



A Semiotic Analysis of Gus Mus's Poems *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* and *Selama Ini di Negerimu*: A Roland Barthes Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the denotative, connotative, and mythic meanings in the poems *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* and *Selama Ini di Negerimu* by Ahmad Mustofa Bisri, utilizing Roland Barthes' semiotic framework. The research data consist of words, phrases, and sentences from both poems that embody denotative, connotative, and mythic meanings. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, with data collection involving the reading, comprehension, and recording of poem segments containing semiotic signs. Data analysis was conducted by identifying signs, classifying the data, and subsequently analyzing meanings based on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The results indicate that both poems by Gus Mus contain denotative, connotative, and mythic meanings related to social criticism and humanity. The denotative meaning reflects the literal sense of the words used, while the connotative meaning reveals criticisms regarding religious fanaticism, poverty, social injustice, and the erosion of human values within society. Furthermore, the mythic meaning in both poems highlights social perspectives accepted as natural by the public—such as the notion that religious symbols outweigh human values, or the view of poverty as a commonplace aspect of social life. Through the use of simple symbols, Gus Mus successfully conveys profound moral messages and social critiques regarding the reality of life in Indonesian society.

Keywords: semiotic, poem, Roland Barthes

INTRODUCTION

Language is inextricably linked to human life. Without language, it would be impossible for an individual to communicate or engage in the various activities associated with social life. Language serves as a vehicle for expressing all manner of information, thoughts, ideas, and the like. It consists of arbitrary symbols that people use to collaborate, connect, and establish identity. The Greeks—whose influence remains significant in the world today—viewed language as a tool humans use to express their feelings and thoughts (Sumarsono, 2008:18). Consequently, language constitutes a crucial aspect of human communication.

Literature is a form of art born from human thought, experience, and reflection on life, all articulated through language (Tarigan, 2009:4). Literary works serve not merely as entertainment but also as a medium for conveying moral values, social criticism, spirituality, and the realities of life within society (Ratna, 2021:7). Poetry is one literary form that possesses profound significance. It employs language that is concise, aesthetic, symbolic, and rich in meaning, often requiring specific interpretation to grasp the underlying message (Pradopo, 2021:13). In poetry, language is not merely a tool for communication but a system of

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signs—encompassing symbols, emblems, and specific meanings—that can be analyzed through a semiotic approach.

Semiotics is the study of signs and their meanings within human life. In literature, semiotics is employed to understand the relationship between the signifier and the signified, which together construct specific meanings within a literary work (Sobur, 2020:22). A key figure in the development of semiotics is Roland Barthes, known for his concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth in the analysis of signs.

Roland Barthes's semiotic framework has been widely applied in literary studies to uncover meanings hidden within poetry and other literary texts. Research conducted by Mawaddah et al. (2024:554-563) demonstrates that Roland Barthes's semiotic approach can reveal symbolic, connotative, and cultural codes within poetry, enabling readers to grasp messages that are not immediately apparent in the text. Poetry is a literary form characterized by the use of beautiful, meaning-rich language. Its beauty arises from elements such as diction, figures of speech, rhyme, and rhythm—often enhanced by imaginative vocabulary—leading poetry to be described as an author's expression of feelings articulated in a lyrical manner (Kosasih, 2018:97). This highlights that the richness of meaning in poetry stems from the condensation of linguistic elements distinct from everyday speech; it employs concise language that nonetheless conveys profound significance.

The poem "Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini" depicts a societal phenomenon where religion serves merely as a symbol of identity, yet religious values are rarely implemented in daily life. The poem critiques attitudes of intolerance and fanaticism, as well as social behaviors that contradict religious teachings themselves. Meanwhile, the poem "Selama Ini di Negerimu" portrays social conditions rife with inequality, injustice, and a loss of humanity. Both poems contain signs that cannot be understood through literal meaning alone; rather, they require an interpretation of connota-

tion and myth, in accordance with Roland Barthes' semiotic concepts.

