chatédrade de Chartes" ("Chathedral of Chartes") 4. "Kristus di Medan Perang" (Christ on the Battlefield) 5. "Kamar 1" (Room 1)
3. Subagio Sastrowardoyo (1924-1995)	Islam	6. "Jarak" (Distance) 7. "Tanda" (Sign) 8. "Afrika Selatan" (South Africa) 9. "Leiden 12/10/75"
4. Darmanto Jatman (1942-2018)	Protestant	10. "Aku Menatapmu" (I Gaze Upon You) 11. Apa yang Sesungguhnya Harus Kukatakan) 12. "Apa yang Sesungguhnya Harus Kukatakan" (What Should I Truly Say) 13. "Apakah Kristus Pernah?" (Has Christ Ever?) 14. "Pa Sia Pa" (Who is he) 15. "Tell Me Is There Any Reason Why Should I be Born? Tanya Si Sui Lin si Nyamuk" (Tell Me Is There Any Reason Why Should I be Born? Ask Si Sui Lin, the Mosquito)

5. Linus Suryadi AG (1951-1999)	Catholic	16. "Maria dari Magdala" (Mary of Magdala)
6. Rusli Marzuki Saria (1936 -)	Islam	17. "(Kristus Sawo Matang)" (Christ, the Ripe Sapodilla)
7. WS Rendra (1935-2009)	Catholic	18. "Litani bagi Domba Kudus" (Litany for the Holy Lamb) 19. "Balada Penyaliban" (The Ballad of Crucifixion)
8. Saini KM (1939-)	Islam	20. "Himne" (Hymn)
9. Hartojo Andangdjaja (1930-1990)	Islam	21. "Golgotha, Sebuah Pesan" (Golgotha, A Message)
10. Joko Pinurbo (1962 -)	Catholic	22. "Kredo Celana" (Pants Creeds) 23. "Celana Ibu" (Mothers Pants) 24. "Di Kalvari" (At the Feast At Calvary) 25. "Mandi" (Bathing)

After consolidating the corpus of the study, the researcher performed a close reading of the poems, identifying words, phrases, and/or lines that referred to the figure of Jesus Christ. This data was then analyzed using the theory of religiosity. In analyzing the image of Jesus, various methods can be employed, such as the archaeological method, symptomatic reading, and thick description (Taum 676). This study adopts the thick description method, initially proposed by Clifford Geertz (Geertz 310-23), which aims to comprehend the cultural ideas and concepts underlying cultural phenomena. Geertz' thick description method "allows scholars to delve into layers of meaning and decipher the intricate cultural codes they represent. It focuses on seemingly insignificant elements that contain significant details about cultural practices" (Geertz 312).

In this study, I present poems in their original language, Bahasa Indonesia, along with my own English translation. The translation was done using a semantic translation model, which J. C. Catford asserts, "strives to transfer the contextual meaning of the Source Language (SL) as closely as possible into the syntactic and semantic structure of the Target Language (TL)." Semantic translation focuses on the word level while remaining bound to the culture of the Source Language (SL) (Catford 78).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A close reading of the poems reveals five general themes in relation to Jesus Christ: 1) The suffering Jesus Christ; 2) Christ compelling sinners to repent; 3) Professing Christ's love, yet living in hate; 4) Doubting Christ's Sanctity; and 5) Christ as a Harsh Judge. The following sections will examine each of these in detail.

The Suffering Jesus Christ

A predominant theme depicted in contemporary Indonesian poetry revolves around Jesus as a suffering Redeemer. This imagery resonates strongly in distinct poems penned by four poets of diverse backgrounds: “Isa” (“Jesus”) and “Doa” (“Prayer”) by Chairil Anwar, “Balada Penyaliban” (“The Ballad of Crucifixion”) and “Litani bagi Domba Kudus” (“Litany for the Holy Lamb”) by WS Rendra, “Mandi” (“Bathing”) by Joko Pinurbo, and “Himne” (“Hymn”) by Saini KM. Interestingly, Chairil Anwar and Saini KM identify as Muslim poets, while WS Rendra and Joko Pinurbo are Catholic poets.

Chairil Anwar, a prominent Indonesian poet with an Islamic background and a pioneer of modern Indonesian poetry, was the first modern Indonesian poet to introduce the imagery of Jesus in his works. He was the first to write about Jesus Christ, and his contemplation on Jesus’ suffering is subtle and poignant. This is evident in his two poems, “Isa” (“Jesus”) and “Doa” (“Prayer”).

ISA Kepada Nasrani Sejati	JESUS For True Christians
Itu Tubuh mengucur darah mengucur darah rubuh patah	That Body, pouring blood, pouring blood, crumbles, breaks,
mendampar tanya: aku salah?	landed in question: am I at fault?
kulihat Tubuh mengucur darah aku berkaca dalam darah	I see the Body pouring blood, I reflect within the blood,
terbayang terang di mata masa bertukar rupa ini segera	a vision illuminated in the eyes of time, this form changes swiftly,
mengatup luka aku bersuka	closing the wounds, I rejoice.
Itu Tubuh mengucur darah mengucur darah	That Body, pouring blood, pouring blood.
12 November 1943	November 12, 1943

Chairil Anwar depicts Jesus’ suffering as if he himself were witness to the figure of the Body pouring out blood and enduring painful accusations. The suffering of Christ, whose body bleeds, collapses, and breaks, is borne not of His own fault but of the sins of humanity (“landed in question: am I at fault?”). The bleeding body continuously leads the poet to self-reflection (“I reflect within the blood”),

envisioning repentance, transformation, enlightenment, and salvation (“a vision illuminated in the eyes of time”, “this form changes swiftly”). When the wounds on Jesus’ body close (as if healed), the poet glance with joy, glad that His suffering is diminished (“closing the wounds/I rejoice”). However, this joy is not lasting, as the Body continues to pour out blood, redeeming sin after sin. Thus, in life we bear witness to the continuous suffering of Jesus—His carrying of the cross and the suffering never cease.

Chairil Anwar’s reflection on life, sin, and Jesus is reiterated in “Doa” (“Prayer”), written in November 1943, once again addressed “to the steadfast believers” (Teeuw, *Sang Kristus* 122), most likely the “true Christian”; the poet’s admiration for the figure of Christ (whom he came to know through his encounter with a true Christian) leaves him in awe, prompting him to reflect on his own sins and turn to Him.

