

MASCULINITY IN INDONESIAN POPULAR CULTURE IN THE EARLY ERA OF THE NEW ORDER REGIME

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the forms of masculinity in the Indonesian popular culture in the beginning of New Order regime. This study was based on the two novels: Cross Mama and Kekasih-Kekasih Gelap, written by Motinggo Busye. The analysis used new historicism theory proposed by Stephen Greenblatt. The analysis also considered various cultural contexts emerged in 1970s. The results show three shared trends in the novels. The first trend shows that the masculinity tends to be represented by both men worshipping patriarchal values such as the myth of woman's virginity and men perceiving woman as a sexual object. The second trend shows that masculinity is stereotyped based on masculinity, power, and male dominance. The third trend shows that masculinity relates to various products of mass culture at the time. This last trend shows that in that era, the ideal male figure is represented as the one who: (1) is sexually active with many women, (2) has a muscular body, (3) has a handsome look, and (4) has a financial capability. Besides the shared three trends, the result also shows that the texts in the novels do not only reflect the cultural situations in the 60's and 70's but also contribute in shaping the social values of the cultural situations.

Keywords: masculinity, Indonesian popular culture, Motinggo Busye, New Order regime, new historicism

INTRODUCTION

The development of pornography industry grows to meet the desire and sexual fantasies of men. According to Thornton (2009) the pornography industry developed shortly after World War II as an underground business. Therefore, the period from the beginning of 1970 until the 1980s is known as the period of pornography. In that period, many media that displayed erotic elements leading to sexual activity emerged. In the West, especially the United States, the presence of pornographic films such as *Boys in the Sand* and *Deep Throat* can be considered to be a milestone in the movement of world's porn industry. This movement was reinforced by the emergence of *Playboy magazine*, which has been considered by some people as one of the main pornographic icons. The spread of pornographic contents in those media has contributed significantly in the public's social and sexual orientation. In fact, according to Diamond (2009) from year 1969 to 1973, some countries such as Denmark, Sweden, West Germany, and the United States legalized the media that published pornographic materials.

In Indonesia, the porn industry emerged soon after the Old Order regime collapsed. The orientation of the New

Order regime was more inclined to the West, which had led to the changes in the behaviors, lifestyles, and sexual life of the society. The sexual activity that was regarded as a taboo to be disclosed in the public gradually began to melt. This can be seen from the various artifacts of popular culture that emerged in that era. Written articles, some literature work, photographs, advertisements, and news were fertile lands in the dissemination of pornographic contents in Indonesia.

However, it is found that the proliferation of pornographic contents in this society was not only intended to fulfill men's sexual fantasies alone, but it also created certain myths on male masculinity which were believed by men not only in those past years but also until now. According to Jensen (2006), pornography as a mirror may show us about how men see women, how men see men, and how men see sexuality and culture. Thus, analyzing the emergence and development of pornography is important, because they reflect the masculine image and masculine ideal of Indonesian men at a certain period of time.

Therefore, one aim of this study was to obtain a portrait of Indonesian men's masculinity and the image of Indonesian men's masculinity that were reflected in the various artifacts of popular culture in the 1970s. The data

used in this study were artifacts of popular culture that emerged in the 1970s such as text ads, news, adult magazine covers, and Motinggo Busye's two novels i.e. *Cross Mama* (1966) and *Kekasih-Kekasih Gelap* (1976). The novels were chosen to be the data in this study because Motinggo Busye is regarded as one of the pioneers in the work of obscene (Sumardjo, 2000). The other aim of this study was to investigate to what extent people embraced the masculine value and moral, which were influenced by various kinds of media existing at that time. To achieve these two aims, new Historicism theory, proposed by Stephen Greenblatt, used.

