

Representation of Feminism in the Kethoprak 1756 (*Pitoelas Seket Enem*) Performances

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ABSTRACT

Kethoprak is a traditional Javanese theater art. In its performances, kethoprak often displays various kinds of stories which also contain various kinds of messages and social criticism. One of the kethoprak performances that represent feminism is the performance entitled 1756 (*Pitoelas Seket Enem*) presented by KKTT Wiswakarman. The 1756 performance is a performance that adopts a story about the upheaval of the Javanese war carried out by Mangkunegara I with the help of female warriors from Ladrang Mangungkung with the main character named Gantari. This research is interpretive qualitative research using a feminist and semiotic approach as a tool to explore the research. Feminism theory is used to dissect the representation of feminism in the entire performance, while semiotic theory is used to examine the symbols related to the performance. This research data is a representation of feminism in the kethoprak performances entitled 1756 by KKTT Wiswakarman while the data sources for this research include books, and previous research which can be used as a valid reference source to support research. The result of this research is that the kethoprak performance performed by KKTT Wiswakarman with the title 1756 contains a representation of feminism which is seen in the character named Gantari. This representation of feminism can be seen in the gestures, expressions, dialogue, and lighting of the character Gantari during the performance.

Keywords: Feminism, Gantari, Kethoprak, 1756

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic country consisting of various tribes and cultures so it is rich in various kinds of arts. One of these types of arts is in the form of performing arts. One of the performing arts in Indonesia, especially in Java, is the art of kethoprak. Kethoprak is a traditional theater art that was born in the middle of the 20th century in Klaten and is very popular, especially in the Central Java, East Java, and Yogyakarta areas (Sujarno, et al. 2003:39).

Kethoprak performances often raise various interesting stories and provide entertainment so that they are favored by various community groups (Jazuli in Lidiasari et al., 2023). According to Nastiti (2017), kethoprak is a folk art and the stories raised are stories that live in the midst of the people,

both in the form of legends and about history. The art of kethoprak is not only a spectacle or entertainment, but also contains guidance and order (Murdiyastomo, 2019). Furthermore, Nastiti (2017) explained that kethoprak as a traditional performance contains four functions including; means of ceremonies, spectacles or entertainment, education and social criticism.

The concept of kethoprak as a social criticism media often raises the issues of stories that develop in society. Social criticism that is thrown against the government or the ruler who leads is represented by the selection of certain stories and is also carried out through puns or parodies (Murdiyastomo, 2019). This is in line with the findings of Pramasheilla (2021) in her research which explains that in the performing art of kethoprak performed by the kethoprak ringkes group from Yogyakarta, they also often criticize through banyolan. Furthermore, Murdiyastomo (2019) explained that in 1946 the art of kethoprak became a medium of communication and socialization for communists and socialists and in that year kethoprak was contested by political groups for the sake of politics and campaign media. Overall, the art of kethoprak has various roles and contains various kinds of messages, criticisms of the government and issues that are being discussed.

Nowadays, the issue of gender is very widely echoed and represented through various things and one of them is through drama media, both films, theater and traditional theater arts including the art of kethoprak. Gender is a concept of classifying men and women based on socio-cultural perspectives, not based on sex or natural viewpoints (Setyowati, 2013). The term sex is used in relation to biological markers while gender refers to the way people identify themselves away from physical characteristics (Barker and Jane, 2021) Although not directly, some of the stories in Kethoprak can convey feminist values such as gender equality, justice, and women's independence through plots, dialogues, or moral messages conveyed.

Lestari (2021) explained about the criticism of ideological feminism that is depicted in the image of a character named Retna Pembayun in the kethoprak script with the title *Retna Pembayun* by Priyo Nugroho. In her research in the form of feminist analysis, Rini (2019) explained the important role of female characters in the *Kyai Kala Gumarang* kethoprak script. In line with this research, Kurniawan et al. (2020) explained the importance of female figures during the royal period in the form of Javanese women's patriotism in the kethoprak *Kyai Kala Gumarang* script.

