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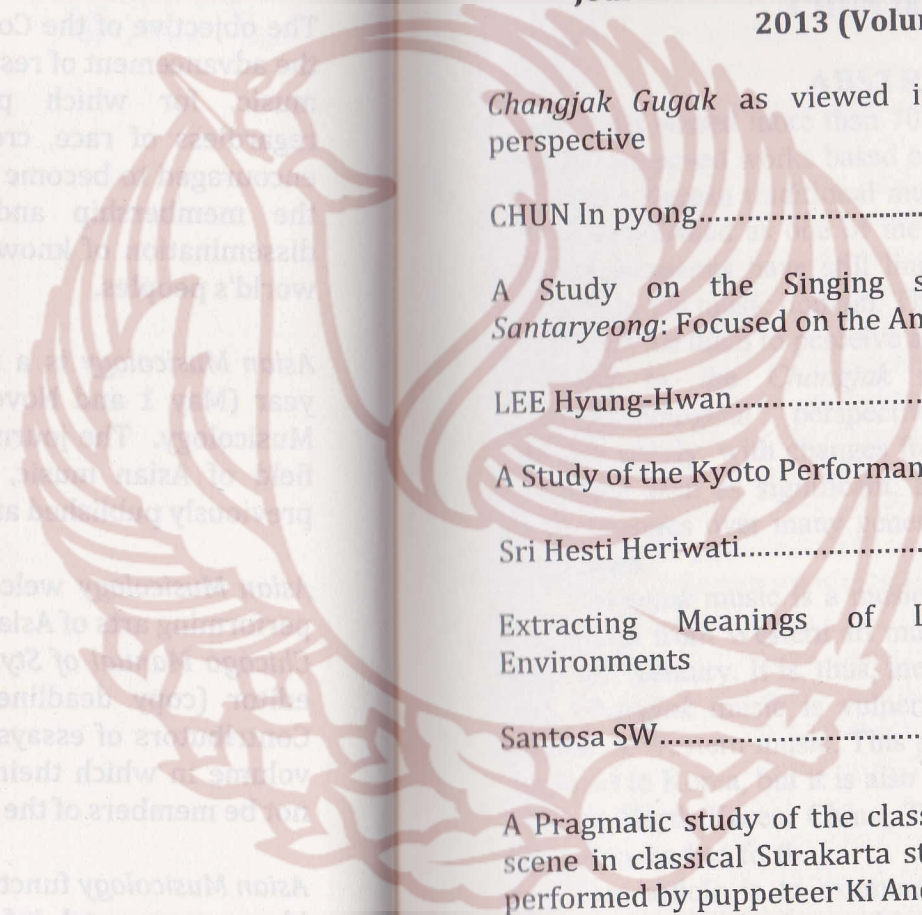
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Asian Musicology

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Extracting Meanings of Literary Texts in New Environments[1]

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Abstract

Reading and listening to literary texts sung in *macapat* songs are means of constructing meanings among readers and listeners. When interpreting texts these people negotiate thoughts with the contents of texts. Using basic understanding from society they orient themselves on contents of texts to get proper values in the community. They do not keep meanings that they have from community, nor do they follow the contents of songs, rather they create new meanings that transform their beliefs and thoughts into new substances. In this process they highlight precepts, revise concepts, alter norms, and change world-views. In another word, when listening to songs people do not maintain stable meanings throughout times but they change the fluid matters that are changing with environments and contexts. In doing so, these elite people want to elicit wisdom to get fresh guides for their lives and the betterment of society.

Background

On Wednesday evening 21 December, 2011, at 8 pm, when I came to the "compound headquarter" building in Bumi,

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[1] This article is a revised version of my paper presented at "Athens Institute for Education and Research – ATINER, 3rd Annual International Seminar on Visual and Performing Arts" 4 – 7 June, 2012, Athens, Greece.

Laweyan, Surakarta, three persons had already been sitting at the corner of the veranda. They were waiting for other members to come and join in the assembly. Knowing my arrival in the crowd they greeted me and said a word of welcome. I sat next to them and started to chat as if a member of the group. Soon we were involved in discussion about several aspects of activities of the group and surroundings.

I introduced myself as a gamelan musician and that made me easier to get acquainted with them. They accepted me as a "new member" believing that I had the same interest as what they were doing and would participate in their activities regularly. Soon after, other members came individually, some in groups, making them the total of 15 people all together. Then, they started singing songs from books well-known among people in the village especially those who were fond of Javanese literature. Everyone was given opportunity to sing the songs alternately using his/her own style and interpretation on the literary texts.

People may wonder who they are, why they get together, and what the purpose of the meeting is. It is a weekly gathering among neighbors in that compound. It is not a spectacular event in the community. Nor is the performance of superstars who enjoy popularity, nor is the show of celebrated actors on a stage where the glamorous costumes, tremendous sound, dynamic light effects and aesthetic dimension are highly emphasized. It is a congregation of village people who wear a non-formal costume with no intention to show-off their appearance. They sit freely on a carpeted floor and occasionally discuss easy matters to make the atmosphere more alive and comfortable. Once in a while laughter breaks the environment resulting the gathering more resemble with daily activities.

A question arises: why do they assemble if it is not for performance? Do they have specific goals to achieve in the assembly? Do they think of village rules of conduct? People who concern about rules in compound often meet informally but regularly to discuss relevant issues in the surroundings. Unlike other crowds in informal meeting, they think that life in the community should not be freely handled without rules, rather it should be maintained by using norms and wisdom in order to achieve proper goal. They intend to find ways of constructing ideas and to make efforts in "exercising" concepts suitable for the people's life.[2] These "elite" people intend to preserve knowledge for the prosperity and security of the community. Responding to the social and cultural changes they want to revise thoughts and ideas to keep "in line" with recent social and cultural development.

In early December, 2007, in a seminar of "Musical Communication in Gamelan Performances,"[3] at Institut Seni

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[2] Peter Parkes provides an example in which lineages are not a separate concept that people use in their community, rather they are mobilized as solidarity groups in distinctive societal institutions. He observes this phenomenon among Kalasha people in Africa and said "Yet Kalasha lineage organization is not simply idealized 'fiction' of ritual and ceremonial representations. Lieages are actively mobilized as solidarity groups in all of the distinctive societal institutions of the Kalasha, and most notably in their 'three great customs' (tre ghona dastur) of wife-elopment, prestige feasting and festival celebration (Parkes 1994: 62).