METHODS

New Historicism was first put forward by Stephen Greenblatt in the *Genre* journal in 1982. In the journal, Greenblatt, as quoted by Young (2009), revealed that what he calls New Historicism is a method of study that is different from the one that belongs to both the Old Historicism and the Formalist Criticism, which dominated the world of academia after the World War II. In New Historicism, Greenblatt stressed two main points, i.e. historical work and literary work. History, in New Historicism view, is regarded as an interpretation of a certain event or a certain period of time. Thus, a history is not regarded as an objective fact, because it contains subjective and personal interpretation of its author. In Indonesia, this phenomenon can be seen in the presence of various chronicle versions concerning the coup event that took place in September 30th, 1965. Therefore, the main research basis of New Historicism is literary work.

Greenblatt (2004) understands that a text does not only provide a snapshot of cultural situation within a certain period of time but also affects the social value of the cultural context in which the text occurs. Therefore, a text that appears in a certain period of time is not only understood as a depiction of the cultural situation of the time. For example, the text does not only contain depictions of decaying morals of a social class, but also actively influences and shapes social values and moral standards of society. A text should not be seen as a passive mirror, but it should be seen as either an enforcer or demolisher of certain values that are developing in the community. According to Tiwary & Chandra (2009) the new historicism can be based on the assumption that a literary work is the product of the time, place, and its circumstance of its composition. The literary text must be read and interpreted in its biographical, social, and historical contexts. The method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same period (Kacmaz, 2011).

Conway (2009) stated new historicism has fostered a critical interest in power, the operation of containment the possibilities of subversion, and the individual and collective acts together, that together shape the meaning of cultural artifacts and their circulation in the world. It is also based on the argument that the existence of a subject in a culture is never autonomous (Greenblatt, 1988), New Historicism views that subjectivity is the result of a construction of both the cultural codes and social codes, for example through the use of language and certain dominant discourse in a society. Greenblatt (2004) calls this as a fashion, i.e. a system that conditions the people to adapt to the standard of value that has been "confirmed." Sometimes this is accompanied by various forms of force, for example the rules set by either the government or other authorities. Gradually, the adjustment and conditioning eventually become natural things for all

members of the society. In his book, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning From More to Shakespeare* (Greenblatt, 2005), this concept is called by Greenblatt as self-fashioning. People are competing to conform to various standards and cultural symbols that have been confirmed. This is to establish one's self-identity in order to be accepted by his/her own society.

Hence, in the view of New Historicism, both the culture and the presence of humans in the culture are not separated to each other, but they mutually form and influence each other. Based on the view of New Historicism, culture plays an important role in creating one's self-awareness and self-identity. Thus, how culture shapes one's self-awareness is one aspect that must be studied. Budianta (2006) stated new historicism does not accept the difference high and low culture.

Therefore, Greenblatt (2004) asserts that to rediscover the meaning of a text, some efforts to reconstruct the cultural situation when the text was produced is required. This is because, according to him, a text not only can reflect a cultural situation within a certain period of time but also can contribute to shape the social value of the cultural context in which the text occurs. It views society as inhering of texts corresponding to other texts (Raj, 2015).

According to Doğan (2005), the study on a literary text, in the perspective of New Historicism, is an attempt to reconstruct an "ideology" or a power relation of a cultural situation by taking the literary text as the basis of the study. The analysis of the literary text will result in the identification of the values, ideologies, perspectives, and beliefs formed by various cultural and social codes. Myers, as quoted by Darni (2013), new historicism focuses on how literary text has function by itself as a certain history discourse which can interact with another history discourse. It views society as inhering of texts and corresponding to other text. The next stage in this study is to explore various domains of the cultural factors of the same period that are considered to influence and form the text.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on close reading of the two novels by Motinggo Busye's, used as the data of this study, it was found that the dominant representations of masculinity relate to the financial success, remarkable sexual performance, ruling over women, and the worshiping of patriarchal values such as the myth of virginity. These elements became important symbols that had to be owned by a man in order to be categorized as both an ideal and a real man. The dominance of such discourse does not only appear in the novels of Motinggo Busye's, but also appears in various other texts, such as films, newspapers, magazines, women magazines' consultation page at the time. The Motinggo Busye's novels in some ways helped shape, reproduce, and strengthen the dominance.