Cahyanti and Purnomo (2023) in their research found that there is a bisexual life in the Javanese priyayi family which is represented in the sineprak (sinema kethoprak) with the title *Candhik Ayu's Cheating Affair*. Furthermore, Wahyudi (2021) in his research explained that there was a contestation of waria (transvestite) in the performance of kethoprak entitled *Ande-Ande Lumut* by the Sragen Sedap Malam Art Association. In the performance, it is not only a place for transvestite contests but also as a place for transvestites to show their femininity.

One of the performances of kethoprak performance that highlights gender issues, precisely representing feminism, is also seen in the performance of kethoprak presented by KKTT Wiswakarman with the title *1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem)*. KKTT Wiswakarman itself is a student activity unit under

the Faculty of Cultural Sciences UNS which is engaged in traditional theater in the form of kethoprak. The performance with the title 1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem) was staged at the Arena Theater of Taman Budaya Central Java on Wednesday, December 6, 2023 in the context of the production of KKTT Wiswakarman. 1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem) tells the story of the struggle of Raden Mas Said (Mangkunegara I) in the Java war. In the Javanese war, Raden Mas Said fought against Dutch colonialism in Java assisted by a female army from ladrang mangungkung with a central figure named Gantari.

The performance entitled 1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem) was directed by Lucky Agusta and the script staged was the work of Benedictus Billy Aldi Kusuma, S.Sn. Overall, the production stage with the title 1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem) highlighted how a woman became a soldier who ushered in victory for Mangkunegara I. Gantari had to fight against the invaders and her own and her family because she was only a woman. The upheaval experienced by Gantari was strengthened with the banner of Mangkuengara I in the form of the banner of *tiji tibe*h “*mati siji mati kabeh atau mukti siji mukti kabeh*” for a victory and free from the shackles of VOC colonialism.

The performance, which lasted no more than two hours, attracted the enthusiasm of the audience. Wrapped in the characters of each player as well as the accompaniment and lighting and artistic make the performance even more interesting and to watch. With some of these phenomena, the researcher is interested in researching the performance of kethoprak with the title 1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem) from the side of feminism by using the concept of representation because the data in the form of visual performances has also been uploaded on the youtube site.

Previous research related to the topic and data to be taken includes; Sampurno et al. (2022) conducted research related to the representation of feminism contained in the film series *Kitangan Putus*. Setyowati (2013) conducted research related to the representation contained in *Srikandi* characters in puppet performances with plays or stories of *Bisma Gugur*. Kamil and Rochmaniah (2024) with their research in the form of representation of feminism in the film *Enola Holmes 2* using John Fiske's semiotic analysis. Mayastuti (2021) in her thesis researched the existence of women's inferiority in the Kethoprak *Sumpah Satyasmara* manuscript by Sungging Widagdo and its relevance as a teaching material for Javanese language subjects in junior high school.

From several previous studies, it can be concluded that research related to the representation of feminism in the performance of kethoprak entitled 1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem) has never been carried out so it can be continued. Based on the description of the background of the problem, the researcher will conduct research related to the form of representation of feminism in the performance of kethoprak entitled 1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem) with the theory of feminism and semiotics as the dissection.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher uses qualitative-interpretive methods, namely methods of analysis based on the value itself, but combined and ending with an interpretation or interpretation process

(Ratna, 2021), by positioning the kethoprak presentation as text and object. This research is a research utilizing a video of the Kethoprak presentation entitled 1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem), which has been uploaded on YouTube and utilizes the results of the literature. The data of this research is the representation of feminism in the presentation of kethoprak entitled 1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem). The data sources of this research include the presentation of kethoprak with the title 1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem), books, and previous studies that are valid in building this research. The data collection technique is by looking and taking notes. The data analysis process is by data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions (Miles and Huberman in Ratna, 2021).

