

## DREAMS AS COSMIC REPRESENTATION IN THE LENG PERFORMANCE

Nissa Argarini

*alumnus of Postgraduate Indonesian Institute of Arts (ISI) Surakarta*

*Mirat Kolektif*

*Karanganyar, Indonesia*

*nissargrn@gmail.com*

**Abstract**—This article, entitled *Dreams as Cosmic Representation in the Leng Performance*, explores the connection between dreams and the portrayal of cosmic beliefs in the Javanese society, as demonstrated in the *Leng* performance staged by Teater Gapit in 1986. The *Leng* performance serves as a reflection of the Javanese community's beliefs and associates dreams with meaningful signs in daily life. In the Javanese perspective, dreams are often interpreted as messages from the spiritual realm. This research examines the correlation between the real-life experiences of the character named Juragan and the dreams he encounters in the *Leng* performance. Furthermore, the paper delves into the concepts of balance and harmony from the perspective of the Javanese people in the *Leng* performance. Employing a qualitative research approach with a case study method, this study reveals that dreams act as a gateway to the individual's microcosm, reflecting the state of the surrounding macrocosm. Dreams are believed to be connected to events occurring in the universe and can provide insights into the overall condition of nature. Moreover, they can be linked to the situations and conditions experienced by individuals in their waking lives.

**Keywords**—*Leng* performance, dreams, Javanese beliefs, microcosm, macrocosm.

### INTRODUCTION

Reading Teater Gapit also means reading its performance works. Teater Gapit is one of the theater groups in Surakarta City established in 1981, representing the social, economic, and political life in Indonesia. Teater Gapit connects with its audience through the use of Javanese colloquial language. Javanese colloquial language is the lowest level of Javanese culture, often used among friends or by an elder to a younger person. In the play "Leng," Javanese culture is not only represented through language but also embodies the spirit of Javanese values (Argarini 2023, 102). Bambang Widaya Sp. (also known as Kenthut) is the director and scriptwriter of Teater Gapit. He plays a significant role in voicing the plight of marginalized communities. Kenthut often tries to depict his sensory experiences, responding to societal issues and capturing government policy injustices. One of his works that represents the class conflict between the powerful and the oppressed is titled *Leng*.

"Leng" portrays the challenging life of marginalized communities struggling to preserve their land and livelihoods while facing the pressure of modernization from capitalist landowners. The play tells the story of the people in Bakalan Village who have to confront the greed of a factory owner, the Juragan, who tries various ways to acquire their land to expand the factory. Among the many scenes, one particularly surprising moment is the dream sequence. Despite Teater Gapit's reputation for realism in

their drama, they incorporate a dream scene in "Leng." In this dream, Juragan envisions a symbolic performance of a wayang (shadow puppet) cavalry trampling him and destroying his wealth. Frightened and in tears, Juragan experiences a profound impact from this dream. Since the dream, he becomes more anxious and tightens security over his factory and other assets.

In Javanese belief, dreams are not just mere fantasies but hold significant meanings and can be interpreted as warnings of misfortune or a way of manifesting desires that might come true. Javanese society often considers dreams as pathways to answers or aspirations to be achieved. Their beliefs about dreams are complex and diverse. Dreams are divided into three-time frames: *titiyoni*, *gandayoni*, and *puspatajem*, each with different interpretations (Ranoewidjoyo 2009, 133). One interpretation mentioned by Ranoewidjoyo is the influence of a person's psychological condition. Ranoewidjoyo's views can be compared to Burdach's perspective on Freud, stating that dreams free us from conscious experiences, trials, pleasures, and sorrows that will not repeat (2007, 7). This freedom signifies that dreams may offer insights and solutions to burdensome issues. Islamic philosophers also share a similar viewpoint, suggesting that dreams exist in the subconscious mind, transcending the limitations of space and time and enabling people to experience and accomplish things beyond their waking reality (Assagaf et al., 2018, 347). Assagaf adds that dreams can sometimes provide guidance or divine direction from Allah, offering insights into future events. Dreams are not only confined to realistic explanations but may also include seemingly irrational aspects. This study aims to explore how Teater Gapit's performance of "Leng" brings dreams into the realm of theatrical realism as an opportunity to understand Javanese perspectives within the cosmic balance.

### THEORY AND METHODS

#### A. Dream Theory

When someone is sleeping, their consciousness slowly shifts from the waking world to another realm, namely the dream world (Dee 2013, 23). Sometimes dreams can be explained or retold after waking up, but there are also dreams that cannot be explained as if we forget that we ever dreamed. The Javanese people classify dreams into three different types of time to help interpret someone's dreams, as mentioned in the introduction. In the Islamic perspective, among dreams, some contain demands to be carried out in the best possible way, while others provide symbols for events that will happen in the future (Quthb 1999, 1).

The relationship between dreams and mental disorders can be categorized into three types: (1) clinical and etiological relationships, when a dream displays or

initiates a psychotic condition or arises after such a condition; (2) changes in the dream world in cases of mental disorders, (3) the inner connection between dreams and psychosis and their similarities leading to a deep connection (Freud 2001, 99). From these three different aspects, it is implied that external influences or stimuli play a significant role in the relationship between mental disorders and the occurrence of dreams. Furthermore, Freud mentions that one source of psychic stimuli, together with active stimuli and interests, is sufficient to explain the origin of all dream images (Freud 2001, 45).

