

# Narrative Strategy and the Ethics of Power in the Kresna Duta Play: A Review of Surakarta Style Wayang Wong Performing Arts (Indonesia)

**Darmoko**

*Javanese Literature Study Program, Department of Area Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, Jl. Prof. Dr. Selo Soemardjan, Pondok Cina, Beji District, Depok City, West Java 16424, Indonesia*

## ABSTRACT

This study discusses the narrative strategy and ethics of power in the *wayang wong* performance of the *Kresna Duta* play. This play is oriented toward history, myth, tradition, and convention in Javanese society as a manifestation, existence, representation, and visualization of the struggle for the values of truth and untruth. How does the scriptwriter (director) compose narrative elements to play the discourse of power in Javanese culture that are interrelated in the performance, as a problem that needs to be solved? This article aims to formulate the scriptwriter's (director's) strategy in composing narrative elements to obtain actual, relevant, logical, contextual, and quality criteria and to formulate the concept of ethics of power depicted in the play. Creswell's (2009) qualitative descriptive method is a basis for analyzing all elements that build the narrative structure in performing arts and presenting them according to the reality of the production of the *Kresna Duta* play. Darmoko's (2017) narrative strategy to analyze the process of the cultural output and Anderson's theory of power in Javanese culture (1990) is supported by Suseno's (1993) concept of ethics of power to analyze the resistance

between the discourse of truth and untruth. This article concludes that the screenwriter (director) produced the play *Kresna Duta* based on the power of imagination, intuitive sensitivity, intellectuality, and understanding of cultural codes. The power of truth contained in Kresna, the existence of Pandawa, can destroy the power of untruth in Duryudana, the existence of Kurawa.

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received: 04 November 2024

Accepted: 17 July 2025

Published: 02 December 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.33.6.02>

### E-mail address:

[pak.darmoko@gmail.com](mailto:pak.darmoko@gmail.com) (Darmoko)

**Keywords:** Ethics of power, Javanese, *Kresna Duta*, narrative strategy, *wayang wong*

## INTRODUCTION

*Wayang Wong* (hereinafter abbreviated as WW), from the perspective of performances, has developed various styles in Indonesia following the development of people's mindsets. (Darmoko, 2020). WW art in the past grew and developed in the Mangkunegaran Surakarta Duchy, which was politically under the authority of the Kasunanan Surakarta, so its presentation style refers to its parent, namely the Kasunanan Surakarta Palace (Hersapandi, 1999).

*Wayang* is one of Indonesia's cultural products, and it is widely spread across several islands, such as Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Bali, and Lombok. *Wayang* grows and develops in each region and its characteristics, patterns, and styles according to the creativity of its supporters. *Wayang* refers to a story that depicts a certain character, a certain puppet, a person who plays a certain character, and a certain form of performing arts. (Darmoko, 2020).

The definition of *wayang* refers to people playing certain characters, often called *wayang wong*, which will be abbreviated as WW in the future. WW grows and develops in various performance styles. Financial and spiritual strength have helped the Surakarta style of WW performing arts receive attention and survive until now.

Hersapandi (1999) describes that WW art in the past grew and developed in the *Mangkunegaran Surakarta* Duchy, which was politically under the rule of the *Kasunanan Surakarta*, so its presentation style refers to its parent, namely the

*Kasunanan Surakarta* Palace. The development of art in the *Mangkunegaran* Duchy reached its distinctive form during the reign of Sri Mangkunegara VII (1916 - 1944), due to the acculturation of culture with many influences from the Yogyakarta style.

Several Surakarta-style WW art groups that have become historical records of traditional performing arts include: Ngesti Pandowo in Semarang (Central Java), Sriwedari and RRI Surakarta in Surakarta (Central Java), Bharata and Sekar Budaya Nusantara in Jakarta. Among these WW art associations, *Sekar Budaya Nusantara* is a forum for artists from various circles. It is based on the theme raised, which usually concerns objects or names of central figures, important events, and an important place or area.

Surakarta-style *wayang wong* performances contain at least two important elements that need to be discussed: first, storytelling strategy, and second, the ethics of power. The relationship between the two is analyzed from a narrative conceptual framework. The discourse of knowledge-power between virtue and vice, by the scriptwriter and director, is always contested. In Javanese ethics, the power of goodness always wins the fight. Previous research is presented to obtain novelty and an adequate research contribution. Several studies on Surakarta-style WW dance that the author found as material for consideration highlighted several issues regarding management, growth, development, and structure.

