

THE TRANSFICTIONAL AND TRANSMEDIAL JOURNEY OF PETRUK: ARTISTIC TRANSFORMATIONS FROM PUPPETRY TO THEATRE AND PAINTING IN THE CONTEXT OF TWO INDONESIAN PRESIDENCIES

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines how artists create a new realm of artistic imagination through the processes of transfiction and transmedia, utilizing the works of Danarto and Djoko Pekik as case studies. Specifically, this study analyzes Danarto's theatre script *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh*, created during the Suharto regime, and Djoko Pekik's painting *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya* (Petruk Becomes a King; Semar is His Coachman), inspired by the shadow puppet performance *Petruk Dadi Ratu* (Petruk Becomes a King). By applying the theory of possible worlds, this study reveals how these works transform the previous artistic realm, creating a new imaginary world. This study employed several steps: (1) identifies the shadow puppet *Petruk Dadi Ratu* as a key work of transfiction and transmedia; (2) traces its influence on *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* and *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*; and (3) analyzes the relationship between these imaginary worlds and socio-political reality during the presidencies of Suharto and Joko Widodo. This study finds that (1) *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* presents a utopian world without rulers and authorities, contrasting with the totalitarian socio-political reality of Indonesia during the Suharto era, while (2) *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya* reflects the Joko Widodo regime's utopian vision. This study proposes a cross-media reading strategy for artistic and literary works, contributing to the humanities by exploring how the transformative power of imagination generates possible worlds that reflect Indonesia's socio-political reality.

Keywords: Possible-world; transfiction; transmedia; Petruk character; puppetry; painting art; theatre script

1. INTRODUCTION

The creation of artistic works, particularly in literature and painting, fosters a realm of imagination, by perceiving language, its fundamental medium, as a framework that enables limitless interpretation.

Language can be analysed both from external perspectives and through metalingual approaches, allowing for the interpretation of linguistic statements across diverse reference fields or discourse universes. The concept of multiple reference planes refers to the existence of various worlds that contain assessable propositional truths. This concept establishes a supplementary domain for the existence of a universe beyond the human realm, functioning as a self-referential framework (Ryan & Bell, 2019).

The positioning of language as a calculus applies not only to verbal language, which is literary material resulting from the relationship between the signifier and the signified (Barthes, 1964) but also to visual language, which is the material of painting. Painting material can also build a discourse or refer to a specific reference field by being placed as a calculus. Based on aesthetic considerations, arranging painting components according to the existing composition, such as figures, objects, nature, letters, lines, and colours, produces appropriate patterns that can create a world of imagination (Gheysari & Maziar, 2023).

In the art world, creating an imaginary universe is equivalent to creating a new world through the process of transfiction and/or transmedia, drawing on previous works of art. Transfiction considers the same parts, such as characters or settings, in different texts, resulting in interconnected fictional universes (Haugtvedt & Palmer, 2024; Mittermayer & Capanema, 2019; Saint-Gelais, 2008). Meanwhile, intermedia refers to the aesthetic migration or transfer of a particular discourse from one art medium to another, as aesthetics or specific types of discourse are non-media-specific elements that can be applied in different art forms (Novák, 2021; Rajewsky, 2005; Wolf, 2002). Transmedia phenomena can be observed in the migration of ideas, techniques, and themes from one medium to another, as well as in the way different arts influence and inspire one another. 'Fiction' in transfiction can be understood as an element that exists in the same area as aesthetics or types of discourse. In other words, what migrates are non-media-specific elements. The concept of transmedia helps us understand how different forms of expression can converge to create a more comprehensive and interconnected artistic experience.

Both Danarto's theatre script *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* (Figure 1) and Djoko Pekik's painting *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya* (Petruk becomes a King; Semar is His Coachman) serve as concrete examples of the transfiction and/or transmedia process. These works not only reinterpret familiar characters from traditional narratives but also invite audiences to engage with them in innovative ways. By blending elements of theatre and visual art, they expand the boundaries of storytelling and challenge viewers to explore the depths of cultural heritage through a contemporary lens. Although distinct in form and mode of expression, these artistic creations function as a bridge connecting diverse narratives and media. They draw inspiration from the tale of *Petruk dadi Ratu* (Petruk becomes a King), a *carangan* story, which is a puppet performance that deviates from the conventional Mahabharata storyline while still incorporating familiar characters and settings from that epic. The process of transfiction and transmedia, particularly the transformation of puppet stories into drama scripts and paintings, occurs because puppets are historically inter-imperialistic works (Teoh, 2018), allowing for diverse stories to be told with performances tailored to specific interests. Punakawan characters, like Petruk, serve a dual role as comic characters in the dramatic line and as mouthpieces for contemporary satire and criticism (Anderson, 1973). They speak at the right angle for the drama and beyond its space and time.

