

## ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES IN THE POETRY ANTHOLOGY *MATA SUKMA, MATA CINTA* BY DINULLAH RAYES: AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS

Sultan Bahanan<sup>1\*</sup>, Iwan Jazadi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>English Education Department, STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa,

---

### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received Jan 23, 2025

Revised Jan 25, 2025

Accepted Feb 28, 2025

#### Keywords:

Ecocriticism, Environmental  
Values, Indonesian Poetry,  
Poetic Diction, Literary  
Ecology

---

### Abstract

This study investigates the representation of environmental values in the poetry anthology *Mata Sukma, Mata Cinta* by Dinullah Rayes through a qualitative ecocritical lens. Ecocriticism, which explores the interplay between literature and the environment, provides a framework for examining how poetic diction reflects ecological consciousness. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, analyzing 147 environment-related words that appear frequently ( $\geq 5$  occurrences) across the anthology. These dictions are categorized into three environmental domains: land (e.g., *pohon*, *batu*), water (e.g., *laut*, *air*, *muara*), and air/outer space (e.g., *bulan*, *bintang*). Findings reveal that the selected lexical items function not only in literal contexts but also convey metaphorical, symbolic, and emotive associations with nature. This duality suggests a layered ecological awareness embedded in the poetic language. The study contributes to the growing discourse on literary ecocriticism in Indonesian literature, offering insights into how poetry can cultivate environmental sensitivity.

Copyright © 2025 STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa.  
All rights reserved.

---

\*□ Correspondence:

Email Address: bhnnsultan@gmail.com

---

## INTRODUCTION

Poetry has long served as a vessel for conveying cultural, philosophical, and emotional expressions, but its role in environmental discourse is increasingly recognized in contemporary literary criticism. The interrelation between literature and the environment has emerged through the lens of ecocriticism, a field that explores how literary texts engage with nature, ecological awareness, and environmental ethics (Murti, 2019; Rohman, 2015). In the context of Indonesian literature, ecocriticism is still an evolving discipline but has begun to garner attention as environmental concerns escalate across the archipelago (Candra, 2017; Nasekha & Mulyana, 2024).

Ecocriticism moves beyond simple nature appreciation; it critiques anthropocentric worldviews and foregrounds the reciprocal relationship between humans and the natural world. This approach is particularly effective in analyzing poetry, where symbolic and

metaphorical language often reflects deeper ecological concerns (Rizam & Ayuanita, 2024). In Indonesia, “green literature” and “sastra hijau” have emerged as poetic responses to environmental degradation, with poets embedding ecological values into their works to challenge exploitative human behavior (Murti, 2019).

Dinullah Rayes' poetry anthology *Mata Sukma, Mata Cinta* (2019) exemplifies such ecocritical potential. The anthology is rich with natural imagery—such as *bulan* (moon), *daun* (leaf), and *laut* (sea)—that reflects both literal and metaphorical engagements with the environment. These environmental dictions offer a unique lens to assess how poetic language can function as a medium for ecological consciousness and moral reflection.

Despite growing interest in literary ecology, few studies have systematically examined the environmental values embedded in Indonesian poetry using a diction-based analysis. Existing ecocritical research often focuses on prose or short stories (Candra, 2017; Rizam & Ayuanita, 2024), leaving a gap in understanding the ecological dimensions of poetry as a genre.

This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing frequently used nature-related words in *Mata Sukma, Mata Cinta* and interpreting their ecological significance through a qualitative ecocritical approach. Specifically, this research addresses the following questions: (1) What are the most frequently occurring environmental dictions in the anthology? (2) How do these dictions reflect environmental values within the ecocritical framework?

## Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the interdisciplinary framework of ecocriticism, a literary theory that explores the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Cheryll Glotfelty, one of the pioneers of ecocriticism, defines it as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment,” emphasizing how literary texts shape, reflect, or challenge perceptions of nature (Oppermann, 1999). As a branch of literary studies, ecocriticism critiques anthropocentrism and promotes ecological ethics through close readings of texts that foreground nature, environmental crises, and interdependence between humans and ecosystems.

Ecocriticism is particularly well-suited for the analysis of poetry, where symbolism and imagery often serve as proxies for deeper environmental or spiritual meanings. For instance, eco-poetry—an evolving subset of ecocriticism—investigates how nature-related symbols, metaphors, and diction evoke ecological awareness and critique environmental degradation (Khosravi et al., 2022). In this context, recurring environmental dictions such as *pohon* (tree), *laut* (sea), or *bulan* (moon) are not merely decorative elements but carriers of layered ecological messages.

Moreover, the interpretative richness of poetry allows for an eco-symbolic reading, in which lexical elements associated with nature (e.g., land, water, sky) take on dual roles: they function literally while also expressing metaphorical or spiritual dimensions of ecological consciousness (Waithiru, 2022). This aligns with the notion that symbolism in literature

often serves as an indirect critique of society, enabling the author to comment on environmental disruption without overt confrontation.

