Visual Metaphor of Javanese Cartoon: The Interpretation of Cultural Socio-Politic in Goenawan Pranyoto's Comic Cartoon Mbeling "Ande Ande Lumut" (1951-2014)

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Abstract

A comic cartoon is a communication media that is widely enjoyed and accepted by people. As a literary and journalistic work, the comic cartoon also captures the surrounding cultural situation. The modern and traditional cultural sign, fact and imagination, realist pattern and cartoon or caricature are used in a combination that seems contra versed (it is called double code discourse in postmodernism discourse), to show metaphor pattern relationship. The metaphor is applied through the transformation and play of the signs in the past and the future. They were spread, combined, and also transformed as a tool to show the creator's expression. In this research, it was found that there was a very close relationship between the use of metaphoric signs and Indonesia's social-politic situation in 1983. On one hand, Metaphor in comic cartoon Mbeling was a tool created to insinuate and criticize the corrupt and feudal Orde Baru authoritarian. It insinuated the violence involving the government officers in every aspect of the people's life. On the other side, the comic cartoon also becomes the representation of contemporary Javanese culture that was open to other culture and acculturation.

Keywords: social-politic; metaphor; comic cartoon

INTRODUCTION

Comic is derived from Latin word cartone that means "cardboard". Now, it means a graphic aimed as satiric humor (Wijana, 2004, p. 4). According to Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (1995, p. 448) cartoon is humorous graphic related to the social-politic condition. Cartoon is not an artistic sense only for the purpose of art, but it also entertains, even insinuates and criticize the social-political and cultural situation in general. Critics in a cartoon, as stated by Anderson, mark the historic phase of the beginning of modern communication that is not built on feudalistic and violence (Anderson, 1990). One of the most popular cartoons is comic cartoon or cartoon strip. Cartoon strip is a sequence cartoon graphic consisted of three to six panels or more (Wijana, 2003, p. 11).

An archeologist has discovered that comic cartoon was found in the wall and flower vase in ancient Egypt and Greece era. As the center of visual story telling tradition, the root of comic cartoon can be found in Indonesia. It is found in a story told by a priest and puppeteer using two

or three-dimension media such as temple relief, palm leaf (palm story), and cloth (geber puppet) (Tabrani, 2005, pp. 69-73).

The history of comic cartoon development in Indonesia is closely related to the emergence of comic cartoon in mass media. The search of modern cartoon in Indonesia found a strip cartoon Put On by cartoonist Kho Wang Gie. Put On a was comic cartoon published in Sin Po newspaper, a Chinese communication media in 1931 written in Malay (Bonneff, 1998, p. 19). In Semarang, the development of comic cartoon can be traced through the cartoon published in local mass media in 1980's until mid 1990's.

The comic cartoon is a representative media that captures idea, knowledge, and phenomena which was the basis of a culture. According to hall (2003, p. 4-5) representation is one of the important practices in culture production. Culture is a very wide concept related to sharing experience. People are said to have the same culture, if they have the same experience, share the same cultural codes, and speak the same language.

In contrast to the photography that only captures and recite what is seen, it is a selection process, interpretation, and respond from the creator's mind. Therefore, the representation of the social-politic situation can be presented in a different form from its reality. It is represented as an ideologized cartoon such as deformation, distortion, simplification of the form with a critical attitude, questioning, protest, insinuation, and deriding inside the content.

Meanwhile, the development period of the comic cartoon in 1980's faced a crucial social-politic situation that affected the press and cartoon media in Indonesia. Comic cartoon faced a great challenge to maintain its existence and creativity. In 1982, Orde Baru Authoritarian through Public Broadcasting Ministry (Harmoko) published UU Pokok Pers, this law affirmed the existence of Surat Ijin Usaha Penerbitan Pers (SIUPP). The SIUPP was basically published to control the pers. Under Orde Baru authoritarian, the cartoonists have to do "the right politic", they have to know how to criticize without causing any disturbance to the government (Ajidarma, 2012, p. 1). Besides that, the comic cartoon also had to compete with imported comic from US, Europe, and Japan that visually more attractive (Bonnef, 1998).

Shortly, this paper aimed to analyze the visual metaphor in comic cartoon Mbeling "Ande Ande Lumut" created by Semarang most phenomenal cartoonist Goenawan Prayoto (1951-2014). It also analyzed the relationship between the characters of Mbeling comic cartoon "Ande Ande Lumut" and Indonesia social politic situation in 1983 as the cultural background.

METHOD

The cartoon is a visual art and mostly the language used is figurative language, while news, speech, and gossip use literal language (Ben Anderson, 1990, p. 155). Metaphor is used in the cartoon to express an issue figuratively. Therefore, the interpretation of the issue can be boarded through transformation or disguise. Metaphorical transformation, for a cartoonist, is an armory. It is used to sharpen and enrich the message conveyed by the creator (Gombrich, 1963 in Sunarto, 2005).

