The Use of Satirical Language Style Markers in Gus Mus's Poetry Collection

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to describe the use of satirical language markers in the form of irony, cynicism, and sarcasm in Gus Mus's poetry collection. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method based on Gorys Keraf's stylistic theory. The data consist of poetry excerpts analyzed to reveal the function of satire in exposing the hypocrisy of power, social alienation, and moral degradation in society. The findings show that irony is used to uncover identity crises and structural injustice, cynicism to criticize the decline of values and socio-religious hypocrisy, and sarcasm to mock double standards and political manipulation. These findings affirm that satirical language in Gus Mus's poetry functions as a strategy of social criticism and a means of fostering critical awareness among the people.
Keywords: Satirical Language, Poetry, Irony, Cynicism, Sarcasm.

1.   Introduction

Language plays a vital role in human life as a system of arbitrary sound symbols used as a primary means of communication within society. Through language, individuals convey thoughts, feelings, and ideas, as well as establish social relationships. The use of well-structured language, both oral and written, is a necessity in the communication process, considering that differences in background, knowledge, and perception can significantly influence the understanding of meaning (Kridalaksana & Kentjono in Asrianti, 2023). Beyond its function as a communication tool, language also possesses expressive and persuasive functions, which serve to influence the attitudes and actions of others. Through language, a speaker can convey evaluations, criticisms, or disagreements regarding a particular situation.

In indirect communication, criticism is often conveyed implicitly by utilizing specific figures of speech to ensure the message is delivered in a more subtle and aesthetic manner, yet remains meaningful. In this context, language style (stylistics) plays a crucial role as a means to enliven, beautify, and strengthen the influence of language on the reader or listener (Ratna in Hartati et al., 2021). Keraf (in Annisa et al., 2022) states that language style is a distinctive way of expressing thoughts through language that reflects the personality of the writer or speaker. In line with this, Siswantoro (in Rahmawati, 2020) suggests that language style is a deliberate deviation from everyday language used to produce certain effects, particularly in literary works. Thus, language style can be understood as an author's characteristic way of conveying ideas indirectly while remaining meaningful and aesthetic. One form of language style frequently used to deliver criticism is satire.

According to Keraf (in Alita, 2023), satirical language style is a method of conveying intentions with a meaning that differs from or contradicts the explicitly stated expression, aimed at delivering mockery, dissatisfaction, or indirect criticism. Gorys Keraf (in Hardiyanti, 2023) categorizes satirical styles into several types, including irony, cynicism, sarcasm, satire, and innuendo, which range in sharpness from subtle to harsh. According to Keraf (Khuluqie et al., 2022), irony is an effective literary device because it conveys an impression characterized by significant restraint. Whether intentional or not, the series of words used denies the actual intended meaning. Cynicism is a harsher form of irony, as emphasized by Hardiningtyas (in Hasanah, 2019). Furthermore, Keraf (in Andriarsih & Asriyani, 2020) defines sarcasm as a

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reference that is cruder than both irony and cynicism, as it contains bitterness and caustic reproach or stinging satire that is sharp enough to cause offense. However, this study focuses its analysis on three specific types of satire: irony, cynicism, and sarcasm. These three types were selected because they are the most dominant and relevant to the characteristics of the poetry being analyzed, particularly in conveying sharp criticism of social, political, and moral hypocrisy. This purposive selection ensures the analysis remains focused, allowing for a more systematic and contextual deepening of the satirical meanings within the Indonesian cultural framework.

In the modern social context, characterized by socio-political dynamics, value crises, and social inequality, the satirical language style is increasingly utilized as a medium for social criticism. The use of satire allows poets to convey critiques of power, hypocrisy, and moral decay without stating them explicitly. This phenomenon appears not only in daily communication but is also widely found in literary works, particularly poetry.