This context of masculine information, for instance, can be seen in the section of foreign news in many mass media in Jakarta in mid-December 1969, which contained a lot of news about the development of foreign music, for example Frank Sinatra. News about Frank Sinatra was interesting, because the news that was presented was not about Frank Sinatra's singing career, but about his weakening sexual ability. Below is the English translation quote of the news about Frank Sinatra, which was taken from Berita Yudha newspaper, December 7, 1969 (Berita Yudha, 1969).

A reporter from Movie Stars Magazine writes about Frank Sinatra's sexual ability as follows: '... His age is over 50 years. His sexual ability is the same as his physical condition, which is no longer strong enough to make a woman faithful to him. Women are interested in him because of his fame, but after they know his weakening sexual ability, they will certainly conclude that Frankie is no more than a senile playboy....' (Yudha Feature).

There are two things that can be examined from the news above. First, that physical ability, especially sexual one, is an important symbol to signify one's manhood. Second, social status as a big name, wealth, or position, is another symbol that can be used by a man to establish himself in the community. Frank Sinatra uses his fame, as a world class singer, to pick up a woman to stay with him.

The hectic news about Frank Sinatra was important because it can uncover the dominant stereotype of masculinity which related to the predominating financial success and strong sexual performance in the first two periods of the New Order regime. This similar stereotype is also reflected in the two novels of Motinggo Busye's. The ideas on sexuality and sexual activities performed by the characters are depicted in the novels. Sexual issue was such an important domain for the male figure in those periods. Not only was it considered as a symbol of masculinity itself, but also it became one of the criteria for a man to be accepted in the society.

Sexual activities in the two novels become the contest arenas of one's masculine identity. In the novel *Kekasih-Kekasih Gelap*, a man's ability to have sex with various women, especially girls who are still virgins, has its own prestige. Both characters in the novel, Darmawan and Yan da Silva, earned a 'killer' title (being skillful at sexual intercourse), which connotes virility or masculinity, because they both have conquered a lot of women. This can be seen in the following English translation quote:

Yan whispered into the ear Hertog: "I've been earning large amount of money from *tante-tante* [*tante* is the singular noun for *aunt* in English. *Tante-tante* is the plural form for *aunt* in English. *Tante-tante* connotes naughty adult women whose age is older than the man]. I've just had sex with one of them. If you don't believe me, look at the bedcover. It is still in a mess."

"Well, *tante-tante* is nothing compared with virgin girls. By the way, I know two virgin girls, but they live rather far away from here. Because I know you are a popular 'killer' [a skillful person in seducing women]. Would you like to come with me to visit them?" Hertog says (Busye, 1976).

The shrewdness in sexual activity became a pride for men at that time. This representation was confirmed by the narrations in the novels that indicate a sense of pride when a male character manages to give sexual satisfaction to a female character. The following is the English translation quote for such confirmation:

And until late at night, *Tante* Selfia seemed to enjoy her stay in Yan da Silva's bed room in Gunung Sahari area. Yan told a lie to Tante Selfia that he is Arabian by descent, and only his name that has 'da Silva'. Selfia believed what Yan said, because he

was indeed very skillful in the sexual intercourse. Yan was as agile as the Arabian horses running in a desert, particularly those owned by the sultans in the story of 1001 nights. Yan was so skillful in the sexual intercourse that he could make Selfia felt as if she was in the story of 1001 nights. Because of a mosquito bite, she was awakened and learned that it was 11 p.m (Busye, 1976).

Quoting Shahab (2006), the strength and ingenuity of men in sexual intercourse becomes a myth of men who lived in the 1970s. He added that there were a lot of advertisements offering promises in which men can increase their strength in a sexual intercourse. The promises were directed not only to the men of the lower or working class but also to the men of both the middle and the upper middle class. It can be seen from Picture 1, which is the advertisement placed in Tempo magazine of August 14, 1971 edition. This magazine is considered as a representative magazine for both the middle and the upper middle class.



