

Language of Poetries Balada Orang-Orang Tercinta,  
Empat Kumpulan Sajak, Blues Untuk Bonnie, and  
Sajak-Sajak Sepatu Tua Written By W.S. Rendra  
  
(A Stylistic Study)

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**Abstract**

This research used the descriptive qualitative method to analyze as detailed as possible the data related to the use of language of the poetries as stated in the objectives of this research. The data of the research were analyzed by using the semiotic structural method with hermeneutics.

The results of the research are the distinctiveness of the use of language, namely: (1) the phonemic integrations such as alliteration, assonation, euphony, cacophony, phonemic symbol, and rhyme found in the poetries of W.S. Rendra produce a beautiful rhythm and support a certain atmosphere. Alliteration, assonation, euphony, cacophony, phonemic symbol, and rhyme are only found in several lines or couplets. The patterns of phonemic integration of rhyme found in the research are those which are free or are not fixed. The beginning rhyme occurs due to the iterations of words or lines. In addition, the middle and

end rhymes occur because they follow the end phonemes of the former lines. The realization of alliteration, assonantion, euphony, cacophony, phonemic symbol occurs linearly in one line or many lines in one couplet. The pattern of alliteration always occur not only at the beginning syllables but also at the end syllables, but that of assonation always occurs in the open syllable. In addition to plosive, sibilant, and lateral sounds, in the poetries of W.S. Rendra are nasal sounds also found. The realization of the beginning, middle, and end rhymes do not always occur in the couplets, but in some parts of them. Furthermore, in the poetries of W.S. Rendra there are not fixed patterns as found in old poetries.

The vocabulary employed in the poetries of W.S. Rendra is dominated with daily Indonesian vocabulary. In addition, some items of vocabulary found refer to names of places, names of figures, and addressing words. Most of the dictions are poetic, which consist of dictions with natural reality objects, private/special dictions, and general dictions to support literary devices. In terms of denotation and connotation, the poetries of W.S. Rendra use many connotative words and a small portion of denotative words, but this still makes them easy to understand. The images frequently occurring in the poetries of W.S. Rendra are visual and motion ones. The former have an effect that their meanings are more concrete and the fantasy images become clearer and more detailed. Meanwhile, the latter are more dominant so that the poetries become more alive and dynamic. Other images such as smell, audio, and taste are also present although the number is not dominant.

The figurative languages found in the poetries of W.S. Rendra include simile, epic simile, metaphor, and allegory. The most dominant ones are implicit metaphor and simile. The presence of the figurative languages makes the poetries prismatic in nature (emitting meanings very much).

The stylistics frequently occurring in the poetries of W.S. Rendra are repetition, climax, and anti climax as well in addition to a small portion of other stylistics. The dominant stylistic is repetition, and this makes the poetries look rhythmic, and give emphasis on the ideas intended by the poet. In addition, the use of the repetition stylistic specially varied with climax, anti climax, and other stylistics makes the poetries look fresher, not boring, beautiful, and interesting. The anaphoric repetition dominating the poetries of W.S. Rendra makes them more rhythmic at the beginning lines and also emphasizes the meanings of the words repeated at the beginning lines.

Visually, the poetries of W.S. Rendra are presented in couplets consisting of a number of lines which is not fixed. Some couplets with two lines through more than ten lines are found. Even, there are several poetries which are not assembled in couplets, but in lines that are arranged into one couplet from the beginning to the end of the couplet. The typography of the poetries is not arranged in certain configurations, but their lines are neatly arranged with left align. This makes the expression of ideas with language becomes smooth and flowing. The most special and prominent aspect found in the poetries of W.S. Rendra is the presence of enjambments. Nearly in all of his poetries occur enjambments. Even, there are several couplets which only consist of one sentence so that there occur many enjambments. This results in tensions and accentuates the following lines so that they are interesting to be

followed in the next lines.

