



## Comparison of Expression of God in Poems Written by Amir Hamzah, Chairil Anwar and Sutardji Calzoum Bachri



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### Article history:

Received: 10 December 2017

Revised: 10 April 2018

Approved: 20 May 2018

Published: 29 May 2018

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### Keywords:

Poetry;

Marker;

Fragment;

Denotative;

Expression;

Connotative;

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### Abstract

God becomes the search for religious people. This search is expressed in the form of books, songs, movies, or even in the form of literary works. The individual poets express God in poetry. There is a difference between one poet and the other. In this study, therefore, we examine several issues: the expression of God in Amir Hamzah's poem entitled Drop Back, the expression of God in Chairil Anwar's poem entitled Prayer, the expression of God in the Sutardji Calzoum Bachri poem entitled Amuk, and the comparison of expression on God in the poems of the poets. This research is qualitative with descriptive nature. In this case, data collection is done by library method and documentation technique. Further data analysis is done with the application of Roland Barthes semiotics theory, namely the principle of signifier (sign), signified (signified), and meaning (signification). This analysis begins by splitting the data in the form of fragments that are arbitrarily defined. Thereafter, the first or denotative meanings are determined by looking at the lexical meaning, and the meaning of the second or connotative level is determined by the search for a relation between marker and second level marker. By looking at the significance of the second level, the expression of God in the poetry of the poets in can be determined. Thus, the results of data analysis show things as follows. (1) Amir Hamzah expresses God with the fragment of your servant tongue, different, develops, spreads me up the ladder of captivity, and descends again. (2) Chairil Anwar expresses God with the fragments of *prayer* and *at your door I knock*. (3) Sutarjdi Calzoum Bachri expresses God with the fragments of *my cat* and *se There is mmmmMu!* (4) Amir Hamzah expressing God as a supreme substance and he resisted such ideas as *manunggaling kusula gusti*, Chairil Anwar expressed God as the only place to get the feeling of "coming home or returning" to be a person who surrendered to the greatness of God's grace, while Sutarjdi Calzoum Bachri expressed God as a substance that can only be found with submission to Him.

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## 1. Introduction

Views and criticism of literature have developed as the development of the literature. It is similar with Habiburrahman giving criticism of the novel by Prie GS entitled *Ipung*. Habiburrahman criticized the teenage romance life in the novel. The novel should not contain a statement provoking Indonesian teens to date or establish relationships before marriage. Furthermore, the author of the novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* is very fond of the novel section describing the teenagers who worship in Ramadhan (fasting month). This is certainly related to divine values that need to be put forward in literature. He assumes that the character named Ipung in the novel has been able to be a good description of adolescent life that is obedient to the rules of religion.

In contrast to Goenawan Mohamad criticizing Indonesian literature is very taboo in discussing sex. He thinks Indonesian literature should be freer with the disclosure of sexual problems. The system of values such as Islamic beliefs, customs, churches, traditional obedience combined with Dutch educational discipline is a factor limiting the freedom to express and explore sexual phenomenon (Mohamad, 1980: 10). Thus, besides criticism that supports the values of divinity in literature, there are some others practitioners who attack and claim that belief in religion (God) becomes a factor inhibiting the development of literary works.

It is not merely about women, love, natural beauty, hometown, home, education, culture, or the meaning of a boy that become the objects of imagination. These objects often have similarities among poets. It's the same with God. The poets were inseparable from this divine object. Each poet has wide and varied views about it.

Some poets such as Amir Hamzah, Chairil Anwar, and Sutardji Calzoum Bachri write poems discussing the nature of deity. They also have different perspectives or point of views in describing their expressions of "God" in their poems. This is a clear phenomenon contained in the text of the poem. As Siswatoro stated that the text (poetic text) is a universe containing various phenomena of structural phenomena, styles, pragmatics, psychological, philosophical, semiotic, and intertextual (Siswatoro, 2016: 5).

Moreover, there is no study that has yet examined the phenomenon of "comparative expression of God" in the poem. This phenomenon is considered as a virtue in this study that compares the expression of the poets (about God). Thus, a study entitled *Comparison of Expressions of God in Poems written by Amir Hamzah, Chairil Anwar, and Sutardji Calzoum Bachri* is extremely important to conduct.