Born in Sragen, Central Java, on June 27, 1940, Danarto is a versatile artist whose work spans short story writing, novel writing, painting, and theatre scriptwriting. He wrote several literary works, including *Godlob* (1975), a collection of short stories translated by Harry Aveling under the title *Abracadabra* (1978), *Adam Ma'rifat* (1982), *Berhala/Idols* (1987), *Gergasi/Cylinder* (1993), *Setangkai Melati di Sayap Jibril/A sprig of jasmine in Gabriel's wing* (2001), and *Kaca Piring/Glass Plate* (2008) (Tempo, 2018; The Jakarta Post, 2018). He wrote several theatre scripts, including *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* (1976), *Obrok Owok-Owok*, and *Ebrek Ewek-Ewek* (1976) (Tempo, 2018; The Jakarta Post, 2018). Danarto, who is active in *Sanggar Bambu* Yogyakarta, a community of painters who also create works of art, such as reliefs, mosaics, sculptures, and murals, organized the *Kanvas Kosong* Exhibition (1973) and received a number of awards, including the Prize from *Horison* Magazine (1968) (Administrator, 2024), the Literature Prize from the Jakarta Arts Council (1982) (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, 2018), the Prize from Yayasan Buku Utama, Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia (1982, 1987) (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, 2018), and the SEA Write Award from the Kingdom of Thailand (1988) (Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, 2018).

Djoko Pekik, who was born in Grobogan, Purwodadi, Central Java, on January 2, 1937, is a painter who has exhibited numerous times, including at Edwin Gallery Jakarta in 1990, the National Gallery in 2013 under the theme "*Jaman Edan Kesurupan*" (The Age of Trance Madness), and the Jogja National Museum in 2016 during the "ARTJOG 9" event. During the New Order era, Djoko Pekik was once imprisoned for his activities in *Sanggar Bumi Tarung*, a community of painters operated under the *Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* (Lekra) (People's Cultural Institute), an organization affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party (Maharani, 2015). However, in 2019, President Joko Widodo purchased his painting, *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya* (Petruk

becomes a King, Semar is His Coachman), and hung it on the wall of the State Palace of the Republic of Indonesia in Yogyakarta (Dermawan T, 2020) (Figure 2).

Danarto wrote *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* in Iowa City in December 1976, in Jakarta on April 25, 1977, and performed it at the Arena Theatre in Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta, in 1978. Danarto derived the title of the play, *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh*, from the title Petruk held during his kingship in the puppet performances entitled *Petruk Dadi Ratu*. The script was published in 2015. Meanwhile, the painting *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya* (Petruk becomes a King, Semar is His Coachman) (Figure 3) by Djoko Pekik is likely a transmedia representation of the play *Petruk Dadi Ratu*. The phrase "*Semar Kusirnya*" holds significance because the original puppet play lacks a scene where Semar drives Petruk in a carriage.

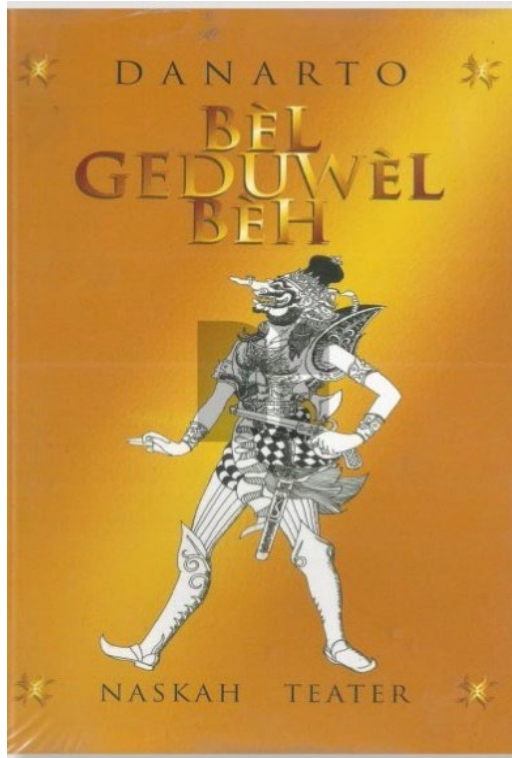


Figure 1: A theatre script book featured Danarto's Petruk painting on its cover
Source: Danarto (2015)



Figure 2: Djoko Pekik's painting at the Yogyakarta Presidential Palace, December 2019.
Source: Dermawan T (2020)



Figure 3: Djoko Pekik presented *Petruk Dadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*, a painting, to Joko Widodo, the 7th President of the Republic of Indonesia. Source: Alfiah (2020)

This process of transfiction and transmedia has implications for the creation of three distinct worlds. First, *Petruk Dadi Ratu*, a *carangan* story, serves as an insertion that remains integral to the wayang narrative without altering the primary storyline. Second, *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* is a new form of transfiction and transmedia that translates a *carangan* story into a theatre script. It focuses on the main character, Yoso Kartubi, who assumes both the appearance and name of Petruk. Third, the painting *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya* (Petruk Becomes a King, Semar is His Coachman) illustrates Petruk in a transformed setting, dressed in royal clothes and accompanied by Semar as his coachman.