[3] Funded by Hibah Penelitian B-Art program (SE Dirjen Dikti No. 3785/D/T/2006 dated 2 October , 2006) this seminar was meant to get inputs from experts in gamelan for the initial report of the first year of the research program. In conducting this research I was assisted by Sigit Astono, Bondhet Wrehatnala, and Sugimin, the lecturers in ethnomusicology department at ISI Surakarta. This paper is based on the

Indonesia (ISI) Surakarta, similar topic came up in a gathering. This meeting was more formal compared with the previous one inviting people from schools of arts and some experts in gamelan music. Like those in the village, the participants concern about the meaning of literary texts in community considering that texts are relatively fixed in form and few changes are made in its performances. The concern was how people interpreted them when they were performed in different contexts in which ideas occurred subject to the dynamic change of community.

I responded to the question that the process occurred in a complicated mode in which literary texts and audiences' world-views were interacting one another. This process involves how audiences implement concepts and ideals that are suitable for the community life. These audiences want to preserve knowledge and contents from the texts to keep ideal values in the society. But, at the same time they also react to social and cultural changes by which they intend to revise ideals to keep "in accordance" with values of the society.

If people live in complex environments having certain concepts and at the same time they also want to develop new ideals, how they manage to get and develop concepts and ideals? In what way they react to environments in their surroundings? They believe that one excellent resource to obtain the concepts is by reading and singing literary texts in which people can find ideas, thoughts, beliefs, stories, dreams, and hopes. With these they can highlight precepts, revise concepts, alter norms, and change world-views. These elite people want to elicit wisdom to get fresh guides for the

issues that came up in the seminar and those among the literate people in Bumi village environments.

development of people's life. In their minds literary texts are not "dead manuscripts" in which beliefs, teachings, and wisdoms are kept in a "warehouse of past experience" without alteration rather they are used as sources of inspiration to create new principles, doctrine, ideology, and moralities (Santosa 2005: 112). They also assume that literary texts offer ideas to "challenge" beliefs, teachings, guides, and wisdoms. With concepts from literary texts people want to reinforce social values to get new ideas for the improvement of the society.

This paper will explore how people in *Merdi Lambang* group (stands for *Mersudi Larasing Tembang* "in search for the harmony of songs") interpret literary texts to extract meanings, how they construct precept and concepts in daily life and new environments, how they position themselves in discourse texts, and how they create texts for the harmony of environments and the life of people. They learn the ideals by singing songs weekly at night time using literary texts that they know from older manuscripts. In analyzing the texts I will consider some aspects: time, dynamic, power, context, and community where people in the group exercise imaginations during the gatherings. In some cases analyses of texts and contexts is given specific attention to understand the role of texts in the development of concepts in the community at large.

Literary Texts in Javanese Contexts

In Javanese community literary texts are used as a means of expressing concepts in many contexts such as: wedding ceremonies, *wayang* (shadow puppet) and *gamelan* performances, reading *macapat* (verse with relatively strict rules of syllable and ending vocal sound) in informal gathering,

folk art performances, and in many other forms of artistic expressions. Using these literary texts musicians and singers want to express their ideas using songs either with the accompaniment of gamelan or sung without gamelan like in *macapat* reading.

Literary texts have strong power especially in *macapat* community where texts are continuously sung once a week in a serious atmosphere, the nights when people intend to get blessing from supernatural power. At that moment energies from environments, inner content of texts, serious expectations from singers and audiences, and aura of specific time merge together to create atmosphere suitable for distributing good values in villages. The singers, who have good knowledge of morality and high authority in social strata, by singing the texts in beautiful melodies, explore substances that provide orientation to those who listen to songs. This performance does not only have deep effect on listeners' heart but more importantly they distribute ideas in which people can use as guides in their social activities. In a sense, these ideas will provide a way to choose good values and conducts when they need guides to interpret social rules and norms.

When being sung literary texts become reference for members of community who expect to renew their ideals to comply with recent progress of society. Many people believe that, like what happens in gamelan performances (Mawardi 2012), *macapat* singing can also provide good understanding of social aspects in social lives. Following what Bandung Mawardi said, texts in songs may contain ideal guides such as tolerance, harmony, balance, good interactions with others, and cooperative works among people. These values do not stay in a vacuum rather they emphasize concepts and rules of conduct that exist among people to keep in good relation to

other members in society. Using this "procedure" the readers maintain guides in which people can use to interact in groups. When interaction occurs personal dialogues take place giving a way to create new meanings in new environments (Robinson 1997: 28 – 31).

Songs and Youths

Another way to promote literary texts is by letting youths participate in song competitions. Most likely that the participants are students from various levels typically from surrounding scholls and areas. I see one important reason in doing this: students are required to contextualize songs in their circumstances. Unlike in class where they almost create meanings in limited sense among colleagues and teachers in this competition they have experience in dealing with the members of community at large. Also, they will come into contact with social and political situations in which education and class environments are connected with national ideology to strengthen the principles of nation. Themes related with larger contexts like this will be beneficial for the students especially to let them be aware of people's position in the country. For example, during the national revival month, the 20th day of May will be the center of celebrations of institutions, social organizations, and officers. The song competition may become one of the components of the events making all of the people involved in the celebrations. In Surakarta, this kind of event was held by industrial and commerce chamber which voluntarily initiated to prepare ahead of the event. Erwiyanto noted this in the context of cultural preservation and he wrote:

Acara yang bertajuk Kadin Kota Surakarta Peduli Budaya Bersama Masyarakat Surakarta dilangsungkan dalam rangka memperingati Hari Kebangkitan Nasional. Nantinya, lomba tak hanya di wilayah Kecamatan Banjarsari, namun akan dilangsungkan di kecamatan lain seperti Serengan, Jebres, Laweyan, dan Pasar Klewon. Di mana dari masing-masing kecamatan, akan diambil tiga besar untuk maju ke final (Erwiyanto, JogloSemar.co. Minggu, 26 Mei 2013).