This research uses feminist and semiotic theories as its dissection. Feminism is a struggle to achieve equality, dignity, and freedom of women to choose and manage their rights to their bodies and lives both from inside and outside the household (Azid, 2024). Feminism is also referred to as a women's movement that demands full equality of rights between men and women (Sigihastuti in Botifar and Friantary, 2024). The core goal of feminism is to increase the position and degree of women to be equal to or parallel to the position and degree of men (Djajanegara in Botifar and Friantary, 2024).

The semiotic theory in this study is used to peel off the marks behind each scene in the kethoprak performance. Semiotics is a science that studies signs in human life. This means that everything in our lives is seen as a sign, which we must give meaning to (Candra in Yulia et al., 2024). John Fiske's semiotic theory states that an event in a media will become a media event if it has gone through the process of encoding by social codes which are constructed at three levels, namely the reality level, the representation level, and the ideological level (Fiske in Sampurno et al., 2022).

In looking at feminism in the presentation of kethoprak 1756 (Pitoelas Seket Enem), the researcher uses the concept of representation because the researcher highlights each scene that exists and has been uploaded on the Youtube channel in the form of a video. Representation is the process of producing meaning through language (Sampurno et al., 2022). According to Hall in Sampurno et al. (2022), representation is a bridge that connects concepts within the self with language, imagination, events, objects, objects, and people that are not real.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The performance of *kethoprak* with the title 1756 by KKTT Wiswakarman was carried out on Wednesday, December 2023 at the Arena Theater of Taman Budaya Central Java Surakarta. The performance was also broadcast on KKTT Wiswakarman's youtube channel. The following are the findings of the data found in the video which lasts 1 hour, 37 minutes, 29 seconds.

Women's Assertiveness in Decision Making



Figure 1. Gantari meets his brother Rengga.

Source: <https://youtu.be/QGXQ1371it4?feature=shared>

In Figure 1, Gantari meets his brother named Rengga. Rengga always demeans Gantari because she is considered just a weak woman who can't do anything. Gantari always replies to the sentences that have been thrown out by his brother. The situation became even more heated when Rengga said that why does a woman become a soldier when it is better to stay at home. Gantari then answered loudly even though his mind was turbulent between having to follow his brother's words or continuing to fight against Dutch colonialism.

Gantari's attitude in the form of a firm and strong woman is depicted both from the fashion style, makeup that is full of wounds as well as accompaniment and lighting. In addition, the strong gaze and gantari dialogue to Rengga strengthened the statement about women's firmness in making decisions even under pressure. The dialogue is as follows: "*Aku prajurit ladrang mangungkung kang kudu njejegke adil, kabeh kang metu saka ucapmu, ora bakal ndadekke mundur aku kang. Gantari ora bakal mundur yen sakdurunge bumi nuswantara iku mulya, kowe ora usah mbujuk karo apa sing tak lakoni, papanmu ora neng kene kang*" Translation: "I am a ladrang warrior who must uphold justice, everything that comes out of your words will not make me retreat. Gantari will not retreat before the archipelago becomes independent, you don't have to blame what I did, your place is not here.



Figure 2. Gantari faces Jaya Pengrawit and Jaya Puspita

Source: <https://youtu.be/QGXQ1371it4?feature=shared>

Figure 2 is the scene when Gantari faces Jaya Pengrawit and Jaya Puspita. At that time, Gantari was in a downtrodden situation because his mother died killed by the Dutch. Even so, Gantari remained strong even in this scene, Gantari, who had been advised by Jaya Pengrawit to rest first, still wanted to join the attack against the Dutch.

The dim lighting system illustrates that the situation is still in grief but also in such a precarious condition. Jaya Puspita's sharp gaze towards Jaya Pengrawit indicates that the situation is indeed precarious because it is time for an attack. Gantari's firm and firm attitude every step means that Gantari is a strong woman. In this scene, Gantari also expressed his desire that he did not want to rest and had to join the war against the Dutch. This is supported by the following dialogue: "*Aku ya kudu melu, tunggunen aku tak ancang-ancang*" which means "I also have to come along, wait a minute I get ready first".

