



# Historical Imagination Through Writing Historical Poetry in History Learning

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**Abstract:** This study aims to examine: 1) the development of historical imagination in history learning, (2) the use of poetry in history learning, and (3) the relationship between the use of poetry in history learning affects the historical imagination of students. This research uses literature review methods and qualitative research with secondary data in obtaining data sources for its preparation. The results showed that 1) the development of writing historical texts (historiography) cannot be separated from the art of storytelling which contains imagination as expressed by historians in the form of poetry or prose; 2) the importance of historical imagination in the writing of historical texts through the writing of historical poems as an effort to return ideality to the consciousness of reality; 3) as Hegel points out that the writing of history must be on two important sides, namely critical and poetic. The activity of writing historical poetry can improve the ability of historical imagination.

**Keywords:** Historical Imagination, Poetry, History Learning

## Introduction

The subject of history is one of the important subjects that students must understand. Through history learning, learners can develop the competence to think chronologically and have knowledge of the past. This knowledge can be used to understand and explain the process of development and change from time to time to grow a national identity during the life of the world community. Even Jumono (in Wahyudi and Ma'mur, 2020:124) suggests that:

Historical awareness will be able to guide humans to an understanding of themselves as a nation understands how important historical awareness is, so the development of History education is a demand to give birth to a wise generation who can solve the nation's problems wisely.

However, the interest and level of historical awareness in learners today are still not as expected. Learners still consider that history is a past that is no longer relevant to the context of today's life. Moreover, students now belong to Generation Z (born in the range of 1996 – 2010) who have the characteristics of being tech-savvy, flexible, smarter, and tolerant of cultural differences. They are also connected globally and networked in a virtual world. Nonetheless, this generation is a generation that loves instant culture and is less sensitive to the private essence of constantly posting its life on social media. From the various events that accompanied generation Z, many stereotypes emerged that were later attached to this generation, namely unruly, instantaneous, selfish, lazy, and unable to socialize with their elders (Rastati, 2018: 87).

One of the identifiable weaknesses of generation Z in history learning is the lack of the ability to imagine, i.e. historical imagination. Historical imagination has an important role to help students in reconstructing historical events based on facts and existing data. This less prominent ability is one of the problems that must be overcome. In reconstructing an event in the past, students need imagination in their minds so that students can imagine historical events that occurred (Wayudi and Ma'mur, 2020: 124).

Based on this explanation, the ability to imagine must be mastered by students to be able to develop their thinking power as widely as possible. The use of imagination is important for students to hone students abstraction skills, especially in history learning, to be able to imagine events that have occurred in the past. Supriatna (in Wahyudi and Ma'mur, 2020: 125) says that the past can be a space of time for them to imagine. Past times are connected to the events they experienced. One alternative to develop students' historical imagination skills in the process of learning history by using the edutainment model.

Making poetry is one of edutainment. According to Coleridge poetry is the most beautiful word in the most beautiful atmosphere, it is also a thought. According to Leigh Hunt, poetry is an imaginative overflow of feelings. Meanwhile, according to Dunton, poetry is human thought concretely in emotional and rhythmic language. Waluyo, in addition, states poetry is monologue text whose content is not first of all a plot. The point of the opinion is that the content of the poem is not merely a story, but an expression of feelings. Poetry is a form of literary work that expresses the poet's thoughts and feelings and is imaginative and is composed by concentrating on the physical structure and inner structure.

Based on this presentation, it can be concluded that writing poetry is one of the activities that stimulate the imagination of students that can be used in history learning. But in reality, there are still many teachers who have not been able to carry out the use of poetry in history learning. The research made in this article aims to reveal and describe the use of poetry in historical learning that can improve the historical imagination of students.

Meanwhile, the benefits of this research are:

- 1) For students, namely with research on the use of poetry in history learning can grow or improve historical imagination skills.
- 2) For teachers, this research can provide an overview of teachers to be more creative in the teaching process, one of which is by using poetry in history learning.

## Literature Review

### *Historical Imagination*

The ability to imagine is very important in learning. Even various discoveries in different parts of the world are created through imagination. So important is imagination that there is not a single science that does not require imagination. Even Einstein considers imagination more important than science itself. Imagination is the ability to think broadly. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (in Rachmawati, Kumiati 2010, p 54), imagination is the thought power to imagine (wishful thinking) or create images (paintings, *krangan*, and so on) of events, and based on one's reality or experience.