Two transfictional and transmedia works, *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* and *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*, imply that their creation is not a mere coincidence but rather a depiction of an alternative world derived from a socio-political context. Danarto wrote *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* and staged it between 1976 and 1977 during the New Order era under President Soeharto, while Djoko Pekik painted *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya* between 2014 and 2015, during the presidency of Joko Widodo. Based on the assumption, this research focuses on three main issues: (1) why the *carangan* story *Petruk Dadi Ratu* was used as the basis for *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* and the painting *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*; (2) the forms of transfiction and transmedia's implications for the formation of a fictional world's existence as an alternative world; and (3) the relationship between alternative world events and reality during the two presidencies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers have not yet conducted studies on the transfiction and transmedia of puppet stories. Previous studies primarily focused on the transformation of puppet performance structures (Capellita & Lestari, 2019; Nuriarta et al., 2024; Nurrochsyam et al., 2023; Suaka & Budiasa, 2024; Winaja, 2016; Yudabakti, 2016). Some scholars look at the preserving leather puppet sculpting to maintain puppet traditions (Prasetya et al., 2024), analyse visual rhetoric's impact on design (Xu & Shanat, 2024), study sustaining puppet stories (Ratchatakorntakoon, 2024), and explore the *beber* puppet's potential in developing the creative economy and tourism (Suwondo et al., 2025).

Focusing on the puppeteer's orientation towards the function of performance, Nurrochsyam et al. (2023) show that puppeteers as agents of morality in contemporary Indonesian society compete in creativity and innovation: some emphasize aspects of spectacle, while others emphasize aspects of guidance (moral teachings). Both groups compete with each other to defend their opinions and beliefs. In such a situation, Nurrochsyam et al. (2023), aligning with Habermas' perspective, advocates for communication. This approach ensures that the puppeteers remain true to their role as educators and teachers within the community while also adhering to the creative and innovative process. Suaka and Budiasa (2024) assert that the performance of Cenk Blonk, named after a *punakawan* character, embodies the hopes of Nurrochsyam. Dalang Nardayana, a puppet show based in Bali, has demonstrated its resilience in the face of globalization since the early 1990s, drawing audiences ranging from rural adults to urban teenagers. This enduring appeal stems from the puppeteers' ability to present stories in a fresh, original, critical, and entertaining style while remaining faithful to the core principles of traditional puppetry. In fact, research by Nuriarta et al. (2024), which focused on RA Kosasih, Teguh Santosa, and Gun Gun's epic Mahabharata Puppet comics, set in Sundanese, Javanese, and Balinese cultures, respectively, through the lens of articulating Indonesian identity, showed that through their work, the artists have built an identity as well as promoted Indonesia's cultural diversity. Meanwhile, Capellita and Lestari (2019) explore the strategy of diplomacy based on the characters of the *punakawan*, who are attractive and flexible in all situations, thereby reducing tension and building effective communication.

Other scholars have also studied the transformation of wayang from one medium to another (Downes, 2018; Nugroho, 2024; Pausacker, 2004; Sedana, 2019; Stange, 1994). Sedana noted that the transformation of literature into puppet performance, based on the traditional triadic model of form-plot-character, especially in Bali, found that the process is heavily influenced by the creativity of puppeteers. The process unfolds in three stages. Before the performance, the puppeteer transforms narrative literature into dramatic forms. During the presentation, the literature is further adapted into wordplay, narrative lines, songs, dialogues, social commentary, and critique. After the performance, the puppeteer bridges the material and spiritual realms, tailoring the creative interaction to align with the audience's expectations, the performance context, and their own artistic strengths. Nugroho (2024) examined how Mpu Kanwa's *kakawin* (ancient Javanese poetry) *Arjunawiwaha* was adapted into the scenario text of Wignyosoetarno's *Harjuna Wiwaha*, a Javanese shadow puppet play. The study reveals the transformation of the puppet characters' *sanggit* (creativity), storyline, *janturan* (description), *pocapan* (discourse), and conversations to bring the story to life. Meanwhile, other study on the modelling of Sri Rama in shadow puppets in Malaysia shows that Sri Rama's modelling is closer to Chinese shadow puppet designs than other Asian shadow puppets (India, Thailand, Indonesia, and Cambodia) (Hui & Abdullah, 2024).

Downes (2018) explores Hindu-Javanese puppet mythology in the literary works of three contemporary Indonesian women writers. Focusing on novels by Laksmi Pamuntjak, Leila Chudori, and Ayu Utami, Downes reveals how puppet epics serve as productive counter-discursive sites for writers who seek to intervene against dominant narratives of history and gender. These female writers seek to reimagine the history of violence in Indonesia, particularly the anti-communist mass killings of 1965–66, by combining a critical reassessment of official national narratives with a redefinition of idealized gender roles. Puppet mythology plays a central role in each of their projects, sometimes as an object of critique and sometimes as a source of alternative gender models. The study compares their literary engagements with puppets, revealing how each author either challenges or reinforces prevailing notions of feminine and masculine identity in contemporary Indonesia, and how these representations deeply intertwine with narratives of history and nationhood.