Figure 1 Advertisement of Medicine for Adult Men's Stamina Suggesting Masculinity (Source: Tempo Magazine, August 14, 1971)

Based on Figure 1, it can be argued that the texts in the novels of Motinggo Busye's does not only reflect the discourse on masculinity and male ideal construction in the early period of the New Order regime but also reflects the strengthening of such discourse by some prominent figures' idea saying that manliness and masculine identity can be acquired through aggressive sexual activities.

Such understanding is reinforced by various constructions in the narrative texts of the novels. A view that the characters have is a social structure which only recognizes that the sexual ingenuity and power are men's ideal traits. The criterion for such recognition is about how much male characters can fulfill female characters' sexual desire. Therefore, Most of the male characters in the two novels are represented as young people. It is not without reason; young people are considered to have better physical condition and libido than the older people are.

The two novels always construct the characters of healthy young people as the ones that have a good body and are strong in sexual intercourses. The depiction of such construction can be seen in the following English translation quotes:

And until late at night, Tante Selfia seemed to enjoy her stay in Yan da Silva's bed room in Gunung Sahari area. Yan told a lie to Tante Selfia that he is Arabian by descent, and only his name that has 'da Silva'. Selfia believed what Yan said, because **he was indeed very skillful in the sexual intercourse. Yan was as agile as the Arabian horses running in a desert, particularly those owned by the sultans in the story of 1001 nights.** Yan was so skillful in the sexual intercourse that he could make Selfia felt as if she was in the story of 1001 nights. Because of a mosquito bite, she was awakened and learned that it was 11 p.m (Busye, 1976).

Thus, based on such masculinity construction, a woman is only considered as both the sexual object and the power object only. Also, in such masculinity understanding, a man is considered a loser if he gets a woman who has had sex with other men before. This can be seen in the following English translation quote:

Hertog becomes so furious. Bobby smiled mockingly: "You'd better leave Erna. She used to have an affair with Dermawan. If she becomes your wife, she will not appreciate you because you are nothing compared with Dermawan. He is better than you are in everything. He has bigger penis. He can have a sex longer than you can do. He is good at Voorspel [sexual prelude]" (Busye, 1976)

Sex in the two novels written by Motinggo Busye is seen as an arena of both contest and control over women. Similar perspective is reflected in various writings in newspapers, which contain some suggestions for men on how to choose a good wife. Most texts that we have compiled indicate that women were seen merely as objects of power by men. One of the examples can be seen from the following English translation article with the title *Married with a Virgin Girl* published in Warta Harian newspaper in October 12, 1969 (JAN) edition:

It is considered that having a virgin girl to be wife is like having a book with blank pages. Thus, the man who marries the virgin girl has a lot of opportunities to write what he wants on to the blank pages of the book. A virgin girl is unlike either a divorced woman or a widow. Both a divorced woman and widow are 'second hands'. They used to receive the 'sex education' from their previous husband (s). It is clear that generally a man will have far greater difficulty in "fostering" his wife to share the same ideals he dreams of. As commonly known, the solid basis for a marriage is a **mutual understanding**. The mutual understanding is achieved through 'education' in its broad sense. It is no surprise that the majority of people today still believe that the marriage of two people of different religions is considered **less than ideal**.

The writer of the article explains that if a man marries a virgin woman (girl), it becomes an advantage for the man. The reason is that the man can easily educate the woman (girl) to establish their marriage. In other words, the man can control the woman (girl). This will unlikely be possible if a man marries a divorced woman or a widow. Another benefit that the man will get is that he will get 'the first night

atmosphere', the myth of virginity that every man dreams of.

In the two novels of Motinggo Busye's, the view regarding this virginity has become one of the central points of the problem. The two novels view that virginity is very important. The loss of virginity has become a standard for evaluating a woman's behavior. In the novel *Kekasih-Kekasih Gelap*, the character Hertog is amazed by the virginity of the character Erna's. Below is the English translation quote from the novel:

Erna swallows her breath, a happy breath. She had pain and pleasure of having sexual intercourse for the first time. Now she feels spiritual enjoyment, because she feels being protected.