In the Indonesian context, ecocriticism has gained traction as environmental challenges become more visible. Scholars have shown that local literary traditions—including poetry—are increasingly infused with environmental themes, often reflecting indigenous perspectives and ethical calls to action (Sikuku, 2024). These studies highlight how literature becomes not only a mirror of ecological degradation but also a medium for environmental advocacy and education. Thus, the theoretical lens adopted in this study synthesizes three key principles: nature-as-symbol in poetic diction, interconnectedness between human and non-human elements, and ecocritical interpretation of frequently used environmental lexicon.

## METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design grounded in an ecocritical literary framework. As described by Sugiyono (2017), qualitative descriptive research seeks to understand phenomena in their natural context through interpretive and inductive analysis. In this context, the research aimed to explore how environmental values are reflected in the diction of the poetry anthology *Mata Sukma, Mata Cinta* by Dinullah Rayes.

The ecocritical lens applied in this study draws from literary ecology principles, which emphasize the symbolic, thematic, and ethical roles of nature in literary texts (Oppermann, 1999; Khosravi et al., 2022). The analysis focuses on recurring nature-related words and their contextual use to identify embedded ecological consciousness within the poems.

The primary data source was the poetry anthology *Mata Sukma, Mata Cinta* (Rayes, 2019), which consists of 151 pages of verse. The anthology was selected due to its rich use of environmental imagery and potential alignment with ecocritical themes such as interconnectedness, environmental degradation, and nature reverence.

The study used the following data collection techniques. First, document analysis – poems were read closely and repeatedly to identify environmental diction. Second, textual annotation – key words and phrases related to environmental elements (e.g., land, water, air) were marked and categorized. Finally, note-taking – contextual meanings, figurative associations, and frequency of diction were recorded manually to support thematic analysis.

The data analysis followed a three-stage process informed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). First, data reduction – environmental dictions were filtered by occurrence frequency ( $\geq 5$  appearances) and thematic relevance. Second, data display – selected dictions were tabulated and grouped into three ecological categories: land, water, and air/space. Finally, interpretation – words were interpreted based on their literal, metaphorical, and ecological meanings. This stage drew on principles of ecocriticism, particularly the symbolic function of nature in literature.

Lexical items were analyzed both for denotative meanings (e.g., *pohon* = tree) and connotative values (e.g., *pohon* as a symbol of life or endurance). This dual-level analysis

helps uncover how language constructs ecological consciousness in poetic form (Khosravi et al., 2022).

## RESULTS

The analysis identified a total of 147 occurrences of environmental-related dictions across the anthology. These dictions were categorized into land-based, water-based, and air/outer space-based elements. Only lexical items appearing  $\geq 5$  times were included.

A total of 12 high-frequency environmental dictions were grouped and quantified as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Environmental Dictions

No.	Diction	Category	Frequency	Normal Meaning	Abstract Meaning
1	<i>Bulan</i> (moon)	Air/Space	22	13	9
2	<i>Matahari</i> (sun)	Air/Space	19	14	5
3	<i>Daun</i> (leaf)	Land	15	15	0
4	<i>Laut</i> (sea)	Water	13	9	4
5	<i>Pohon</i> (tree)	Land	13	3	10
6	<i>Api</i> (fire)	Land	12	5	7
7	<i>Batu</i> (stone)	Land	12	11	1
8	<i>Air</i> (water)	Water	9	6	3
9	<i>Muara</i> (estuary)	Water	8	2	6
10	<i>Hujan</i> (rain)	Water	7	3	4
11	<i>Debu</i> (dust)	Land	7	6	1
12	<i>Bintang</i> (star)	Air/Space	5	2	3

Total lexical entries analyzed: 147, with 94 instances of normal/literal use and 53 instances of abstract/symbolic use. Land-related dictions accounted for the highest share of environmental references (e.g., *daun*, *pohon*, *batu*), emphasizing tangible terrestrial imagery. Water-based dictions (e.g., *laut*, *muara*, *hujan*) often appeared in emotional or transitional contexts. Air/outer space terms like *bulan* and *bintang* were frequently used in both literal and metaphorical representations.

Table 2 presents sample lines from the anthology *Mata Sukma*, *Mata Cinta* by Dinullah Rayes, illustrating how each frequently used environmental diction is embedded in poetic contexts. Each line reveals either a literal or figurative use of nature-related words.

