

Postmodernism Representation in Manungsa Comic 2016

Patra Aditia^{1*}

¹Visual Communication Design, Faculty of Creative Industry, Telkom University

Abstract. The development of Indonesian comics, especially in the 2010s, became increasingly widespread and featured diverse themes. One of the interesting title is Manungsa. Published in 2016, Manungsa created by Erfan Fajar and Jaka Ady. The story takes place on dystopia and post-apocalyptic future setting. But even in the future, Manungsa's main antagonist comes from local Indonesian beliefs such as Babi Ngepet, Buto, Genderuwo, and Jelangkung. This research uses semiotic method to find the denotation, connotation, and myth aspect on certain panels and illustration in comic, to be seen as representation of postmodernism in Sallie McFague's perspective. After analysis and discussion, the conclusion that Manungsa comic contains representations of postmodernism in the form as follows: great appreciation of nature, reduce admiration of science, capitalism, and technology; accept the challenge of "other religions" (in this case the old belief) of the "dominant religion" (in this case science and technology), and encourage the resurrection of the oppressed classes, such as race, gender, social classes excluded (in this case eastern and all his old beliefs).

Keywords : Manungsa, local beliefs, postmodernism

1 Introduction

Visual-narrative communication as the embryo of comics has actually been going on for centuries. In 110, there is a Trajan's column that tells of the battle between the Romans against the Dacians. If we go further, the hieroglyphic letters used by the Egyptians on the Pyramid wall can also be considered as a more primitive narrative visual communication. While visual-narrative communication as a comic embryo discovered along with the innovation of press printing around the 15th century.

Comics, because of its visual narrative value, often used to contain certain messages, including identity and local issues. For example, theme and genre published by American publisher contains different issues compared to Japanese Comics (manga). Indonesia is no exception, local characteristic in Indonesian comics always become main issues since early days of its development. In the 1930s, Put-On, a comic strip published in Sin Po tell stories about the daily lifes of Chinese ethnic in Indonesia. While in in the 1950s, Wayang as a comic genre gained popularity as it was close to Indonesian culture and brought positive values.

* Corresponding author: patra.aditia@gmail.com

After romance comics in the 1960s considered bring negative influence to its reader, Silat and Superhero as genre begun to as receive positive response because of its local values. For example, the setting is in Indonesia and the politeness of the figures that appeared in the comic was typical Indonesian. After a considered long hiatus, the emergence of Carok volume 0, created by Thoriq, in Pasar Seni ITB 1995 considered as a new movement in Indonesian Comic. Carok is set in a fictional city named Braga with informal Indonesian thrash-talking dialogues and images that are heavily influenced by American comics. Indonesian comics continued to grow through magazine like Sequen and omnibus containing works of local comic artists such as Re: On and Kosmik.

In subsequent developments, especially in the 2010s, Indonesian comics became more widespread and featured diverse themes. One of the highlights is, *Manungsa*, published in 2016 . Created by Erfan Fajar and Jaka Ady, *Manungsa* set in the distant future of dystopian post-apocalyptic world. Though placed in future, *Manungsa*'s antagonist still comes from indigenous Indonesian beliefs such as Babi Ngepet, Gendruwo, and Jelangkung. The re-establishment of old beliefs in the midst situation of advanced technological civilization considered interesting to examine. This also can be regarded as a representation postmodernism thought, which accepts small narrations that previously marginalized, for re-appointment. The small narrations referred to respect in the Eastern belief, which in the eyes of modernism, is often regarded as irrational and inconsistent with the development of civilization.

2 Literature Review

2.1. Comic

Comics defined as "sequential art", the art of telling a story through images. Meanwhile comic was defined as and images arranged in a juxtaposed order, serve to produce an aesthetic response from readers. That definition of comic emphasizes that the core comic as a medium is oriented to story-telling image, where words are secondary elements and media presentation can vary. Comic page consists the following elements:



Fig. 1. Comic and Manungsa Comic

- Illustrations: Drawings, serves to explain the scene narratively
- Panel: Boundary between each illustration. There is an open panel and a closed panel.
- Gutter: Empty space between panels. According to McCloud, this empty space lets the reader imagine the time and scenes of inter-panel ransisi.
- Caption: Description outside the dialog. Captions are commonly used to indicate the location, time, or character of the character
- Text: dialogs spoken by characters.
- Words Balloon: Field to fill text. Words Balloon also has various forms such as balloons for thinking, shouting, whispering, etc.
- Tails: Direction from words balloon. Its function is to show who is speaking.