DOA kepada pemeluk teguh	PRAYER to the steadfast believers
Tuhanku Dalam termangu Aku masih menyebut namamu	My Lord, In awe, I still utter Your name
Biar susah sungguh mengingat Kau penuh seluruh	Though it is truly difficult to remember You entirely
cayaMu panas suci tinggal kerdip lilin di kelam sunyi	Your unwavering faith burns, a flickering candle in the silent darkness
Tuhanku aku hilang bentuk remuk	My Lord, I am lost, shattered
Tuhanku aku mengembara di negeri asing	My Lord, I wander in a foreign land
Tuhanku di pintuMu aku mengetuk aku tidak bisa berpaling	My Lord, at Your door, I knock I cannot turn away
13 November 1943	13th November 1943

Unlike in the poem “Di Masjid” (“In the Mosque”), God in “Doa” (Prayer”) is no longer viewed as an adversary by the poet. The names “God” and “Jesus” are used interchangeably in this poem by Chairil Anwar. God (portrayed as the Body that sheds blood) leaves the poet in awe, and in his contemplation, he continues to invoke His name, despite initial doubts. He addresses and remembers God entirely, holding within him an intense and sacred sense of faith (“Your unwavering faith burns bright”). Although faint, like “the flicker of a candle in silent darkness,” this

faith is kept alive by the poet, who continues to feel its warmth and witness the majesty of God.

In such moments, Chairil Anwar laments: “My Lord, I am lost, shattered.” These words evoke the same feeling captured by the lines “That Body/ pouring blood,/ pouring blood,/ crumbles,/ breaks” in the poem “Isa.” The poet’s sense of being is shattered by sins (“I reflect within the blood”). He feels like “wandering in a foreign land” where people do not greet each other and where everything feels unfamiliar. This emotional turmoil signals the poet’s awareness of his moral failings before a holy God, emphasizing the emotional turmoil caused by a sense of guilt. Ultimately, he decides to “knock” at Jesus’ “door” because he truly “cannot turn away.” Thus, in Chairil’s poems, Jesus, who suffered for man’s sins, is humanity’s Savior.

Another poet who shares Chairil Anwar’s vision is W.S. Rendra, a great Indonesian poet also known as “The Peacock.” Rendra is recognized as a theater leader and performer, director, and captivating poetry reader. When he was writing poems about Jesus Christ, Rendra was still a Catholic. Like Chairil Anwar, he depicts the suffering of Christ as a means of humanity’s salvation in “Ballada Penyaliban” (Ballad of the Crucifixion) and “Litani bagi Domba Kudus” (“Litany for the Holy Lamb”).

Kutipan Puisi	Poetry Excerpt
<p>BALLADA PENYALIBAN W.S. Rendra</p> <p>la melangkah ke Golgota jantung berwarna paling agung mengunyah dosa demi dosa dikunyahnya dan betapa getirnya.</p> <p>Tiada jubah terbentang di jalanan bunda menangis dengan rambut pada debu dan menangis pula segala perempuan kota.</p> <p>–Perempuan! mengapa kau tangisi diriku dan tiada kau tangisi dirimu?</p> <p>Air mawar merah dari tubuhnya menyiram jalanan kering jalanan liang-liang jiwa yang papa dan pembantaian berlangsung atas taruhan dosa.</p> <p>Akan diminumnya dari tuwung kaca anggur darah lambungnya sendiri dan pada tarikan napas terakhir bertuba –Bapa, selesailah semua!</p>	<p>BALLAD OF THE CRUCIFIXION W.S. Rendra</p> <p>He walks to Golgotha, the most majestic heart, chewing sin after sin, how bitter it tastes.</p> <p>No cloak is spread on the streets, the mother weeps with hair in the dust, and all the women of the city weep.</p> <p>–Women! Why do you weep for me and not for yourselves?</p> <p>Red rosewater from his body flows through dry streets, the streets of hollow souls, where destruction and slaughter occur for the sake of sins.</p> <p>He will drink from the golden goblet, the wine of his own stomach, and with his final breath he murmurs, –Father, it is finished!</p>

The ten-stanza “Ballada Penyaliban” is a dramatic portrayal of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, intertwined with reflections and prayers from the poet’s heart. The poem begins with Jesus’ journey to Mount Golgotha: “Jesus walks to Golgotha / carrying a wooden cross / like a white cotton lamb,” followed by a description of the situation on the streets: “No roses on the streets / no palm leaves / the white lamb absorbs torment and punishment / bowed down by an immensely beloved task.” This contemplation is connected to a contradictory preceding event, when Jesus was praised and welcomed with palm leaves in the city of Jerusalem. Here, the poet alludes to Abraham, known as the father of all believers and the biological ancestor of the Israelite nation.

<p>Mentari meleleh segala menetes dari lupa dan leluhur kita Ibrahim berlutut, dua tangan pada Bapa:</p> <p>– Bapa kami di sorga telah terbantai domba paling putih atas altar paling agung. Bapa kami di sorga berilah kami bianglala!</p>	<p>The sun melts away, everything dripping from forgetfulness and our ancestor, Ibrahim, kneeling, both hands toward the Father:</p> <p>–“Our Father in heaven, the purest white lamb has been sacrificed on the grandest altar. Our Father in heaven, grant us a rainbow!”</p>
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Rendra continues to depict the journey of Jesus. “He walks to Golgotha, / the most sublime heart, / chewing sin after sin, / and how bitter it is.” He reminds us once again that “There are no robes spread on the streets, / the mother weeps with her hair in the dust, / and all the women of the city weep.” This sorrowful journey is a path to redeem humanity: “The red rosewater from his body drenches the dry streets, / the streets of desolate souls / where anguish and slaughter take place / in the gamble of sin.” The words point to a deep reverence for Christ’s figure. Note the use of phrases such as “like a white cotton lamb,” “the white lamb absorbs torment and punishment,” “bowed down by an immensely cherished task,” “the most sublime heart,” and “the red rosewater from his body drenches the dry streets.” These depict Christ as the ultimate sacrificial figure, bearing the weight of humanity’s sins with pure, selfless devotion. By comparing Him to a “white cotton lamb” and describing His journey as one where “the red rosewater from his body drenches the dry streets,” the poet underscores the innocence and purity of Christ’s sacrifice, alongside the immense suffering He endures for the sake of redemption. The imagery of “the most sublime heart” and “the white lamb absorbing torment and punishment” convey a profound reverence for Jesus, portraying His path to Golgotha as both tragic and spiritually transcendent.

Similarly, Rendra's "Litani bagi Domba Kudus" ("Litany for the Holy Lamb"), captures the struggle and heroism of Jesus Christ in saving humanity. The poem expresses a deep spiritual devotion and hope in divine salvation.

LITANI BAGI DOMBA KUDUS	LITANY FOR THE HOLY LAMB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Yesus kecil domba yang kudus - Lapangkanlah dadamu, ya Domba Kudus! + Yang terbantai di tengah siang. - Limpahkanlah kiranya berkatMu bagai air! + Yang berdarah bagai anggur. - Meluaplah ampun dari samodra kasihMu! + Yang menyala bagai kandil. - Kami semua adalah milikMu! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Little Jesus, the holy lamb - Open your heart, O Holy Lamb! + Who was slaughtered at midday. - Pour forth your blessings like water! + Who bled like wine. - Overflow with forgiveness from the ocean of your love! + Who blazed like a candle. - We all belong to you!