Table 2. Sample lines of environmental diction used in poetic contexts

No.	Diction	Representative Line (Original)	Translation / Interpretation	Meaning Type
1	<i>Bulan</i> (moon)	<i>"Cahaya bulan purnamamu menabur benih cinta"</i>	"Your full moonlight scatters seeds of love"	Figurative
2	<i>Matahari</i> (sun)	<i>"Warna-warni jatidiri menari-nari di bawah matahari"</i>	"Colors of identity dance under the sun"	Literal
3	<i>Daun</i> (leaf)	<i>"Berdaun rindang teduhi insan dan keinsanan"</i>	"Leafy branches shade people and humanity"	Literal
4	<i>Laut</i> (sea)	<i>"Akhirnya berbaur air lautan bergelombang"</i>	"Finally merged into the rolling sea water"	Literal
5	<i>Pohon</i> (tree)	<i>"Bersama kita bangun pohon makna"</i>	"Together we raise the tree of meaning"	Figurative
6	<i>Api</i> (fire)	<i>"Kobaran api melahap jasad kapal asing"</i>	"The blaze devoured the bodies of foreign ships"	Literal
7	<i>Batu</i> (stone)	<i>"Bukit batu, gunung batu, padang pasir lepas tatapan keseharian"</i>	"Stone hills, stone mountains, desert gaze of the daily life"	Literal
8	<i>Air</i> (water)	<i>"Aliran air surut yang sunyi sepi"</i>	"The receding stream runs in lonely silence"	Literal
9	<i>Muara</i> (estuary)	<i>"Mengalirkan zat, sifat-Mu dalam sungai hatiku nuju muara fitrah"</i>	"Flowing Your essence in my heart's river toward the estuary of purity"	Figurative
10	<i>Hujan</i> (rain)	<i>"Hujan lebat di luar tirai jendela, bergetar badan batinku"</i>	"Heavy rain beyond the curtain shakes my soul and body"	Figurative
11	<i>Debu</i> (dust)	<i>"Debu alun-alun musim kemarau"</i>	"Dust of the dry season square"	Literal
12	<i>Bintang</i> (star)	<i>"Bintang gemintang bercerita cahaya cinta"</i>	"The stars tell tales of the light of love"	Figurative

This table illustrates how environmental diction functions symbolically, thematically, and emotionally across the anthology. Several dictions (*bulan*, *muara*, *pohon*, *bintang*) transcend their physical meanings to become metaphors for emotion, spirituality, and identity.

The summary of key lexical trends indicates that the most frequently used environmental diction was *bulan* (moon), appearing 22 times, indicating its central symbolic role. Abstract usages (e.g., *pohon makna*, *api perasaan*) were more common in emotionally intense poems. The mixture of literal and figurative meanings suggests that nature is portrayed not just as scenery but as an extension of human emotion and philosophical reflection.

## DISCUSSION

### Interpreting the Environmental Diction

The findings from *Mata Sukma*, *Mata Cinta* reveal a rich integration of environmental diction that serves both literal and symbolic functions. Dominant lexical choices—such as *bulan* (moon), *pohon* (tree), and *laut* (sea)—are not used merely to depict setting but to convey emotional states, spiritual metaphors, and ecological awareness. For instance, the line “*Bersama kita bangunkan pohon makna*” (Together we raise the tree of meaning) elevates *pohon* beyond its botanical identity into a symbol of shared human values and growth.

This aligns with Knickerbocker’s (2012) concept of ecopoetics, where the figurative power of language evokes environmental sensibilities not through direct advocacy, but through sensory and symbolic experience. By using poetic diction to encode environmental values, Rayes’ work exemplifies how the natural world becomes a medium for introspection and moral positioning.

### Ecocriticism in Symbol and Theme

Rayes’ usage of environmental symbols reflects foundational principles of ecocriticism: interconnectedness, environmental ethics, and critique of anthropocentrism (Waithiru, 2022). Dictions like *muara* (estuary) and *api* (fire) shift from ecological descriptors to metaphors of transformation and destruction, respectively. These poetic choices resonate with Hughes’ ecopoetics, where nature is not passive but active, shaping and reflecting human consciousness (International Journal of Research in English, 2022).

Moreover, the high frequency of air/space imagery—such as *bintang* (star) and *bulan* (moon)—suggests a spiritual and cosmic framing of environmental awareness. This aligns with Sikuku’s (2024) observation that modern ecocritical poetry intertwines aesthetic appreciation with ecological urgency, cultivating both wonder and warning.

### Localized Environmental Consciousness

Unlike Western ecopoetics, which often centers on wilderness or climate change, Rayes’ poetry integrates Indonesian cultural and spiritual sensibilities. Nature is not just observed; it is embodied, relational, and moral. This reflects Ryan’s (2017) theory of “botanical imagination,” in which plants and other natural entities possess subjectivity and agency within poetic language. In Rayes’ verse, *daun*, *pohon*, and *batu* carry localized moral resonance—echoing indigenous understandings of nature as animate and sacred.