Literary works are systems of signs that contain social and cultural meanings; therefore, their interpretation requires a symbolic and contextual understanding (Ratna, 2022). Priyatni (in Alfiawati 2020:84) suggests that literature serves to provide pleasure or enjoyment to its readers. It can be concluded that literature is a linguistic art that possesses meaning, born to be enjoyed by the author or by anyone who reads it. As a form of literature that is dense, symbolic, and suggestive, poetry provides ample space for poets to convey implicit social criticism. According to Reinaldy (2021), poetry is a literary form that uses language briefly and densely, complemented by harmonious rhythm and aligned sounds. Furthermore, Irawati (2019:33) states that poetry encompasses various elements such as emotion, imagination, thoughts, ideas, tone, rhythm, sensory impressions, word arrangement, figurative language, density, and interconnected feelings. Another perspective by Lafamane (2020:2) defines poetry as a literary form produced through the expressions and feelings of the poet. Through poetry, an individual can convey complex thoughts and feelings using creative and expressive words. In other words, poetry serves as a medium for a collection of thoughts delivered in the form of beautiful language.

The poems of Gus Mus are well-known for utilizing satirical language as a stylistic hallmark to highlight injustice, religious hypocrisy, as well as moral and humanitarian crises. The satire in his poetry is delivered in layers, ranging from subtle irony and reinforced by cynicism to sharp, confrontational sarcasm. Based on the aforementioned context, this research is significant as it explores the use of satirical language as an effective tool for social criticism in addressing political dynamics and moral crises within society. Through an analysis of Gus Mus's poetry, this study aims to reveal the symbolic meanings behind irony, cynicism, and sarcasm that function to foster critical awareness in readers.

While research on religious and social themes in Gus Mus's poetry has been widely conducted, there remains a void in stylistic analysis that systematically categorizes forms of satire using Gorys Keraf's theoretical framework. Most existing literature tends to focus on general thematic interpretations without dissecting the linguistic markers that distinguish between irony, cynicism, and sarcasm. This research fills a gap in literary stylistic studies regarding the linguistic boundaries and precise functions of satirical markers in Gus Mus's work. The primary focus of this study is to identify how these markers function as a structural strategy for social resistance, moving beyond mere thematic analysis toward a technical linguistic evaluation of satire as a tool for political and moral critique. Thus, this research provides a tangible contribution to understanding how literary works can serve as strategic communication tools to voice the truth aesthetically yet remain incisive.

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2. Research Methodology

Research Type and Approach

This study employs a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. This approach aims to describe and interpret the use of satirical language markers, specifically irony, cynicism, and sarcasm, in Gus Mus's poetry collection. The data are analyzed in depth to understand the implicit meanings and the functions of social criticism within the poetry, referencing Gorys Keraf's stylistic theory.

Data and Data Sources

The research data consist of excerpts of stanzas and lines of poetry containing satirical language markers found in Gus Mus's poetry collections, specifically the anthology Negeri Daging. Secondary data sources include books on stylistic theory, academic journals, and previous studies relevant to satirical language styles, irony, cynicism, and sarcasm.

Data Collection Techniques

Data for this research were collected through library research using the "observation and note-taking" technique (teknik simak dan catat). The researcher conducted deep and repeated readings of Gus Mus's poetry collection, subsequently marking the stanzas that represent the use of satirical language styles. These data were then classified into the categories of irony, cynicism, and sarcasm. The selection of this technique is based on the characteristics of the data source, which consists of written literary texts. This technique allows the researcher to precisely identify stylistic nuances and ambiguous diction, ensuring each language marker is captured within its complete linguistic context. This is crucial in qualitative analysis to ensure no implicit meanings are overlooked.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study was conducted through several stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, as formulated by Sugiyono (in Alfionita & Gazali, 2021).

Data Reduction

At this stage, activities include identifying, selecting, and classifying data according to the research focus. The analyzed data consist of stanzas and lines from Gus Mus's poetry containing satirical markers. Irrelevant data were discarded, while relevant data were summarized, coded, and grouped based on the type of satire.

Data Display

Data display was performed by organizing the reduced data through description and interpretation according to the research focus. The data are presented systematically based on the classifications of irony, cynicism, and sarcasm to facilitate the analysis and conclusion-drawing process.