Current phenomena of social conflict and intolerance in Indonesia further underscore the relevance of studying Gus Mus's poetry. Differences in religion, culture, and social perspectives often trigger conflicts that lead to discrimination and societal division. This situation indicates a decline in values regarding humanity and tolerance. In this context, Gus Mus's poetry serves as a medium for social reflection, reminding society of the importance of human values, brotherhood, and spirituality in social life.

The issues addressed in this study are: What are the denotative meanings in the poems "Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini" and "Selama Ini di Negerimu" by Gus Mus? What are the connotative meanings in the poems "Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini" and "Selama Ini di Negerimu" by Gus Mus? What are the mythical meanings contained in the poems "Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini" and "Selama Ini di Negerimu" by Gus Mus, based on Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis?

The objectives of this study are to describe the denotative meanings in the poems "Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini" and "Selama Ini di Negerimu" by Gus Mus, and to describe the connotative meanings in the poems "Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini" and "Selama Ini di Negerimu" by Gus Mus. This study describes the myths found in the poems "Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini" and "Selama Ini di Negerimu" by Gus Mus, applying Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The research aims to broaden the researcher's insight and understanding regarding the application of Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis to literary works, specifically the poetry of Gus Mus. The findings are expected to serve as a reference and learning resource for students in their academic pursuits, aiding their understanding of literary semiotics and other related fields. Furthermore, the study helps readers grasp the profound meanings within Gus Mus's poems, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the social, religious, and humanitarian mes-



sages they convey. It is also hoped that this research will serve as a foundation for future studies involving Roland Barthes' semiotics or Indonesian literary analysis.

Language evolves dynamically over time, adapting to the advancement of knowledge across different eras (Aminuddin, 2011:9). A fundamental characteristic of language is its universality, making it a constant medium for human communication. Barthes explains that signs possess not only literal or denotative meanings but also connotative meanings shaped by culture, ideology, and societal experience (Wibowo, 2013:41).

In fact, a sign can evolve into a myth accepted as truth within social life (Qusayri et al., 2024:392). This concept renders Roland Barthes' theory relevant for analyzing literary works, particularly poetry, which is rich in symbols and hidden meanings. One Indonesian poet whose works are replete with symbolic and religious significance is Bisri, known as Mus. Mus is an Indonesian Islamic scholar, cultural figure, and man of letters renowned for poetry that addresses themes of religion, humanity, and social issues, while also critiquing the realities of societal life (Nasa, 2023:166–176). In his poetry, Mus frequently conveys social critiques, moral messages, and spiritual reflections through specific symbols that require in-depth analysis and interpretation.

Research by Muhammad Qusayri, Somadi, and Sukirno (2024:391–399)—titled "A Roland Barthes Semiotic Study of Poetry: Sajak Matahari and Sajak Burung-Burung Kondor by W.S. Rendra"—was published in the journal *Indonesia: Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*. This study aims to analyze the humanistic meaning within W.S. Rendra's poems using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. It employs a descriptive-qualitative method utilizing heuristic and hermeneutic reading techniques. The findings reveal the presence of Roland Barthes' five semiotic codes—hermeneutic, semic, symbolic, proairetic, and cultural—within the poems. Additionally, research by Hanny Maulida Mawaddah and Ahmad Supena (2024:554–563)—titled "A Roland Barthes

Semiotic Analysis of the Poetry Collection Kopi, Kretek, Cinta by Agus R. Sarjono"—was published in *Bahtera Indonesia: Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze Roland Barthes's five semiotic codes within several poems by Agus R. Sarjono. The results indicate that the collection *Kopi, Kretek, Cinta* by Agus R. Sarjono contains connotative, symbolic, actantial, and cultural codes that reveal the social and cultural meanings embedded in the poems.