Moreover, Pausacker conducted a study to identify the character of the President of the Republic of Indonesia in relation to the *punakawan*—with Petruk being one of them. In his analysis of puppet performances, Pausacker illustrates how Indonesian society symbolically associates presidents of the Republic of Indonesia with characters from shadow puppetry. Suharto, for instance, was frequently linked to the figure of Semar; B.J. Habibie was often associated with Gareng; and Abdurrahman Wahid identified with Bagong. These associations suggest a populist image portraying the presidents as figures rooted in the people and

committed to serving them. However, some identify Suharto with the character Petruk (Stange, 1994). Furthermore, Yuniawan and Marzuki (2020) studied the connection between President Joko Widodo and Petruk, using Subandi Giyanto's painting, *Petruk Dadi Ratu, Semare Kaling-Kalingan Mega* (Petruk Becomes the King, Semar is Covered by Clouds) (Figure 4). This study interpreted Petruk as a symbolic representation of Joko Widodo, emphasizing the depiction of antagonistic characters—such as the cunning, the sycophantic, and the corrupt—who were seen as opposing statesmanship and democratic principles during his tenure.

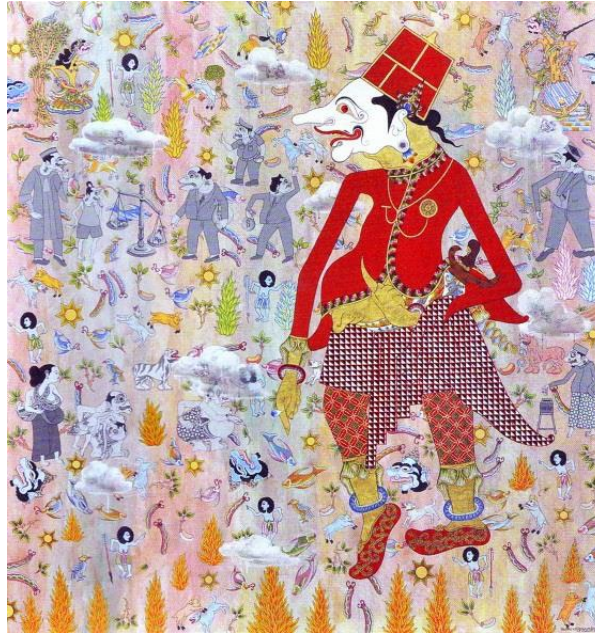


Figure 4: The painting *Petruk Dadi Ratu Semare Kaling-Kalingan Mega*
Source: Yuniawan and Marzuki (2020)

3. METHODOLOGY

The study employed several concepts of transfiction and transmedia. Firstly, the study focused on language as a form of calculus. Language serves as a medium, separate from numbers, through which humans use their minds to unravel the mysteries of the universe. Due to its language's displacement properties, which allow it to reveal a variety of things without spatial or temporal limitations (Yule, 2015), humans can use their minds to uncover not only the empirical-positivist sense of reality but also imaginative mysteries of the universe.

Scientific advancements that adopt an empirical-positivist perspective often dismiss and regard the existence of imaginative reality as mere fantasy (Lyotard, 1984). According to the recent theory, language functions similarly to calculus, allowing the interpretation of statements through various reference fields or discourse universes. This analysis may be conducted either from outside the language system or metalinguistically literary artwork refers to imaginative reality as the *textual referential world*, distinguishing it from the *textual actual world*. Painting, which serves as an expression of the painter's aesthetic experience on a two-dimensional plane through the use of various mediums such as line, color, texture, and shape, manifests the same reality, known as imaginative reality (Kartika, 2017).

Authors and painters, living in the real world and capable of processing literary or painting material, can access the imaginative world and transform it into visual narratives or images, thereby building a world of artistic imagination. The prevailing assumption suggests that the author or painter creates their work through mystical means, drawing inspiration from a divine or celestial source. However, the author or painter creates his artwork by processing various components that already exist in an accessible imaginative world. The description indicates that, conceptually, the world is plural. The world of visual storytelling and imagery is not part of the real world but rather an autonomous realm with its own characteristics. Visually narrated or imaged characters have their own distinct worlds and stories. Characters from other worlds can nevertheless interact with one another according to the accessibility mechanism (Ryan, 1991a, 1991b). In a piece of art that depicts multiple worlds, we can make figures accessible from one realm to another, and a process of accessibility transpires from one reality to another.

Secondly, the discussion revolves around transfiction and transmedia. Trans-fiction, or the migration of fictional entities across different texts, can continue the process of cross-world accessibility. These texts may belong to the same medium, usually written narrative fiction, and transmedia can be considered a special case of trans-fictionality—a form of transfictionality that operates across many different media (Saint-Gelais, 2005). Three types of relationships can connect a fictional world to another: expansion, modification, and transposition (Doležel, 1998). Expansion broadens the original story-world by introducing new characters, elevating secondary figures to heroic roles, and extending the timeline through prequels and sequels. Such modifications create different versions of the proto-world, redesigning its structure and story. Transposition preserves the design and main story but places it in a different temporal or spatial setting. These relationships allow creators to explore new narratives and themes while maintaining a connection to the original work. Further, this paper defines transmedia as the process of transforming a specific story into another form of artwork, or vice versa. The focus of this paper is the transformation from puppet performances to theatre scripts and to paintings.