The first study, entitled "*Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandowo* (2021-2015): Study of Performing Arts Management," was published by the Center for the Preservation of Cultural Values of the Special Region of Yogyakarta by Sujarno et al. in 2016. This study focuses on performing arts management using interview methods with famous artists, observers, and audiences. This study provides inspiration for future research that focuses on the strategies of scriptwriters or directors to manage elements in the performance to produce synergy in the presentation of the play and supporting elements in harmony.

The second study, "Easy Steps to Dance the *Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandowo* Surakarta-Style," published by the Publishing Agency of the Indonesian Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta by Supriyanti et al, focuses on the study of dance movements, especially female and male dance movements, using interview methods and literature studies, and was published in 2021. This study inspires the development of research that focuses on the strategies of scriptwriters and directors in composing narrative elements of Surakarta-style WW performances.

The third study, "The Existence of *Wayang Orang*: A Descriptive Study of the Existence of the *Sriwedari Surakarta Wayang Orang Group*, Surakarta, AntroUnairdotNet journal, Vol.IV/ No. 2/ July 2015 by Azhari. This study focuses on the growth and development of the Surakarta-style *Wayang Orang* performing arts by applying qualitative methods, namely observation and interviews. This

study inspires further research in developing strategies for scriptwriters or directors to improve audience services by building actual, relevant, logical, contextual, and quality criteria.

One of the Surakarta-style *Wayang Wong* performances that is important to discuss is the *Kresna Duta* play, abbreviated as *KD*, produced by *Sekar Budaya Nusantara*. The play contains sophisticated ethical values of power. The *KD* play is a story in the Mahabharata that describes the genealogy of the Pandawas (Pandavas in English) and Kurawas (Kauravas in English) and the great war between the two as descendants of the Bharata family. In this play, Kresna (Krishna in English) is the Pandawas' envoy on a peace mission to the Astina palace, but fails because Duryudana (Duryodhana in English) insists on defending Astina, Indraprasta, and his colonies. Kresna's failure as Pandawa's envoy led to the Bharatayuda war. This play leaves behind problems that need to be solved, namely: 1) What is the strategy of the scriptwriter or director to position the elements of verbal narrative to obtain actual, relevant, logical, contextual, and quality criteria? and 2) How are the Javanese ethics of power depicted in the narrative text produced? This article formulates the scriptwriter's strategy in composing narrative elements to obtain certain criteria, how the director places performance elements on certain criteria, and presents a new concept of the ethics of power in Javanese culture. The problems and objectives of the article are expected to be solved in this research.

## MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

The data used as discussion material in this article is the text of the *wayang orang* performance of the *KD* play uploaded on YouTube (Kesenian Wayang Orang, 2018). The oral narratives of the *dalang* and dancers in the wayang wong performance are transcribed for access and presentation. The elements of the narrative that are transcribed are the conversation between *wayang* dancers, the narrative of *janturan* (the *dalang's* story containing a description of a place, the stories of all the characters who appear, the events of the characters, and the problems discussed), and the narrative of *pocapan* (the *dalang's* story containing a description of certain events experienced by a character, such as mental state and profile, summary of events that have happened, are happening, and will happen.)

Creswell's (2009) qualitative method was used to describe the structure of the verbal narrative text by revealing facts, phenomena, variables, and conditions that occurred and interpreting and narrating existing data on the process of compiling elements of the play and the ethics of power contained in the narrative text concerning traditional socio-cultural values and the relationship between variables in the narrative text. The aspects of the narrative text are described by paying attention to the functional relationships between the elements to express the idea of the ethical struggle between the power of truth and untruth.

The facts and phenomena of the cunning, hypocrisy, and evil of the Kurawas do not waver in the text as strong variables of the struggle against truth, justice, and virtue possessed by the Pandawas. The verbal narrative text of characterization is a series of events in the scene, setting, time setting, and social setting. The ethics of power in Javanese culture are used as a guideline to analyze the power struggle between truth and falsehood in the narrative text of the WW performance.