METHOD

The researcher employs a descriptive methodology in this study. According to Nazir (in Endraswara, 2016:8), the objective of this method is to provide a methodical, factual, and accurate explanation regarding the details, characteristics, and relationships of the events under investigation. This method is used to describe the denotative and connotative meanings, as well as the myths, found in the poems titled *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* and *Selama Ini di Negerimu* by Gus Mus. The study utilizes a semiotic approach based on Roland Barthes's framework. Barthes's semiotic theory is employed because it is capable of uncovering the meanings of signs within the poems *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* and *Selama Ini di Negerimu* by Mus through three stages of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth.

Data collection techniques refer to the actions taken by the researcher to gather data. According to Sugiyono (2017:224), Razak (2017:99), the data collection procedure constitutes a crucial and highly strategic step in the process. The techniques used for data collection involve document analysis and a literature review. Specifically, the data collection procedures for this study consist of documentation techniques and literature study.

Data analysis techniques are the process of structuring data sequences, organizing them using patterns, categories and basic description units, Patton (Moleong, 2017:280). Based on this, this research analyzes the data using the following procedure. Re-read the data collected regarding the

meaning of the signs in the poems entitled "the religious people of this country" and "all this time in your country" from the work of Gus Mus, classify the data in the form of quotations of word fragments, phrases and sentences which have denotational, connotation and mythical meaning in the poems entitled "the religious people of this country" and "all this time in your country" from the work of Gus Mus, analyze the data that describes the meaning of the poems entitled "the religious people of this country" and "all this time in your country" from the work of Gus Mus using Roland Barthes' semiotic study, describing data that describes the meaning of signs in the poems entitled "religious people in this country" and "all this time in your country" from the work of Gus Mus using Roland Barthes' semiotic study, interpreting data that describes the meaning of the poems entitled "religious people in this country" and "all this time in your country" from Gus Mus's work using Roland Barthes' semiotic study, concluding the data results that describe the meaning contained in the poems entitled "religious people in this country" and "all this time in your country" from the work of Gus Mus using Roland Barthes' semiotic studies.

RESULTS

1. The Meaning of Denotation in the Poems *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* and *Selama Ini di Negerimu* by Gus Mus

Data 1 Analysis of the Meaning of Line 1 Denotation

"Lord, look at how religious this country is"

Religious People: A group of people who adhere to a particular religion.

In the first line of the poem "Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini" by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies a denotative meaning in the phrase "kaum beragama" (religious people). The denotative meaning of this phrase refers to a group of people who possess and practice the teachings of a specific religion. The phrase retains its literal mean-

ing as understood in everyday life, without any additional connotations.

Data 2: Analysis of Denotative Meaning in Line 4 "demi mendapatkan ridha-Mu" (for the sake of obtaining Your ridha)

Ridha: God's willingness or approval regarding human actions.

In the fourth line of the poem "Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini" by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies a denotative meaning in the term "ridha-Mu" (Your ridha). The denotative meaning of this term refers to God's willingness and approval regarding actions performed by humans. The term retains its actual meaning as understood within religious teachings.

Data 3: Analysis of Denotative Meaning in Line 5:

"they are willing to sacrifice their brethren"
Sacrifice (Mengorbankan): To surrender something for a specific interest.

In the fifth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies the denotative meaning of the word "mengorbankan" (to sacrifice). The denotative meaning of this word refers to the act of surrendering something—whether it be wealth, effort, or personal interests—for a specific purpose. The word retains its literal meaning, consistent with common usage in everyday language.

Data 4: Analysis of Denotative Meaning in Line 6:

"to vie for the closest spot by Your side"
Vie (Berebut): To compete with others to obtain something.

Closest spot (Tempat terdekat): The position nearest to a specific destination or center.

In the sixth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies the denotative meanings of the word "berebut" (to vie) and the phrase "tempat terdekat" (closest spot). The denotative meaning of "berebut" refers to the act of competing with others to acquire something. Meanwhile, the denotative meaning of the phrase "tempat terdekat" refers to a position located at



the shortest distance from a specific center. Both terms retain their literal meanings.

Data 5: Analysis of Denotative Meaning in Line 7

“they even have the heart to thrust and stab”

Thrust (Menyodok): To push or jab using a specific object.