In examining both the theatre script *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* and the painting *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*, the study followed several steps. Firstly, the study traced the transfiction and transmedia process from the puppet show featuring the puppet *carangan* story of *Petruk Dadi Ratu* to the theatre script *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* and to the painting of *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*. The second step involved inspecting the fictional realm of the *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* theatre script and *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*, a product of transfiction and multimedia derived from puppet performances of the play *Petruk Dadi Ratu*. Thirdly, the study uncovered the connection between the emergence of the fictional world in *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* and the socio-political reality of President Suharto's era. Furthermore, the study established a connection between the emergence of the fictional world in *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*'s painting and the socio-political reality of President Joko Widodo's era. Finally, the study compared the alternative world presented in the two works with the socio-political reality of the two presidential eras.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 *Petruk Dadi Ratu* as an expression of local wisdom

Tjan Tjoe Han wrote the story *Petruk Dadi Ratu* in 1932, long before Indonesia's independence (Fatah, 2025; Widarmanto, 2020). The story is often used by famous puppeteers in Java, Indonesia, such as Ki Anom Suroto (Nusa Tivi, 2025), Ki Seno Nugroho (Channel Budaya Nusantara, 2018), Ki Wisnu Hadi Sugito (Tia Video Pro, 2023a, 2023b), Ki Manteb Sudarsono (Ali Mustofa Official, 2021), and Ki Enthus Susmono (Sanggar Cemara, 2020), whose performances have recently been recorded and published through YouTube channels. Each uses a different narrative structure, but the core of the story world is the same, depicting an attempt by a *batur*, an ordinary person in society, to awaken the *Korawa* to do good and stop evil deeds. Despite the stories' tendency to connect to the *Korawa*, they actually target a broader audience with their messages or exhortations to do good.

Although the *Punakawan*, Javanese puppet characters comprising Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong, are often traced to the 19th-century text *Ghaṭotkacāśraya* by Empu Panuluh (Zoetmulder, 1983), earlier references appear in the 15th-century text *Nawaruci* by Empu Siwamurti, which revived these figures. The *Punakawan* also feature as decorative elements in the reliefs of Panataran Temple, Tegawanggi Temple, and Suku Temple (Sunarto, 2012). From *Ghaṭotkacāśraya* and *Nawaruci* to the puppet show, the *punakawan* figures had always accompanied the knight wherever they went. The knights, alongside *Punakawan*, constantly gain safety, salvation, and victory. The *Punakawan* always performs as an *abdi* or *batur* (Javanese; servant), for the knights in both the Ramayana and Mahabharata episodes; in the Ramayana, they serve Prabu Ramawijaya or Raden Laksmana, whereas in the Mahabharata, they assist Raden Harjuna, Raden Abhimanyu, Raden Bambang Irawan, and other knights. As a *batur*, the *Punakawan* acts as an ordinary citizen who always obeys the commands of the *bendara*, his master. The relationship between the *punakawan* and the knights reflects the Javanese philosophy of *manunggaling kawula lan gusti*, which emphasizes the unity between the people and their leaders. This concept implies that when leaders disregard or oppress their people, and even through acts of cruelty or injustice they ultimately risk losing their legitimacy and position of power.

Petruk Dadi Ratu, a *carangan* story in a Javanese puppet show, presents an alternative world for people's lives, characterized by unequal power relations and rulers who often act arbitrarily towards their subjects. In the story, King of Begawan Pustaka's daughter, Mustakaweni, stole *Jamus Kalimasada*, a powerful weapon and the heirloom of the Amarta Kingdom. Bambang Priyambada, the son of Raden Harjuna, caught her. It seemed that Bambang Priyambada and Mustakaweni fell in love with each other. They then entrusted the stolen heirloom to Petruk. The heirloom's magic transformed Petruk into *sakti mandraguna*, endowing him with unparalleled strength and the ability to manifest his words into reality. With this ability, Petruk gave the

people advice not to be arrogant toward others. Petruk also travelled to Nusarukmi Kingdom, where he advised Prabu Jaya Sentika, the notoriously abusive king, to govern with humanitarian principles. As a king who believed in his superiority, Prabu Jaya Sentika rejected this advice and became so enraged that he planned to kill him. However, Petruk defeated him before he could carry out his mission. Following Petruk's triumph, Prabu Jaya Sentika asked Petruk to assume the role of king in Nusarukmi Kingdom. Subsequently, the kingdom changed the name Lojitengara Kingdom and bestowed upon Petruk the title Prabu Bèl Geduwèl Bèh, also known as Prabu Tongtongsot.