[The program called *Kadin Kota Surakarta Peduli Budaya Bersama Masyarakat Surakarta* (Kadin Surakarta and Surakarta community Preserve Culture) was held to commemorate the National Revival Day. In the future, the competition will not be held in the district of Banjarsari but also in other districts like Serengan, Jebres, Laweyan, and Pasar Kliwon in which in each will be selected the best three to go to the final competition.]

The awareness of the principals of nation and country is of special importance not only for mature citizens who have already a lot of experiences in dealing with other people in communities but also more significantly for youth who are still studying in schools considering that they will become the leaders of the country in the future. The understanding of this theme is widely known and people use it for various purposes from environmental benefit to social and political targets. One of the intellectuals in Surakarta, G.P.H. Dipokusuma, stated that kids will be the "object" for the future event taking into account that they have a strategic position in the development of

society. In a competition ceremony, emphasizing the possible role of the young generation, he said:

"Meskipun ini acara perdana, namun kami mendapat dukungan dari budayawan dan seniman yang ada di Kota Solo. Bukan tak mungkin tahun depan nanti kami akan mengadakan acara serupa, namun dengan peserta kalangan remaja bahkan anak-anak. (Erwiyanto, JogloSemar.co. Minggu, 26 Mei 2013). [Athough this is an initial program, we get supports from intellectuals and artists in Solo city. Maybe next year we will hold similar program with participants from youth and kids.]

Figure 1. Elementary school students perform songs and gamelan in a song festival. This festival was held for kindergarten, elementary, secondary, and high school students in Central Java. Students are performing songs based on selections from repertories provided by the committee. (Photo: from Google)

The participation of youth in singing and performing gamelan is important due to their role in nowadays and future times. Youths are younger generation who has present and future times in which recent and upcoming concepts will be explored in their lives. In this context getting meanings from various aspects of life – living with friends in schools, being in good environments, understanding texts in songs and gamelan, listening to advice from parents and teachers, and exploring the life of surroundings – is necessary to contextualize ideas in their social activities. Using this strategy people will be able to improve the position of the youth so that ideas and concepts from communities can be explored in accordance with community lives. Especially at this time in which guidance, rules, and norms of community are not highly highlighted contents from songs and gamelan will become alternative teachings among students who will be the leader in the future.

Song Texts in Various Contexts

Texts of songs and *gamelan* play role in other social and cultural events as well. Countless events are held using this ensemble believing that performance of songs will strengthen the social, cultural, political, educational concepts to people who are involved in performances. More than that, the performances are thought as beneficial to the environments because their aura will get into aspects of community lives.

Pak Darsono, a *macapat* singing expert, told me that singings are popular among other kinds of literary performances in Surakarta. He gave me example of the use of *macapat* singing in personal celebrations, office happenings, and inter-religion communication programs. This singing is used for getting better understandings and meanings among audiences when they participate in a meeting.
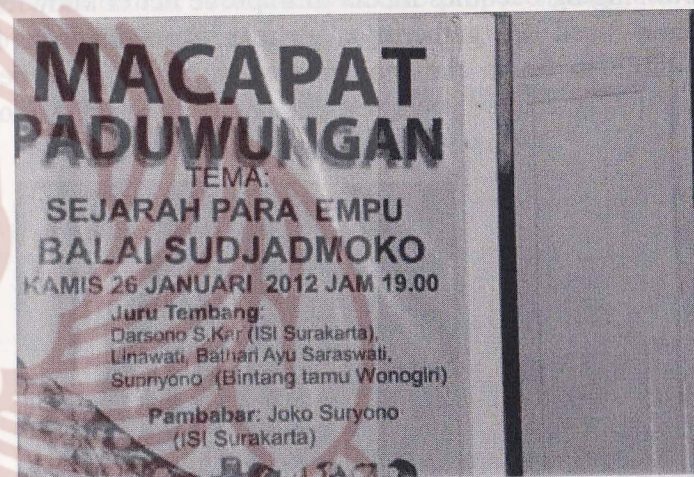

Figure 2. A pamphlet of *macapat* gathering on *keris*-ology [the science of dagger] shows the names of singers who take part in the meeting. This singing is used for getting better understandings and meanings among audiences when they participate in the meeting. (Photo: Santosa)

The role of *macapat* singing in *keris* gatherings will be discussed here because it delivers special implications to audiences and environments. Unlike in social gatherings in which people assemble to discuss specific topic using verbal idioms, in these gatherings in addition to dialogue among participants they listen to the singing of *macapat* songs. The purpose of using the singing is that audiences can understand better ideas from discussion when they are emphasized by songs in which singers put the concepts in aesthetic domain.

Songs provide nuances and auras to grasp meanings and make them more familiar in the mind of audiences. For that reason, *macapat* singing becomes media to improve better knowledge of theme used in gatherings. People do not only feel comfortable to be in the meeting but also they feel being motivated to develop more questions and to think of the topic of discussion after their participation in the meeting.

Figure 3. Pak Waluyo, a *macapat* expert, sings a song in a meeting on *keris* in Surakarta. Texts used are typically selected in accordance with the theme of the gatherings. (Photo: Santosa)

Being in meeting and in artistic environments can also stimulate audiences to correlate the meanings from dialogue and those from aesthetic aspect of performance. Understanding both do not interrupt one another rather they will go side by side to extract better new meanings. Artistic dimensions provide access to knowledge of the theme by exploring ideas in figurative mood and in turn this will provide a way to

experiences other beneficial concepts. Perhaps, this is the most effective and efficient method in finding meanings because audiences do not feel uneasy to the proper strategy to extract knowledge using this way.
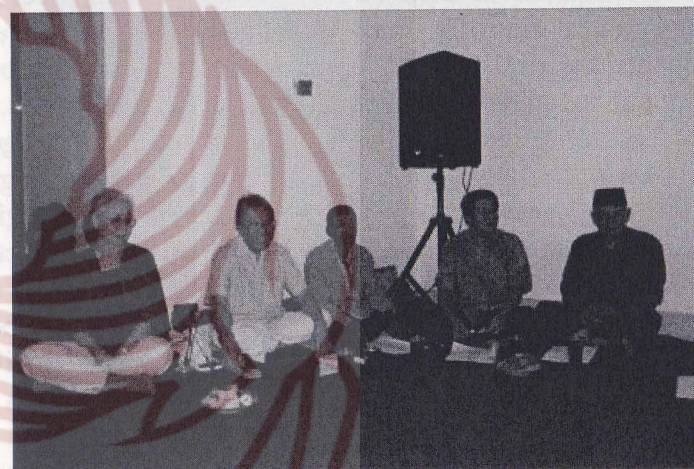