Stab (Menikam): To drive a sharp object into someone’s body.

In the seventh line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies the denotative meanings of the words “menyodok” (to thrust) and “menikam” (to stab). The denotative meanings of both words refer to physical actions—specifically thrusting or stabbing with a sharp object—capable of injuring someone. Both words retain their literal meanings, describing physical actions in the standard sense.

Data 6 Analysis of Denotative Meaning in Line 12:

“even supporting tyranny”

Tyranny (kelaliman): An act of oppression or an unjust action.

In the twelfth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identified the denotative meaning of the word “kelaliman” (tyranny). The denotative meaning of the word refers to arbitrary actions, injustice, or treatment of others that exceeds proper bounds. The word retains its actual meaning as defined in the Indonesian language.

Data 7 Analysis of Denotative Meaning in Line XIV:

“they never even harbor ill thoughts toward the devil”

Devil (setan): A supernatural being considered to lead humans astray according to religious teachings.

In the fourteenth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identified the denotative meaning of the word “setan” (devil). The denotative meaning of the word refers to a supernatural being known in religious teachings as a tempter and a corrupter of humans. The word retains its literal meaning as understood in societal beliefs.

Data 8 Analysis of Denotative Meaning in Line XVI:

“they keep building You luxurious houses”

Luxurious houses: Large, beautiful buildings serving a specific purpose.

In the sixteenth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies the denotative meaning of the phrase “luxurious houses.” The denotation refers to buildings that are physically large, beautiful, and of high value. The phrase conveys a literal meaning, referring to actual structures that can be directly observed.

Data 9: Analysis of Denotative Meaning in Line XIX:

“with magnificent domes and towering minarets”

Dome: A semicircular roof structure.

Minaret: A tall, upright structure.

In the nineteenth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies denotative meanings within the text. These meanings are found in the words *kubah* (dome) and *menara* (minaret/tower). The denotation of *kubah* refers to an architectural feature of a mosque or house of worship that serves as the main roof. Meanwhile, the denotation of *menara* refers to a tall, slender structure, such as a part of a mosque (a place for the call to prayer).

Data 10: Analysis of Denotative Meaning in Line 20

to shout Your name

meneriakkan (to shout): Producing a loud, clear sound intended to be heard by many people.

In the twentieth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies a denotative meaning. This meaning is found in the word *meneriakkan*, which refers to a high-volume vocal activity—distinct from *melantunkan* (to chant or intone), which implies a softer delivery.

Data 11: Analysis of Denotative Meaning in Line 22

who wish to pay a visit to You

sowan: To appear before or visit a respected per-

son. In line 22 of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identified a denotative meaning. This denotative meaning is found in the word *sowan*, which refers to the physical act of visiting someone older or more respected as a gesture of deference.

Data 12: Analysis of Denotative Meaning – Line 24

Hingga pesta agung kenegaraan (Until the grand state celebration)

Pesta: Festive celebration

Agung: Grand/Majestic

Kenegaraan: Relating to the state/government

In line 24 of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identified denotative meanings. These meanings are found in the words *pesta*, *agung*, and *kenegaraan*. The denotative meaning of *pesta* refers to a festive celebration, typically involving food, drink, music, and merriment. Furthermore, the denotative meaning of *agung* refers to something large, grand, or of high status (in terms of size or quality). Meanwhile, the denotative meaning of *kenegaraan* refers to anything related to the state or government.

Data 13: Analysis of Denotative Meaning – Line 30

kedekatannya dengan kekuasaan yang Engkau limpahkan (their closeness to the power You bestow/pour out)

limpahkan: To pour out/bestow

In line 30 of the poem “*Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini*” by Gus Mus, the researcher identified a denotative meaning. This meaning is found in the word *melimpahkan*, which refers to pouring out or bestowing something in large, abundant quantities (like water being poured).