After his coronation as king of Lojitengara, Prabu Bèl Geduwèl Bèh came to the Kingdom of Hastinapura to offer advice and give lessons to the Korawa, notably Duryudana and Resi Durno, royal counselors who often pitted the Korawa against the Pandawa. However, the Korawa ignored his advice and fought back. Prabu Bèl Geduwèl Bèh defeated the Korawa one by one and imprisoned them. Seeing that the situation was not conducive, Sengkuni, the Patih of Hastinapura, fled to Amarta Kingdom to ask the Pandavas for help. The Pandavas attempted to defeat Prabu Bèl Geduwèl Bèh but ultimately lost and were imprisoned. Meanwhile, Krishna, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu and advisor to the Pandawa, observed from a distance, fully aware of Prabu Bèl Geduwèl Bèh's true identity. He instructed Gareng and Bagong, with Gareng being the elder brother and Bagong the younger brother of Petruk, to confront the king. However, rather than engaging in physical combat, the two merely appeared and recounted the story of their missing brother, Petruk. Their storytelling alone was enough to awaken Prabu Bèl Geduwèl Bèh's consciousness, leading him to return to his original soul as Petruk, now restored to his role as a *batur*.

4.2 Transfiction, transmedia, and the story world in *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh*

The similarity between the title of the king of Lojitengara, Bèl Geduwèl Bèh, in the puppet story *Petruk Dadi Ratu* and the title of Danarto's *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* theatre script, both of which refer to Petruk, marks the process of character migration from the first character to the second. The images on the cover of the theatre script – also on page iii – painted by Danarto in 2014 (Figures 1 and 5) and the picture of Petruk on the last page of the *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* theatre script, painted by Danarto in 2013 (Figure 6), further illustrate the process of migration. Both the title and the drawing signify Danarto's reception of the previous work, which was originally a puppet performance story.

However, both have differences. While the shadow puppet show *Petruk Dadi Ratu* emphasizes the mystical origins of Petruk's powers through *Jamus Kalimasada*, which later led him to wear the king's clothes and change his name to Prabu Bèl Geduwèl Bèh, the Danarto's image in the theatrical script focuses on the character's physical transformation; he wears the royal dress and carries a gun, *keris*, and *pèthél*, an axe, on his belt. This transition suggests that Petruk's transformation is driven less by supernatural forces and more by physical change. Meanwhile, the portrayal of Petruk and Prabu Bèl Geduwèl Bèh in the theatre script reflects a complex process of transfiction and transmedia adaptation. Yoso Kartubi, the character in the script, undergoes not only a physical transformation, donning royal garments and bearing weapons, but also a profound shift in attitude and morality. The once-innocent figure becomes a tyrant, exemplifying the corrupting influence of power.



Figure 5: Petruk or Bèl Geduwèl Bèh in the front page and page iii on the script theatre
Source: Danarto (2015)



Figure 6: Petruk in ordinary people's clothes on the script theatre
Source: Danarto (2015)

The theatrical script *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* employs language games to craft dialogues filled with meaningless puns, bitter jokes, and profound references to various subjects or objects. This language play style is similar to the literary works of Indonesia during the New Order period, which transformed puppetstories into shadow boxing, a form of resistance against the regime (Clark, 2001, 2006) and a symbol of an aesthetic regime (Heryanto, 1985, 1988; Heryanto & Hadiz, 2005). During this era transfiction and transmedia strategies evolved as means of evading government censorship, as the name Petruk had come to symbolize dissent. The character became synonymous with criticism of the regime, and anyone who portrayed Petruk risked state retaliation. This was exemplified by Surono, who was arrested in 1971 after performing as Petruk in a popular puppet-people dramatical production of *Petruk Dadi Ratu* (Stange, 1994). The absence of evidence in the script that indicates a connection between the plot and the story of Petruk Dadi Ratu further reinforces the avoidance of censorship, except for the sentence, "Tonight Azwar is frustrated with Petruk, takes on the role of Bèl Geduwèl Bèh, and refers to himself as Yoso Kartubi" (Danarto, 2015). The script utilizes familiar characters in a new context, sidestepping censorship issues by delicately referencing the original story while addressing deeper issues without directly aligning with the source material. Despite this initial explanation, Danarto's *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* theatre script does not depict Prabu Bèl Geduwèl Bèh as it does in the play *Petruk Dadi Ratu*. Instead, he modifies it through a transfiguration process and changes his name to Yoso Kartubi. In addition, the narrative describing the power shift continues until the end of the script.

Danarto crafted the script *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh*, drawing inspiration from the idea of "theatre without an audience." The script begins with two people entering a room and merging smoothly with one another. The script creates a fascinating interaction between the characters by involving the audience in the cast's conversations with them. On the opening page, Danarto writes, "This is an interesting joke script" (Danarto, 2015). The amusing effects of wordplay, which manipulates words and meanings to disguise the plot, transform Danarto's script into a ludic script (Yohanes, 2015). The basis of Danarto's "Ludic Script" is its innovative narrative approach, which blurs the distinction between the audience and the performers. The script develops an engaging interaction that improves the theatrical experience by involving the audience in the dialogue. Originally acclaimed for its intelligent humour, this work transcends ordinary amusement with its clever wordplay, serving not only as a source of laughter but also as a mechanism to obscure deeper meanings within the narrative. The characters take the audience on a humorous yet nuanced journey, bending words and meanings to turn a simple comedy script into a complex ludic experience. Furthermore, Danarto's work showcases the power of words to delight and inspire, leaving audiences with a range of interpretations.