The concept and workings of the narrative strategy (*Sanggit* in Javanese) have traditionally been owned by the play scriptwriter (director) as a representation of society, which then becomes a convention. *Sanggit* is a weapon for a play scriptwriter (director) to obtain characteristics and, at the same time, legitimacy from society for the play presented. (Darmoko, 2017). In the narrative strategy, the scriptwriter (director) implements creative powers to formulate ideas that will be realized in a play performance.

Darmoko (2017) gives the idea that creativity in producing performing arts is doing something with a certain method and a certain achievement target so that the overall appearance meets the criteria of actual, relevant, logical, contextual, and quality. A scriptwriter (director) and another in presenting a *wayang* play will have differences from time to time. The textual and contextual approaches prioritize elements contained in the verbal text of the performance, which are connected to factors

outside the text, such as customary values, conventions, morals, and spirituality, which are collective knowledge within a society.

*Sanggit* is a term usually used by Javanese cultural figures to refer to the knowledge they have to create an art object. An art object requires references from the process of contemplation and thinking related to the context of the relationship with the object being created. The scriptwriter (director) is placed in the subject who creates an object. *Sanggit* is the scriptwriter's (director's) strategy to compose elements in plays and performing arts. The creativity and innovation of plays and staging are by the scriptwriter (director) through exploring imagination based on intuitive sensitivity, intellectuality, and understanding of cultural codes. This process is carried out so that the creation and presentation of the play obtains an actual, relevant, logical, contextual, and quality presentation.

The creativity and innovation of plays and the staging of plays in the performing arts by the scriptwriter (director) are guided by the traditions and conventions of art styles oriented towards the centers of the palaces in Surakarta and Yogyakarta. The traditions and conventions of WW performing arts contain ethical and aesthetic norms that are actualized in the elements of narrative text. Ethical and aesthetic principles will result in pseudo-performance art, namely the arrangement of moral values and the beauty of puppet shows that can artistically depict conformity with social reality.

The structure of harmony and rhythm built in a puppet show is determined

by the *sanggit* and *garap* carried out by the scriptwriter (director). *Garap* is the creativity and innovation of the scriptwriter (director) to present a play on the performing arts stage to achieve certain criteria.

Understanding the power of imagination, intuitive sensitivity, intellectuality, and cultural codes as a means for the scriptwriter (director) to achieve a criterion, accompanied by a historical and religious (mythical) contextual thinking orientation, so that the art of puppetry has a solid, harmonious, and rhythmic structure. *Sanggit* drives the creativity of developing ideas related to the traditions and conventions of scriptwriters (directors). Tradition and convention provide certain characteristics, patterns, and styles. The scriptwriter (director) sends ideas in the form of messages into the narrative text of the WW performance of the KD play and hopes that the audience, as the message recipient, will get an actual, relevant, logical, contextual, and quality presentation of the play. (See Figure 1)

The theory of power discourse in Javanese culture from Anderson (1990) is applied to obtain a picture of the concept of power represented and manifested into the figure of a central figure, namely Kresna as a variable of the Pandawas and the manifestation of the god Wisnu (Vishnu in English), the guardian of the universe, as well as a symbol of truth, justice, and virtue. The power that the Javanese view is central to the main idea of Javanese politics. Power is not a theoretical assumption, but an existing reality. Power is a divine force that is intangible, mysterious, and spread