Data 14: Analysis of Denotative Meaning – Line 37

they sacralize their opinions

sacred: sacred

In line 37 of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher found the denotational meaning in it. The denotational meaning is found in the word *sacralize* which refers to

making something holy, sacred and cannot be violated.

Data 15 Analysis of the Meaning of Line 39 Denotation

to their takbir and vows

pledge : promise

In line 39 of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher found the denotational meaning in it. The denotational meaning is found in the word *pledge* which refers to a promise or official statement made intentionally.

Data 16 Analysis of the Meaning of Line 40 Denotation

which is as empty as a drum's stomach
drum belly: the inside of the drum

In line 39 of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher found the denotational meaning in it. The denotational meaning is found in the word *drum belly* which refers to the empty space inside the drum which, when struck, produces a loud sound but the contents are empty.

2. Connotative Meanings in the Poems *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* and *Selama Ini di Negerimu* by Gus Mus

Data 1: Analysis of Connotative Meaning in Line 1:

“Tuhan, lihatlah betapa kaum beragama negeri ini” (God, look at the religious people of this country)

Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini : A group that considers itself the most righteous and holy

In the first line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identified a connotative meaning in the phrase “*kaum beragama*.” Connotatively, the phrase refers not merely to a group of people who embrace and practice the teachings of a specific religion, but also implies a group that displays religious identity outwardly as a symbol of piety. In the context of this poem, the “religious people” are portrayed as a group that treats religion not only as a guide for life but also as a means to demonstrate personal



superiority over others. The phrase implies that religiosity is often understood merely in terms of symbols, attributes, and social recognition, rather than as the genuine embodiment of spiritual values.

Data 2: Analysis of Connotative Meaning in Line 4

Demi mendapatkan Ridha-Mu (To obtain Your pleasure/approval)

Ridha-Mu (Your pleasure/approval): A standard of justification for all actions

In the fourth line of the poem “Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini” by Gus Mus, the researcher identified a connotative meaning in the phrase “ridha-Mu” (Your pleasure/approval). Connotatively, the phrase is interpreted not only as God’s willingness or acceptance regarding human actions but also as a symbol of the ultimate goal often cited to justify various actions taken in the name of religion. In the context of this poem, God’s approval is no longer understood as a reward for virtuous and compassionate behavior; instead, it serves as a form of legitimation claimed by certain groups to reinforce the conviction that their own actions are the most righteous.

Data 3: Analysis of the Connotative Meaning in Line 5

They are willing to sacrifice their brethren
Sacrifice: Sacrificing common sense and conscience for the sake of group identity

In the fifth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies a connotative meaning in the word “sacrificing” (mengorbankan). Connotatively, the word signifies not merely the act of surrendering or losing something for a specific purpose, but also the abandonment of human values, common sense, and conscience in order to uphold group interests. Within the poem’s context, “sacrificing” does not necessarily imply physical harm; rather, it encompasses acts of ostracizing, antagonizing, or disregarding fellow human beings perceived to hold differing views, beliefs, or interests.

Data 4: Analysis of Connotative Meaning in Line 6

untuk berebut tempat terdekat di sisi-Mu (to vie for the closest place by Your side)

berebut (to vie/scramble): Unhealthy competition disguised as acts of worship

tempat terdekat (closest place): The most “noble” position within the socio-religious hierarchy

In the sixth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies connotative meanings in the word berebut and the phrase tempat terdekat di sisi-Mu. Connotatively, the word berebut signifies not merely the act of racing to obtain something, but symbolizes excessive competition in displaying piety and religious identity. In the context of this poem, worship and religious activities are no longer understood as a means to draw closer to God; instead, they have transformed into an arena of competition for gaining societal recognition, respect, and status. Meanwhile, the phrase tempat terdekat di sisi-Mu refers not simply to spiritual closeness to God, but symbolizes a position perceived as the most noble, righteous, and elevated within the socio-religious hierarchy.

