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The Reality of The World and Imagination of Bambang Widaya Sp.: A Case Study of *Lèng* Performance

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ABSTRACT: *Lèng* comes as a representation of social class from the imaginary world of Bambang Widaya Sp. Widaya is able to perceive the social reality around her. This research is an analytic descriptive research that uses documentation of *Lèng*'s performance as a research object. This study uses Jacob Sumardjo's theory of creativity as a tool to open up Widaya's journey in writing *Lèng*'s plays. Widaya tries to use his abilities and insights in everyday life and his artistic life as a way to create. From the meeting between knowledge and experience, Widaya translates the social reality of the people in Java in the *Lèng* performance. The results of this study can be seen that Widaya uses her experience and insights about the social reality around his as a way of working. Widaya processes various internal and external things from himself by transforming the world of reality into a world of imagination in *Lèng*'s performances.

KEYWORDS : Bambang Widaya, *Lèng*, kreativitas.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gapit Theater is one of the theater groups that appeared in Surakarta on 1981. Gapit Theater is the only group whose entire work uses the medium of the Javanese language. The backgrounds of its members, who are academics at the Indonesian Karawitan Arts Academy (ASKI) Surakarta, have had a major influence on the works of Gapit Theatre. In the Gapit Theater performance, Java is not only present as a language, but also incorporates the traditional values and norms of the Javanese people in all elements of the performance. This reason is the hallmark of the presence of the Gapit Theater in the Indonesian theater scene. Gapit Theater does use Javanese as a medium to convey messages and the reality of Javanese society, but the form of the show shows a Western realism style. Gapit Theater uses the conventions of realism performances by using the script as the main reference (not *wos*), the arrangement of blocking, art, and the arrangement of lighting in accordance with the description of the atmosphere of the story.

Bambang Widaya Soepono, an artist who started his career by writing short stories and novels for magazines. Widaya—more familiarly called Kenthut—is a screenwriter and director at the Gapit Theatre. Kenthut wrote seven manuscripts namely *Brug* (1982), *Suk-Suk Pèng* (1983), *Rol* (1983), *Lèng* (1985), *Rèh* (1987), *Tuk* (1989), *Dom* (1990), and one manuscript which he has yet to complete called *Luh*. According to Hengky Rivai—as one of Kenthut's friends—, said that Kenthut has unique habits. Cycling down the road to places that are sometimes unplanned becomes Kenthut's habit which hones his creativity even more. Starting from cycling and observing, Kenthut was able to intelligently represent the people around him on stage. The fact that is even more interesting is that Kenthut chose to use Javanese *ngoko*, the lowest level of Javanese language. *Ngoko* language is more familiar on the roadside, markets, terminals, or slum places. For Kenthut, the *ngoko* language was chosen because it is close to the life of the lower class people (*Surabaya Post*, December 3, 1989).

The trips that Kenthut always makes take him to a unique place, namely Balakan Village, Polokarto, Sukoharjo, Central Java. Balakan Village has a sacred grave which the community believes is a place that can become an intermediary in getting something they want. Kenthut interprets the situation in the Balakan region as a hope, wish, and aspiration that is always being produced by the will of the people. From the meaning made by Kenthut, the word will appear (in Javanese) which in Indonesian is defined as the word 'will' or 'be'. Kenthut transformed the wishes, hopes and aspirations of Balakan Village into a new world with the name Bakalan Village. Bakalan Village will continue to produce and provide space for Kenthut to place hopes on the reality of society in his imagination.

Kenthut's plays always reflect the reality of social life in Java. The class position of society, the system of government, and the reality of the lives of marginalized communities are some of the themes raised by Kenthut. In *Lèng's* play, Kenthut tells about the construction of a factory which threatens the existence of a sacred burial area. The play *Lèng* was first staged in 1985, when the New Order era was still in power. The reality of that regime is vividly alluded to by Kenthut in *Lèng's* performance. Kenthut divides the stage into two, namely the upper stage and the lower stage. This artistic play with the separation of the stage is what makes the Gapit Theater phenomenal. The upper stage is the playing area for Juragan, an authoritarian factory leader. The lower stage is a picture of Kyai Bakal's grave, a sacred tomb in Bakalan Village.