In Catholicism, the term "litany" refers to a series of prayerful supplications that are chanted or sung by the prayer leader to which a congregation responds. This form of prayer may have been adopted by the early Church from the Jewish community's way of praying (see Psalms 118 and 136). The Catholic Church has a considerable number of litanies, such as the Litany of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Litany of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, the Litany of the Saints, the Litany of St. Joseph, and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There are also litanies dedicated to specific saints, such as the Litany of St. Vincent, the Litany of St. Aloysius, the Litany of St. Anthony, among others. "Litani bagi Domba Kudus" is often recited as a prayer by Catholic communities in Indonesia. This poem reveals the divinity and grandeur of Christ in religious and literary language.

The dramatization of the passion of Jesus Christ in the poems above is also evident in Joko Pinurbo's poem "Mandi" ("Bathing"). While Rendra's poem aligns with historical and biblical accounts found in the Scriptures (see Luke 22:14-23; John 18:13-24; Matthew 26:53-66; Mark 14:57-64), Pinurbo's portrayal follows his own poetic tendencies, which tend to diverge from historical narratives. In this poem, Pinurbo depicts the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as a forced bathing ritual of the victim, whose immense suffering is expressed in the poem.

MANDI	BATHING
<p>Korban segera diseret ke kamar mandi dan diperintahkan berdiri di depan. Wajahnya tertunduk pucat, tubuhnya gemetar, dan matanya seperti kenangan yang redup perlahan. Belum sempat pemimpin rombongan menanyakan tanggal lahir dan asal-usul korban, orang-orang yang sudah tak sabar menyaksikan sekaratnya berseru nyaring: "Mandikan dia! Mandikan dia!"</p>	<p>The victim was swiftly dragged into the bathroom and instructed to stand before them. Their face pale, head bowed, body trembling, their eyes like fading memories. Before the leader of the group could inquire about the victim's date of birth and origin, those impatient witnesses of their impending demise cried out loudly, "Bathe them! Bathe them!"</p>
<p>Bahkan bulan tak berani bicara; dengan takut-takut ia melongok lewat genting kaca. Sepi makin beringas. Ia cengkeram tubuh kurus korban, ia serahkan lehernya kepada yang terhormat tali gantungan.</p>	<p>Even the moon dared not speak; timidly peering through the glass tiles. Silence grew fiercer. It clutched the emaciated body, surrendering its neck to the esteemed noose.</p>
<p>Krrrkk! Sepi melenggang pergi sambil terbahak-bahak, meninggalkan korban berkeleatan sendirian. Lalu, di hening malam itu, tiba-tiba terdengar seorang bocah menjerit pilu: "Ibu, tolong lepaskan aku, Ibu!"</p>	<p>Crrack! Silence swaggered away, laughing uproariously, leaving the victim stranded and contorted. Then, in the stillness of that night, a child's agonizing scream pierced the air, "Mother, please release me, Mother!"</p>

The dilemma referred to here is Jesus Christ's mortal struggle with his impending suffering and crucifixion, specifically to his human experience of fear and anguish. In the historical (or perhaps more accurately, biblical) account, Jesus expresses this struggle when he prays to God, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me" (Matthew 26:38), highlighting his deep sorrow and willingness to follow God's will. The poem "Mandi" ("Bathing") by Joko Pinurbo mirrors this emotional turmoil but presents it with a twist. Here, the poet has Jesus cry out to his mother in agony, "Mother, please release me, Mother!"—recasting the figure of his mother as the one he turns to in his suffering. This shift emphasizes the deeply human side of Jesus's experience, underscoring the emotional intensity and vulnerability of his suffering.

Jesus is also depicted as a savior in the poetry of Saiki K.M., a Muslim poet.

<p>HIMNE Saini K. M.</p> <p>Bahkan batu-batu yang keras dan bisu Mengagungan namaMu dengan cara sendiri Menggeliat derita pada lekuk dan liku bawah sayatan khianat dan dusta.</p> <p>Dengan hikmat selalu kupandang patungMu menitikkan darah dari tangan dan kaki dari mahkota duri dan sembulan paku Yang dikarati dosa manusia.</p> <p>Tanpa luka-luka yang lebar terbuka dunia kehilangan sumber kasih Besarlah mereka yang dalam nestapa mengenalmu tersalib di dalam hati.</p>	<p>HYMN By Saini K. M.</p> <p>Even the hard and silent stones, Honor Your name in their own way, They twist in anguish, within the curves and bends, under the slashes of betrayal and lies.</p> <p>With wisdom, I always gaze upon Your statue, Drops of blood flow from Your hands and feet, From the crown of thorns and the rusty nails, Marred by the sins of humanity.</p> <p>Without wide-open wounds, the world loses its source of love, They who know You are crucified in their hearts, Are truly blessed in their deepest sorrow.</p>
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Despite not being a follower of the Christian faith, Saini K. M. portrays Jesus with clarity and grandeur: “Even the hard and silent stones / Honor Your name in their own way.” The suffering of Christ is described as the “slashes of betrayal and lies” inflicted by humanity. Thus, the poet “gazes upon [His] statue,” a common practice among Christians who reflect upon their sins. Crucifixion in the poem is also understood as an imperative to save the world: “Without wide-open wounds, / the world loses its source of love.” At the pinnacle of his reflection, Saini K. M. firmly proclaims, “They are truly blessed in their deepest sorrow / who know You are crucified in their hearts.”

The belief in Christ as the Savior of humanity is also evident in Joko Pinurbo’s “Kredo Celana” (“The Creed of Pants”). The poem adorns Jesus Christ with a pair of jeans as a way of philosophizing humanity’s salvation through His death. In the poem, the poet finds Jesus’ jeans at a flea market, torn and stained with blood on the knees; he surmises that this could have once belonged to a hungry thief, a teacher burdened with debt, or a writer oppressed by poverty. The poet buys the jeans and proudly wears them while reading poetry in a performance hall.