Data 5: Analysis of Connotative Meaning in Line 7

mereka bahkan tega menyodok dan menikam
(they even have the heart to thrust and stab)

menyodok (to thrust/jab): Verbal or psychological attacks cloaked in religious doctrine

menikam (to stab): Betrayal by one’s own fellow believer.

In the seventh line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies connotative meanings in the words menyodok and menikam. Connotatively, the word menyodok signifies not merely a physical attack, but symbolizes an assault carried out through words, accusations, slander, hate speech, or disparaging judgments—all justified by religious doctrine. In the context of this poem, such actions depict the behavior of individuals who use religion as a tool to attack and discredit others who

hold differing views. Meanwhile, the word "stabbing" (menikam) signifies more than just wounding someone with a sharp weapon; it symbolizes betrayal, hostility, and acts that harm others—even those belonging to the same group or sharing the same faith.

Data 6: Analysis of Connotative Meaning – Line 12

bahkan mendukung kelaliman (even supporting kelaliman)

Kelaliman: Oppression cloaked in religious ritual.

In the twelfth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identified a connotative meaning in the word "kelaliman" (oppression/tyranny). Connotatively, the word signifies not merely acts of cruelty or deeds that harm others, but also symbolizes various forms of injustice justified through religious symbols, narratives, or legitimacy. In the context of this poem, "kelaliman" depicts behavior that contradicts humanitarian values yet is deemed correct simply because it is perpetrated by a group possessing influence, authority, or a specific religious identity. Consequently, such oppression is no longer viewed as a wrongdoing; instead, it is accepted as normal, provided it is carried out in the name of a supposedly sacred cause.

Data 7 Analysis of Connotative Meaning in Line 14

they never even harbor ill thoughts toward the devil

devil: A scapegoat for one's own bad behavior

In the fourteenth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies a connotative meaning in the word "devil" (setan). Connotatively, the word is not merely interpreted as a being synonymous with temptation and wickedness; it also symbolizes the party frequently used as an excuse or scapegoat for human wrongdoing. In the context of this poem, the devil represents the human tendency to shift responsibility for bad behavior onto external factors. By doing so, individuals can avoid feelings

of guilt and bypass the need for introspection regarding their own actions.

Data 8 Analysis of Connotative Meaning in Line 16

they keep building You luxurious houses
luxurious houses: A symbol of the collective hypocrisy of religious people

In the sixteenth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies a connotative meaning in the phrase "luxurious houses" (rumah-rumah mewah). Connotatively, the phrase is not merely interpreted as referring to magnificent, large, and high-value buildings; it also symbolizes the human effort to showcase religious grandeur through physical symbols visible to the public. In the context of this poem, these luxurious houses illustrate the tendency of some religious people to prioritize the construction and grandeur of religious facilities over the actual practice of religious values. Architectural magnificence becomes a measure of success and a source of pride, while issues such as poverty, injustice, and the suffering of others are often overlooked.

Data 9 Analysis of Connotative Meaning in Line 19

“with magnificent domes and towering minarets”

Dome: Symbolic religious pride.

Minaret: A symbol of power and social prestige.

In the nineteenth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies connotative meanings in the words “dome” (kubah) and “minaret” (menara). Connotatively, the word “dome” is not merely understood as the hemispherical architectural feature of a place of worship; it also symbolizes the identity, pride, and grandeur of a religious group. In the context of this poem, the dome serves as a symbol of religiosity manifested through physical and visual aspects that are readily visible to the public. Meanwhile, the word “minaret” signifies more than just a tall structure attached to a place of worship; it symbolizes status, influence, and the desire to dem-



onstrate a group's existence and greatness within social life.

Data 10: Analysis of Connotative Meaning in Line 20

to shout Your name

shouting: Religion as a performance

In the twentieth line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies a connotative meaning in the word “shouting” (meneriakkan). Connotatively, the word implies more than simply vocalizing something loudly; it symbolizes an effort to openly display religious identity and piety so that they are recognized by others. In the context of this poem, the act of shouting God’s name illustrates a tendency among some individuals to prioritize the public display of religious expression over the internalization of religious values in daily life. Religion is no longer positioned as a spiritual guide that shapes character and behavior; instead, it becomes a means to gain recognition, attention, and positive validation from one's social environment.