Through *Lèng's* performance, Kenthut invites the audience to explore a piece of the world that shows the reality of marginalized communities in Java during the New Order era. The lower stage is the area of Bakalan Village represented by the cemetery area which is a place of work for the figures Pak Rebo, Mbok Senik, and Kecik, as well as a place of solitude for the figures Bongkrek and Janaka. The upper stage is a projection of the factory which is realized through an office space for the factory owner. The conflict between these two classes became even more complicated, when Juragan started arbitrarily expanding the factory area to replace factory employees with sophisticated machines. Many factory employees who are residents of Bakalan Village were fired because of the progress of factory technology, while their agricultural land was also taken over by Juragan. The difference between these two stages represents two different social classes in society.

The criticisms leveled in *Lèng's* performance come with the gap in the social conditions of the people of Bakalan Village. Inequalities arise when Juragan—a representative of the upper social class—tries to profit from the people's misery. Bongkrek, as a representative of the lower class society, tries to ask for justice by fighting the Juragan's power. At this point, Kenthut clearly describes the social class in the society around him. Juragan and Bongkrek are symbols uttered by Kenthut to bring the audience closer to reality which is actually close to them in real life. Kenthut implicitly shows that social inequality in the surrounding community at that time existed and was always in production. Social inequality in Java is a form of social reality represented by Kenthut in *Lèng's* performance. Furthermore, *Lèng's* implied meaning also indirectly refers to the ongoing social and political conditions of the New Order era.

The presence of the colonizers in Indonesia brought their arts and cultural elements, thus influencing the arts in Indonesia during the colonial period. The culture that Indonesia already has is then mixed with Western culture (European), then cultural acculturation occurs. The process of acculturation that has occurred over the years has had a major influence on the development of the arts in Indonesia, one of which is the theatrical performing arts. Indonesia, like other Asian nations—India, Japan, China, and others—reflects an Eastern culture that is more spiritual in nature and born of intuition, togetherness, and using integrated media of expression (Achmad 2006, 26). In this study, the influence of Western culture on theatrical performing arts in Indonesia also influenced the development of the arts in Java. This acculturation process is used by Kenthut as a place to accommodate his creative work. Kenthut learns new things related to the development of modern theater in Indonesia, but does not simply leave the traditions that have been rooted in Javanese values.

Creativity is closely related to the individual experience of an artist. Artists will experience a chaotic condition which can then be captured as their inspiration for work. According to Sumardjo, when artists are able to respond to human empirical reality, it is a way of representing works of art (2000:78). Kenthut used his sensory experience to see the reality of the people in Java and his experience in art in making works with Gapit Theatre. These insights and experiences were then processed, to produce the characteristics of the Gapit Theater performance style, especially in *Lèng's* play. In *Lèng's* performance it can be assumed that he combined Western realism style—which Kenthut got from his experience watching other groups' performances—with his insight and experience as part of the Javanese community as well as an ASKI student.

II. METHOD

The research to be carried out is an analytic descriptive study using qualitative data with case studies of the *Lèng* performance by and director Bambang Widaya Sp staged by the Gapit Theater in 1986. The general characteristics of the descriptive method are focusing attention on the facts about the problem being investigated. which is then carried out by an analysis process (Widi 2013, 85 and Ratna 2004, 53). The research to be carried out is a qualitative research based on the data of a phenomenon without using quantitative calculations. Qualitative research is carried out by conducting observations and interviews, besides that data is also obtained from documents, books, video tapes, and so on based on a methodology for investigating social phenomena and human problems (Strauss and Corbin 2015, 5 and Noor 2015, 34). The research conducted is descriptive in analyzing the data used for research

Nuriman stated that there are at least three stages that must be carried out in the process of analyzing descriptive research, namely reading repeated texts, speculative interpretation, and in-depth analysis (2021, 62-63). In this study, reading the repeated text means reading all the data collected based on the video of *Lèng's* 1986 performance, interviews with sources, and literature study. The data that has been collected and read is

then grouped based on the need for Kenthut's production of the performance style and based on the identification of the Javanese values produced by the Gapit Theater in *Lèng's* performances. The grouping of the data is used as material in interpreting how much influence the style of Western realism and Javanese values appear in *Lèng's* performances. The results of this interpretation are still speculative, so an in-depth analysis is needed by conducting a re-examination of data recording, data grouping, to the final analysis which is corroborated by the results of a literature study and interviews with informants. An in-depth analysis can be found that *Lèng's* performance has a distinctive style by combining the conventions of modern realism and Javanese values.