## 2. Research Methods

### *Theoretical Framework*

A theory proposed by a linguist from Swiss named Ferdinand de Saussure sees the sign as two indispensable things namely signified and signifier. Besides, the theory of the denotation and connotation has also been proposed by Roland Barthes. Denotation is an explicit, direct and definite meaning while connotation is an open meaning to various possible interpretations (Triandjojo, 2008: 23). Barthes explained that a system connoting is a system whose expression region is formed by a signification system.

Roland Barthes who also makes semiotics as the main approach to the science of culture stresses the intent of semiotics is to accept all sign systems, whatever their nature and boundaries, whether images, cues, musical sounds, objects and all those things that construct habit or other things and are not classified as language, is at least a signal system that is the relationship between signifier and signified to give meaning (Hidayat, 2006: 111).

Signifiers and signified belong to cultural products. The link between them is both arbiters and only on the basis of the language user's conventions, agreements or rules, and cultures. The relationship between Signifier and signified cannot be explained by any reason either by the choice of sounds or arguments to hook the sound which is in tone with the object or deterministic concept since the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbiter then the meaning of signifier must be learned and that there are definite structural or codes that help interpret meaning (Sobur, 2001: 126).

If literature uses language as a symbol then language in literature can also be analyzed by using the principle of signifier and signified. Based upon this principle the first meaning or denotative meaning in literary works can be found. In other words, the meaning that exists in the language convention can be interpreted by using a dictionary. It is different with the meaning of the second level or connotative meaning (because literature is always synonymous with the meaning of connotation), a third principle called the *significance* is needed to find the meaning contained in the literary convention. Therefore, the meaning of literature is meaning of meaning.

Wellek and Warren claimed that there are three notions of comparative literature. First, the study of oral literature, especially the theme of folklore and its spreading. Second, the investigation of the relationship between two or more literary works that became the material and object of the investigation such as the problem of reputation and penetration, influence, and the fame of great works. Third, literary research is in the whole of world literature,

general literature, and national literature. In addition, the comparative literature (which according to Welles as a follower of the American tradition) explained that at first comparative literature appeared in the study of oral literature especially in the field of literary works of the people. After that, this oral literature is sought for its origin, its dispensing region, and its transformation into literary literature (Welles and Werren, 1995: 47).

In addition, Benedetto Croce argues that comparative literary studies research in the form of exploration and discovery of change, replacement, development, and mutual differences between two or more literary works. Comparative literature is closely related to the theme and literary theme (<http://www.bungfrangki.com>).

This study limits that comparison is the difference contained and found in three aforementioned poems in order to express the writer's imagination and expression of God. It is because each poet has his or her own imagination and view towards the same object; however, the imaginative objects are expressed by the use of different words.

### 3. Results and Analysis

This study begins with extracting the texts of the said poems. The extraction is conducted by grouping the texts arbitrarily producing the fragments of the array, phrase, or word to be analyzed (Barthes, 2007: 349). The fragments were analyzed as lexical or denotative meaning while for the second level or connotative meaning, the analysis was conducted based on the denotative meaning. Based on this connotative meaning, the expression of the poets can be seen. Afterward, we will describe the comparison of the poets' expression in seeing or feeling God's presence in life or in his imagination.

#### 3.1 Expression of God in Amir Hamzah's Poem

The "expression of God" in Amir Hamzah's poem entitled *Turun Kembali* can be seen as follows:

- 1) *Jaku hamba engkau penghulu* (stanza 1, line 4)
- 2) *turun kembali* (stanza 5, line 5)

The "expression of God" in Amir Hamzah's poem entitled *Turun Kembali* can also be seen as follows

Signifier *hamba* (servant) lexically signifies *abdi* or *budak belian* (servants or slaves) (KBBI, 2005: 384). Signifier *penghulu* (leader) signifies 'kepala or ketua' 'head or chairman' (KBBI, 2005). The signifier *hamba* and *penghulu* in the line of *jaku hamba engkau penghulu* indicates that 'there is a servant who declares that he is truly a servant or slave and his leader is definitely a head or a chairman'.