<p>Kredo Celana Joko Pinurbo</p> <p>Yesus yang seksi dan murah hati, kutemukan celana jinmu yang koyak di sebuah pasar loak. Dengan uang yang tersisa dalam dompetku kusambar ia jadi milikku.</p> <p>Ada noda darah pada dengkulnya. Dan aku ingat sabdamu: "Siapa berani mengenakan celanaku akan mencecap getir darahnya."</p> <p>Mencecap darahmu? Siapa takut! Sudah sering aku berdarah, walau darahku tak segarang darahmu.</p> <p>Siapa gerangan telah melego celanamu? Pencuri yang kelaparan, pak guru yang dihajar hutang, atau pengarang yang dianiaya kemiskinan? Entahlah. Yang pasti celanamu pernah dipakai bermacam-macam orang.</p> <p>Yesus yang seksi dan rendah hati, malam ini aku akan baca puisi di sebuah gedung pertunjukan dan akan kupakai celanamu yang sudah agak pudar warnanya. Boleh dong sekali-sekali aku tampil gaya.</p> <p>Di panggung yang remang-remang sajak-sajakku meluncur riang. Makin lama tubuhku terasa menyusut dan lambat-laun menghilang. Tinggal celanamu bergoyang-goyang di depan mikrofon, sementara sajak-sajakku terus menggema dan aku lebur ke dalam gema. "Hidup raja celana!" Hadirin terkesima.</p> <p>Kelak akan ada seorang ibu yang menjahit sajak-sajakku menjadi sehelai celana dan celanaku akan merindukan celanamu.</p>	<p>The Creed of Pants By Joko Pinurbo</p> <p>Jesus, both alluring and generous, I found your torn jeans in a flea market. With the remaining money in my wallet, I snatched them, making them mine.</p> <p>There is a bloodstain on the knee. And I remember your words: "Whoever dares to wear my pants will taste the bitterness of my blood."</p> <p>Taste your blood? Who is afraid! I have bled many times, though my blood is not as fierce as yours.</p> <p>Who, I wonder, let go of your pants? A hungry thief, a teacher burdened with debt, or a writer oppressed by poverty? I don't know. What is certain is that your pants have been worn by various people.</p> <p>Jesus, both alluring and humble, tonight I will recite poetry in a performance hall and I will wear your pants that have slightly faded in color. Allow me to display some style.</p> <p>On the dimly lit stage, my poems flow joyfully. As time passes, my body feels smaller, gradually disappearing. Only your pants sway in front of the microphone, while my poems continue to echo and I dissolve into the echoes. "Long live the king of pants!" The audience is amazed.</p> <p>In the future, there will be a mother who stitches my poems into a piece of clothing, and my pants will long for your pants.</p>
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Saini K. M. and Joko Pinurbo both explore the profound suffering and significance of Jesus' crucifixion in unique and symbolic ways. Saini's portrayal emphasizes the depth of Christ's pain and sacrifice, framing it as a source of love essential to humanity. He conveys a reverence for the enduring impact of Jesus' suffering, even for those outside the faith, and ties it to an inner crucifixion within believers. Pinurbo, meanwhile, uses the metaphor of Jesus' worn jeans to reflect the humanity of Christ's sacrifice, suggesting that Jesus' suffering resonates with the struggles of everyday individuals. Together, these interpretations underscore the enduring power of Christ's sacrifice as both a symbol and a source of universal compassion.

Christ Compelling Sinners to Repent

The presence of Jesus as a human being sometimes evokes a sense of guilt in individuals as they are reminded of (and prompted to repent for) their sins. This irony arises from the fact that Jesus is not merely a figure of peace and inner tranquility but is also one who confronts the complexity of humanity. Interestingly, this kind of awareness is found among poets from a Christian background. This is evident in the poems "Aku MenatapMu" ("I Gaze Upon You"), "Apa Yang Sebenarnya Harus Kukatakan" ("What Should I Truly Say"), "Pa Sia Pa" ("Who is He"), and "Tell Me Is There Any Reason Why Should I Be Born?" Tanya si Sulin si Nyamuk" ("Tell Me Is There Any Reason Why Should I be Born? Ask Sulin the Mosquito") by Darmanto Jatman; "Chatedrale de Chartes," ("Cathedral of Chartres") and "Kamar 1" ("Room 1") by Sitor Situmorang; and "Leiden 12/1078" by Subagio Sastrowardoyo.

AKU MENATAPMU Oleh Darmanto Jatman	I GAZE UPON YOU By Darmanto Jatman
Maka malam pun sobek Matahari gugur dalam ledakan bom Ketika pertempuran tanpa medan tanpa lawan itu	Thus, the night tore apart The sun fell in the explosion of bombs In the battle without terrain, without adversary
Jarak kita Sengkarut sistem moral macam-macam Yang membenamkan Tuhan ke dasar rawa Sengkerut dogma theologia macam- macam...	The distance between us Entangled in various moral systems That submerge God into the depths of the swamp Crinkled dogmas of various theologies...
Kekasihku Betapapun kemelutnya Jangan lepaskan tanganmu! Tangan kita yang bertautan – Itulah Kristus pada jaman farisi Tangan kita yang bertautan – Itulah kedamaian kita kini.	My beloved No matter how tumultuous it may be Do not let go of my hand! Our hands intertwined – That is Christ in the time of the Pharisees Our hands intertwined – That is our peace now.

The poem “Aku MenatapMu” (I Gaze Upon You) depicts the profound dilemma between repentance and betrayal. Christ, salvation, and humanity’s repentance are pillars of Christianity. However, despite his belief, the poet is also in an affair with a “dark lover.” Hence, he still accepts Christ, just like the Pharisees who hypocritically pretended to follow religious teachings. The persona remains determined to continue his affair. “My beloved / No matter how tumultuous it may be / Do not let go of my hand!” The poem explores why the poet chooses to “remain with his dark lover.” It proposes that the answer is that there is peace within it, just as in the time of Jesus and the Pharisees. “Our hands intertwined / –That is Christ in the time of the Pharisees / Our hands intertwined / –That is our peace now.”

The theme of repentance for a “dark lover, affair partner” or from a “Love that always troubles people” is also clearly revealed in the poem “Apa yang Sesungguhnya Ingin Kukatakan” (“What Should I Truly Say”). In this poem, the poet implicitly questions (due to the reluctance to express it explicitly) the rumors that Christ had a relationship with Mary Magdalene, the beautiful prostitute who anointed His feet with perfume.

In another poem by Jatman titled “Pa sia Pa,” (“Who is He”), the poet realizes that he is actually not afraid of God. He explains that this is because “God has rewarded me / with difficulties / as my destiny.” Nonetheless, the sound of the tolling bell that mimics the rhythm of “Pa Sia Pa” (Who is He?), which seems to seek out sinners, makes him uneasy and even fearful. As the poem ends, the poet’s fear transforms into astonishment as the bell seeks him out. This poem depicts the profound dilemma between repentance on the one hand and betrayal (according to moral standards) on the other. While repentance and salvation are core values in Christianity, the attachment to the pleasures of sin enslaves humanity: “My beloved / No matter how tumultuous it may be / Do not let go of your hand!”

The poem “Tell Me Is There Any Reason Why Should I be Born? Tanya Si Sui Lin si Nyamuk” (“Tell Me Is There Any Reason Why Should I be Born? Ask Si Sui Lin, the Mosquito”) is about a mosquito named Sui Lin which is fascinated by the warm skin of Jesus on Easter morning. The poem is a commemoration of Christ’s resurrection from the tomb after His suffering, crucifixion, and burial. As a commemoration of the resurrection of Christ, Easter is synonymous with both repentance and joy because humanity has been saved. However, the tragic tale of an unfortunate female, the mosquito Sui Lin, which is deeply in love with Jesus Christ, ends with her death—smack!—“oh my poor Jesus / my Jesus / my twin dove from when I was born before / I can no longer play this symbolic role / being a mosquito / that inevitably must suck your blood /—oh forgive me /—smack!”