---

## Bridging Poetry, Ethics, and Environmental Pedagogy

The poem's diction choices also carry implications for environmental education. As Rizam and Ayuanita (2024) note, ecocritical literature can act as a pedagogical tool by embedding ecological ethics into aesthetic experiences. In classrooms, analyzing poetry like Rayes' could nurture not only literary competence but also environmental responsibility.

This aligns with the global trend in using literature as a soft-power medium to address ecological crises—what Sikuku (2024) calls “a cultural movement toward sustainability.” Rayes' poems, through their symbolic diction and reflective tone, contribute to this literary ecology by making environmental consciousness both intimate and poetic.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the environmental values embedded in the poetry anthology *Mata Sukma, Mata Cinta* by Dinullah Rayes through an ecocritical lens, focusing specifically on the frequency and function of nature-related diction. The findings reveal that the anthology employs twelve recurrent environmental dictions—such as *bulan* (moon), *pohon* (tree), *laut* (sea), and *muara* (estuary)—which function not only in their literal sense but also serve as powerful metaphors for emotional, spiritual, and ecological reflection.

Thematically, the poems articulate a worldview that emphasizes interconnectedness between humans and the natural environment, mirroring central tenets of ecocriticism. By infusing symbolic diction with ecological resonance, Rayes elevates nature from backdrop to agent, encouraging readers to reflect on their own relationship with the environment. His work aligns with global ecopoetic movements while grounding environmental consciousness in Indonesian cultural and spiritual contexts.

However, the study has limitations. Its scope is confined to a single literary work and uses a frequency-based selection method, which may not capture subtler ecological themes or less frequent but symbolically rich diction. Additionally, the interpretation remains qualitative and could be enhanced by comparative or computational approaches.

Based on the findings and limitations, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. Comparative Ecocritical Studies – Future research should examine how environmental values are reflected across different Indonesian poets or compare regional ecopoetic styles globally.
2. Educational Integration – The symbolic and ethical content of poems like Rayes' should be integrated into environmental education curricula, particularly in language and literature classes.
3. Corpus-Assisted Analysis – A computational approach could be used to expand the scale of analysis and detect broader ecocritical patterns in Indonesian poetry.
4. Thematic Expansion – Researchers may explore other poetic features—such as tone, rhythm, or visual structure—that contribute to environmental messaging.

In conclusion, *Mata Sukma*, *Mata Cinta* offers not only literary beauty but also a quiet call to environmental stewardship. Through layered language and ecological symbolism, Rayes contributes to a growing canon of poetic works that blend aesthetics, ethics, and sustainability. His poetry demonstrates how literature can serve as both mirror and mentor in navigating today's environmental challenges.

## REFERENCES

- Candra, A. A. (2017). Ekokritik dalam cerpen Indonesia mutakhir. *Jurnal Pena Indonesia*, 3(2), 100–129. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jpi.v3n2.p100-129>
- Khosravi, G. D., Sistani, R. R., Raihanah, M. M., & Vengadasamy, R. (2022). Eco-mysticism in Pablo Neruda's selected poetry. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 28(3), 262-281. <https://doi.org/10.17576/3l-2022-2803-17>
- Knickerbocker, S. (2012). *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/19472>
- Murti, F. N. (2019). Indonesia's green literature: "The sleeping beauty" literary. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 243(1), 012165. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/243/1/012165>
- Nasekha, A. D., & Mulyana, M. (2024). Ecocritical study on the "Sendhang Tirta Panggesangan" geguritan. *Lingua*, 19(1), 36-45. <https://doi.org/10.18860/ling.v19i1.24073>
- Oppermann, S. (1999). Ecocriticism: natural world in the literary viewfinder. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 16(2), 29-46. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/596975>
- Rayes, D. (2019). *Mata Sukma, Mata Cinta*. Buana Grafika.
- Rizam, M. M., & Ayuanita, K. (2024). Kajian ekologi cerpen digital berbasis web dan implementasinya dalam pembelajaran bahasa dan sastra. *Ghancaran*, 5(2), 451-462. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ghancaran.vi.17362>
- Rohman, S. (2015). Story of big flood in the modern Indonesian literary: An ecocriticism study. *International Journal of Language Education and Cultural Review*, 1(1), 105–112. <https://doi.org/10.21009/IJLECR.011.11>
- Ryan, J. S. (2017). *Plants in Contemporary Poetry: Ecocriticism and the Botanical Imagination*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315643953>
- Sikuku, M. (2024). Ecocriticism and environmental awareness in modern poetry in Africa. *American Journal of Literature Studies*, 3(2), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.47672/ajls.2313>
- Sugiyono. (2017). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Waithiru, A. K. (2022). Symbols of the sentient House of Usher: An ecocritic approach. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 5(2), 369-376. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.5.2.812>