Figure 4. Audiences listen to *macapat* reading in *Balai Sudjatmoko* building to elicit knowledge from songs. They enjoy typical relax atmosphere in which they are sitting on the floor while drinking and eating snacks during performances. (Photo: Santosa)

The diffusion of *macapat* song is perhaps best done in a song competition because both singers and audiences intend to understand the content of songs. These events promote the spirit of participants to practice more and to show-off song texts and melodies that they create in their groups. The purpose of this show is not only for personal and group interests but more importantly to put songs in contexts so that they can renew ideas from songs. Groups of *macapat*

gatherings will participate in these events showing their expertise in singing and interpreting texts of songs. Typical styles are shown to explore an aesthetic aspect in which audiences can get knowledge of social dimension valuable for the groups. Unlike in their regular time where members of singing groups sing for their colleagues, in these events participants are dealing with communities and other groups who intend to enjoy their literary and artistic creations. In away, this is a real contest in which teachers, singers, connoisseurs, strangers, performance goers, and colleagues want to listen to recent development of the *macapat* singing. They all bring their "artistic creations" expecting intellectual responses from other groups and audiences.

Recently, many institutions - radio stations, schools, social organizations, government offices, and art councils - hold a yearly singing festival for some levels of ages from the very young kids to adult people. The purpose of the competition is, in addition to evaluate the students' competence on how to play the music, to circulate the meanings of songs in its community. They believe that especially in this new context songs and music should be adjusted to the new conditions. Adult people will be of special importance because it through the people that new meanings can be distributed to other groups of people. These people are typically active and are the most productive groups. They have a lot of experiences in dealing with songs and texts and they know how to manage contents of the texts and songs. Wisdoms in the community are not stable in their meanings and so are those inside the texts and songs. When they meet one another people will be in the contexts in which reconciliation between groups should be evaluated, communication with colleagues is encouraged, and the use of

norms need to be revised in accordance with new environments.

Figure 5. A participant in *macapat* competition sings a song accompanied by small gamelan ensemble. This competition was held by KADIN, an industrial and commerce chamber office, in Surakarta in 2013. (Photo: from internet)

Elements of societies are aware of this situation and they consider it as necessary to participate in such competitions. They have rehearsals more than usual and try to find good teachers to train singers and gamelan players. Enthusiasm among participants will become one of the parameters of how judges asses the quality of their performances. More efforts are also being done to achieve the best performance they can get.

Figure 6. Participants of *macapat* competition gather in venue to participate in the competition held by The Regent of Bantul, Yogyakarta, about 60 km south of Surakarta. In this event they are getting ready to show their expertise and artistic creations in front of other competitors. (Photo: from internet)

Local governments provide supports to people in their areas who intend to participate in festivals. With these assistances musicians and singers have better motivation to rehearse and practice singing. The effect of this program is varied but I can take a note one important aspect of the consequence is that people intend to promote their groups and local identities (Santosa 2012: 197 – 204). In a sense, this becomes the best way to encourage social solidarities and cohesion to get better knowledge and skills of singing songs and performing gamelan. Using this method people will be able to develop artistic achievements to widen the perspectives that are useful for their social activities.

The Power of Texts

Among readers and listeners, more specifically the literate people, a literary text has its own world while discourse text resides another. These worlds are not away from another rather they stand side by side in the minds of readers. Literary texts, unlike the ones in daily life, own aesthetic stimulation in which readers perceive internal substance from the unity of their elements. The choice of words, the structure of vocal sounds, the inner contrast of consonants, the rhythm of syllables, the organization of rhymes, and the dynamic of melody all create the "unit of essence" with an ever-lasting power from inside. Imaginations come out when readers perceive texts in their "abstract" forms, the ideal concepts that provide inspiration of sonic creation. Discourse texts, on the other hand, are realized when essences of literary texts are manifested in an actual situation where literary meanings reverberate in new space to find new meanings. In *macapat* performances (songs consisted of several lines of fixed number of syllables and vocal ending-sound in a sentence) discourse texts are not simple in character because they do not only use words to create the "composition" like those in poems; they "exploit" words and melodies to reach the unity of songs.

How is the power constructed? What factors play role in the formation of the power? Literary texts provide space for elements of literature to find their "ideal forms." When rules and norms, such as the number of syllables and the vocal ending in every sentence, the characters of song, the musical concepts from singers, are applied, they regulate elements of songs that provide "windows" to reach an aesthetic domain. How then this "structure" works in the minds of the readers?

The "formal structure" of poems functions in the formation of "skeleton" of songs. This physical input eventually provides guide to aesthetic orientation. Ideal input will become the foundation to create "virtual space and time" by which they can grasp the feeling of the innermost spot, the essential content of songs. When the spot is reached the psychological state of readers is constructed so that they can read the songs properly. This is not the end of the goal to achieve aesthetic state, however, it is only halfway to the end. The readers need to "contextualize" their understanding in a real context, the "melting pot" between the readers' and the audiences' views. The power of songs will work well when all of the elements are exposed in real contexts, when the songs are performed in public space. With all of these "procedures" texts radiate power by which aesthetic satisfaction can be reached entirely.