In reconstructing the past the student needs imagination in his mind so that the student can imagine the historical events that occurred. As said by Collingwood (in soffer, 1996) that:

“Historical imagination is an innate or a priori part of thinking that allows students of history to reconstructing the past. Whether stored in the furniture of the mind, learned through practice, or inherited as genetic inclinations, imagination is indispensable to the historian’s craft”. (pp. 1)

Tabrani (in Imanissa, 2016, p. 9) reveals that there are three forms of imagery, namely: a) pre-image which is thinking with an image that is not clear but can help in the thought process, b) concrete image, namely thinking with a form of image that combines some senses that can help the thinking process, c) abstract image (language), namely thinking with a form of image using language (word).

The function of imagination according to Collingwood (in Lemisko, 2004) there are three functions, namely, to re-enact, interpolate and interrogate. Re-enacting means reviving historical events. Interpolation means that students must be able to fill gaps or gaps from a historical record. Interrogation is analyzing sources and looking for messages from a historical event that can be identified if students imagine the right historical context. In addition, interrogating means imagining the author's perspective in a historical narrative.

The benefits of historical imagination according to Schot (2015, pp. 1-2) are:

1. It is a mirror that makes us understand the presence and the future. This is not only the case because the questions we ask are fuelled by contemporary concerns, but also because through history we get a better understanding of these concerns and ultimately of ourselves. This is the first feature of the historical imagination.
2. History opens up the experience, and it shows us alternative scenarios. This is the second feature of the historical imagination.
3. Open up new ways of thinking about the future. This is a third feature of the historical imagination.

Collingwood (1946/1994) states that historians should use their imaginations to reconstruct and understand the past. Since we cannot observe the human events that have occurred, he argues that we should imagine them. Although Collingwood admits that imagination is often thought to relate to the fictitious, he argues that the image does not always have to be about the 'unreal'. For Collingwood, imagining is simply a process by which we construct or reconstruct images, ideas, or concepts in our minds and he points out that these processes should not relate or need not relate.

### *Poetry Writing*

Rodman Phillbrick (in [www.teacher.scholastic.com](http://www.teacher.scholastic.com)) gives some important points related to the writing of poetry. *First*, planning is an important initial stage. Each poetry writer must allocate his time to writing a poem, approximately 5-10 minutes. The thing that needs to be done is to write immediately. Writing a poem is better than nothing. The more often you write poetry, the more familiar you are with poetry. The author of the poem can start writing something that attracts attention.

*Secondly*, ensuring that the object to be depicted is very important to convey. The author can use a third-person point of view, for example, if he does not want his poem to be seen as a "self-image."



*Thirdly*, relaxation is important if in the process of writing a poem suddenly the idea becomes stuck. Enjoy the situation close to you right now. Lying on the couch, closing your eyes, walking in the park, and watching the trees and the immediate environment are all potent recipes to bring back ideas that had stalled. As soon as the idea comes back, we can continue writing poetry again.

*Fourth*, imagine freely. Imagination will freely lead us to the richness of the material of writing poetry. Free imagination will also make the experience of the soul more diverse.

*Fifth*, use metaphors. Authors can use thesaurus dictionaries to help make vocabulary and language acquisition richer in pronunciation. Try to find the right words to express thoughts and feelings. Don't easily feel "satisfied" until you feel like you are choosing the right word according to the intention you want to express.

### **Method and Research Design**

This research is qualitative in the form of library research that uses books and other literature as the main object. The type of research used is qualitative, namely research that produces information in the form of notes and descriptive data contained in the text under study. The research stage is carried out by collecting literature sources, both primary and secondary. This study classified data based on the research formula (Darmalaksana, 2020). At an advanced stage, data processing and/or citation of references are carried out to be displayed as research findings, abstracted to obtain complete information, and interpreted to produce knowledge for conclusions.

### **Results and Discussion**

Postmodern philosophy was a revolution against the rationality of modernism, a deliberate attack on the fundamentalist character of various modern minds. One of the hallmarks of postmodern philosophy and later postmodern history is deconstruction. In contrast to reconstruction which seeks to draw meaning contained in an event, deconstruction seeks to give meaning to an event. In the



postmodern one cannot go back because one does not have access to that past. If it can't go back in time how can it say it's right and know the past? Or in other words, if he doesn't have access to the past how can he check that the story is true?

Isn't what has been interpreted just an interpretation? Because so far historians have only relied on historical records or archives that later reconstructed them and that is what is called history. What is emphasized here is the historical nature of the recordings and archives accessed by historians. Such a past as an object of inquiry is no longer objectively inevitable and this is called "non-existent presence."