**Keywords:** Phoneme, diction, vocabulary, imagery, figurative language, literary devices, and visual form

## 1. Introduction

W. S. Rendra is one of Indonesian poets with a world reputation. His poetries have been known and acknowledged by world's literary work critics, and even some of them have been translated into several foreign languages. This poet has earned a nickname "The Peacock" due to the beauty of his works. His works are masterpieces and are known to the world community as proven by the facts that his works have been reprinted and translated into several foreign languages. The works translated into foreign languages among others are (1) *Rendra Ballads and Blues*, English translation by Burton Raffel, Harry Aveling, and Derwent May, (2) *Pamphletten van een Dichter*, Dutch translation by A. Teeuw, (3) *State of Emergency*, English translation by Harry Aveling, (4) *Weltliche Gesänge und Pamphlet*, German translation by Beate and Rainer Carle, (5) *Ijzeren Wereld*, Dutch translation by Kees Snoek, (6) *Puisi-Puisi Rendra*, Malaysian translation by Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka Malaysia, (7) *Rendra Poetry*, Hindi translation from English by Shivkuti Lal Verma, and (8) *W. S. Rendra*, Russian translation by M. Boldyzeva and St. Petersburg (Rendra, 1997:62–67). Therefore, the poetries of W. S. Rendra need to be studied in terms of stylistic peculiarities and stylistic and semiotic meanings.

The language of poetry by and large is difficult to be comprehended in term of meaning due to its distortion and uniqueness. The difficulty in interpreting the meaning lies on its language which frequently uses literary conventions that make it beautiful, indirect, and require a deep thought or contemplation. Literary language (in this case the language of poetry) is indeed different from the non-literary one. It offers other distinct phenomena. It is connotative in nature rather than referential, which refers to a certain state (Wellek and Warren, translation by Melani Budianta, 1990:15). Its connotative makes a poetry have multiple and ambiguous meanings, so that it is difficult to be comprehended. It is therefore, that poetry is a multi interpretable literary work. Its multi interpretability is due to the aesthetical competencies of its readers. In this respect, although multi interpretable, this literary work should remain to be interpreted logically by linking the elements and phenomena of its own. This is where literary language has a poetic function. According to Jakobson (Teeuw, 1984:75-76), the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis combination. This claim confirms that in a literary work (poetry), poetic function is the most important aspect, not other functions. Poetic function is not a referral one, but the reference out of the language expressions is the most important, and the words or the uses of language become the center of attention although other functions is also present in the poetry (Teeuw, 1984:74). Such a definition indicates that the language which is used by a poet shows his or her individual language because it depends very much on how to maximize the poetic function of the literary language in the new creativity forms. According to Wellek and Warren (translation by Melani Budianta, 1990:17), poetic language regulates, introduces daily language resources, and sometimes violates the common conventions, which pushes its readers to pay attention to, consider, and realize them. In this respect, the daily language is exploitable as a literary language. This exploitation makes its language deviate from the normative one. This becomes the sole characteristic of literary language of individual poet. However, such language distinctiveness cannot be identified constantly (stable). The

language that a poet uses follows the context development of his or her life experiences and aesthetic experiences. Therefore, poetry always develops and changes in the use of its language. In other words, the use of language which is individual-based and specific can be mentioned as language *style*.

## 2. Theoretical Review

Hermeneutics in literature is closely related to semiotics which views language as a sign system of the primary level (*ein primaries model bildendes system*) and literature as a sign system of the secondary level or the higher level (*ein secundares model bildendes system*), which must be interpreted as a whole so as to get literary meanings. Riffaterre offers two levels to comprehend a literary work, namely: heuristic reading and hermeneutic reading or retroactive reading. Heuristic reading is the reading of a literary work based on its language structure, or from the point of view of semiotics is the reading of a literary work based on the semiotic system convention of the primary level. What is achieved in this reading is its referential meanings. Meanwhile, hermeneutic reading is the reading of literary work based on the semiotic system of the secondary level or the reading of a literary work based on the acknowledged conventions or its prevailing literary contexts (Riffaterre, 1978:3- 6). This claim is nearly similar to the one conveyed by Ricoeur, although expressed differently. Ricoeur claims that a text lies between hermeneutic explanation and understanding, which encounter each other. The structural explanations tend to be objective, whereas the hermeneutic understanding gives a subjective impression. This dichotomy must be dealt with an understanding that a text essentially is autonomous in nature to do “de-contextualization”, either from the sociological or psychological points of view and to do “re-contextualization”(a process of going back into the context) Furthermore, he explains that the task of hermeneutics is to search for internal dynamics that regulate the work structures of a text on one hand and to look for power owned by a text to project itself going outside and to enable its meanings to come out on surface. Hermeneutics, therefore, is a theory of the operation of understanding and its relation to the interpretation of a text (Ricoeurin Kaelan, 1998:235). Hence, a literary text possibly has more than one meaning if related to different contexts.