- Sound Effects: Its functions to emphasis event in the the form of text. One of the interesting things about this, that the same object has different sound effects in each place, eg; the cat in Japan sounds "nyaa", while in Indonesia "meong"

2.1.1 Manungsa

Manungsa is a comic in 2016 created by Erfan Fajar on art and Jaka Ady on story. Manungsa tells story of the Kanaka and Rakai, brothers who survived the disaster in their hometown, Pakuan. It has been fourteen years since the disaster and they have begun normal days in Giacarta. Nevertheless, Kanaka always believed that the destructive Pakuan area was not a natural disaster, but a mysterious "thing". Until one day, chaos and strangeness began to happen in Giacarta, which may also related to the disaster in Pakuan. Chaos and oddities are expressed through a number of creatures that have associations with old beliefs in Indonesia, such as Babi Ngepet, Buto, and Jelangkung.

The comic was published in 2016 by PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama, previously each chapter published in Kosmik magazine monthly. The first author, Erfan Fajar, was incorporated in Stellar Labs, Jakarta, and worked on several comics such as Star Trek, Dragon Resurrection, Jericho Season and Arigato Macaroni who have won R.A. Kosasih Award for Best Online Strip Comics category in 2014. Meanwhile for the second author, Jaka Ady, Manungsa is the first comic she wrote. Previously, he became editor of the H2O and H2O Reborn, comics published by Kolam Komik

2.2. Postmodernism

Jean Baudrillard defined postmodernism as: "The melting of territorial boundaries and high cultural distinctions with low culture, between appearance and reality, and any other binary opposition which has been upheld by conventional social and philosophical theories. Thus, postmodern in general is the process of differentiation and the emergence of smelting in all fields.

While Jean Francois Lyotard called postmodernism the following: "Dynamic intensification, which is an ongoing quest for novelty, experimentation and the revolution of life, against and not believing in all forms of great narrative, in the form of its rejection of metaphysical philosophy , the philosophy of history, and all forms of thought of totality, such as Hegelian, Liberalism, Marxism, and others. Posmodern in the field of philosophy can be interpreted all forms of critical reflection on the modern paradigm and on metaphysics in general.

Characteristics of postmodernism itself according to Sallie McFague are as follows: (1) Great appreciation of nature; (2) Emphasizing the importance of language in human life; (3) Reduces admiration for science, capitalism, and technology; (4) Accepting other religious challenges to the dominant religion; (5) Accepting and sensitive to a new religion; (6) Moving white domination in the Western world; (7) Encouraging the resurrection of the oppressed classes, such as race, gender, social classes excluded; (8) Growing awareness of the importance of interdependence radically from all sides in a way that can be thought of.

3 Methods

3.1 Semiotics

Semiotics or semiology is a term that refers to the study of sign systems such as language, code, signals, and so on. In simple terms semiotics is the science of signs, derived from the

Greek word “semioin” meaning sign. As humans in their lives have the ability to produce and process symbols. Semiotics examines symbols or signs, learns the function of marks in a text where the sign system contained in a text has a message content that directs its readers in capturing the contents of the message. A collection of signs (such as words, images, sounds and or movements) constructed (and interpreted) with reference to conventions related to the genre and certain communications media.

This concept begins with the thought of Ferdinand Saussure as a linguist who sees semiotics as the science of studying the sign, grouped into two: signifier and signified. Saussure thought later became a foundation for Roland Barthes to develop more about the application of semiotics or semiology as a science. In contrast to Saussure focusing on the unity relationship between signifier and signified, and the meaning expressed in the dyadic relationships, Barthes looks further at the concept of tagging at a deeper level (connotative), where Saussure previously seen mainly at denotative level. Roland Barthes sees language as a sign system that reflects the assumptions of a society within a certain time [1].

Like Saussure, Barthes also believes that relation between signifier and signified do not form naturally, but are arbitrary. Barthes perfected Saussure's semiology by developing a system of signification at a connotative level. Barthes also saw another aspect of sign as the myth that marks a society.

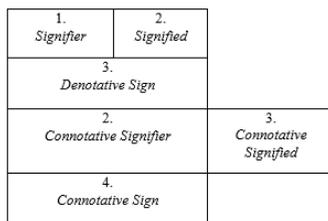


Fig. 2. Barthes Sign Map [1]

In the sign map developed by Barthes it can be seen how the denotative sign (3) is formed from the relation between the Signifier (1) and the Signified (2). At the same time, however, denotative sign also become a connotative sign (4). The denotation rate produces a straightforward, direct, and definite meaning. Denotation is the true and literal meaning, which is socially agreed and reference to reality.

The difference between interpreting Barthes denotation and connotations with its general meaning is that, in general denotation is defined as a literal meaning of an object, a process of traditional significance, usually referring to the use of language with a meaning corresponding to what is spoken. However, in the semiology of Barthes denotation is a system of first-degree significance, while connotation is the second level. In this case denotation is the closure meaning or cover (repression) in a political sense. Furthermore, Barthes connotations are identical to ideological operations, which he mentions as myth and mean to express and justify dominant values in a given period. According to Barthes, myth is also a second level of meaning system.