What kind of strategy do these literate people use to elicit the power of texts considering that it is glossed in a substance that is not simple matter, intricate in structure, and delicate in keeping ideas? How does power exist in texts? How "fictional substance" is perceived in the complexities of thoughts? Why are people moved when reading or listening to the texts sung in public? Illiterate people are unlike the literate. These illiterate groups find the rhythm of syllables, the meaning of words, the dynamic of rhythm, and the beauty of melody are all dull and worthless. When listening to songs, due to the lack of competence in perceiving their energy, they feel as if living in dark forest at lonely night knowing nothing about what is happening. Meanings of words become the enemy of thoughts, the compositions disturb their world-views, and the energy of performance threats their psychological orientation. All aspects of texts and elements of music provide no more than physical substances in which they find things that are useless

in their perspectives. These people find no way to value songs and even more they get frustrated listening to performances. Literate people, on the other hand, are rich with "creative activities" by which they feel at home in performance contexts and will "get enlightenment" when they listen to texts. These people learn how literary texts own energy to create "new worlds" significant for the society. Due to the long process of studying and listening from previous times, they have capacity to comprehend the possible meanings of texts, because every aspect of songs makes sense in their minds. Words are not strange phenomena rather they are sources of extracting meanings, the structure of poems fit readers' ideals of metaphor, the meanings of words break the borders between daily life and imaginations to get into an aesthetic domain with new perspectives. They find that literary texts contain a variety of connotations offered in wide array of imports, meanings with which they want to exercise world-views. It is this potency to create new world that I call power in which all of the energy of the texts work together to construct unity of songs.

Figure 7. *Merdi Lambang* group of *macapat* is reading literary texts in a veranda of compound headquarter building in Surakarta, Central Java. This event is held on Wednesday evenings in a fluid atmosphere where participants use classical texts to deliver meanings to the members of the community. (Photo: Santosa)

Time in *macapat* may become problematic issue because when reading or listening to songs people orient themselves on specific times. Even though they have freedom to choose meanings of texts they prefer to orient themselves on concepts that are familiar in their world-views. A poet, for example, may think about an ideal time to focus on because in it they get a strong image of an ideal figure. If this is what he wants to get, he will work on selecting words, finding facts about figure, thinking of proper genres of songs, considering proper rhythms, selecting the dynamic of consonants, and considering how to move from "metonymic organization to metaphoric substitution," using Guy Rosalito's words (2007: 202). The oscillation of the last two domains will result in the level of association that leads to aesthetic achievements. In the

example below, the image of ideal figure and values of previous time will come up from the following excerpt of *Sinom* poem from *Wedatama*, a classic book written by *Mangkunegara* IV, the Prince in Surakarta.

Nulada laku utama (abide the good conducts)
Tumpraping wong tanah Jawi (for all of the Javanese)
Wong agung ing Ngeksiganda ([like]the King of *Mataram*)
Panembahan Senopati (Panembahan Senapati)
Kepati amarsudi ([he] keeps on making efforts)
Sudane hawa lan napsu (to hold desires)
………. etc.

Until the last century the image of *Sultan Agung*, another name for *Panembahan Senopati* (the king of *Mataram*, nowadays Yogyakarta), was strongly attached to people because he was thought of as the central figure in *Mataram* kingdom. His strong efforts to unite all of the kingdoms in Java, his hard works to make *Mataram* the biggest kingdom in Java and Nusantara, his position as a national hero, made people think of him as the ideal figure in that period. His identity and personalities were well-known among people. He also had strong dedication to keep the state free from colonization. People in the community were aware of this situation. For that reason, they were fond of him and used his characters as a theme in writing history and poems. Readers and audiences from that time enjoyed his excellencies and he was thought of as the most dependable figure. People wanted that he became the perfect figure with strong identity and personalities. Readers of recent times, however, will have different orientation of who the ideal figure is. The figure of

Sultan Agung, whose role and dignity are still known among readers, nowadays becomes inappropriate issue to the recent contexts. Now, they position his role as important figure in history of the past; his authority is "reduced" due to different orientation of the readers. To unite Java is not relevant issue anymore because now they orient themselves on Indonesian nationality; we should not expose the political power of the kingdom anymore because king does not have political authority. Nowadays, readers orient themselves on other figures in recent community. But, they may keep some of the characters: his identity and strong personality as ideal values. In *macapat* community, in Javanese society as well, this kind of reduction is commonly done in reading, performing, and listening to songs.

Pak Darsono (personal communication, 28 December, 2011), an expert of *macapat* song in Surakarta, said that the meaning of verse is not necessarily the same as when it was composed by the author. Nor did it mean literary. Texts have "vague meanings" to let readers interpret in their own ways. The meanings will change according to who "translates" them, in what context they exist, and in what condition the texts present. All of these complex situations make the extraction of meaning complicated and not easy to follow.

Let me provide an example to make it clear. Suppose a reader wants to read an old poem, the *Sinom* mentioned before, in front of audiences in a ceremony in village community. He will read the text first to understand the gist. Or, it is quite possible that he already got it with all of the connotations before reading it. When reading, using basic understanding from the texts, he will orient himself on the time proper for that event. He will "negotiate" his thoughts with audiences'. Unlike in the "original version," the authority of the king will

not be considered as the most important issue. His wise character will be "reduced" and the readers may make analogy with other figures in the community, not on him anymore. They will remember the dignity of friends, the environment of surroundings, the childhood time, and the happy time when they got together with neighbors. All of these issues will make sense to the readers because their experiences and world-views limit their orientation. The process can be summarized as the following:

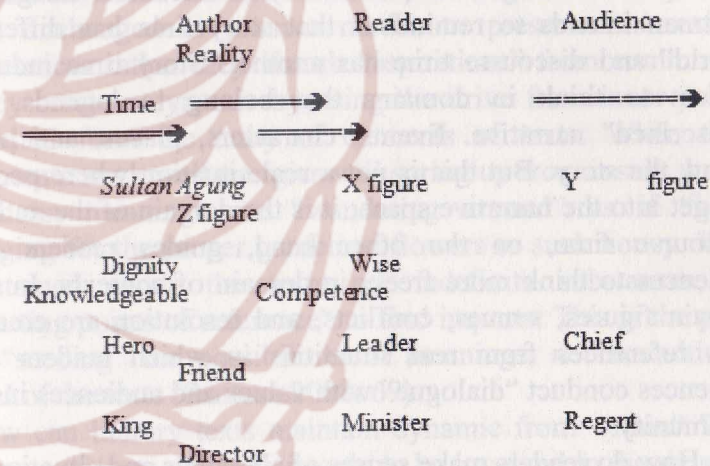| Author Reality	Reader	Audience
Time		
Sultan Agung Z figure	X figure	Y figure
Dignity Knowledgeable	Wise Competence	
Hero Friend	Leader	Chief
King Director	Minister	Regent

Figure 8. Transformation of meanings from author, reader, audience, and reality.