Understanding a literary work basically is interpreting a text. Interpreting in this respect is an effort of unpacking the covert meanings or an effort of dismantling the folds of meanings from the covert levels in literary meanings (Kaelan, 1998:232). Words are also symbols because they describe other meanings which are indirect in nature, not so important referentially, and figurative, and which are only understood through symbols. Interpretation is a concept which bears a plurality of meanings contained in symbols or words as an expression in language form. This claim is nearly similar to the one suggested by Riffaterre. Literature (in this respect poetry) is an expression or a statement of a matter indirectly (Riffaterre, 1978:1). This indirectness is due to meaning displacing through the use of figurative language; meaning distorting caused by the use of ambiguous words, contradictions, nonsense; and creating of meaning caused by the utilization of visual forms, enjambment, rhyming, homologues (the parallelism of forms and lines) and typography.

Literary work is an imaginative work of its author through language media. As an imaginative work, aesthetic becomes more dominant. Poetry (a part of literary work genre) is an artistic work with language media, and its aesthetic function is more prominent. The structure of the language of poetry is a literary text composed of sign systems. Based on the scope of stylistic study aforementioned, the approach employed in this study is a semiotic and structural one. The structural approach studies how the language elements of a poetry is created, and this stylistic study investigates how is the language distinctiveness of poetry. Meanwhile, the semiotic approach emphasizes how the function of language sign in literature is. The function primarily preferred in this stylistic study is the poetic function as claimed by Jakobson (Teeuw, 1984:74) that “poetry is the most typical and special poetic function, and poetic function is dominant.” In poetic function, the use of words or language becomes the center of attention. The poetic function of language is the concentration of attention to message or the directivity of the message itself. Jakobson (Teeuw, 1984:75-76) claims that “*the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination*”<sup>4</sup>. This poetic function is elaborated Simson (2004:53) by into three principles, “*the particular language pattern he develops work to establish connection (a principle of equivalence), between the words he chooses from the pool of possible words (the axis of selection), and the words that are combined across the poetic line (the axis of combination)*”. Poetry is a literary work composed of language elements which are closely related. In relation to stylistic study, the interrelation of the language elements of poetry shall be studied in detail in an attempt to search for stylistic specificity, and to investigate the aesthetic effect used in its language. Furthermore, the semiotic analysis as a support approach is very important considering that the language in literature has two levels of sign. The first level of sign is that the language shows the linguistic meaning, and the second level of sign is that language indicates the literary meaning. Even, according to Culler in Teeuw (1984:100), in a literary work, there are literary, linguistic, and cultural conventions. Therefore, to study a literary work requires knowledge related to language, literature, and culture. Poetry is composed of linguistic signs both the verbal and non-verbal ones. The verbal signs are in the forms of lingual units, and the non-verbal ones include visual form, punctuation, *enjambment*, general complexion, typography, and others including language sign which functions to arouse aesthetic effects or certain contemplations. The literary stylistic studies the aforementioned aspects.

### 3. Methodology

This research used the descriptive qualitative method, which was by and large to describe and elaborate/analyze in details the findings found in the data. It also observed and described the objects of the research based on the facts/data in the field. Furthermore, this method was chosen due to the characteristics of the prevailing data, that is, qualitative data, which are norms or criteria in the form lingual units. The role of theory in this research was not as a tool to examine hypothesis, but to trace, to observe, and describe various uses of language particularly those related to the literary properties. The prevailing theories of stylistic study were the basis to trace the phenomena.