Repentance through Christ is also the subject of Situmorang’s “Chatedrale de Chartes” (“Catedral of Chartes”). The serene atmosphere during Easter brings about repentance as it provides a quiet and reflective space for self-examination.

This calmness allows individuals to focus inwardly, contemplate their actions, and genuinely seek forgiveness, deepening their connection to the sacredness of the occasion. The poet captures this stillness, creating a setting that encourages reflection on one's faith and life choices, which leads to a profound, clear contemplative repentance.

Cathédrale de Chartres Sitor Situmorang	Cathedral of Chartres by Sitor Situmorang
<p>Akan bicarakah Ia di malam sepi Kala salju jatuh dan burung putih-putih Sekali-sekali ingin menyerah hati Dalam lindungan sembahyang bersih.</p>	<p>Will He speak on quiet nights When snow falls and white birds Occasionally surrender their hearts In the sanctuary of pure prayers?</p>
<p>Ah, Tuhan, tak bisa kita lagi bertemu Dalam doa bersama kumpulan umat Ini kubawa cinta di mata kekasih kelu Tiada terpisah hidup dari kiamat</p>	<p>Ah, Lord, we can no longer meet In collective prayers of the congregation I bring this love in the eyes of my beloved Life is inseparable from doomsday</p>
<p>Menangis ia tersedu di hari Paskah Ketika kami ziarah di Chartres di gereja Doanya kuyu di warna kaca basah Kristus telah disalib manusia habis kata</p>	<p>She wept on Easter day When we visited Chartres in the church Her prayers whispered on the wet stained glass Christ was crucified, humanity lost words</p>
<p>Ketika malam itu sebelum ayam berkokok Dan penduduk Chartres meninggalkan kermis Tersedu ia dalam daunan malam rontok Mengembara ingatan di hujan gerimis</p>	<p>On that night before the cock crowed And the people of Chartres left the fair She sobbed amidst the falling leaves of the night Roaming memories in the drizzling rain</p>
<p>Pada ibu, isteri, anak serta Isa Hati tersibak antara zinah dan setia Kasihku satu, Tuhannya satu Hidup dan kiamat bersatu padu Demikianlah kisah cinta kami yang bermula di pekan kembang Di pagi buta sekitar Notre-dame de Paris Di musim bunga dan mata remang</p>	<p>Between mother, wife, child, and Jesus The heart is torn between sin and loyalty My love is one, the Lord is one Life and doomsday are intertwined Such is the story of our love That began in the week of flowers In the early morning around Notre-Dame de Paris In the spring and dimly lit eyes</p>
<p>Demikianlah kisah kisah hari Paskah Ketika seluruh alam diburu resah Oleh goda, zinah, cinta dan kota Karena dia, aku dan isteri yang setia Maka malam itu di ranjang keinginan Terbawa kesucian nyanyi gereja kepercayaan Bersatu kutuk nafsu dan rahmat Tuhan Lambaian cinta setia dan pelukan perempuan</p>	<p>Such is the story of Easter When the entire world is troubled By temptation, sin, love, and the city Because of her, me, and the faithful wife So that night in the inn Sanctity carried the hymn of faith Condemning desires and embracing God's grace The embrace of faithful love and a woman</p>

..... Demikianlah Cerita Paskah Ketika tanah basah Air mata resah Dan bunga-bunga merekah Di bumi Perancis Di bumi manis Ketika Kristus disalibkan.	...Thus ...Is the story of Easter ...When the earth is wet ...With restless tears ...And blooming flowers ...In the land of France ...In the sweet land ...When Christ was crucified.
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This poem reveals the conflict between human fidelity to God (Christ) and to the poet's love affair ("Condemning desires and embracing God's grace"). Christ's crucifixion is presented as a moment for the poet to contemplate his sins and wrongdoings. Situmorang's perspective is anthropocentric (see Atmosuwito 58). The act of repentance intended to take place on Easter night remains unfulfilled because, before the Cross, the poet also brings his "beloved," leaving his heart restless. The poet feels a sense of betrayal from those he loves. "Between mother, wife, child, and Jesus / The heart is torn between sin and loyalty / My love is one, my Lord is one / Life and doomsday are intertwined."

Likewise, sin, weakness, and neglect of "drinking Christ's blood" (holy communion) are the subject matter of two of Pinurbo's poems, "Di Perjamuan" ("At the Feast") and "Di Kalvari" ("At Calvary").

DI PERJAMUAN Joko Pinurbo Aku tak akan minta anggur darahMu lagi. Yang tahun lalu saja belum habis, masih tersimpan di kulkas. Maaf, aku sering lupa meminumnya, kadang bahkan lupa rasanya. Aku belum bisa menjadi pemabuk yang baik dan benar, Sayang. (2006)	AT THE FEAST By Joko Pinurbo I will not ask for Your wine of blood again. Last year's still remains, untouched, kept in the fridge. Forgive me, I often forget to partake of it, sometimes even forgetting its taste. I have not yet become a good and proper reveler, my Beloved. (2006)
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In the poem "Di Perjamuan" ("At the Feast,") the poet engages in an intimate conversation with Christ, addressing Him with tender affection as "Beloved." With humility, the poet apologizes to the Beloved in the midst of the sacred feast (Holy Eucharist) and declares that he will not ask for Christ's blood (wine) again, as a portion of it remains, still unconsumed, preserved in the refrigerator. This choice of "refrigerator" is intriguing as it alludes to modern, everyday living. The wine, or Blood of Christ, symbolizes Jesus' sacrifice, offered directly within the sacred context

of communion in the church. The essence of communion is a shared experience in faith; thus, the act of storing Christ's Blood in a refrigerator diminishes its spiritual meaning and might even be seen as a disrespect for the sacrament. In Catholic theology, Christ's Blood is meant to be consumed immediately, not stored or removed from its liturgical context. In this poem, the poet acknowledges his own shortcomings, realizing that he has not yet become a true reveler (one who wholeheartedly loves and embodies the Blood of Christ as wine).

<p>DI KALVARI Joko Pinurno</p> <p>Salibmu tinggi sekali. Ya, lebih baik kaupanjat tubuhmu sendiri.</p> <p>2007</p>	<p>AT CALVARY By Joko Pinurbo</p> <p>Your cross is towering high. Indeed, it is better for you to climb it on your own.</p> <p>2007</p>
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In "Di Kalvari" ("At Calvary"), the poet becomes acutely aware of the weight of the Cross and Christ's suffering. What humanity can do is to "climb its own body" to reach the towering Cross, a reference to the necessity of repentance.