The language games in *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* serve to obscure discussions regarding the transfer of power. The nuanced humorous dialogues maintain concealed tension, encouraging audience engagement and playful interpretation of the language games (Danarto, 2015).

"CONDUCTOR: Obviously I am authorized.

("Maju tak Gentar," a song by Cornel Simanjuntak, unexpectedly appeared on the sound system. The couple, along with their two young children, a boy and a girl, came out of bed. YOSO KARTUBI and MARYATI are wearing green clothes, black berets, bullet slings, and firearms, respectively. So are their children. Also, the friends have transformed into the same outfits. They have evolved into an army of heavily armed soldiers. The stage layout changed. Equipment changes) (Danarto, 2015, p. 15)"

The language game still continues in subsequent dialogues. Despite the fog of language in the dialogue process, the CONDUCTOR uses sentences related to power conflicts, such as the statement, "Just one day after the coup, it has become a worse dictator" (Danarto, 2015, p. 17), which is then interspersed with language play again. And again, comes a statement describing the suppression of those who dare to resist the ruler, as stated by EL LASASI.

"EL LASASI: Numerous charges have led to the decision to sentence A B C D E to death before a firing squad. Bring A! A was carried by two soldiers. An attempted to rebel, but his efforts were in vain. He shouted his real name. No one ignored his shouts, nor did he ask for a careful trial, but no one heeded his demands." (Danarto, 2015, p. 15).

Danarto's concept of "theatre without audiences" holds that a theatrical script requires a partnership between the performer and the audience on stage, not as a communication process but as a presentation of the story world (Ryan, 2013). Such depictions suggest that the transfiction and transmedia process from the puppet play *Petruk Dadi Ratu* to *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* was a type of alteration operation. It was produced as a protoworld version that differed from the play *Petruk Dadi Ratu*, with the framework changed and the tale rewritten (Doležel, 1998). The progression of puppet plays from *Petruk Dadi Ratu* to *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* illustrates the dynamic nature of transfiction and the transmedia process, demonstrating how stories can undergo

significant changes through alteration operations. The protoworld version features a reinvented structure and a rewritten story, indicating not only a shift in thematic focus but also an adaptation to current situations and audience expectations. This creative metamorphosis underscores the flexibility of narrative across various mediums, showing how each adaptation can offer fresh insights while remaining faithful to its cultural origins. Ultimately, these reinterpretations demonstrate the enduring power of puppetry as a storytelling medium one that bridges historical narratives with contemporary perspectives and continues to resonate with diverse audiences.

4.3 Transfiction, transmedia, and the imaginative world in *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*

Similarly, to *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh*, Djoko Pekik's artwork, *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya* (Figure 7), is a transfictional and transmedia interpretation of *Petruk Dadi Ratu*'s puppet story. Unlike Prabu Bèl Geduwèl Bèh in *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh*, who changed his name to Yoso Kartubi, Petruk is depicted as a king in this painting, accompanied by a courtier and his chariot driven by Semar (his father), and the three appear as uniformed figures descending into the real world, as if they were puppets. The image implicitly presupposes that viewers are familiar with Petruk's narrative from the play *Petruk Dadi Ratu*, which the painter expands by portraying Petruk as a monarch in the land of the red and white flag, Indonesia. In this imagined nation, Petruk encounters people from all walks of life: farmers, suggested by the *tarik* (traditional peasant head covering) he wears; political party followers, indicated by the red and green hues of his garments; and the broader masses, represented by the ordinary crowd. The people cheer for King Petruk as he leads them along a long road toward a palace encircled by towering skyscrapers.

The use of colour strokes and artistic compositions establishes the imaginative world of visual imagery, distinct from the narrative of Petruk in the puppet show *Petruk Dadi Ratu*. The red and white flag, the national insignia of the Republic of Indonesia, divides the interpretation of Petruk. Does the painting portray Petruk as a puppet who has ventured into the human world, or does it not? Is Petruk in the painting a representation of Ir. Joko Widodo, the President of the Republic of Indonesia at the time of its creation in 2017?



Figure 7: Djoko Pekik's painting of Petruk becomes a king, Semar is his coachman, December 2019
Source: Dermawan T (2020)

Djoko Pekik, an expressionist realist painter, showcases his artistic prowess through works such as *Demit* (2001), *Cari Kutu* (1999), *Figur Wanita* (2002), *Jaran Kepang* (2007), *Ketoprak* (1997), *Kuda Lumpung* (2003), *Wanita Merokok* (2007), *Penari Topeng* (1999), and *Melepas Dahaga* (1989), each illustrating objects with a realism. It is noteworthy that only a few paintings, such as *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*, depict the convergence of two distinct realms: the world of wayang and that of lived reality. Djoko Pekik's work embodies a dichotomous existence, with one dimension anchored in the tangible world through references to real-life phenomena, and the other constructing a self-referential visual domain that is inherently introspective. Djoko Pekik's artworks depict a significant interaction between the tangible world and the mythical tales inherent in traditional Indonesian shadow puppetry. Pieces like *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*, in which modern elements intricately integrate with figures from folklore, inspire people to discover the relationship between the familiar and the surreal. This contrast seems deliberate on Pekik's part to open up a space for possible interpretations by art lovers of how cultural myths influence personal and collective realities and how tradition and modernity continue to intertwine in the Indonesian art world.