III. FIGURES AND TABLES

Table 1. is the division of the overall stage area, that division in the conventions of Western realism is the basic provision for distinguishing the atmosphere of the story and the emotions of the characters. **Table 2.** shows the upper stage area which is the playing area of Juragan and Bedor (juragan's assistant). While **Table 3.** is the lower stage of the playing area used by the characters Pak Rebo, Mbok Senik, Bongkrek, Kecik, and Janaka. The division of the game area as in the table makes it easier to read the meaning and motivation of the characters. In *Lèng's* performance, the distribution of playing areas for the characters also determines the atmosphere and emotions that are being experienced.

The area that describes the emotional mood of the story can be divided into three basic areas, namely the front area which includes area numbers 1, 2 and 3; the middle area which includes area numbers 4, 5, and 6; and the back area which includes area numbers 7, 8, and 9. The front area is usually used to indicate anger, passion, challenge, and other emotions related to a hot soul. This middle area is usually used not only for the emotions of the characters, but is also often used as a flat dialogue area. The middle area is also used to show borderline emotions, full of doubts and optimism. While the back area, in the *Lèng* performance is used mostly by the figures Juragan and Bedor. The emotions that are presented in the back area are usually those that contain anxiety, deep sadness, or it could be to show intense anger.

Table 1. Distribution of Stage Area Base on Situation and Emotion Actor

Right Back (7)	Center Back (8)	Left Back (9)
Right Center (6)	Center (5)	Left Center (4)
Right Front (1)	Center Front (2)	Left Front (3)

AUDIENCES

Table 2. On Stage Area

Right Back (7)	Center Back (8)	Left Back (9)
Right Center (6.1)	Center (5.1)	Left Center (4.1)
Right Center (6.2)	Center (5.2)	Left Center (4.2)
Right Front (1)	Center Front (2)	Left Front (3)

AUDIENCES

Table 3. Below Stage Area

Right Back (7.1)	Center Back (8.1)	Left Back (9.1)
Right Back (7.2)	Center Back (8.2)	Left Back (9.2)
Right Center (6)	Center (5)	Left Center (4)
Right Front (1)	Center Front (2)	Left Front (3)

AUDIENCES

Fig. 1. shows the lower stage set in *Lèng's* performance. In the picture, the character Bongkrek begins to worry about the fate of his friends who are involved in the mass layoffs by the factory owner. Pak Rebo and Mbok Senik sat by the table trying not to pay too much attention to Bongkrek. Janaka (a tomb visitor) only observes Bongkrek's complaints. **Fig. 2.** And **Fig. 3.** show the original description of the area of Kyai Balak's tomb in Balakan Village, Polokarto, Sukoharjo. Kenthut represents the corner of Kyai Balak's tomb area in Balakan Village, Polokarto which is borrowed for the projection of the lower social class in *Lèng's* performance. Meanwhile, **Fig. 4.** is an area of the upper stage which represents the upper social class which in this case can be projected as the ruling regime.



Fig 1. Kyai Bakal tomb complex become below stage.



Fig 2. 'Sesaji' area in Kyai Balak Tomb, Balakan Village, Polokarto.



Fig 3. Kyai Balak tomb area, Bakalan Village, Polokarto.



Fig 4. Area of the upper stage.

IV. CONCLUSION

Kenthut is an artist who responds to the social life around him in a creative way. Kenthut writes and paints his work by departing as a research artist. He makes art not only from imagination, but also participates as a witness to history, to make history. Kenthut chose the right path in responding to life which was applied in his play with the Gapit Theater.

The artistic application of *Lèng's* performance uses the basic conventions of Western realism style, while the values presented by the characters cannot be separated from the Javanese values of the Gapit Theater members, especially Kenthut. The division of the stage is a characteristic presented by Kenthut as a separator between the two classes, namely the upper social class and the lower social class. Apart from that, the stage division is also a marker of the difference between reality and the characters' dreams, as well as a separator between Kenthut's reality and imagination.

Kenthut consciously and unconsciously described the practices of the New Order. In several policies the New Order regime attempted to unite things that had become traditions and something that was considered new, more modern, or advanced. Kenthut has carried out this practice in *Lèng's* performance by representing the social reality of the people in Java and presenting it in the form of a realism style performance.

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