The myth in Barthes's view differs from the concept of myth in the general sense. Barthes argues myth is language, which leads to myth as a communication system and a message. In his description, he argues that myth in this particular sense is the development of connotation. The long-established connotation in society is a myth. Barthes said that myth is a system of signs that are interpreted by humans. Myth can be regarded as a social class product that already has a dominance. According to Barthes, myth allows for a signified to have different signifiers, for example "sensuality" can have many markers ranging from embedding the word “hot” on certain objects, from Marilyn Monroe posters to a Wild Stallion.

4 Results and Discussion

Denotatively, figure displayed is a decomposed long-haired woman and with size above average normal human body. The woman seemed to be holding the cracked walls on top of her large body. Connotatively, this kind of figure in the treasury of local belief in Indonesia called Genderuwo. Genderuwa is a Javanese myth of a kind of genie or spirited creature of human-like apes that big and muscular with reddish black skin, while covered with thick hair grows all over the body.



Fig. 3. Genderuwo, Ni Khalisah, Wayang Golek, and Babi Ngepet

Basically, genderuwo is never a female figure. But in Manungsa, the giant form of genderuwo is maintained but modified as a women. In myth, the possibility of old belief still living in society, even though technological developments continue to lead progress to its rational context, so in the process will leave everything mystical. The existence of genderuwo as a form of creature that is believed still grow as a form of local beliefs that will not just disappear by modernity.

Denotatively, the image shows an object that has a round shape with light in it, The past round is resting on wood / iron shaped similar to each cross. The "pole" is tucked into a pencil that writes a number of words on paper like "Ni Khalisah", "Darshana", "Padnun", "Jyotika", and so on.

Connotatively, the form is associated with the medium used to accommodate spirits or supernatural entities that are (usually) formed from water scoop made of coconut shells and wooden handles. Spirit that enter through the media are then named Jelangkung. Usually the game is done by three people, two people hold the dolls, while another read the mantra. The game is generally performed in places that are believed haunted. When the spirits come, it will introduce itself and tell the story using the help of stationery. The questions are varied, such as the name of the spirit, the year and the cause of death, often about future fortunes and lucky numbers in gambling.

Mythically, the illustration on comic panel is trying to show that in the midst of subordinate machine civilization, there are still which we must be respect for not becoming subject to anything modern and predictable.

Denotatively, shown in the picture is a doll that the size of a hand. The doll is probably made of wood / iron with an obscure face and uses a crown on its head.

Connotatively, the image is about to show figures of Wayang Golek, a puppet made from wood found in Sundanese traditional performing art, especially popular in West Java. Wayang golek generally take stories from Mahabharata and Ramayana. But in its development, Wayang Golek tells new stories and become one of the traditional entertainment that still survive until today.

Mythically, Wayang Golek as a figures show form of culture that is still maintained, even though has entered the post-apocalyptic period. The absence of the face symbolizes the anonymous puppet show, and it is not important to show whose character in the world of puppetry. The more crucial thing is the Wayang Golek itself, as an artifact, still survive.

Denotatively, the panel shows a large human figure with a boar head. The human body is wrapped with Japanese-style war clothes of the 15-16th century. In the balloon the text is written: "I am leaving, please guard the candle."

Connotatively, the illustrations on panel shows traditional Indonesian beliefs about Babi Ngepet. a legendary creature in Indonesian society that tells story about a demonic pig. Some myths tell that Babi Ngepet manifested from a person who wants to rich by taking pesugihan pig. When going to "act", the master must wear a black robe to cover his body. And later, miraculously, the master will turn into a pig. The other one had to keep the candle in order not to shake the fire. When the candle flame begun to shake, it means that the person who became the pig is in danger.

Mythically, this shows that while the world is getting more and more modern and rationality is increasingly taking an important role, the old beliefs about Babi Ngepet still take part. Although there have been many adjustments (in Manungsa) in terms of Babi Ngepet figure itself, but the essence of the Babi Ngepet as a demonic pig figure associated with guarded candles, still maintained.

5 Conclusion

Based on above analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that based on four panels from Manungsa comic, which shows the figures of Genderuwo, Jelangkung, Wayang Golek, and Babi Ngepet, there is a representation of postmodernism thought described by Sallie McFague as: a great appreciation of nature, reducing admiration for science, capitalism, and technology; accept the challenge of "other religions" (in this case the old belief) of the "dominant religion" (in this case science and technology), and encourage the resurrection of the oppressed classes, such as race, gender, social classes excluded (in this case eastern and all its old beliefs).

6 References

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