Interpreting dream meanings is a step toward understanding the small world within the vast universe. In Javanese culture, it is known as "mikrokosmos" to read the small world related to human beings, including the dreams experienced, and "makrokosmos" to refer to the vastness of the world or the universe that encompasses human life. Javanese belief emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance in the universe for human life. If there is disharmony between these two worlds, disasters or catastrophes may occur.

#### B. Methods

This research employs a descriptive-analytical method using qualitative data in the form of descriptions and explanations of the issue. The data source used is a performance video of "Leng" by Teater Gapit in 1986 in Surakarta. The descriptive-analytical method begins with observing the video performance of "Leng" in 1986, mainly focusing on the character of Juragan, including gestures, dialogues, and acting patterns that influence the creation of the bad dream. The next step involves comparing the observation data with existing literature to establish a close connection between Juragan's behavior and the dreams experienced by Juragan.

### DREAM IN THE LENG PERFORMANCE

#### C. Psychological Symptoms

In the beginning, it was mentioned that the character "Juragan" in the Leng show is a factory owner sensitive to technological advancements, desiring to expand the factory to increase its profits. Initially, Juragan promised prosperity to the villagers by working in his factory but gradually laid-off factory workers to replace them with machines for more profit. This policy led to an increase in threats from a former factory foreman. As these threats escalated, Juragan began experiencing psychological disturbances, feeling more anxious and worried. To calm his anxiety, Juragan had to take medications prescribed by a specialist.

The scenes clearly depict that the harmful policy has adverse effects on Juragan's mental health. He starts hallucinating about his failure to lead the factory, feeling it has been attacked and believing his wealth has been destroyed. In one particularly distressing dream after taking sedatives, Juragan envisions a group of people breaking into the factory, destroying everything, and subjecting him to physical abuse.

#### D. The Interpretation

Juragan's psychological symptoms are a result of the constant burden of his thoughts. These accumulated stressors lead to prolonged hallucinations about events that are not real. In this context, the dream is depicted as part of the performance in one scene. Juragan's policies towards the factory have negative consequences for employees and former workers, who are also villagers of Desa Bakalan. They suffer from the loss of their ancestral lands seized by Juragan to expand his factory without benefiting the local residents.

These accumulated problems triggered protests from the former factory foreman, leading to demonstrations and sending various threatening messages. The continuous and periodic threats, which Juragan initially disregarded, eventually started affecting him and disturbing his thoughts. He experienced prolonged anxiety and fear over these threats, leading to hallucinations. Juragan began to hear and see a crowd of protestors, even though there were only assistants and factory workers present. His anxiety-induced sleep disturbances further exacerbated the situation, blurring the lines between reality and his dreams and hallucinations.

### CONCLUSION

The Leng Performance provides an insight that sometimes humans receive warnings through various means, one of which is through dreams. Realistic events can stimulate a person's psyche and lead them into the world of dreams. The Leng Performance intends to convey a message about the complexity and interconnectedness between dreams and real life. Dreams are used as a tool to depict the world on a smaller scale (microcosm) and also as a reflection of the entire universe (macrocosm). The Leng Performance invites the audience to contemplate the complex relationship between dreams, humans, and the universe within the context of theater. The character Juragan serves as an example to show that behaviors and decisions that disturb cosmic balance also disrupt the relationships between other cosmic entities (interactions between humans and nature). As a result, the Leng Performance becomes an artwork that enriches the understanding of the relationship of the cosmic world (microcosm and macrocosm).

### FIGURES



Fig. 1. Scene of Juragan's dream.



Fig. 2. The silhouette of a horse-drawn carriage stepping on the figure of Juragan.



Fig. 3. The Juragan always hears the voices of protesters, while there is no one else except him and his assistant.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Assagaf, M. Yusuf, M. Galib, dan Mabduh Wahid, "Sumber Mimpi dalam Perpektif Hadis," *Jurnal Diskursus Islam*, vol. 6, hal. 343-360, Agustus 2018.
- [2] Argarini, Nissa, "Realisme Jawa: Studi Kasus Pertunjukan *Leng* oleh Teater Gapit," Tesis S-2 Program Studi Seni Program Magister Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) Surakarta, 2023.
- [3] Dee, Neys, *Memahami Mimpi*. Mill Valley, Terj. STOK Intermedia, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Populer LKiS, 2013.
- [4] Endaswara, Suwardi, *Mistik Kejawa: Sinkretisme, Symbolisme, dan Sufisme dalam Budaya Spiritual Jawa*, Cetakan Keempat (edisi revisi). Yogyakarta: Penerbit Narasi, 2006.
- [5] Freud, Sigmund, *Tafsir Mimpi*, Terj. Apri Danarto, Ekandari Sulistyaningsih, dan Ervita. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Jendela, 2001.
- [6] Quthb, Muhammad Ali, *Tafsir Mimpi: dalam Pandangan Islam*, Terj. Baharuddin Fannani, Surabaya: Risalah Gusti, 1999.
- [7] Ranoewidjoyo, Romo RDS, *Primbon Masa Kini: Warisan Nenek Moyang untuk Meraba Masa Depan*, Jakarta Selatan: Bukune, 2009.