#### 4. Research Finding and Discussion

- a. Phonemic styles in *Balada Orang-orang Tercinta, Empat Kumpulan Sajak, Blues Untuk Bonnie*, and *Sajak-sajak Sepatu Tua* of W.S. Rendra

Phoneme is much utilized by poets to produce aesthetic effects. The integration of phonemes such as alliteration, assonation, euphony, cacophony, phonemic symbol, and rhyme found in the poetries of W.S. Rendra produces beautiful rhythm effects. In addition, such phonemes are frequently used to support a certain atmosphere according to their context.

The alliteration, assonation, euphony, cacophony, phonemic symbol, and rhyme can be found only in several lines or couplets. The patterns of the phonemic integration found are those which are not fixed, and do not follow the conventions of old poetries. The beginning rhymes occur due to the iterations of words or lines, and so do the middle ones. Meanwhile, the end rhymes occur because they follow the end phonemes of the previous lines.

The realization of alliteration, assonance, and rhymes (beginning, middle, and end), euphony, and cacophony emerge linearly in a line or in several lines in a couplet. The pattern of alliteration occurs not only at the beginning syllables but also at the end syllables. Meanwhile, the pattern of assonation always occurs in the open syllables. In addition to plosive, sibilant, and lateral sounds, in the poetries of W.S. Rendra are nasal sounds also found. The realization of the beginning, middle, and end rhymes do not always occur in the couplets, but in some parts of them. Furthermore, in the poetries of W.S. Rendra there are not fixed patterns as found in old poetries.

Overall, the phonemic styles found in the poetries of W.S. Rendra are alliteration and assonation. With such styles, the language of his poetries are more interesting, regular rhythmic, and beautiful. The sounds are also utilized to support meanings.

- b. Diction, vocabulary, denotation and connotation, and image in *Balada Orang-orang Tercinta, Empat Kumpulan Sajak, Blues Untuk Bonnie*, and *Sajak-sajak Sepatu Tua* of W.S. Rendra

The vocabulary used in the poetries of W.S. Rendra is dominated by Indonesian vocabulary that is the vocabulary of daily language. Scientific terminologies or foreign language terminologies are not found in his poetries. However, in addition to such vocabulary of daily language, there are many items of vocabulary which are names of places, names of figures, names of trees, names of flowers, and addressing words. Such words are to support the poetries which are narrative in nature and which are in the ballad forms. There are also poetries with time markers that indicate the storyline use.

The diction in the poetries of W.S. Rendra is selectively chosen as to create language creativities as literary devices which produce language beauty such as alliteration, assonation, euphony, cacophony, phonemic symbol, beginning, middle, and end rhymes, figurative language, image, and rhetorical device. In addition, the diction is chosen to produce certain connotations according to the contexts.

However, not all of the words in the poetries of W.S. Rendra are connotative in nature, but

some are denotative. Such words cause the poetries of W.S. Rendra to be easily understood. The diction with natural reality object and that of private one which become special parts are also found the poetries of W.S. Rendra. The dictions are used to have connotations of certain meanings and to create figurative languages and images so that the poetries have narrative styles; they remain poetic and produce a deep contemplation. The dictions chosen by the poet are frequently assembled to describe a romantic beauty as to convey his sense of awe over special objects such as his lovers, idols, and natural beauty. The dictions which have connotations of tragic and cruel incidents are also found in his poetries. They function to emphasize meanings and give concrete descriptions about ideas intended in the poetries.

The images found in the poetries of W.S. Rendra include vision, movement, smell, audio, and taste. The visual image gives effects that the meanings of the poetries become more concrete, and the fantasy images become clearer and more detailed. The motion image makes the poetries more alive and dynamic. The auditory image makes the poetries of W.S. Rendra auditory in nature, and other images make the language effect beautiful, interesting, fresh, and imagery.

c. Figurative languages in *Balada Orang-orang Tercinta, Empat Kumpulan Sajak, Blues Untuk Bonnie*, and *Sajak-sajak Sepatu Tua* of W. S. Rendra

The figurative languages found in the poetries of W.S. Rendra are simile, epic simile, metaphor, and allegory. Such figurative languages make his poetries more contemplative and prismatic. The figurative languages are used to describe or to compare the intended objects concretely. In addition, the language of the poetries becomes more interesting.