Signifiers *hamba* and *penghulu* signify a meaning of 'two people who have different status in society'. However, in this poem, the conflict is the relationship between man and God, not human conflict. Thus, these two signs signify connotative meaning in terms of the status difference between the creating and the created substance.

The status difference was expressed by Amir Hamzah to illustrate a true boundary between man and God. Amir Hamzah avoids being like Beyazid, Siti Jenar, or Al Hallaj (a figure who considers himself to be one with God). All of these figures have been blocked by himself. When they seek God (transcendental), it turns out that he exists. When they experience the feeling of ecstasy, they soar into the unseen sky, but only themselves exist in space and time. This situation is considered as being united with God (Al Junaid and Shaykh An Nafiri, in Sangkan, 2012: 295).

Amir Hamzah does not look at the relationship between man and God as the views of the three figures above. Whether it is the view that man is always moving in God or the light of God, in this poem Amir Hamzah disagrees with it. In other words, the relationship between man and God is like the analogy expressed by Tillich that is like valleys and mountains, sun and moon, or like substances with very high existence and low-existence substances (Tillich in Palmquist, 2007: 218). Even in other references, Amir Hamzah through his work entitled *Sebab Dikau* illustrates that humans are like puppets and God as puppeteers who play the puppets (Mohamad, 1980: 66).

*Turun Kembali* (Come back down or descend)

The word *Turun Kembali* (come down/ descend) lexically signifies the existence of 'moving downward' or 'moving in a direction that is lower than the original' (KBBI, 2005: 1228). While the word *kembali* (again or back) signifies the existence of 'back to the original' or something 'over and over' (KBBI, 2005: 537).

Connotatively, *Turun Kembali* is not used to signify a person moving downward with both legs and doing it repeatedly, but this word is used to signify the expression of Amir Hamzah who has undergone "high consciousness" to achieve something on God's hand. However, due to the limitations of Amir Hamzah as a human being, he chose to express his "consciousness" towards his human traits who are not able to reach the divine attributes. Thus, in this fragment, God is expressed as a substance that cannot be reached by human nature. In other words, Amir Hamzah disagreed with the view developed in society at that time such as the view of Sheikh Siti Jenar who often follow Al Hallaj who regard God as *manunggaling kaula Gusti* or being united with God (Sangkan, 2012: 294).

In other references, it is explained that the signs shown by Amir Hamzah's language in his poem indicate his time as a companionship age of various influences such as the biblical preachers. The Muslim poets raised as a devout man translated a passage from the *Perjanjian Lama* (Old Testament). However, Amir Hamzah further differentiates the relationship between man and God which is like the relationship between puppet and puppeteer in his work entitled *Sebab Dikau* (Mohamad, 1980: 66). This is what makes Amir Hamzah come down again, with this poem *Turun Kembali* he affirmed that humans are different from God.

### 3.2 Expression of God in Chairil Anwar's Poem

A poem written by Chairil Anwar that explores the conflict between a servant and his or her God is *Doa*. Fragments describing his expression in imagining God can be seen in these parts of his poem.

- 1) *Doa* /prayer/ (the title of Poem)
- 2) *di pintuMu aku mengetuk* / at your door, I knock/ (stanza 9, line 3)

Similar to the analysis of Amir Hamzah's poem entitled *Turn Kembali*, fragments of this poem entitled *Doa* is also analyzed based on the theory of Semiotic proposed by Roland Barthes.

#### 1. *Doa*

Lexically, the signifier *doa* (prayer) means 'request, wish, hope or praise addressed to God' (KBBI, 2005: 271). The signifier *doa* in this poem is used as a title meaning the prayer serves as the name of the work which may shortly imply a content or intent of the poem. Therefore, *doa* is used to signify 'someone who has hope, wish, request, or praise to God'.

The connotative meaning that comes with this signifier *doa* implies the existence of a servant who hopes for something good from God. By praying a servant has placed God as the highest place in asking for help to cope with his or her life's problems.

In line with the view of Max Scherer who states that someone's psychological feelings are distinguished over intellectual feelings, moral feelings, social feelings, feelings of self-worth, and religious feelings. Scherer further states that religious feelings are the highest or deepest feeling (Scherer in Hartati, 2004: 88). When Chairil Anwar could no longer contain his feelings of self-esteem, intellect, community, or morality, he turned his feelings toward divinity. Therefore, he prays in this highest or deepest feeling so that he can get out of his troubles.