"Hertog," Erna said again, "You're not kidding, aren't you?"

"I told you that I was amazed you were still a virgin!" (Busye, 1976)

The articles on the view that glorifies virginity myth were written in many magazines for men's consumption. Even the view was believed by the majority of men who also lived during the era when the two novels were published and circulated. For example, in the section *Just For Men* of TOP magazine with the title *Searching for the Sticky Quality like the Sticky Rice*, the techniques on how to make women get their sexual pleasure--based on woman's sexual organs--were described. Below is the English translation for the article in the section:

If you intend to get married someday, then choose a woman who is not only good in their manners, physical appearance, and establishing a social relationship, but also has a good taste! "

Look for the one that has a vagina quality that is **like sticky rice**. Don't choose the one whose vagina quality is a sort of slippery, like tofu, or oversized like a wide rail tunnel. The vagina with sticky quality usually has a good mechanism. That's what is categorized as a good quality! "

"Do you know what a good mechanism is?"

"Good mechanism can be illustrated by a situation where you stand in front of a working jet engine, your head will be sucked into the engine, be squeezed, and be pulverized by the engine prior to being exhausted through the exhaust pipe like a smoke!

"The most important thing is not about whether your head is being jammed or not, but the process of your head is being sucked and chorused!"

From the quotation above, it can be concluded that the perception of the sexual relationship is never separated from the power relation. A woman is seen as a sexual object to satisfy the sexual desires of men. The quotation emphasizes that a woman is a sexual object by giving a boldface print. Like in some texts of Motinggo Busye's novels, the quotation above associates a woman with various nouns such as sticky rice, tofu, tunnels, even the engine. This indicates that the text views a woman merely as an object of a power.

Moreover, in the texts of Motinggo Busye's novels, the markers of masculinity of the male body is constructed, to some extent, to have some similarities with the ideal markers of masculinity of the Western male body. Below is the English translation quote of a text in which the images of a Western male body are depicted:

“What a handsome man.”

“Red Norton [brand make of a motorbike]?” his friend asks.

“Yes. ‘He looks like Robert Vaughn. Look at the way he hangs his cigarette on to his thin lips. One thing that we don’t know yet is his automatic dumper revolver.” (Busye, 1966)

Coincidentally, Rika comes across an abstract picture of Heffner. Omslag with a pipe in the Time magazine. She then tore the picture off the magazine and pasted it in her bedroom wall. Ms.Soffie asked: “Why do you paste such a nasty picture on the wall? It’s a bad picture crazy, isn’t it?”

“Mommy is out dated. Heffner is a true man. You don’t know that he is the owner of the Playboy magazine, do you?”

“What kind of man he is?” Soffie asks.

“A man is a man, not a woman,” Rika replies (Busye, 1966).

Interestingly, those texts are always trying to associate the imagination of the ideal man by including the examples of Western men in that era, like Hugh Heffner, the founder of Playboy magazine and Robert Vaughn, an actor who is considered having an ideal body shape and a good look. The texts mention both figures as true men. The argument in this research concerning the selection of these two figures as ideal images of men are based on the fact that Heffner is loved by women, while Robert Vaughn has a good look and a financial success. Heffner’s closeness to and being loved by women can be associated with his remarkable sexual capability. Based on the selection of the two men, it can be concluded that the image of the man which is idealized in the novel *Cross Mama* leads to the men who have sexual and financial capabilities.

From a variety of reports and pictures that circulated in men’s magazine at that time, the male body ideal leads to the possession of a muscular body. The imagination of masculinity perceived by the society at that time relates to the masculinity that is associated with both the sexual capability and a firm muscular body. Both Motinggo Busye’s narrative texts and the social text surrounding them are mutually reinforcing and constructing the imagination. The examples of this imagination can be seen in the following magazine covers, as presented in Figure 2 and 3.