Data Validation

To maintain the validity of the data, the researcher applied the theory triangulation technique. Each identified poetry excerpt was validated by cross-confronting it with Gorys Keraf's stylistic criteria and theories. This process ensures that the categorization of data into irony, cynicism, or sarcasm has a consistent, objective, and scientifically accountable theoretical basis.

Conclusion Drawing

The final stage involved formulating conclusions based on the results of the interpretation and data analysis. The conclusions reflect the research findings regarding the forms and functions of satirical language in Gus Mus's poetry, which were then re-verified to ensure data validity and consistency.

3. Results and Discussion

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The existence of literary works, particularly poetry, within society serves not only as an aesthetic medium but also as a vehicle for delivering social criticism. Poetry becomes an expressive space for poets to voice their anxieties, disappointments, and dissatisfactions regarding the various social realities occurring around them. One form of criticism frequently employed in poetry is satirical language, such as irony, cynicism, and sarcasm. The use of these styles allows the poet to convey critiques indirectly, yet they remain powerful and impactful for the reader.

Based on the analysis of Gus Mus's poetry collection, it was found that the poet extensively utilizes satirical language as a form of criticism against power, social hypocrisy, the decay of public morality, and the misuse of religion and intellectual language in the public sphere. The satirical language styles employed include irony, cynicism, and sarcasm, each with varying degrees of harshness and sharpness of meaning.

Irony

Irony was identified in five analyzed data points within Gus Mus's poetry. One representative example is as follows:

Data 1 "Clothes I", Page 64
The clothes you wear
Hide your true self
You continue to hold onto them
Until one day
You are forced to be naked
And you no longer recognize
Your own self

Based on Gorys Keraf's stylistic theory, this excerpt represents irony through the contradiction between literal and symbolic meanings. The marker "*clothes*" does not merely function as a literal body covering but is symbolized as a social "*mask*" that obscures one's true identity. The irony reaches its climax when the subject no longer recognizes themselves when forced into a state of being "*naked*" the moment when the mask of falsehood is removed. This satirical language marker is effectively used to deliver a reflective critique of the identity crisis of modern humans who rely too heavily on social imagery, thus losing their authentic selves. Unlike the study by Arisnawati (2020), which examines irony in daily Laiyolo regional speech within a local cultural context, this research positions irony in poetry as a reflective critique of the identity crisis in modern society.

Data 2 "Riddle", Page 16
What kind of animal, perhaps
That intends to build a palace
For all of us?

From Gorys Keraf's stylistic perspective, this excerpt employs irony by contrasting the illogicality between the marker "*animal*" and the activity of "*build a palace*". Literally, it is impossible for an animal to construct such grandeur; however, the poet uses this metaphor as a sharp satire against the behavior of rulers who act inhumanely despite possessing great power. Irony emerges through the promise of welfare, symbolized by the "*palace*", which in practice often benefits only the ruling elite rather than the people. The irony marker here functions to voice public skepticism toward political promises, where the poet criticizes authorities who claim to act in the collective interest while pursuing personal luxury. Unlike Nihayah (2021), who examined mild satire on social media, this research emphasizes irony as a sharp political critique through symbolic metaphors in poetry. These findings expand the study of irony as a medium for structural criticism in literature.

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Data 3 "Under the Tin Chair", Page 25
Atop the mighty tin chair
It feels like centuries you have been transfixed in slumber
Idling like an idol
Laughing with arrogance
Inhaling and enjoying the sweat
Of those of us who remain.

From Gorys Keraf's stylistic perspective, this excerpt represents irony through the contradiction between the position of power and the behavior of the ruler. The marker "*tin chair*" symbolically represents a "*mighty*" authority, yet ironically, it is occupied by figures who are passive and negligent. The irony reaches its climax when the rulers, who should ideally offer protection are depicted as "*idols*" that are silent, conscience-less, and feast upon the hard labor of the people without empathy. The irony marker here serves as a means of reflective critique against structural exploitation and the unjust relationship between arrogant rulers and the sacrificed populace. Thus, in Data 3, irony is sharply utilized to satirize the passivity and indifference of rulers toward the suffering of the people. This find differs from Ulfareski (2021), who views satire primarily as an element of entertainment. In this study, irony functions as a serious critique of social injustice. Consequently, this research affirms the role of irony in poetry as a tool for fostering moral awareness and leadership.