4.4 World of Utopia versus reality

4.4.1 The Utopian world of *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* versus the realities of Suharto's Presidency

The explanation indicates that *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh*, depicted in the painting, is dressed in a king's uniform and holds a gun (Figures 1 and 5), which marks a transition from Petruk, who is represented as a commoner (Figure 6). The pistol serves as a crucial marker, indicating that, in exercising his authority, *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* employs not only the conventional weapons of *keris* and *pèthél* (axe), along with the mystical powers of *Jamus Kalimasada*, but also contemporary firearms typically used by military personnel. Following the effective resolution of the situation through the elimination of those who threatened his authority, Yoso Kartubi became aware of various factions plotting an assault. Yoso Kartubi made an effort to redefine his identity. Consequently, Nasir Lenong stepped into the position formerly occupied by Yoso Kartubi. In an unforeseen turn of events, Nasir Lenong released individuals who had been in opposition to Yoso Kartubi. Following the successful elimination of Yoso Kartubi, Nasir Lenong stepped down from his role as ruler and reverted to his agricultural origins. Nasir Lenong declared, "It's sufficient for me to swiftly return to the rice fields," a sentiment later confirmed by El Lassi: "From farmers, back to farmers." The master of the rice field has returned. Just as the country was once empty, both without a president and without a leader, it is now empty once more. Presidents are simple to make. Every time a crisis arises, you have the opportunity to nominate a new president. What we need is a leader."

The assassination of Yoso Kartubi by Nasir Lenong, followed by his eventual return to the peasant class, underscores the marginal significance of leadership figures in *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh*. This theatrical text presents a notably idealistic perspective in comparison to the socio-political context of the Soeharto presidency, characterised by coups and assassinations. *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* exemplifies a community that prioritizes collective well-being above individual power struggles. In contrast to the turbulent Soeharto era, marked by personal ambition, violence, and oppression, *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* envisions a more harmonious society by foregrounding the voices of marginalized individuals.

4.4.2 Utopian world of *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*

Pekik had originally intended to have his painting *Petruk Jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya* permanently installed on a wall of the Presidential Palace in Nusantara Capital City (Ibu Kota Nusantara), Indonesia's planned new capital (Dermawan T, 2020). The painting symbolizes aspirations for Indonesia's future in the context of this national relocation project. However, this vision remains aspirational. Indonesian politics has been increasingly polarized by debates over the possibility of a third presidential term, efforts to amend term limits have clashed with existing laws that restrict presidents to two terms. Meanwhile, following the end of his presidency, Joko Widodo has faced public criticism, including allegations questioning the authenticity of his academic credentials, which have ignited heated national discourse. If Petruk, a beloved folk hero, portrays Joko Widodo as a leader with widespread public support in this context, the reality does not simply match the painting. The "long road" in the painting could symbolise the journey towards the realisation of the IKN relocation. However, does the painting also allude to the challenges that the next government under President Prabowo Subianto will face? For now, the answer remains deferred; only time will tell whether Indonesia's ambition for its new capital will endure or dissolve into utopian idealism.

5. CONCLUSION

The artwork represents an autonomous realm of imagination and identifies itself as a *textual or visual referential world*. An artwork will achieve acceptance and inspire other creators by illustrating universal principles of humanity. A work of art demonstrates its greatness through these characteristics. The thematic structure of a work of art dictates its greatness. The play *Petruk Dadi Ratu* illustrates universal laws through Petruk's efforts to alter his destiny by assuming the role of queen and striving to eliminate evil. The similarity of the reality naturally inspired other creators, specifically Danarto and Djoko Pekik, to adapt it into a theatrical script, titled *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh*, as well as the painting *Petruk jadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*.

As modern visual artists, Danarto and Djoko Pekik not only make transmedia efforts, producing the puppet story *Petruk Dadi Ratu* into other art forms, but also make transfiction efforts that present its expanded form in *Bèl Geduwèl Bèh* and modify it in *Petruk Menjadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*. By expanding and modifying, these two artists create their own world, an alternative world. Behind his ludic script, Danarto creates an utopian world, where power is no longer important, but a leader is still needed. Everyone, above all, should do their job well. This utopian idea emerged during a period when the global social climate was shaped by the authoritarian Soeharto regime, which positioned itself as the supreme authority and regarded the people as subjects to be governed at its discretion.

In the painting *Petruk Menjadi Ratu Semar Kusirnya*, Djoko Pekik illustrates an idealized vision of Indonesia under Petruk's leadership. This idealized vision sharply contrasts with reality in Indonesia during the painting period, where Joko Widodo governs for two terms, each lasting five years. In this context, both artists, Danarto and Djoko Pekik, through their works, construct an imaginative world that carries resemblance to events occurring in the real world. These similarities are, in fact, fictitious, as the events depicted serve as the basis for the author's imagined world.

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