Figure 2 Image of Masculinity in Magazine Covers
(Source: Ultra Magazine and Magazine Violet
from www.stalinebooks.com)



Figure 3 Image of Masculinity in Magazine Covers
(Source: Ultra Magazine and Magazine Violet
from www.stalinebooks.com)

Regarding the above explanation, it can be concluded that the texts in the two novels of Motinggo Busye’s reflect a growing discourse on masculinity at the beginning of the era of the New Order government. Based on the above-mentioned analyses, it can be concluded that both the texts in the novels of Motinggo Busye’s and the other contexts share the same view on masculinity of men, that is both the sexual activity is regarded as an arena of identity contest of manliness and the sexual strength and shrewdness are regarded as symbols of virility of men which relate to the financial ability. Also the depiction of a muscular male, which confirms the view that the ideal male body is a muscular body, is interpreted as vigor in performing sexual activity. Both the texts of Motinggo Busye’s and the other contexts have mutually formed, influenced, and even reinforced the stereotypes and values that determine the standards to be a man, i.e. his sexual activity.

The results of the analysis show three shared trends in the novels. The first trend shows that the masculinity tends to be represented by both men worshipping patriarchal values such as the myth of woman’s virginity and men perceiving woman as a sexual object. The second trend shows that masculinity is stereotyped based on virility or masculinity, power, and male dominance. The third trend shows that masculinity relates to various products of mass culture at the time. This last trend shows that in that era, the ideal male figure is represented as the one who: (1) is sexually active with many women, (2) has a muscular body, (3) has a handsome look, and (4) has a financial capability. Besides the shared three trends, the result of the analysis also shows that the texts in the novels does not only reflect the cultural situations in the 60’s and 70’s, but also contributes in shaping the social values of the cultural situations. Strengthening the ideal of masculinity is widely constructed by men who came from Indonesia’s middle class at that time. This finding is interesting to be compared with the analysis of the values of masculinity that appears in men’s magazine after the collapse of the New Order conducted by Handayani (2010). Handayani concluded that the masculinity of Indonesian middle class male is built by three indicators namely wealth, agency, and women. Success in accumulating wealth and the subjugation of women have the same characteristics as the ideal image of masculinity that emerged in the beginning of the New Order era. However, males’ masculinity is likely to be an important subject to the government in the beginning

of the New Order rather than after the collapse of the New Order.

Masculinity that comes at the beginning of the New Order tends to be static, and has no other alternative. Both novel and other cultural artifacts have the same picture of ideal masculinity. In contrast, masculinity that appears after the New Order emerged tends to be more liquid and has another alternative. van Wichelen (2010) showed that the indicators of masculinity after the New Order can be reached through the commodification of religious values, such as polygamy. Similarly, Clark (2012) who saw the emergence of a culture of violence in the film was closely intertwined with the presence of a new masculinity after the New Order. The models of masculinity as it did not appear at the beginning of the New Order.

CONCLUSIONS

New Historicism views that some literary work should not be regarded as a passive reflection of life. Every existing literature work contributes to the construction, reconstruction, even deconstruction of values that are present in the community. The results of the current study show that the two novels of Motinggo Busye's are closely associated with a variety of cultural situations, both in reinforcing or reconstructing certain values, where they were published.

One of the New Historicism-based analyses in this study shows that the tendency of the masculine texts of the two novels has some relevance with and shares a similar perspective to various social products that emerged at the same time as when the two novels were published. Both the texts in the novel and the social products have demonstrated the representation of an ideal man in the early period of the New Order regime. The results of the analysis show three shared trends in the novels. The first trend shows that the masculinity tends to be represented by both men worshipping patriarchal values such as the myth of woman's virginity and men perceiving women as sexual objects. The second trend reveals that masculinity is stereotyped based on virility, power, and male dominance. The third trend shows that masculinity relates to various products of mass culture at the time.

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