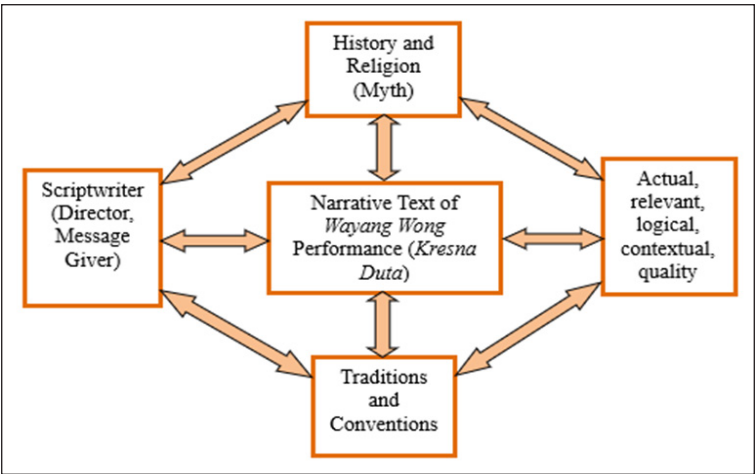


Figure 1. Narrative strategy of the play KD

throughout the universe. Meanwhile, the Javanese ethics of power from Suseno (1993) in this paper's study is related to resistance, negotiation, bargaining positions, and the struggle for power discourse between 'truth' and 'untruth'.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study of the *KD* play performance presents a discussion of narrative strategies in the aspects of a) characters and characterization that function to describe the role of characters involved in the construction of ideas to realize traditional ethics of power in society; b) a series of events, which contain parts that connect one event to another which are implemented with the instrument of character actions to build and realize the idea of ethics of power; c) the setting of place, time, and social as a supporter of the narrative system to construct where, when, and how the social situation occurs to realize the idea of ethics

of power in the narrative text; d) the nature of ethics of power placed by the scriptwriter (director) in the play in the form of narrative devices and artistic expressions by referring to traditions and conventions that form conditions of confrontation between truth and untruth through narrative strategies.

Narrative Strategy in the Play KD

This section discusses three important things related to characters and characterization, the series of events and scenes, the setting of the place, the setting of the time, and the setting of the social context. The application of the concept of narrative strategy in this writing was developed from Darmoko's (2017) doctoral dissertation, Universitas Indonesia.

Text analysis is based on narratology that relies on the scriptwriter and director. Art production through storytelling forms a reciprocal relationship between the scriptwriter and director and their work.



Power in the scriptwriter and director is applied to place an interest using elements in literature as a tool to achieve the desired goal. On the other hand, power in the text is stereotyped through the fight between right and left, truth and untruth. Sosič (2022: pp. 13) says that narratology is closely linked to Structuralism, the most consistent realisation of Structuralist ideas in literary studies. The manifesto is the treatise by the Structuralist and Semiotician Roland Barthes, *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*. In it, the sentence is established as the basic model for the structural analysis of narrative: the narrative text must be studied as a large sentence, since it also has sentence units, rules, “grammar”, verb predicates, and subjects.

The narrator's position in applying the narrative strategy method is significant because of the central concept. In the context of the discussion, the narrator is the *wayang* dancers and *dalang* who play and express certain characters. In addition, a narrator organizes and manages the elements in the performance for his narrative message. Bal (1999, pp. 19) says that the narrator is the most central concept in the analysis of narrative texts. The narrator's identity, the degree to which and how the identity is indicated in the text, and the implied choices lend the text its specific character. The narrator is a very central concept in analyzing narrative texts. The identity of the narrator, the extent to which and in what way the identity is identified in the text, and the implied choices give a special character to the text.

An aspect that is also important concerning the study of the struggle of ideas in the context of power in narrative texts, besides the position of the narrator, is narrative negotiation. In narrative negotiation in the text, the relationship between powers that meet, intersect, resist, and even contradict each other is discussed. Negotiation in narrative is used as a reliable weapon by political groups or intellectual controversies in the context of knowledge. Narrative as a structure forms a context, may or may not be successful in the implementation of negotiations, as expressed by Abbott (2002, 156), that narratives are used as weapons in larger narrative contests such as trials, political races, and intellectual controversies in the form of bargaining positions whose claims may or may not be successfully negotiated. Interpretation aims to obtain meaning related to the communication of ideas and the production of thought. A narrative is not just a story, but a position that requires precision to handle. Discussions about the interpretation of narrative texts depend on the reliability of a narrator in conveying their narrative text. A narrator played by *wayang* dancers and *dalang* is variously described by scriptwriters as an instrument, a construction, and a device.

### **Characters and Characterization**

The emergence of Kresna in the play cannot be separated from the values of truth contained in the ethics of power, as in Javanese philosophy. In the narrative text, from the beginning of the scene, the

character of Kresna shows an important and central role and position. Kresna is talked about and narrated by his supporting characters in scene after scene. Kresna can move events from the first scene to the end.