Metaphor can be interpreted as a figurative language or a parable of one sign to another that have the same meaning. In semiotic, figurative language consists of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. According to Jacobson in Ruswondho (2009), the difference between metaphor and the other types of figurative language is that metaphor works paradigmatically. Paradigmatic means the relationship between one sign and another sign are equal and virtual, conceptual. Due to this relationship, the transfer of one sign to another by using transfer and equality principle is possible (Noth, 1990, p. 128–129 in Sunarto, p. 28). The transfer can be done by using suppression and replacement, while equality can be done through analogy, comparison, and similarity.

To analyze visual metaphorical signs,

we need to ground the analysis based on Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory. According to Saussure, language is a system of a sign, and always consisted of two aspects, signifier and signified. The signifier is material aspects such as writings, graphics, and sounds, while signified is mental images, ideas/concept, and language (Berten in Sobur, 2006, p, 46).

Based on de Saussure's theory, the metaphor works through transformation and comparison of two different signs, it creates a combination of signifier from the first sign that result in signified from the second sign in a certain aspect (Chandler, 2007, p. 14). The process is illustrated as follow Figure 1.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Comic cartoon "Ande Ande Lumut" was created based on Javanese popular folklore. It is used as the media of the signs that was recycled to appreciate and revitalized the Indonesian oral folklore. The legend was associated with a story of two identical ancient Javanese kingdom, the Jenggala Kingdom ruled by King Jayengnegara and Kediri Kingdom ruled by Jayengrana, Javanese era before Majapahit. Based on the story, In the past, the two kingdoms were one great kingdom named Kahuripan. To avoid civil war, King Airlangga divided the kingdom into two parts and each part was ruled by his sons. Before he died, king Airlangga left a will that the two kingdoms must be reunited by a wedding. Unfortunately, Kediri Kingdom was attacked by the enemy who disliked the reunion. The legend told a story about the King of Kediri Raden Panji Asmarabangun (son of Jayengnegara) who wanted

to find love. He met his soulmate, Putri Sekartaji, who was a princess of Jenggala Kingdom. In searching for his true love, he disguised himself as a young man named Ande Ande Lumut, while Dewi Sekartaji disguised herself as Klenting Kuning. Then, this story was recycled using comic cartoon metaphor by Goenawan Pranyoto, so it became visually attractive, fresh, and full of modern nuance.

This research found how the creator creatively used metaphor as a force of art, culture reflection, and also a social critic media.

Metaphor as an art (*olah rupa*)

Comic cartoon style was categorized into three major styles, United States of America (USA), Europe, and Japan. Since 1940's and 1950's, Indonesia's comic market was bombed by superhero comic from the USA picturing a superhero with muscled body and realistic graphic. After that, the explosion of Indonesia popular superhero started to begin, for example, Garuda Putih, Puteri Bintang, and Sri Asih (Ahmad et. al, 2006, p. 94). European comic entered Indonesia before Japanese comic wave entered Indonesian market with its animation at 1980's. Before that, in 1960's, silat comic came out because of the influence of Kung Fu comic from China (see Bonnet, 1998, p. 24).

Goen, bombarded by the foreign comic style, insist on maintaining his own style. For example, Goen did not create characters with big round shiny eyes like japanese comic/manga, or big muscled figure like American superheroes, not even create a comic with ligne claire just like European comic. Goenawan Pranyoto (Goen) created his own unique style that was
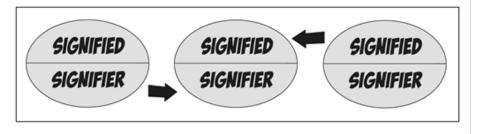

Figure 1. Model of Metaphor Semiotic System (Source: Ruswondho, 2009, p. 9)

down to earth so it felt close to the people. Visually, comic cartoon mbeling has original, unique, and down to earth characteristics. Goen did not want to follow the style of the foreign comic that, at that time, dominated Indonesia comic market and influenced local cartoonist's work.

Comic cartoon Mbeling "Ande Ande Lumut" was a folklore narrated back in a fresh context. The creator purposely recycled past signs (specific space, time, and place context). They were used to explain the event in the present that was completely different with the event in past. In the process of recycled signs – borrowing Baudrillard terminology (in Pilang, 2003, p. 57) – signs decontextualization process occurred. The signs in the past were extracted from the original space and time, then they were recycled or decontextualized in the new space and time for the purpose and spirit of culture appreciation and revitalization.
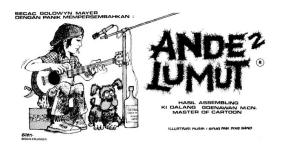

Figure 2. Panel "comic header" of Goenawan Pranyoto 's comic cartoon mbeling "Ande Ande Lumut"

Traditional Javanese culture signs of Kediri Kingdom and modern signs were displayed side by side. Visually, they were an odd and contra versed combination. They were a result of the creator's imagination that could be understood by interpreting the relationship of the metaphors. The combination of Javanese culture sign element and modern culture sign metaphorically created a humorous communication style that became the power and excellency of Goenawan Prayoto's comic cartoon mbeling

Metaphor as the reflection of the culture

Faithful to the old version of "Ande Ande Lumut", the cartoonist presented the traditional Javanese culture signs of Kediri and Jenggala Kingdom such as blangkon, surjan cloth, kebaya, jarit, keris, kendi, etc. Those signs were worn by all the characters in the comic, Ande Ande Lumut, Klenting Kuning, Randa Dadapan, Ny. Netra Wilis, Klenting Abang, Klenting Biru, Klenting Ijo, Yuyu Kangkang, and the guards.