Chairil Anwar describes his condition that does not have the ability to get out of trouble or pressure. By declaring the signifier *Doa* as the title of the poem, Chairil Anwar has expressed that he is a weak man by God. As stated by Arifin An Nakhrawie that a good servant is not a person who leads a life without having to bother God by always whining and pleading but a good servant is someone who realizes himself as a weak and not bragging creature, and always begs God for help (Nakhrawie, 2007: 8).

#### 2. *di pintuMu aku mengetuk* (at Your door I am knocking)

The signifier *pintu* (door) lexically signifies 'the place to enter and exit' (KBBI, 2005: 877), and *mengetuk* (knocking) signifies 'the activity of hitting something with knuckles, hammer, and so on' (KBBI, 2005: 562). So, at your door I am knocking denotatively means 'one who knocks at God's door.'

Connotatively, the signifier in *di pintuMu aku mengetuk* (at your door I am knocking) signifies 'someone who is knocking the door that belongs to God as a form of surrender or self-acceptance'. When a door opens, a person can enter into a place that is behind the door. Chairil Anwar expressed that there is no best place to tell on but God. In this case, the place is not a secular object, material, or space, but this is a sense of security, peace, or strength that can only be given by God.

In line with the aforementioned notion, Farid Esack states that when one finds the core of himself and is face-to-face with God, the person is able to release the burdens in his life (Esack, 2003: 80). Comfort is what triggers Chairil Anwar to express God as a substance that has a door and a place that full of grace.

### 3.3 Expression of God in Puisi Sutardji Calzoum Bachri's Poem

The next poem is Sutardji's poem entitled *Amuk*. This poem consists of twenty-four pages and each page contains one verse of the poem. This poem is cut into fragments. Here are the parts of this poem that are reduced as a part that represents Sutardji's expression in imagining God.

- 1) *Kucingku* (stanza 1, line 1)
- 2) *se Ada mmmmMu* (stanza to 24, line 18-20)
  - a) *kucingku*

Identifier *kucingku* (my cat) is formed on my [cat + morpheme]. Cat lexically means 'animals that seem like little tigers, commonly nourished' (KBBI, 2005: 606). In this poem, the identifier cat is called twenty-three times. Therefore, this identifier becomes a keyword and made a fragment in this study about "expression of God".

As commonly known that it is impossible for a cat to seek God, the search for a cat is more synonymous with foods such as fish, meat, or other foods. The selection of cat as an identifier is more reasonable if it is stated that the nature of a cat that meows when it is hungry is similar to a human who has a curiosity that forces him to seek God. This curiosity makes people tortured, bitter, and result in a human experience of suffering and distress life. This is the intended connotation of the existence of a cat as an identifier.

Lynn Wilcox states that when a person experiences transcendental words become very less, not enough to tell because the experience is extremely different (Wilcox, 2012: 298). The experience experienced by Sutarjdi may be transcendental or not transcendental as Wilcox's review, but in this context, Sutarjdi has difficulty as described by Wilcox. Sutarjdi is unable to describe his curiosity with ordinary words. Therefore, he expressed his curiosity about God using the word *kucing* (cat).

b) *see Ada mmmmmMu!*

Lexically, the word *se* signifies 'bound form from one or one' (KBBI, 2005: 1006), *ada* (exist) is a sign of 'present or true' (KBBI, 2005: 5), *mu* (you) signifies 'clitica you as the reference of possession' (KBBI, 2005: 756). Based upon this, *se Ada mmmmmMu!* signifies 'the existence of the One God'.

If this identifier is interpreted connotatively, it signifies that there is only one God in the universe. Sutarjdi expresses God as a non-dual absolute. As Imanuel Kant argues that there is only one religion, there can be some kind of faith (Kant, in Palmquis, 2007: 468). It means that there is only one God, but what makes it different are human views. Wilcox calls that God is the Absolute Essence (Wilcox, 2012: 398). He adds that prophets, Jesus, or Buddhists teach things that are essentially the same. The essence of God's existence, peace, or tranquility in God's grace.