In the first scene, the character of Kresna can move the Pandawa figures as his supporters to carry out the act of handing over power as an ambassador, so that a series of actions are formed on his journey to the Astina palace. The narrative construction is applied from the moment the *dalang* first hits the box to signal the start of the performance, and the music flows in full accompaniment to the Pandawa dance for a moment, interspersed with the *dalang*'s narration about the Udyogaparwa era, the arrival of Kresna, accompanied by Setyaki, followed by Prabu Matsyapati.

In the First scene, King Matsyapati is in front of the Pandawas of Puntadewa, Bima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sadewa, King Kresna, and Raden Setyaki. King Matsyapati explained that King Duryudana would not surrender the Astina and Indraprasta countries as a whole; therefore, he proposed that the Pandawas prepare for a major war, namely Bharatayuda. Meanwhile, Puntadewa proposed that Kresna be willing to become the Pandawas' ambassador for a peace mission. King Kresna was willing to bring a message of peace for the Pandawas to the Astina palace. Puntadewa conveyed a message from King Kresna to be willing to respect Destarata and Dewi Gendari, Bima conveyed a message to bring Dewi Kunti, his mother, and Arjuna conveyed a message for Karna to be willing to join the Pandawas.

The *KD* play is built by presenting several problems that are placed in the first scene, constructed as follows: 1) King Matsyapati said that King Duryudana would not hand over the Astina and Indraprasta countries to the Pandawas even though he had managed to escape the punishment of exile in the forest for twelve years and hiding for one year. He advises the Pandawas to prepare themselves for war; 2) Puntadewa did not like conflict but liked peace; 3) Bima wanted his mother Kunti to be brought from the Panggombakan duchy, and Arjuna wanted King Karna to be willing to join the Pandawas.

The construction of the problem is divided into three parts of the flow of events that will be passed through, all of which are driven by the central character, Kresna, based on the Pandawas and the King Matsyapati. First, Kresna builds events after gaining power as the Pandawas' ambassador; second, Kresna allows the Pandawas the opportunity to convey a message to him as an ambassador; and third, Raden Setyaki, as Kresna's charioteer, rides the Jaladara chariot and flies to the Astina palace.

In the first part, King Kresna moves on the Jaladara chariot with Raden Setyaki, then visits the Astina palace as the Pandawa ambassador, followed by the appearance of Kresna as the embodiment of lord Wisnu, he creates an illusion to teach King Duryudana a lesson. Salya comes to Kresna to discuss the Bharatayuda war, followed by the Kurawas being angry and ganging up on Kresna. Kresna transforms into a *brahala*, a tall, big, and frightening giant. God Narada



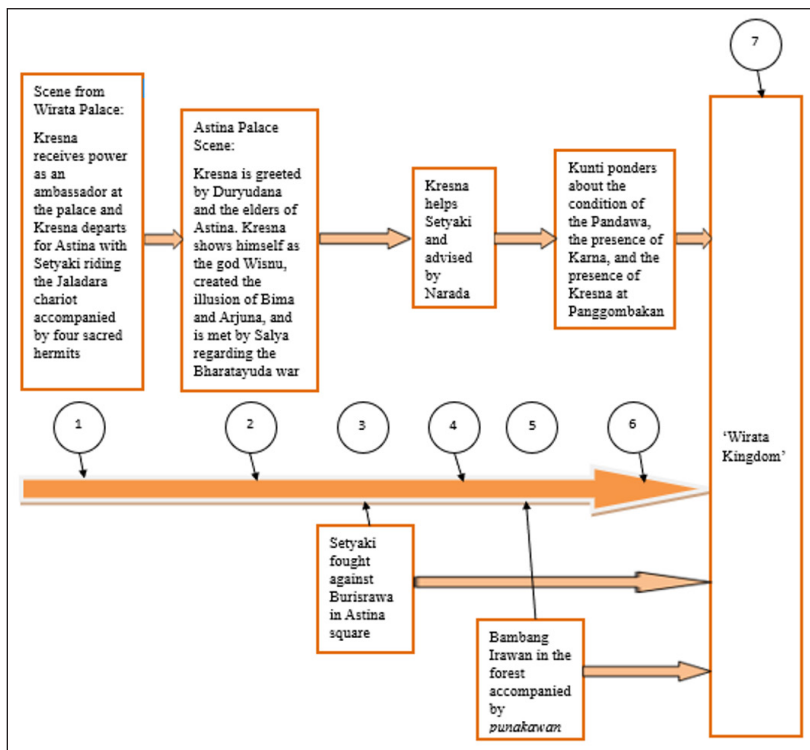


Figure 2. Narrative strategy of the Play KD based on running time

descends to calm his anger, and Kresna and Setyaki leave for Panggombakan.