Professing Christ's love, yet living in hate

Several modern Indonesian poems also address the irony between faith (love of Christ) and reality (neglecting the suffering of fellow human beings) as a central theme. In these poems, Christ is understood as the "White-faced Christ," worshipped by White people even as they continue to inflict violence and suffering on Black people. This theme is particularly apparent in the context of Apartheid politics in South Africa. Despite the grievous actions of White people, they continue to sing "Hosanna" and "march joyfully towards heaven." In this poem, it is explicitly stated that heaven is not for Black people: "But my skin is black / And heaven is no place for me / black earth / black devil / black sin." Meanwhile, white people act with impunity: "They may hunt / They may burn / They may shoot." This starkly illustrates the "irony between faith and reality."

AFRIKA SELATAN Subagio Sastrowardoyo	SOUTH AFRICA by Subagio Sastrowardoyo
<p>Kristus pengasih putih wajah. –kulihat dalam buku injil bergambar dan arca-arca gereja dari marmer— Orang putih bersorak: “Hosannah!” dan ramai berarak ke sorga.</p> <p>Tapi kulitku hitam. Dan sorga bukan tempatku berdiam. bumi hitam iblis hitam dosa hitam Karena itu: aku bumi lata aku iblis laknat aku dosa melekat aku sampah di tengah jalan.</p> <p>Mereka membuat rel dan sepur hotel dan kapal terbang. Mereka membuat sekolah dan kantor pos gereja dan restoran. Tapi tidak buatku. Tidak buatku.</p> <p>Diamku di batu-batu pinggir kota di gubug-gubug penuh nyamuk di rawa-rawa berasap.</p> <p>Mereka boleh memburu Mereka boleh membakar Mereka boleh menembak</p> <p>Tetapi istriku terus berbiak seperti rumput di pekarangan mereka seperti lumut di tembok mereka seperti cendawan di roti mereka. Sebab bumi hitam milik kami Tambang intan milik kami. Gunung natal milik kami.</p> <p>Mereka boleh membunuh. Mereka boleh membunuh. Mereka boleh membunuh. Sebab mereka kulit putih dan Kristus pengasih putih wajah.</p>	<p>The compassionate Christ with a white face. –I see it in illustrated gospel books and marble church statues— White people shout: “Hosannah!” and march joyfully towards heaven.</p> <p>But my skin is black. And heaven is not my dwelling place. black earth black devil black sin That’s why: I am cursed earth I am damned devil I am sin personified I am garbage in the middle of the road.</p> <p>They build railways and hotels and airplanes. They build schools and post offices churches and restaurants. But not for me. Not for me.</p> <p>I stay silent among the stones on the city outskirts in mosquito-filled huts in smoky swamps.</p> <p>They can hunt They can burn They can shoot</p> <p>But my wife continues to multiply like grass in their yards like moss on their walls like mushrooms on their bread. Because the black earth is ours The diamond mines are ours. The ancestral mountains are ours.</p> <p>They can kill. They can kill. They can kill. Because they are white-skinned and the compassionate Christ has a white face.</p>

The gap between faith and reality is also problematized by Sastrowardoyo in “Jarak” (“Distance”). Distance refers to the space between two points or objects or to the difference or separation between two entities in a physical, geographical, social, or even emotional sense.

JARAK Subagio Sastrowardoyo	DISTANCE Subagio Sastrowardoyo
<p>Bapak di sorga, Biar kita jaga jarak ini antara kau dan aku Kau hilang dalam keputihan ufuk Dan aku tersuruk ke hutan buta. Hiburku hanya burung di dahan dan jauh ke lembah gerau pasar di dusun. Aku tahu keriuhan ini hanya sekali terdengar Sesudah itu padam segala suara dan aku memburu ke pintu rumah.</p> <p>Bapak di sorga, biarlah kita jaga jarak ini Sebab aku ini manusia mual Sekali kau tampak telanjang di hutan Aku akan berteriak seperti Jahudi: "Salib!" Dan kau akan tinggal sebungkah lumpur lekat di kayu.</p>	<p>Father in heaven, Let us maintain this distance between you and me You disappear into the whiteness of the horizon And I stumble into the blind forest. My solace is only the birds on the branches and the distant market tumult in the village. I know this commotion is only heard once Afterwards, all sounds fade and I rush to the door of the house.</p> <p>Father in heaven, let us keep this distance For I am a nauseated human being Once I see you naked in the forest I will scream like a Jew: "Cross!" And you will remain as a clump of clinging mud on the wood.</p>

In the poem "Jarak" ("Distance,") Jesus on the Cross is perceived as meaningless due to the vast distance between the poet/humanity and Him. Jesus is nothing more than a clump of mud attached to wood. The prayer of humanity is clear: to maintain their distance with Lord Jesus. If Jesus is the bright horizon (dawn), humanity is the darkness of the blind forest. There is a distance that separates light and darkness. This poem conveys, in a somber manner, the profound separation between the divine and human through the unbridgeable distance between light and darkness.

In "Kristus Sawomatang" ("Christ, the Ripe Sapodilla"), Rusli Marzuki Saria depicts Christ as a "half-smoked cigarette butt" with a sawomatang (sapodilla) color picked up by a street sweeper. As a cigarette butt, Christ is trampled upon by everyone passing by. Meanwhile, inside the Cathedral, the people celebrating Mass shout and pledge to Christ to "carry the Cross to Golgotha" while contemplating Jesus's own words at the height of his suffering: "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani!" ("My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me!"). The poet highlights the irony between people's faith in the crucified Christ (in the Cathedral) and His actual condition: "Christ lies on the road, ripe sapodilla in color / then picked up by a sweaty street sweeper. / A half-smoked cigarette butt remains / after being stepped on by people passing by, / The Cathedral is holding a Mass:/ Our Christ carries the Cross to Golgotha/ 'Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani!'"

KRISTUS SAWOMATANG

Rusli Marzuki Saria

I

Kristus sawomatang tergeletak di jalan
kemudian dipungut tukang sapu yang
berkeringat.

Sebutir puntung rokok termangu
setelah dipijak orang lalu.

Katedral sedang mengantarkan misa:

Kristus kami menyandang Salib ke Golgota
"Eli, Eli, Lama Sabahtani!"

II

Mati adalah untuk hidup kembali
dalam gaung waktu
di mana yang hakiki menyeringai menanti
di bukit-bukit penyamunan
orang-orang tidak pernah kembali.

Suatu waktu

kita begitu bijak: melawan maut dengan
tinju

Kita tinju dinding, kita hardik keliling
Seperti pahlawan yang pulang dari medan
perang

penuh bulu. Keyakinan begitu akrab
dalam dencing peluru.