Cynicism

Cynicism is also quite dominant in Gus Mus's poetry, with eight data points identified. One representative example is as follows:
Data 4 "In Your Country", Page 10
This is the strangest country
Where greed is established
Power is centralized
Hypocrisy is cultured
Ears are plugged with wealth and dignity
Mouths are silenced with lures and threats.

Based on Gorys Keraf's stylistic theory, this excerpt represents cynicism as a form of profound disappointment and doubt regarding the sincerity of social values. The use of markers such as "*established*", "*centralized*", and "*cultured*" indicates that greed and hypocrisy have become a structured system. The cynical tone is reinforced through the depiction of a society that has lost its conscience, where "*ears are plugged with wealth*" and "*mouths are silenced by lures.*" The style of cynicism here functions to reveal the poet's pessimistic view toward the decay of structural morality and the suppression of the people's voice for the sake of power. Thus, in Data 4, cynicism is explicitly used to satirize rulers who perpetuate vice for the sake of material gain and pseudo-dignity. Unlike Muzayanah (2020), who examined cynicism in social media comments, this research demonstrates cynicism in poetry as a symbolic and profound social critique.

Data 5 "So What Else", Page 23
So what else
Can we do
If eyes are deliberately closed
Ears are deliberately deafened
Conscience is numbed

In Gorys Keraf's stylistic review, this excerpt represents cynicism through an expression of bitter doubt regarding human values. The use of the rhetorical question "*So what else can we*

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do?" is not merely an expression of surrender but a marker of cynicism that demonstrates the poet's skepticism toward a society whose conscience has died. This cynicism emerges as a critique of the loss of moral sensitivity, where individuals consciously choose to close their eyes and ears to the truth. Thus, in Data 5, the cynical language style is used to affirm the poet's pessimistic view of a society perceived to have lost its foundation of character and social concern. Unlike Rana (2019), who examined cynicism in dramatic texts, this research highlights cynicism in poetry as a reflection of collective moral decay. Here, cynicism functions as a warning regarding the loss of ethical responsibility within society.

Data 6 "So What Else", Page 24
What else
Can we do
If words lose their meaning
Life loses its soul
Humans lose their humanity
Religion loses its God

In accordance with Gorys Keraf's stylistic concept, this excerpt presents a powerful cynicism through an expression of bitterness toward the total decline of fundamental values. The repetition of the word "*loses*" functions as a marker of cynicism that affirms the destruction of life's foundations, where humanity and religion are perceived as mere forms without essence. This cynical tone reflects the poet's skeptical attitude toward a social reality that allows noble values to be eroded by falsehood. Through the implicit question "*what else can we do*," the poet employs cynicism to convey a reflective challenge against the loss of collective conscience and a sense of despair toward society's resignation in the face of modern moral decay. In Data 6, unlike Nihayah (2021) who examined cynicism in social media speech, this research positions cynicism as a reflection of a comprehensive moral crisis in modern society. This demonstrates a new contribution to the stylistic study of religious-critical poetry.

Sarcasm

Sarcasm is also highly prevalent in Gus Mus's poetry, with 14 data points identified. One representative example is as follows:
Data 7 "Riddle Country", Page 17
Do not ask who
Killed the laborers and journalists
Who snatched lives glorified by God
Do not ask why, just guess!