Women's Struggle in Defending Their Decision as Soldiers.

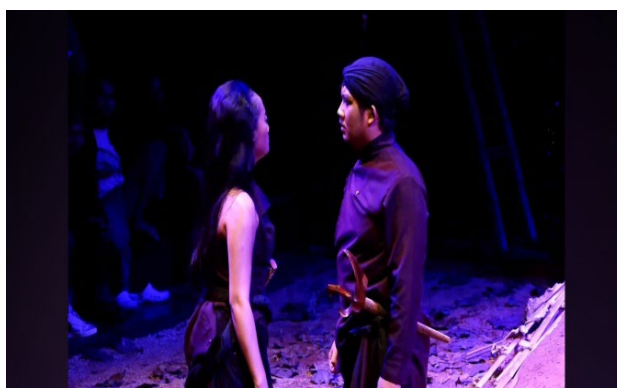


Figure 3. Gantari is facing Jaya Pengrawit
Source: <https://youtu.be/QGXQ1371it4?feature=shared>

In Figure 3 is the scene where Gantari is facing Jaya Pengrawit. In this scene, Gantari is mourning the death of his mother. Jaya Pengrawit, who felt sorry, then told Gantari to go home and end his struggle like a female soldier. Gantari refused, even Gantari did not hesitate to look at Jaya Pengrawit as if he was not afraid of Jaya Pengrawit, who incidentally was the warlord of Raden Mas Said.

In Figure 3, Gantari enthusiastically and loudly explained that everything was the destiny and will of the creator. In demanding something, something must be sacrificed. This can be seen in the following dialogue: "*Ngapa aku ndadak bali, merga ibuku dipateni karo walanda?. Banjure aku bali apa sing kudu tak lakoni, nandhingi walanda? Ora kang, ora kang. Aku wegah yen kudu ninggalke manungsa sing duwe sesebutan ladrang mangungkung, Jer basuki mawa beya kang. Aku kudu nampa lelakon sing kaya mangkene, yen patine ibuku dudu pepati sing dakkarepake*".

The translation of the dialogue is: "why do I have to go home, is it because my mother has been killed by the Dutch, after I go home what should I do, fight the Dutch?, no, I don't want to leave the Laskar Ladrang Mangungkung, everything must have to be paid, I must be able to accept this situation, my mother's death is not the death I expected".



Figure 4. Gantari again faces his sister named Rengga
Source: <https://youtu.be/QGXQ1371it4?feature=shared>

In Figure 4, Gantari again faces his sister named Rengga. However, in this scene Rengga has sided or worked under the Dutch. Gantari felt disappointed with his brother. The atmosphere depicted in this scene is full of emotions. Gantari did not hesitate to look at his brother sharply. The clenched hands further showed that Gantari was not afraid at all.

In Figure 4, Rengga again demeans Gantari and persuades Gantari to end his decision to become a female soldier. Rengga persuaded and scared Gantari by giving him the choice to go home with Rengga or fight Rengga because he was now an enemy. Gantari did not feel afraid but loudly said that Gantari would rather die or be disabled against Rengga than end his struggle with the *ladrang mangungkung* women's army. This is reinforced by the following dialogue: “*Kowe luput kang, kowe luput, luwung aku cacat. Tinimbang nuruti omonganmu*”, yang berarti “*kamu salah mas, kamu salah, lebih baik aku cacat dari pada harus menuruti perkataanmu*”

Inner conflict and resistance to male domination



Figure 5. Gantari experiences an inner conflict over herself as a woman
Source: <https://youtu.be/QGXQ1371it4?feature=shared>

In figure 5, Gantari experiences an inner conflict over herself as a woman but wants to defend the archipelago from the clutches of Dutch atrocities (VOC) by joining the *Ladrang Mangungkung* female soldiers formed by Raden Mas Said. In this case, Gantari also experienced a conflict with his sister, Rengga. In the scene, Rengga urges Gantari to return home and not need to become a female

soldier because the nature of women is to be at home. However, Gantari, who had a firm determination to fight for the archipelago with the ladrang troops, insisted and opposed Rengga's statement even though the wounds had filled his entire body.