Ah, kematian bukanlah salah satu jalan
terbaik

buat lari dari kenyataan hidup sehari- hari!
Itu desismu.

III

Saat yang paling baik adalah ketika
mendongengi

anak-anak dengan cerita kancil.

Tidak terlihat dalam kerut

kening. Sederhana dan tidak ada filsafat

seperti tukang sapu yang
menemukan Kristus sawomatang di jalan.

Sajak-sajakku adalah sapu

dan aku si tukang sapu yang

temukan puntung rokok

tergeletak di jalan.

CHRIST, THE RIPE SAPODILLA

Rusli Marzuki Saria

I

Christ, the ripe sapodilla lies on the road
then picked up by a sweaty street sweeper.

A half-smoked cigarette butt remains
after being stepped on by people passing
by.

The Cathedral is holding a Mass:

Our Christ carries the Cross to Golgotha
"Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani!"

II

Death is to live again
in the echo of time

where the genuine grins await

on the hills of atonement

people never return.

At one point

we were so wise: fighting death with fists

We punched walls, scolded all around

Like heroes returning from the battlefield

covered in feathers. Belief so familiar

in the dance of bullets.

Ah, death is not one of the best ways

to escape the realities of daily life!

That's your disdain.

III

The best moment is when telling stories
to children with tales of the mouse deer.

Not seen in the furrows

of the brow. Simple and devoid of

philosophy

like a street sweeper who

finds Christ, the ripe sapodilla, on the road.

My poems are brooms

and I am the street sweeper who

discovers a cigarette butt

lying on the road.

In the poem “Kristus Sawomatang” (“Christ, The Ripe Sapodilla”) by Rusli Marzuki Saria (a Muslim poet), the meaning of Christ is depicted as a symbol of marginalized and forgotten humanity, lying in the streets and picked up by a sweating street sweeper. Christ is not merely a divine figure suffering on the Cross; he also reflects the everyday suffering experienced by many individuals in society. He represents the harsh realities of life, where death and misery are often confronted without solutions. By placing Christ in a simple and familiar context, this poem invites us to find His presence in daily actions and in the struggle against injustice, reminding us that spiritual value can be discovered even in the small things around us.

Doubting Christ’s Sanctity

Doubting the sanctity of Christ is less common among followers of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, Jatman’s poem, “Apakah Kristus Pernah” (“Has Christ Ever (?)”), questions the divinity and sanctity of Jesus Christ by implicitly suggesting (through rumors and speculation) that Christ may have committed infidelity. In historical (or biblical) accounts, Christ is suspected of having had an affair with Mary Magdalene, a beautiful prostitute who once anointed His feet with fragrant oil. This is also part of Dan Brown’s controversial book, *The Da Vinci Code*, which explores the mystery of Jesus’ alleged relationship with Mary Magdalene. Reflecting on this idea, Jatman writes, “I too head / toward your house / My transgression.” Although not explicit, the poet questions Jesus’ purity.

In contrast, through the experiences of a Jewish woman, Madame Z, “Kamar I” (“Room I”) tackles the themes of persecution, alienation, and identity, highlighting the insecurity and longing in the absence of a safe place amidst the threat of oppression. Its opening depicts an idyllic Paris, offering hope and protection as it simultaneously reveals the harsh reality that Jews are still hunted down. The poet invites the reader to find solace in art and memory, asserting that art can serve as a refuge from the cruelties of the world. By mentioning “the troops” that hunt “the son of man” and wage war in the desert, the poem reflects the violence that continues to haunt humanity. Questioning the identity of Christ at the end—whether He is a deceiver or the Son of God—expresses doubt and the search for meaning amid tragedy, urging readers to contemplate the essence of love and humanity as well as the importance of understanding and tolerance among different faiths.

<p>KAMAR I Kepada Madame Z Sitor Situmorang</p> <p>Kalau kau Yahudi diburu Aku kotamu yang menunggu Daerah ramah yang satu Paris, Seine, rindu pemburu</p> <p>Mari kita endapkan hidup Di lukisan di dinding redup Karena Bakh dan putih senja Karena Yerusalem, dan karena Isa</p> <p>Laskar pergi memburu anak manusia Berperang di tengah gurun</p>	<p>ROOM I To Madam Z By Sitor Situmorang</p> <p>If you are a hunted Jew I am your waiting city The friendly region of one Paris, the Seine, a hunter's longing</p> <p>Let us settle our lives In the painting on the dim wall Because of Bakh and the white of dusk Because of Jerusalem, and because of Christ</p> <p>The warriors set off to hunt mankind Fighting in the midst of the desert</p>
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The poem "Kamar 1" ("Room I") reveals the contradiction between love and betrayal, between slaughter and redemption. The poet depicts Madam as a "hunted Jew" and expresses a desire to provide full protection and love for her in Paris. In this place, the poet and Madam "settle their lives" for the sake of Jerusalem and Isa. The poet then compares the roles of Isa (who struggles in the desert for love) and Hitler (long before Hitler killed millions of Jews). In this sharp contrast, the poet questions the meaning of love taught by Isa, which should be believed and accepted as truth by anyone. If we do not believe in the teachings of love brought by Christ, "Is He a deceiver or the Son of God?" This question demands an answer from His followers.

The poem "Leiden" by Sastrowardoyo reflects on the suffering and sacrifice endured by Jesus Christ. In this poem, the poet poses a rhetorical question regarding why torment always precedes the emergence of meaning and life. Through the imagery of Jesus being crucified and pierced in the side, the poem suggests that suffering can be a source of purification and redemption, akin to the blood that sanctifies the word.

<p>LEIDEN 12/10/78 (Larut malam) Subagio Sastrowardoyo</p> <p>mengapa selalu harus ada siksa sebelum bisa terucap geliat nyawa</p> <p>dia yang disalib ditusuk lambungnya dengan tombak derita darahnya titik memurnikan sabda</p> <p>kebahagiaan melumpuhkan tenaga berkata</p> <p>sebelum sama sekali bisu biar kujatuhkan diri dari menara sehingga terlepas sengsara dalam syair paling merdu</p>	<p>LEIDEN 12/10/78 (Late night) Subagio Sastrowardoyo</p> <p>why must there always be torment before the utterance of a life's struggle</p> <p>he who was crucified stabbed in the side with a spear suffering his blood purifies the words</p> <p>happiness paralyzes the power to speak</p> <p>before completely silenced let me throw myself from the tower to free myself from suffering in the most melodious verse</p>
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The poet notes that happiness can silence the voice and prevent the expression of deep feelings. In confronting resignation and loss, the poet expresses a desire to “fall from the tower,” symbolizing an escape from suffering into a higher form of expression—namely, poetry. Here, the “most beautiful verse” becomes a symbol of beauty born from pain, affirming that within darkness and suffering lies the potential to discover and articulate deeper truths and beauty. Thus, the poem suggests that through difficult experiences, we can uncover profound meaning and beauty in life. It begins with a question on the torment that must be endured to save souls: “why must there always be torment / before the utterance of a life’s struggle?” From an anthropocentric perspective, the poet’s stance contradicts the history of Jesus Christ’s salvation, which emphasizes divine suffering for humanity’s redemption. The suffering and torment inflicted upon Christ make his Gospel even purer: “he who was crucified / his side pierced with the lance of suffering / his blood purifies the word to its core.” However, rather than depicting Jesus as merely a figure of torment, the poet suggests the devil’s temptation—“to fall from the tower”—indicating an inner struggle against despair. This imagery suggests that Jesus, too, faces the temptation to escape suffering. By humanizing Christ, the poet invites readers to engage with the profound emotional and existential struggles He endured, adding depth to the exploration of love and sacrifice in Christianity.