In part two, Raden Setyaki is in the Astina Palace Square waiting for King Kresna. Raden Setyaki is somewhat cornered, so King Kresna has to help him. The incident continues with Kresna transforming into a *brahala*, a tall and big giant who drives away the Kurawas.

In Part Three, Raden Bambang Irawan, son of Arjuna and Dewi Ulupi, along with four *punakawan*, Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong, wander in the middle of the forest. After the *punakawan* entertain themselves, Raden Bambang Irawan accompanies them to the Wirata palace to meet the Pandawas. (See Figure 2)

The characters presented by the screenwriter (director) form a structure of relationships between characters that support each other, are in conflict, or have a relationship, but still support and do not actively establish a relationship with the characters presented. The construction of characters in the narrative text presents the idea of the ethics of power contained in the concept of truth against untruth, manifested in Pandawa and Kurawa. These characters are constructed to face each other between those who fight for the values of truth, justice, and virtue against characters who are on the path of untruth, injustice, and humiliation. Kresna, as the central figure, is supported by King Matsyapati and the

Pandawas, Raden Setyaki, King Salya, the four sages of the gods, Parasurama, Kanwa, Narada, Janaka, *Brahala*, Raden Bambang Irawan, Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong. The figures on the opposing side who try to hinder the struggle of those who uphold truth, justice, and virtue are King Duryudana, King Karna, Sangkuni, and the other Kurawa knights.

Kresna is the central figure; his role and position are directly supported by the Pandawa knight figures, such as Puntadewa, Bima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sadewa, King Matsyapati, and Raden Setyaki. Roles and positions culminate in the central figure, King Kresna, as the Pandawa ambassador. Kresna, as the Pandawa ambassador and king of Dwarawati, faces challenges and obstacles from the Kurawa knights and

their supporters in his efforts to achieve his ideals of defending the land of Astina and Indraprasta, namely King Duryudana, the prime minister Sangkuni, King Karna, and other Kurawa knights. For the characters Begawan Bhisma and Begawan Durna, although they are in the Kurawa group, they do not support and defend the control of the Astina and Indraprasta countries by King Duryudana and Kurawa, King Salya, as a guest at the peace hearing between the Pandawa and Kurawa, sides with the Pandawa and supports King Kresna. The character Kresna physically appears from the beginning of the performance (*pathet nem*) in the Wirata palace scene. Furthermore, King Kresna, as a central character, appears in events that continue until the end of this play. (See Figure 3)