In *macapat* community, like in Javanese society, although readers use books extensively when reading texts, they do not read them literary, as we can see from the above chart. *Macapat* is used to stimulate the variety of possible meanings, not to limit meanings in its literal sense. People avoid extracting "bookish meanings" because it is not relevant to

their way of thinking; it will shrink their perspectives. For that reason switching orientation, reducing the role of figures, changing places of events, proposing a new character is commonly done to get a real imagination. This is how they orient themselves when time is used for their references.

Seymour Chatman investigates how time works in different domains of texts when they are read or sung. He believes that time provides orientation for some aspects of performances; for that reason he distinguishes between story time and discourse time (1978: 81). With these categories Chatman intends to remind us that story time has different "world" and discourse time has another. Story time induces readers to think in domains that belong to legends, the "prescribed" narrative. Events, characters, places, and plots follow the story. But this is not a real situation where people can get into the narrative space; it is the domain of the author. Discourse time, on the other hand, guides readers and audiences to think more freely in domain of contexts. In this domain figures, venues, conflicts, and resolution are created with references from real situations in which readers and audiences conduct "dialogue" with values and audiences in the community.

How do readers make senses of all events and situation in two domains? The first domain happened in the previous time when readers came across a "remote experience" before they use meanings in contexts. All of these activities happened beyond the reach of their real competence because only authors could get the domain in real experience. Literary time creates events, characters, and figures in "virtual worlds," not in actual worlds. The second domain, the discourse time, let readers and audiences deal with "real experience" in everyday life. Images from the "virtual worlds" will be transformed into

those in daily life close to the real experiences. This process occurs in a private sphere in which readers are involved in an intensive psychological state to get the final destination, an aesthetic excitement.

The Dynamic of Texts

Although some people think that literary texts contain fixed meanings, due to static words and compositions, literate people believe that their meanings are constantly changing within environments and contexts. Meanings do not stay stable and unchanged in passive modes to preserve the existed substances rather they absorb "aspirations" from community. They create a dynamic by using the drive from inner power, resulted from the unity of elements of texts. When these elements work well energies will spring up from inside. In this process, meanings are "wandering around" as if "bees" longing for the proper garden of flowers to suck honey. What contained inside the texts are indefinite substances, the "starting points of reference" to find imports. This is the place of "seeding" the possibilities of meanings, not the ultimate goal of the texts (Santosa 2008: 69).

How can literary texts maintain dynamic from within? What aspects of texts motivate people to be involved in the dynamic process? The seeding of meanings do not stand in an isolated space in which readers find "vacuum" of values in a quiet room. Rather, texts are open to share their content with readers. They offer precepts, the "raw material" of concepts for the community by which readers interpret them to create values. There is an interactive process through which values are evaluated, revised, and modified constantly.

Literary texts create more dynamic when poems are read or sung in front of audiences. The texts let readers recall the meanings from previous reading, in an isolated area or in open space, and share them with audiences. Doing so, the readers will face two different worlds: their own world-views and the audiences'. These worlds create interaction in which concepts, beliefs, and hopes are confronted to get new meanings. Readers and audiences experience this dialog and eventually they "transform" the precepts into concepts accordingly. The dynamic process of the value transaction will be guided by ideas and concepts from other domains such as: beliefs, social norms, ethics, local wisdom, and religions. The more the readers read the texts the more intensive the "confrontation" among ideas from readers and audiences. They finally come to a "conclusion" in which all of agents of the process will get better understanding of values in real contexts. In certain extent, venue of performance will provide frame of reference of the process to "exercise" the content of songs. When this happens "transaction" of values among the two groups will take place and new meanings will come out. It is in this sense that texts will keep the dynamic of process in proper way.

What do readers get when a dynamic process of changing values occurs? When texts offer precepts, the readers receive and digest them in the forms of concepts. This mental activity occurs back and forth during the reading of texts resulting in an ability to select proper concepts. Using the "interdependent process" readers develop high sensibility to get rid of what is insignificant and to attach what is important. Getting rid of nonsense is the best way to filter what is good and what is not-good, what makes sense and what does not, what stands out and what does not. On the other hand, putting in the significant and adding substantial matters are also another way to extract

the import of texts. By using these strategies they can create dynamic of texts because the readers get better image of the content in a real situation. It is so because when these strategies are applied, their world-views will actively select "the proper substance" and accordingly construct imagination to get the power of texts. Consequently, the dynamic is heightened when the texts are read in public to reach the ultimate concepts in society. Using the principle of under and over reading, this process maintains the dynamic of interaction between the two. Exploring this process H. Porter Abbott writes:

> "As readers, we exercise a power over narrative texts that is arguably as great as their power to us. After all, without our willing collaboration, the narrative does not come to life. And the price we exact for this collaboration is that we do not simply absorb the information in the narrative discourse but, almost invariably, we overlook things that are there and put in things that are not there. We *underread* and *overread*" (Abbott 2008: 86).

I need to take a note of readers' role in supporting the dynamic of narrative. The readers should not take passive position rather they should be willing to cooperate with precepts and concepts offered by texts. Perhaps, this is the very basic collaboration between the two to keep the narrative alive, as mentioned by Abbott above. When they work together with good understanding I believe that the meanings of texts will be able to keep the inner power contained in texts. This in turn will become the foundation to stimulate energy from inside the texts.