Based on the above, the past has never entered historiography in the form of texts except rhetorically or theoretically. The status of historical knowledge is not based on truth or accuracy about the past itself but rather on the historicity of the past built based on traces which are then the result of the reconstruction that is considered to represent a representation of the past called history and this is a medium of the past in the form of a text (historiography). Here White questions why historians persist in not wanting to consider those historical narratives (in the form of verbal fiction) as the most widely seen in their historiography are more literary than science.

As found in White's work that historical work is a verbal artifact in the form of a narrative prose discourse, in which the content is created and imaginative as much as is found in other words the historian creates or imagines as many traces of history found in the form of recordings/archives. Here the emphasis is on creation/imagination. Since it makes a series of events from the past make sense, or become meaningful, such events/facts must be connected with the concept.

The concept in question is the whole or totality or background or what is meant by the past itself. The problem is that historians can actually find traces of the past, record/archive history, and then construct facts about the past in some sort of chronicle form, but no historian has ever found context to get significant facts. So, the so-called reconstructed context to contextualize the facts must eventually be imagined or created. Only unlike facts, context is not definitively discovered therefore for all historical stories to be meaningful they must involve part-to-whole or whole-to-part relationships, and since the story is meaningful it involves



tropes such as metaphors, metonymy, synecdoche, or irony. Therefore all historical stories are metaphors and therefore those allusions cannot be prevented then history is metahistory.

According to Berkeley, the metaphor is a new linguistic expression or poetic; A word or expression for a concept is used outside of the normal (literal) conventional meaning to express a similar concept. In classical language, theory metaphors are seen as language problems only, not as mind problems (thought). However, in the theory of content or metaphors, metaphorical expressions are individual linguistic expressions that demand one's expertise. Even in everyday life we often use these metaphorical terms/expressions/allusions. For example, your writing is very good like a chicken claw (irony).

The focus of the metaphor is the mind not solely on the language of a sich. That metaphor is one major and necessary part of a normal and conventional way for one to conceptualize the world, that one's everyday behavior reflects the metaphorical understanding of one's experiences.

Furthermore, Lakoff developed a system of metaphorical thought studies as a medium of communication and thinking that is the basis of one's thinking. Based on contemporary research he refutes the traditional assumption regarding the difference between literal (literal) and figurative (figurative), that metaphor is one kind of figurative language only. He was one of those who gave birth to contemporary theories of metaphors, having invented a large system of conventional and conceptual everyday metaphors, including the most abstract concepts that lie behind most everyday languages. In the Lakoff category proverbs and analogies include metaphors. In Indonesia, the treasury is numerous, and they are all intelligent creations that make us think.

Then here the question that must be answered is to what extent is the role of metaphors in the writing of history? According to White, a historian uses metaphor as a decisive trope that would give a historiographical representation of forms. If the cartoon is seen as a historical document the inclusion becomes important. When viewed as a work of satire, the ingenuity of playing metaphors that can be enjoyed by observers over time becomes more useful (Example:





Wordless Sibarani Cartoons, Eastern Stars, 1957) Sibarani cartoons even without words seem to contain text rich in stories.

According to Jan Pamorski, the focal point of historical narrative philosophy is to accept the premise that the problem of historical narratives can not only, but must be analyzed independently of the investigation of history itself. Where the writing of history (the presentation of history to the reader) must be arranged according to its own rules and regulations. Furthermore, the category of historical narratives is interpreted and analyzed from various perspectives as follows.

1. A kind of discourse, addressing the communicative goals of the author (historian);
2. A set of communicative codes;
3. Poetic historical phrases;
4. A figurative and rhetorical expression of language that a priori presupposes the presentation of history;
5. A structure of meanings in the semiotic structural sense (Topolski, Ed 1990:43; Sjamsuddin 2002:342).

It is often not noted that Hegel dealt with the writing of history and the whole issue of historiography (as opposed to the philosophy of history). Hegel elaborated his theory of the writing of history itself, which he saw as one of the verbal arts and therefore considered to be under the imperative of 'aesthetic consciousness'. Therefore, it is advantageous to consider what Hegel said about the writing of history and historical consciousness in this context, as a way to explain the specific content of "the theory of his historical work".