Related to the religion believed by Sutarjdi (Islam), the identifier *se Ada mmmmmMu!* is an identifier for 'confession of the one God's confessed based on perfect reflection and belief'. *se Ada* signifies the 'confession of the existence of one God' and *mmmmMu!* signifies that 'the soul has been satisfied by the perfection of faith'. This explanation will be easier if it is linked to a cat that wriggles, penetrates, claws, and seeks spiritual flesh. Sound *mmmm!* indicates that the cat (the nature of curiosity or souls who are hungry with the spiritual) no longer meow or wriggle because the cat has been full. The sound 5 letters [m] signifies the murmur of spirituality sobriety gained by the worship done 5 times a day (prayer worship in Islam). The exclamation mark [!] at the end of the murmur signifies a strictly mandated commandment, the mandatory prayer command in Islam.

### 3.4 Comparison of Expression of God in Poems written by Amir Hamzah, Chairil Anwar, and Sutardji Calzoum Bachri

Amir Hamzah remains with his trademark using Old Malay. The peculiarities in the use of this language also characterize his anxiety in expressing the relationship between God and the human theme of Sufism. This relationship is expressed in his work entitled *Turun Kembali* (Come Back Down).

In this poem, Amir Hamzah expresses God as a supreme substance, a substance that is not the same as a servant, a creature, or anything created by God. God and man are two substances that really must be separated between creator and creatures. Although when a human being experiences a high level of consciousness or achieves something called transcendental, a person cannot claim himself to be equal to God. Amir Hamzah expresses God by using the analogy of the sun (the source of light) that transmits its light to a creature created by God. Another case with Al-Halaj who regarded himself as the ultimate truth because of the transcendental process he experienced led him to conclude that he had become one with God.

It is different with Amir Hamzah who built the conflict of the human relationship with his God in the theme of Sufism, Chairil Anwar with an identifier *doa* (prayer) has acknowledged his weakness before God. Chairil expresses God as the ultimate place to restore his highest or deepest feelings.

In this work entitled *Doa* (Prayer) Chairil Anwar called and mentioned God many times. The identifier *tuhanku* (my god) signifies an expression that Chairil Anwar communicates with God. God is also expressed as a place to achieve self-actualization. Chairil seeks silence for in the silence and in the feeling of a simple void, he will reach the grace of God.



After the reign of Chairil Anwar, God was again expressed in a different style by someone who was expressed as a poet who was able to extract the meaning of the word to its essence, namely Sutardji Calzoum Bachri through his poem entitled *Amuk*. In a short time, this poem can be interpreted as the expression of someone who believes that God is not there. But once again, Sutardji used words as freely as he could to achieve the meaning he wanted to convey.

By the use of identifier *kucing* (cat), Sutardji has expressed God as the substance he really wants. A cat meowing hunger made it a symbol for the curiosity of his soul about the true nature of God. For Sutardji, the words become very less, not enough to describe his curiosity about perfect faith; so, he describes it with a symbol of *kucing* (cat).

Sutardji also repeated his resignation by expressing God as the One and Only Substance. Substances that can not be reached by human reason. God can only be found in *se Ada mmmmmMu!* which is a 5-day worship that is strictly required in Islam.

#### 4. Conclusion

In Amir Hamzah's work entitled *turun Kembali*, he expresses God as a different substance to the man. Man and God have a clear boundary, and it is impossible for a man to emulate the existence of a perfect God. It is different with Chairil Anwar who expresses God as a place of return, a place that can give a feeling like "coming home" because only God's grace is able to give him serenity. Meanwhile, in *Amuk's* poem, Sutardji Calzoum Bachri was unable to describe his curiosity with ordinary words. Therefore, he expresses his "curiosity about God" by using the word *kucing* (cat). Sutardji Calzoum Bachri also expresses God with a different expression such as absurdity and not double.

#### Conflict of interest statement and funding sources

The authors declared that they have no competing interest. The study was financed by personal funding.

#### Statement of authorship

The authors have a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The authors have approved the final article.




#### Acknowledgments

Researchers would like to thank all those who have contributed to the completion of this study. To my parents who always pray, encourage, and motivate me during my study. The researcher also expresses his gratitude to all comrades for their solidarity during his master's education.

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