We may wonder how music supports literary texts to achieve more dynamic like what happens in *macapat* reading? In what way they collaborate with one another to create the dynamic of power? Images from literary texts are clearly perceived by readers in their vigorous forms representing the spirit of texts. On the other hand, the readers are also aware of the power of melody in providing atmosphere of texts. Since melody lasts longer when it is sung, the texts will also "reside safely" in the "body of the sound." When these two merge the texts characters and they go hand in hand one another I believe that *macapat* reading will be able to "hold" meanings of the texts stronger. It is the character of the long-lasting-melody that stimulates the texts to construct aesthetic satisfaction more lively and vividly.

Texts, Contexts, and Community

Texts do not stand in an isolated space without values, rather they conduct "dialog" with their communities to construct precepts and concepts. Ideas from texts do not stay in their original forms, feeble without energy from inside; they have strong power to transmit meanings. The readers absorb meanings, gloss them with necessary elements, and finally send them to audiences who already have ideas from their previous experiences. With this the readers keep the spirit of texts so that they can present benefit of texts for the community.

Interaction occurs in three-way channels: texts, readers, and communities. Among these components readers have specific role because they mediate the process of transmitting meanings so that ideas from texts become reality in contexts. They learn the characters of the texts, choose the style of

reading, decide the proper genres, and finally "translate" ideas from "virtual forms" into those in "real domains" that belong to audiences. Thus, texts become the basis of inspiration to construct meanings and concepts. The readers "amplify" precepts from texts to become concepts in actual contexts. They are used to formulate the readers' perspectives and world-views in order to get meaningful life in present time and in the future.

A question arises: do contexts play role to formulate concepts? If so, what is the role? Social gatherings, rituals, ceremonies, rules, ethics, and religion are all offering ideas, concepts, and thoughts. Words in poems, well-known for their beauty and sublime content, are extracted from values of these contexts. The sub-concepts of "mirror yourself on good conduct," "keep aware of environments," "struggle for the truth," and "remember of the power of God" are among examples of the essential principles of social institutions. Using reflections, readers absorb precepts and ideas from them and realize ideas to become concepts. The reading of texts is used as a means of translating precepts, concepts, and ideas into reality. It is in this sense that texts become source of ideas in which readers reinterpret them to construct meanings in their new forms. The readers "essentialize" them to become essence that is beneficial for audiences and community.

When listening to songs audiences do not take all of the offered meanings rather they select only those which are relevant to personal and community lives. There are at least two reasons why they do that. *First*, meanings spring out from many directions: times offer frame of reference, events present guides to choose places, and melody provides proper feeling to get aesthetic satisfaction. However, audiences own limited point of view with which they can enjoy some of the

"benefits" because they are "colonialized" by meanings constructed by their minds. Although some people say that audiences have freedom to select relevant meanings, they are not totally free to enlarge imagination in spite of the wide array of tolerance offered when interpreting meanings. This large domain is beyond the reach of audiences' point of view and they cannot grasp everything inside the song. *Second*, the "shortage" of experience provides audiences with specific interests so that their point of views does not wander around. With this they can find space to make sense of songs in the community. This is only possible when audiences create the "discourse space" in which they get the focus of special attention of possible meanings (Chatman 1978: 102).

What impact do audiences have for the community? Meanings that audiences get from songs do not stay in their minds to create world-view; audiences "emanate" them for their life in community. Audiences need to find the ultimate goal of the meanings otherwise they will not get the "true meanings." Using these meanings audiences hold the "true substance" in the form of what Ben Anderson (1983) calls "the imagined community," the truth that people are searching for.

Audiences understand that energies from songs are beneficial for the development of society. Meanings from songs contain fresh substances that may be favorable for old values. New meanings, originated from audiences' perspectives, provide sources of energies to empower the idle substances and the old values. For example, unused concepts of "status in palace community" will be replaced by "position in political society," the concepts of "king" will be restored by "another figure" in society. With these examples energies from songs stimulate access for the development of the community. This kind of substitution results in the "refreshments" of social

norms that eventually "protect" the community from being out-of-date in a new environments and contexts.

Audiences make sense of environments in which *macapat* are sung. When they want to extract meaning from *macapat* they listen to songs at night time, not during the day, because it is appropriate for the content of the songs: spiritual, sacred, supernatural, and "extra-daily" associations. Day time is only suitable for routine and profane activities. In addition, to comply with proper meanings they read it in specific moments in order to reach appropriate meanings: religious, serious, sacred, holly and supernatural domains. Reading *macapat* at night time help them "purify" their life from bad effect caused by unlucky time and environments. For that reason, many *macapat* groups read the texts in the night of *Selasa Kliwon, Jum'at Kliwon*, and the 13th of the month, wishing to utter "spell" to protect themselves from dangers. In their mind, this method makes changes from bad to good atmosphere because many aspects of reading will make it possible.

People believe that they can reach "serious atmosphere" when they sing *macapat* with instruments that have religious character. Headed drums in variety of sizes are typically used in an ensemble to reach this goal.[4] Especially in courts where Islamic teachings are intensively taught, musicians play *santiswara* music [a headed drum ensemble] once a week to deliver guides and wisdom to the society. Some villages also

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[4] Headed drum, called *rebana*, is associated with Islamic culture where this instrument is supposed to be originated from by some people. In Java, this association is also strong so that people use this ensemble for celebrations and rituals in many contexts. Especially when they want to hold ritual in which communication with God is highly emphasized people pray with the *rebana* ensemble for the safety of the family and members of the community.