The figurative languages used in the poetries of W.S. Rendra are always new, meaning that the figurative languages used in his poetries are the ones which are never used by the former poets. This indicates that the poet, W.S. Rendra, is fairly creative to create a fresh figurative language.

d. Rhetorical device in *Ballada Orang-orang Tercinta, Empat Kumpulan Sajak, Blues Untuk Bonnie*, and *Sajak-sajak Sepatu Tua* of W. S. Rendra

The rhetorical device which frequently occurs in the poetries of W.S. Rendra includes repetition, climax, and anti climax stylistics, but there are also some other minor stylistics. The repetition stylistic dominates the poetries of W.S. Rendra so that the language of the poetries looks rhythmic. Besides, the rhetorical device is to emphasize the words intended by the poetries so that the meanings become clearer. The use of climax and anti climax stylistics makes the language of the poetries more interesting. All the more, if the poetries are read, each line and word will get a different emphasis and intonation. In the former, the intonation gradually increases in accordance with statement from the one which is regarded less important to the one which is considered important or very important. Meanwhile, in latter, when the poetries are read, each line and word get an emphasis, and the intonation gradually decreases. The use of the repetition stylistic varied with the climax and anti climax stylistics as well as figurative languages makes the poetries fresher, not boring, beautiful, and interesting. The anaphoric repetition stylistic which dominates the poetries of W.S. Rendra



makes them more rhythmic at the beginning of the lines, and also emphasizes the meanings of words which are repeated at the beginning of the lines.

In some of the poetries of W.S. Rendra is a hyperbolic rhetorical device. Such a stylistic gives a concrete description as well as makes the language of the poetries interesting although it gives an exaggerated or intensified impression.

e. Visual forms which include general pattern, typography, punctuation, and enjambement in *Balada Orang-orang Tercinta*, *Empat Kumpulan Sajak*, *Blues Untuk Bonnie*, and *Sajak-sajak Sepatu Tua* of W. S. Rendra

The poetries of W.S. Rendra are presented in couplets consisting of the number of lines which is not fixed. In his poetries, are couplets with two through more than ten lines in a couplet found. Even, several poetries are not assembled in couplets, but lines which are arranged into one couplet from the beginning to the end of the couplet. The typography of his poetries is not arranged in certain configurations, but the lines are arranged in left align. This gives an effect that the expression of ideas becomes smooth and flowing in nature.

The use of punctuations is not much violated, but is in accordance with the rules of Indonesian language. Deviations are precisely found much in the use of conjunctions, which cannot initiate sentences, but such conjunctions are found much in certain couplets to initiate couplets or sentences. This is done in order to maintain the cohesions between the couplets and between the lines.

The most specific and prominent aspect found in the poetries of W.S. Rendra is the presence of enjambments. Nearly in all of his poetries occur enjambments. One sentence sometimes is not finished in one line, but it is continued in the following lines. Even, there are several couplets which only consist of one sentence so that there occur many enjambments. These results in tensions and accentuate the following lines so that they are interesting to be followed in the next lines.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the results of stylistic study toward the poetries of W. S. Rendra namely: *Ballada Orang-orang Tercinta*, *Empat Kumpulan Sajak*, *Blues untuk Bonnie*, and *Sajak-sajak Sepatu Tua*, some conclusions are drawn: (1) the poetries of W.S. Rendra shows the special uses of language in the aspects of phoneme, diction and vocabulary, figurative language, image, rhetorical device, and visual form; (2) the distinctiveness in the use of the aforementioned aspects aims at producing aesthetic effects so that the language of poetry is more beautiful, interesting, and fresher but not boring; (3) and, the effect of the use of the aforementioned aspects also results in a concrete description of ideas delivered by the author of the poetries so that their meanings become clearer.

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