Christ as a Harsh Judge

Finally, modern Indonesian poetry also portrays Christ as a harsh judge. In “Kristus di Medan Perang” (“Christ on the Battlefield”), Christ is a merciless judge who constantly punishes sinners.

KRISTUS DI MEDAN PERANG Sitor Situmorang	CHRIST ON THE BATTLEFIELD Sitor Situmorang
<p>la menyeret diri dalam lumpur mengutuk dan melihat langit gugur; Jenderal pemberontak segala zaman, Kuasa mutlak terbayang di angan!</p> <p>Tapi langit ditinggalkan merah, pedang patah di sisi berdarah, Tapi mimpi selalu menghadang, Akan sampai di ujung: Menang!</p> <p>Sekeliling hanya reruntuhan jauh manusia serta ratapan, Dan di hati tersimpan dalam: Sekali 'kan dapat balas dendam!</p> <p>Saat bumi olehnya diadili, dirombak dan dihanguskan, Seperti Cartago, habis dihancurkan, dibajak lalu tandus digarami.</p> <p>Tumpasnya hukum lama, Menjelmana hukum Baru, la, yang takkan kenal ampun, Penegak Kuasa seribu tahun!</p> <p>1955</p>	<p>He drags himself through mud, cursing, and watches the sky fall; The eternal rebel general, an imagined absolute power!</p> <p>But the sky turns red and the broken sword bleeds on his side, Yet dreams persist, reaching the end: Victory will abide!</p> <p>Surrounded by ruins, distant from humanity's cries, And within his heart, the longing resides: Once vengeance is obtained, satisfaction will rise!</p> <p>As the earth stands judged, rebuilt, and consumed, Like Carthage, destroyed and doomed, plundered, then rendered barren and salted.</p> <p>The old law perishes, the New Law prevails, He, who knows no forgiveness, never fails, Enforcer of Power for a thousand years!</p> <p>1955</p>

In this poem, the depiction of Christ as a cruel judge is palpable through the choice of words and the poem's mood. The poem begins with a powerful image and dramatization of a figure dragging himself through the mud, cursing, and witnessing the sky falling. He is even referred to as “the eternal rebel general,” with “imagined absolute power.” Because humanity refuses to repent, “distant from humanity's cries,” He who has sacrificed body and soul seeks revenge (“Once vengeance is obtained!”). The retaliation is devastating, “like Carthage, destroyed and doomed, plundered, then rendered barren and salted.”

This portrayal of Christ as a harsh judge may reflect a pessimistic view of the human condition and the moral challenges faced by individuals. In this context, Christ serves as a symbol of justice demanding accountability for sin and humanity's neglect of the call to repent. This representation also reveals the tension between love and justice, where Christ's unconditional love must be balanced with an awareness of the consequences of human actions. In many other works of poetry and literature, we often encounter similar portrayals of Christ as a harsh or demanding figure, reflecting dissatisfaction or a longing for true justice in a world rife with injustice. This idea has gained popularity in various cultural and religious contexts, prompting readers to reflect on the nature of divine justice and the relationship between humanity and God. Through this representation, the poem provides space for deep reflection on morality, repentance, and social responsibility, creating a rich dialogue between the reader and the text.

CONCLUSION

Religious literature in Indonesia is generally rooted in Islamic values and teachings. However, the findings of this study challenge Teeuw and Atmosuwito's claim regarding the limited influence of Christianity on Indonesian culture. Based on the analysis conducted, Jesus Christ is experienced, recognized, and expressed in modern Indonesian poetry. Although the examples provided here are limited, there are indeed more poems with Christian themes as mentioned above. Indonesian poets' perspectives on Jesus Christ possess a unique quality compared to similar perspectives in other countries. One notable distinction is that Jesus, with His divine attributes, is well-received by Muslim writers in the world's largest Muslim-majority nation. Even some Muslim poets, such as Chairil Anwar in "Isa" ("Christ") and "Doa" ("Prayer") and Hartojo Andangjaya in "Golgotha, Sebuah Pesan" ("Golgotha, A Message"), view Jesus as Lord and Savior. This study demonstrates that the figure of Christ and the portrayal of His divinity have transcended religious theological boundaries in Indonesia, indicating that Christianity has also become part of Indonesia's cultural consciousness. In this regard, Indonesian literary expression showcases its inclusive nature, capable of accommodating diverse religious and cultural beliefs.

The study reveals five common portrayals of Jesus Christ in Indonesian poems: as the Savior of all humanity, as a member of specific communities, as a catalyst for sinners' repentance, as a figure whose sanctity is questioned, and as a stern judge of humanity. Although these portrayals may diverge from the official Christian teachings, which generally depict Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, the redeemer, and the one who offers unconditional grace and forgiveness to humanity, these poems broaden the scope of religious experience and interpretation of divinity.

This variety reflects unique perspectives on divinity, from viewing Christ as universally compassionate to questioning His divine authority, thus allowing Indonesian poetry to embrace and reinterpret the divine in ways that resonate with both personal and communal spiritual identities. It highlights how poetry, as a medium of aesthetic expression, can transcend religious boundaries, foster understanding between religions and deepen the appreciation for the various aspects of Christ.

In the context of Indonesia's religious pluralism, this study provides valuable insights into the importance of understanding and embracing diversity in religious experiences. Poetic and spiritual expressions touch the innermost depths of one's heart, echo the stirrings of conscience, and reflect personal attitudes that may remain mysterious to others. These deeply personal experiences shape one's being, resonating in the soul. Indonesian poets have skillfully captured this complexity, using their poems to reflect their unique religious experiences and perspectives. The reflections of Muslim poets on Jesus Christ reveal that He holds a notable place in the consciousness of Indonesian poets from various backgrounds. What is encouraging is that non-Christian Indonesian poets have come to engage meaningfully with Christ's teachings, viewing Him with understanding, respect, and even admiration. This study underscores how poetry can serve as a bridge for diverse expressions of faith and understanding of divinity in Indonesia's multicultural landscape.

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