Data 11 Analysis of Mythic Meaning in Line 11:
“letting their necks be noosed by ties”

Tie: Official position is deemed more important than the courage to defend the truth.

In the eleventh line of the poem *Selama Ini di Negerimu* (All This Time in Your Country) by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies a mythic meaning in the word “tie.” The word constructs a myth that official positions and social status must be preserved, even at the cost of honesty and the courage to speak the truth.

Data 12 Analysis of Mythic Meaning in Line 14:
“in front of the mute automatic camera”

Camera: Image-building is deemed more important than reality.

In the fourteenth line of the poem “Selama Ini di Negerimu” by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies a mythic meaning in the word “camera.” The word constructs a myth that public appearance and image are more important than tangible actions taken for the benefit of society. In social and political life, image-building is often used to mask the actual reality.

Data 13 Analysis of Mythic Meaning in Line 21:
“breeding scapegoats and rats”

Scapegoat: The tradition of blaming others for problems that arise.

Rats: Corruption regarded as commonplace within the exercise of power.

In the twenty-first line of the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* by Gus Mus, the researcher identifies mythic meanings in the terms “scapegoat” and “rats.” These two symbols construct a myth that, in social life, there are always parties singled out to bear the blame, while corrupt practices continue to proliferate and are accepted as a routine aspect of holding power.

Data 14 Analysis of Mythic Meaning in Line 26:
“truth is conquered”

Truth: The value of honesty defeated by power and vested interests. In the thirtieth line of the poem “All This Time in Your Country” by Gus Mus, researchers find the meaning of myth in the word “truth”. This word builds the myth that in social and political life, truth often has no power when faced with interests and power. This condition makes people slowly lose confidence in justice.

Data 15 Analysis of the Meaning of Myth in Line 56:

“He sent the wild birds”

Ababil birds: A symbol of God's help against injustice.

In the forty-eighth line of the poem “All This Time in Your Country” by Gus Mus, the researcher finds a mythical meaning in the phrase “ababil birds”. This phrase builds the myth that ultimately power and evil will be destroyed by the power of God. The poet uses the symbols of this religious story to give hope to society that justice and truth will still prevail against tyranny.

DISCUSSION

Denotation, Connotation, and Myth as Signification Systems in Gus Mus's Poetry

This study reveals that denotation, connotation, and myth do not exist in isolation; rather, they form a unified system of signification, as proposed by Roland Barthes. This view is supported by Hoed

(2014), who explains that a sign functions not only to convey literal meaning but also to generate new meanings based on underlying social and cultural contexts. Consequently, the meaning of a sign can evolve from a basic definition to an ideological meaning prevalent within society. The research findings demonstrate that this process of signification is clearly evident in the two poems by Gus Mus, where the signs employed evolve from denotative meanings to connotative meanings, ultimately forming social myths. Denotation serves as the initial meaning, referring to the literal definition of a word or phrase. This meaning subsequently evolves into a connotative meaning, shaped by social experiences, culture, and societal ideologies. In the next stage, the connotative meaning develops into a myth that represents the views, beliefs, and social constructs prevailing in society.

In the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* for instance, the words *kubah* (dome), *menara minaret*, and *rumah-rumah mewah* (luxurious houses) refer—at the denotative level—to physical structures or parts of places of worship. However, at the connotative level, these words evolve into symbols of grandeur and religious image-making. Furthermore, at the level of myth, these symbols foster a social belief that piety is often measured by physical symbols and religious opulence. This illustrates how a sign evolves from a literal meaning to an ideological one, as described by Barthes.