Based on Gorys Keraf's stylistic theory, this excerpt represents sarcasm as the harshest and most aggressive form of satire used to attack an object. The marker of sarcasm emerges through the repeated command "*Just guess!*", which is deliberately used to mock the legal system's pretension and public silence regarding cases of violence against laborers and journalists. Keraf emphasizes that sarcasm aims to belittle or insult; in this context, the poet insults authorities who pretend to be ignorant despite the truth being crystal clear. The use of this sharp sarcasm serves to expose the irony of law enforcement that allows human lives to be taken without justice, while simultaneously criticizing the normalization of violence within corrupt power structures. In Data 7, unlike Arisnawati (2020), who examined regional languages with a communicative and harmonious tendency, this research demonstrates sarcasm as a harsh critique of public silencing and power systems.

Data 8 "The Religious People of This Country", Page 21
To shout Your name
Increasing the awe and dread of Your small servants

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Who wish to visit You.
Your name they sing in entertainment events
To grand state galas.

Based on Gorys Keraf's stylistic theory, this excerpt represents sarcasm as a form of satire containing stinging mockery intended to degrade the behavior of the criticized object. The marker of sarcasm emerges through the depiction of religious practices that have lost their sincerity and transformed into mere tools for entertainment and the legitimacy of power. Keraf emphasizes that sarcasm is often hurtful in nature; in this context, the poet attacks religious groups that use God's name as a ceremonial symbol and for political branding. This sarcasm is reinforced by the phrase "*increasing the awe and dread of Your small servants*", which sharply reveals the social impact in the form of fear and a spiritual distance between the common people and God. Thus, in Data 8, sarcasm is used as a tool to expose the shift of religious sacredness into a space of interests that oppresses the human side. Unlike Rana (2019), who focused the study on the pragmatic aspects of drama, this research affirms sarcasm as a critique of the commodification of religion in poetry.

Data 9 "Watching TV", Page 74
We see several dashing men in expensive ties
Talking in circles with intellectual accents
Always and always boastin
Their mouths foaming like lizards
We scrambled to turn off the TV out of resentment

Based on Gorys Keraf's stylistic theory, this excerpt displays sarcasm as the most aggressive form of satire through mockery aimed at directly degrading the object. The marker of sarcasm emerges through the simile "*mouths foaming like lizards*", which explicitly insults the empty rhetoric of elites who frequent lying for the sake of public image. Keraf emphasizes that sarcasm is often used to express peak annoyance; in this context, the poet attacks the figures of "*dashing men in expensive ties*" as representations of rulers who appear convincing in the media but fail to provide real solutions for the people. This sarcasm is reinforced by the act of "*turning off the TV,*" which symbolizes social resistance and rejection of the manipulative communication of power. Thus, in Data 10, sarcasm functions as a tool to voice collective disgust toward elites who rely solely on rhetoric without concrete action. Unlike Cahyo et al. (2020), who examined sarcasm in song lyrics as an aesthetic expression, this research positions sarcasm in poetry as a form of resistance against the manipulation of public and media discourse.

4.   Conclusion

Based on the data analysis conducted on Gus Mus's poetry collection, it can be concluded that the analyzed poems extensively utilize satirical language as a vehicle for social criticism. From a total of 27 data points analyzed, the study identified the dominant use of irony, cynicism, and sarcasm within the poetic lines. These satirical styles are employed by the poet to convey critiques of various social issues, such as power, injustice, hypocrisy, the suppression of the people's voice, and the misuse of religion and intellectual language in the public sphere.

The findings indicate that irony is used as a subtle form of satire, delivering criticism through the contradiction between literal and intended meanings. Cynicism is employed to express the poet's disappointment and pessimistic attitude toward moral and social conditions perceived to be drifting further from human values. Meanwhile, sarcasm serves as the harshest form of satire, characterized by direct, sharp, and mocking expressions aimed at jarring the reader's awareness of social realities deemed deviant.

Based on the overall data, it is concluded that the use of satirical language in this poetry collection functions not only as an aesthetic element but also as an effective tool for social criticism. The poet consistently utilizes irony, cynicism, and sarcasm to voice anxiety and resistance against unjust social conditions. Thus, the poems in this collection critically reflect the realities of societal life and demonstrate the role of literature as a meaningful medium for social critique.

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