The existence of those traditional Javanese culture signs showed the creator appreciation of Javanese culture. On one hand, Javanese culture in cartoon comic mbeling was portrayed as a positive value that becomes the guidance of the characters' life. For example, Honesty, fortitude, and bravery value of a Javanese woman was portrayed in Klenting Kuning character. While the character Randa Dadapan showed how Javanese people appreciated a guess and respected others.

On the other hand, the traditional Javanese culture loved by Goenawan Pranyoto, as stated by Anderson (1983, p. 477-496), also kept a dark story of feudalism and oppression done by the noble and the king. Feudalism as the entity that wanted to be abolished through the freedom movement in 1945 still existed. According to Anderson, Indonesian revolution formed a new independent Indonesian but feudalism would still alive in the constitution, bureaucracy, and another government instrument as long as Orde Baru still reigned.

How the colonial-feudalism culture characteristic in Indonesia still existed in the modern bureaucracy was sharply presented by Goen, He showed it through the character of Nyonya Netra Wilis. Nyonya Netra Wilis was perceived as a mother and a traditional Javanese wealthy noble woman who still believed in traditional Javanese culture, for example believed in Javanese mystical ritual and marked date. Ny Netra Wilis character was portrayed as a dictator, she became the representation of traditional Javanese leadership that was very authoritative, anti-critic, and far from

democracy spirit (Panel 3-4). It is shown on how Ny. Netra Willis discriminated Klenting Kuning and forbade her to join the contest by saying that it was rubbish (panel 3).

The signs are shown on Ny. Netra Wilis character could be interpreted as the connotative representation of a strong Javanese leader (it is shown by the appearance of Ny. Netra Willis through the sign of kebaya, sanggul, and jarit while sitting on a carved chair), wealthy and extravagant (the sign of a luxurious necklace), but still showed modern ideas (the sign of reading newspaper), modern lifestyle (the sign of glasses). Those denotative signs were a metaphoric analogy of Indonesian political leader in Orde Baru era who was strong and authoritative just like a king ruled in traditional Javanese politic.

Figure 3. character of Ny, Netra Wilis as the representation of Javanese leader.

The history recorded, during his era, Soeharto represented himself as the central of the policy and authority, both executive and legislative, as well as judicative. Orde Baru political system became the personification of Soeharto himself, that how central Soeharto was in the history of Orde Baru era. Soeharto was the King of Java who ruled Indonesian modern people (Anderson, 1983).

From the history record, it was known that there was dualism of Indonesian modern politic in Orde Baru era. On one hand, Orde Baru authoritarian adopted western modern constitutional system such as the branches of government (executive, legislative, judicative) and policy development model (developmentalism). On the other hand, the authority of Orde Baru era still continued to apply traditional Javanese feudal power which was repressive and centralistic as a kingdom political system.

That condition caused an overlapping situation that affected the bureaucracy system. This overlapping condition is shown in the administration system that treated the senior as a king and could not be criticized. In bureaucracy system, the Orde Baru Authoritarian was keen on speaking symbolically, and this causes an ineffective bureaucracy that results in the corruption opportunity.

Fortunately, in the middle of this kind of symbolic struggle, Javanese culture in comic cartoon mbeling was still represented as a culture that highly appreciated tenacity to face and be critical to a change. As represented through the character of Klenting Kuning, Javanese was portrayed as a tenacious culture that could not be easily swayed by hedonism-materialism, moreover, it also had a critical power to change.

Uniquely, the modern signs such as guitar, piano, sound system, radio, jeep, jeans, and sneakers were easily attached to the characters. This induced the perception and interpretation that Javanese culture was distinct and stereotypical: that is as a contemporary culture that opened to another culture and acculturation.

Figure 4. the description of Klenting Kuning fighting Yuyu Kangkang by Shooting him.

CONCLUSION

Comic cartoon mbeling has placed cultural entity to an equal place as modernism and critically argued with it. By reading comic cartoon mbeling, the readers were invited to visit the cultural signs from the past, present, and future. Every text was born out of the texts before it. In that kind of intellectuality assimilation – as stated by Derrida (in Al Fayyad, 2009, p. 150), there was a core language process called interpellation. Interpellation was a dialog done by both sides. There was no desire to control, conquer, or dominate the conversation. The message derived from the story was a peaceful message that united each other. That was the essence of the dialog as interpreted from the metaphoric characterization of the comic cartoon mbeling "Ande Ande Lumut" created by Goenawan Pranyoto.

The last, comic cartoon mbeling "Ande Ande Lumut" has revealed that the effort of a nation to develop into a modern society was not by ignoring its own culture, but by keeping and developing the good tradition as the guidance to change and enrich the character of modern people in Indonesia.

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