In Part III of Lectures on Aesthetics, Hegel discusses verbal art. He began with the characterization of poetic expression in general and then distinguished poetry and prose. Poetry, he says "is more ancient than speech modeled in intricate prose artistic form". It is an original imaginative understanding of truth, a form of knowledge that 1) fails to separate the universal from its living existence in a particular object, which 2) has not distinguished phenomena, purposes, and means, or 3) connects one with another in subordination with the process of human reason, but 4) understands one exclusively within the other and based on the other.

It can be concluded that poetry is a form of original imaginative understanding of the truth. Understanding poetry as a metaphorical understanding of the world. In poetry, he continued, what is expressed is only used to achieve the ideal of verbal "self-expression". And he took the example of a poem from the stanza of fact recorded by Herodotus in which the Greeks commemorate the man killed in battle which is a historical event that reads:

*Four thousand here from Pelops' land  
Against three million once did stand.*

(Herodotus, The Histories, bk. VII, bab. 228, hlm. 494)

Hegel points out that the content of this stanza is simply the fact that 4,000 Peloponnesians fought against three million at a certain time and place. The way of expression is 'poetic,'" Hegel said since the inscription "proves itself to be an act that conveys the content in its simplicity and at the same time expresses that content with a definite purpose. The content of the sentence, then, becomes more vivid, and more directly self-projecting, than it should be expressed as a simple prose report of an event that occurred at a certain time and place. The "ordinary" statement of the same fact will make its content unchanged, but will not describe itself as an intimate union of the content with a form recognized as a special poetic utterance.

Hegel then went on to "historize" the poetic consciousness itself. Hegel's formal discussion of the writing of history as an art form is placed between the discussion of poetry and his speech. Its location between these two forms—one concerning the expression of ideality, in reality, the other about the use of pragmatic linguistic tools—shows its resemblance to Drama, which (as mentioned above) is a form of mediation taken up in art. between Epic and Lyric's sensibilities. History is a representation of prose.

The great historical narratives—such as those produced by Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Tacitus, "and some others"—describe "a clear picture of the nationality, epoch, external conditions, and greatness or spiritual weakness of the individual concerned in the life and characterization to which they belong"; At the same time, he affirms from such concrete entities 'associational ties' in which



"the various parts of the image" are transformed into an intelligible totality of "ideal historical significance" (Ibid. [258]).

History and literature are events related to each other. Because basically history is an event that happened in the past and has evidence. Meanwhile, literature is a work produced by the story of the surrounding environment that encourages the author to convey his experiences with imagination. An experience is certainly conveyed based on the conditions at the time of an event occurring in the future. Therefore, a literary work will have features that reflect the conditions of its era. Therefore, history and literature will not be detached from each other.

Studying literature is inseparable from studying its history. Studying the history of literature means understanding that as the literary age progresses it has different characteristics. The periodization of the old Poets generation is a literary work produced before the 20th century. This generation produces many literary works such as verse, rhyme, gurindam, and hikayat.

The periodization of the new generation of Poets is evidence of the revival of public awareness of the publication media that accommodates and discusses literature and culture. The birth of the new Poet periodization in addition to accommodating the appreciation of literati is also a form of reaction to the existence of the Library Banner which is considered not to give more space to literati to apply wisdom strictly so that it is considered to limit the creativity of literati. New poets produce literary works such as poems, short stories, essays, and works of art that do not rely on books.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

Currently, the interest and level of historical awareness in current learners are still not as expected. Learners still consider that history is a past that is no longer relevant to the context of today's life. In this context, learners lack imagination in understanding historical events or other words cannot understand historical imagery. This less prominent ability is one of the problems that must be overcome. In reconstructing an event in the past, students need imagination in their minds so that they can imagine historical events that occur.



One of the efforts to improve historical imagination is through the text of poetry. Poems are the most beautiful words in the most beautiful atmosphere, they are also thoughts. In another understanding, poetry is an overflow of feelings of an imaginative nature. Writing poetry is one of the activities that stimulate the imagination of students that can be used in learning history. Even some old historical texts are written in the manuscript of poems.

Based on the analysis that has been carried out, the results are obtained that 1) the development of writing historical texts (historiography) cannot be separated from the art of storytelling which contains imagination as expressed by historians in the form of poetry or prose; 2) the importance of historical imagination in the writing of historical texts through the writing of historical poetry as an effort to return ideality to the consciousness of reality so that the role of the poet is in charge of deepening all the significant and transparent in ordinary forms of consciousness; 3) as Hegel argues that the writing of history must be on two important sides, namely critical and poetic. Thus, the ability to write history must be balanced with the ability to write narratives poetically through writing historical poetry. This can be trained students to have historical imaginary abilities.

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