have similar activities imposing values and meanings to people in surrounding areas. Especially in ceremonies of life passages, where people want to express meanings for better expectations, they commission a group of *santiswaran* or *larasmadya* group to reach the atmosphere where substances of values are contained in it. In one of the ceremonies that I encountered last year, *santiswaran* music was used in the celebration of seven months of the pregnant woman hoping that the baby will be born in healthy condition and has a good conduct in the future. This expectation was represented in two figures of *wayang* [shadow puppet], *Sembadra* and *Arjuna*, painted on a pair yellow coconut. These figures symbolize the beautiful and handsome *wayang* characters that people intend to be the character of the boy or girl that is still in the body of the mother.
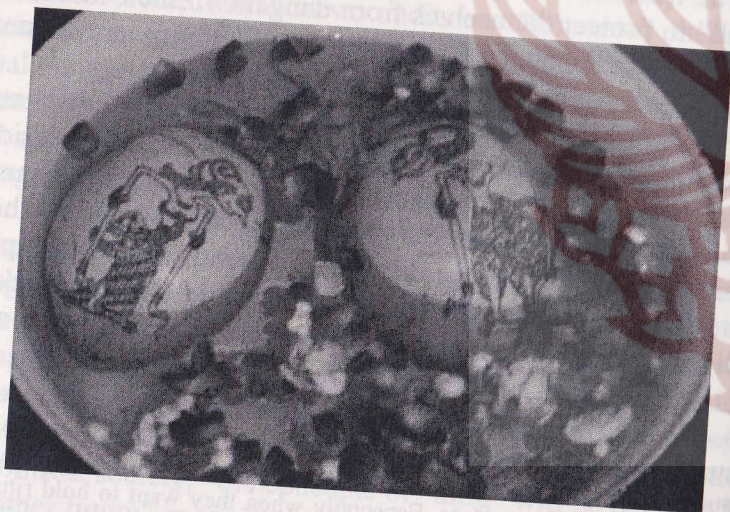
Figure 9. A pair of yellow coconut is carved with *Sembadra* and *Arjuna* figures, the most handsome and beautiful characters in *wayang* performances. These objects contain symbolic values and aspirations in which the baby will be born in healthy condition, has a good conduct, and be beneficial for the society at large. (Photo: Santosa)

Similar symbolic objects are also used in wedding ceremonies, exorcism, birthday celebrations, and circumcisions. These objects do not stand by themselves rather they go side by side with texts in songs sung in ceremonies. They all together construct meanings and create good aura that is valuable for those who celebrate the event. People can get advantages of these and make use them for their guides of conducts. Thus, the symbol reflects the symbolized ideas in which they inter-relate one another back and forth to reach the most significant meanings in their minds.

The performance of *santiswaran* resulted in good aura in which blessing, fortune, and luck will go to the family and especially to the pregnant woman and the baby she is expecting. These figurative concepts are meant for the betterment of community as well in which the guides, wisdoms, and rules are dispersed in a "natural setting" by which they can find good solutions in the community.

Figure 10. *Macapat* singing group participates in Santiswara [singing with head drum ensemble] in Surakarta. This ensemble is typically for praying in religious events of life passages in a community. This event is held at night expecting that a good aura of performance will beneficial for the community. (Photo: Santosa)

Since negative auras on that nights are deeply felt in their minds, audiences and readers intend to get rid of all kinds of hardship; they want to defend themselves from evil effects. In their belief one important strategy to avoid the "harmful atmosphere" is by staying awake; doing this they will get spiritual energies from the supernatural beings and in turn this will neutralize the evil effects. With these energies they feel more secure in their life. They will also get blessing when staying awake because the positive energies will get rid of the negative aura. One famous song reflecting this idea, expecting good-luck and avoiding bad fortune, is the following:

Example:
Aja turu sore kaki (do not sleep early night folks)
Ana dewa nganglang jagad (gods are wandering around)
Nyangking bokor kencanane (to bring the golden water jar)
Isine donga tetulak (contained of spell)
Sandang kalawan pangan (clothes and food)
Yaiku bageyanipun (these are meant for)
Wong melek sabar narima (people who stay awake and be patient in their life).

Other beneficial aspects of reading *macapat* are many, but I do not want to explore them all due to the limited time and opportunities. Above all, reading *macapat* is not only used as a means of exploring the content of texts but it is also more importantly used as a strategy to find ways of getting new ideas to refresh unused matters as well as to get the benefit of being protected by expectations exist in the readers' view. Reading *macapat* is then valuable not only for the groups who sing the songs but more importantly for the members of the community who want to proceed to their better future.

Conclusion

Interpretation of texts involves deep feeling in which readers and audiences make associations beyond the borders of daily life to get into an aesthetic domain with new perspectives. They use this domain to hold precepts, concepts, and ideas extracted from texts. World-views do not stay passive in their position; they keep connotations of meanings for the reference of belief, expectations, conduct, and behaviors. With the unity

of the elements of literature, these meanings get deeper effect on their mind and expectations get intense in their thoughts.

In reading and listening to *macapat* songs we cannot keep the meanings suggested from within the texts; readers and listeners should not be in passive position either because meanings are not beyond their imaginations or because they have preference to construct meanings. Reduction, addition, change, and revision of the contents of texts do not degrade the quality of the content; readers and audiences get real image because what they get is felt in real associations in their thoughts. A figure may be relevant to the previous time but not for recent time, the character of a person may become hot issue in the past but not for present time. All of these occur in the minds of readers and audiences with the changing intensity. Readers and audiences confront concepts, beliefs, and expectations to get new meanings. It is through this process that they "transform" precepts to become proper concepts. They finally come to a "conclusion" in which all of the agents of the process will get better understanding of the values in real contexts.

Key words: meaning, literary text, environment, readers, listeners.

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Biodata

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A Pragmatic study of the classical verse in the Gara-gara scene in classical Surakarta style shadow puppet theatre performed by puppeteer Ki Anom Suroto

Karju

Abstract

The endeavours used by Ki Anom Suroto to create a lively and humorous atmosphere in order to entertain the audience include: (1) maximizing the role of the classical verse (*tembang*) sung by the female vocalists (*pesindhen*) and male vocalists (*penggerong*), accompanied by music of the gamelan, played by the musicians (*pengrawit*); (2) every utterance contained in the various *tembang* and the dialogue of the *panakawan* (clown servants) deviates from the maxim of cooperation and the maxim of politeness; and (3) maximizing the role of the *panakawan* characters based on their individual shape or character (*wanda*), both in their speech (verbal language) and the way in which they dance (nonverbal language). The combination of verbal language (speech) and nonverbal language (visual elements), supported by the rhythms of the gamelan and the voices of the *pesindhen* and *penggerong* are able to create a pragmatic force which attracts the attention of and entertains the audience, in particular members of the audience with a similar cultural background. The verbal language which is written in the various lyrics of the *tembang* and the speech in the dialogue of the *panakawan* with the *pesindhen, pengrawit*, and guest artists, is manifested

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