Social Criticism in the Poems *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* and *Selama Ini di Negerimu*

Based on the research findings, both poems by Gus Mus contain strong social criticism regarding various phenomena occurring in societal life. This finding aligns with the view of Teeuw (2015), who states that literary works are a reflection of societal life, which authors can use to convey responses to or criticisms of social reality. Similarly, Faruk (2017) explains that literature never emerges in a vacuum but is always linked to the social conditions that form its backdrop. Therefore, the criticism Gus Mus conveys in these two poems can be understood as a response to various social, reli-

gious, and humanitarian issues within society. In the poem “*Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini*,” the social criticism is directed primarily at the behavior of certain groups who use religion as a tool of legitimation to gain power, social status, and specific advantages. Through the use of various religious symbols, Gus Mus highlights the gap between ideal religious values and the actual social practices observed in society.

At the level of connotation, the researcher found that the words employed by Gus Mus evolve into social symbols and critiques regarding humanity. In the poem “*Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini*”, various religious symbols are used to satirize the behavior of certain segments of society that use religion as a tool for self-justification, the pursuit of group interests, and the cultivation of a public image. For instance, the phrase “*vying for the closest spot by Your side*” implies a form of social competition regarding piety, while the phrase “*luxurious houses*” symbolizes the opulence of places of worship amidst the suffering of the populace. This reflects a critique of religious practices that prioritize symbols over humanitarian values. According to Ratna (2015), symbols in literary works serve as a means to convey ideas that extend beyond their literal meanings. Consequently, the religious symbols utilized by Gus Mus do not merely refer to the physical elements of religion; they also function as a medium for critiquing social behaviors that invoke religion while disregarding humanitarian values.

Beyond offering social commentary, the two poems by Ahmad Mustofa Bisri also critique the erosion of human values in modern society. This aligns with the view of Nurgiyantoro (2020), Elmustian & Razak (2021), who states that literary works serve not merely as entertainment but also embody moral values that offer a medium for reader reflection. Through his poetry, Gus Mus seeks to remind society of the importance of human values, social concern, and respect for others. In the poem “*Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini*”, Gus Mus illustrates how some members of society prioritize religious symbols and identity over val-



ues such as compassion, tolerance, and social concern. This is evident in the use of phrases like "thrusting and stabbing," which signify violence, hostility, and fanaticism perpetrated in the name of religion. Through such expressions, the poet highlights how religion—which ought to be a guide for peace—is frequently used to justify inhumane actions.

CONCLUSION

The denotative meaning in both poems by Gus Mus represents the literal or actual sense of the words employed. In the poem *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini*, denotative meanings appear in words such as "religious people," "Your pleasure" (ridha-Mu), "Satan," "dome," "minaret," and "pledge," which directly refer to specific religious objects, actions, or concepts. Meanwhile, in the poem "Selama Ini di Negerimu" (All This Time in Your Land), denotative meanings are found in words like "mouth," "eyes," "hands," "streets," "home," and "children," referring to tangible realities in the lives of the people. These denotative meanings serve as the foundation for sign formation before evolving into deeper layers of meaning.

The connotative meaning in both poems reveals social criticism, humanitarian critique, and commentary on societal behavior. In *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini*, the connotations depict religious fanaticism, social hypocrisy, the cultivation of a religious image, and the instrumentalization of religion for group interests or the pursuit of power. Conversely, in *Selama Ini di Negerimu*, the connotations portray the suffering of the common people, poverty, social injustice, the loss of hope, and a lack of social concern. Through these connotative meanings, Gus Mus critiques the social realities of Indonesian society.

The mythical meaning in both poems highlights views and ideologies prevalent within society. In *Kaum Beragama Negeri Ini* a myth is identified wherein religious identity is assumed to guarantee personal morality, the grandeur of a place of worship is viewed as a symbol of piety, and proximity to religion is taken as a measure of human

goodness. Meanwhile, in *Selama Ini di Negerimu* a myth is found wherein the poverty and suffering of the people are regarded as commonplace and accepted as a natural part of social life. Through these two poems, Gus Mus seeks to deconstruct societal perspectives that have long been accepted without critical scrutiny.

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