Gantari's gaze and the gestures she brings illustrate how she as a woman has the same or equal rights as men in general. Gantari felt that women could do the work done by men like soldiers. This is reinforced by Gantari's dialogue as follows: "*wong wedok apa mung kudu mapan enak neng njero omah, adhang sega, ngrumat tandhuran, ora, dudu watake gantari nek mung kon njingkrung kaya enthung*" Translation: "Is a woman just staying and feeling the good in the house, cooking rice, taking care of plants, not Gantari's character if she just stays silent like a pupa"

Gantari feels that women have the right to their bodies and their desires. Gantari denied that a woman is not just staying at home and doing household chores such as cooking rice and taking care of plants. Gantari views that women also need the freedom to determine and realize their desires without any limitations because they are considered inferior to men.

Analysis and Interpretation

Overall, in the data previously presented above, in the presentation of *kethoprak* with the title 1756 indirectly represents feminism in the context of gender equality. The representation of feminism is seen in the whole story and is seen in every scene, especially from the dialogues and roles played by Gantari. Gantari's attitude in responding to inner conflicts and with her family over her prohibition to become a female soldier also reflects the need for gender equality.

In the past, a Javanese woman was bound by rules and orders where women from a young age were educated to carry out domestic duties in the kitchen, well and mattress area or often referred to as the concept of *kanca wingking* (Nugroho, 2020). The performance also explained that women are not just *kanca wingking* over the domination of the male public. Moreover, the story presented is a historical story about the establishment of the Mangkunegara kingdom where Raden Mas Said did not distinguish between men and women.

Raden Mas Said not only assesses the role of women conceptually, but Raden Mas Said tries to position women in the social order to be equal and parallel with men (Wardhana, 2015). This is evidenced by the formation of a female soldier named Ladrang Mangungkung as in the *kethoprak* performed with the title 1756. Raden Mas Said was the first king in Java to involve women in the ranks of his armed forces (Hidayani, 2013).

Gantari's role in the *kethoprak* presentation also highlights the feminist side in the form of nationalism in the form of being a soldier. Nationalism is the understanding of awareness to live together because of the concept of togetherness, a sense of unity, and having a sense of similarity of views as residents of a nation (Kholidah in Al Mardhiah et al., 2024). Gantari's sense of nationalism as described by his determination to sacrifice and die for the freedom of the people from the shackles of Dutch colonialism.

Feminism in the *kethoprak* presentation is also seen in the struggle of women to carry out their rights and opportunities in defending the homeland. In this case, it is represented when Gantari was always detained by his sister named Rengga and by his leader named Jaya Pengrawit. Gantari always tried and convinced both of them that it was all the right to his life and his will in order to defend the motherland. The prohibition and warning, in this case, the threat from Rengga to Gantari's decision reflects that men really want to always dominate. Gantari's central role in the performance illustrates that women are no worse than men. Women are not just wingking friends in the sense of taking care of the household but the concept of wingking friends in the sense of friends who will always accompany in any situation and situation.

CONCLUSION

Women often remain under male dominance, and issues related to gender and feminism are frequently expressed through various forms of art, including the traditional theater of *kethoprak*. The *kethoprak* performance titled "1756" by KKTT Wiswakarman serves as a medium for social criticism and highlights feminist themes. The story centers on the main character, Gantari, who embodies resistance against male subordination. Gantari's dialogue and characterization challenge the notion that Javanese women are merely domestic caretakers. Instead, the performance redefines the concept of "kanca wingking," emphasizing that it represents companionship and support in all circumstances, rather than just household duties. Overall, "1756" underscores the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

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