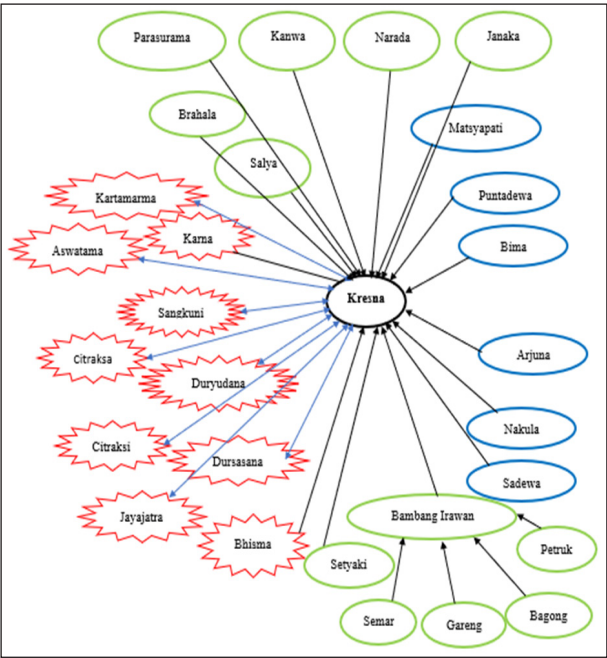


Figure 3. Relationship between the central character Kresna and other characters

### Figure Description

Broadly speaking, the characters are positioned in a conflict between those who side with the Pandawas and those who side with the Kurawas. The characters facing each other in the conflict over the existence of the Astina palace are essentially divided into two groups: those in the red, jagged circle (the Kurawas) and those in the blue circle (the Pandawas). The characters in the green circle support and motivate the central character, Kresna. Kresna, as the central character, can build a network of relationships with other characters, whether they support him, oppose him, or interact with him, without showing any support or opposition. Characters in the blue and green circles, accompanied by a black arrow, indicate those who support and assist Kresna's status as an ambassador. Characters in the red, jagged circle, accompanied by a blue, two-way arrow, indicate those who oppose and conflict with Kresna. Characters in the red, jagged circle, accompanied by a black arrow, indicate those who support Kresna. The figures in the red, jagged circles with regular lines (not arrows) indicate the figures who are related to Krishna and are negotiating their position of support between the Pandawas and the Kurawas.

For the screenwriter (director), King Kresna is a narrative device that has the power to provide knowledge to society through the Pandawas, because of his position as the incarnation of the god Wisnu, who has the power to maintain nature through development and maintenance efforts towards harmony through controlling

human creativity, feelings, and will, harmony between members in community life, and harmony of life in the relationship between individuals and God.

Knowledge about the past, present, and future recorded in Kresna's memory is a safe, peaceful, and prosperous world order. Therefore, speech, attitudes, and actions that contradict the principles of truth, justice, and virtue will always be fought throughout his life. King Duryudana's inconsistent speech, attitude, and actions resulted in the growth of untruth, injustice, and evil in the play *KD*, which became a principle that King Kresna had to fight against.

### Series of Events

The series of events in the *KD* play is based on the central character, Kresna. The scriptwriter (director) in the first scene tells the story of the land of Wirata as a land that adheres to the values of virtue and heroism of the knights. The Pandawas expect Kresna's presence as the guardian of world peace and prosperity.

The series of events constructed by the scriptwriter (director) from the first scene to the end shows the dominant influence of the character Kresna in his efforts to gain self-existence as an ambassador of the Pandawas since his departure from the land of Wirata for the Pandawa peace mission with the Kurawa. The *KD* play, in terms of the creativity of its dramatic plot, is broadly divided into 3 acts (parts), namely *pathet nem*, *pathet sanga*, and *pathet manyura*. In the *pathet nem* section, there are scenes of the Wirata Palace, the Astina

Palace, and the Astina Palace square; in the *pathet sanga* section, there are scenes in the middle of the forest and the battle of the knights against the giant; and in the *pathet manyura* section, there are scenes of the Panggombakan duchy. Although the dramatic plot of the play undergoes a process of compiling introduction, rise, climax, return or fall, and catastrophe, the performance shows its loyalty to the rules of tradition and convention that apply in the world of *wayang* performances. In principle, conflict between two or more interests continues until it reaches its peak and ends in resolution and resolution. In this separation and settlement, several opposing figures resigned or died.

The series of events constructed in this play refers to the verbal narrative text. In principle, there are not too many scenes, because the goal is a compact presentation of conventional classics. The series of scenes is arranged from beginning to end, namely the first scene at the Wirata Palace, the second scene at the Astina Palace, the third scene at the Astina Palace Square, the fourth scene in the middle of the forest, and the fifth scene in the Panggombakan duchy. Diagram 3 shows the plot constructed by the director. Numbers 1-3: *pathet nem* section; numbers 4 and 5: *pathet sanga* sections; and numbers 6 and 7: *pathet manyura* sections. *Pathet nem* section: the scene begins at the Wirata palace, the problem is built through dialogue by highlighting the status of the Pandawas after being freed from the punishment of exile in the forest for twelve years and hiding for one year without knowing where; Kresna was asked by the Pandawas as an

ambassador until he left for the Astina palace (number 1); The storyline is rebuilt on the Astina palace scene by showing a dialogue between the advisors of the Astina Kingdom, King Duryudana, and the knights of Astina with an emergency situation built by the conflict of opinion between Karna and King Salya, then the resolution with the presence of King Kresna and Karna's departure (number 2); the exposition and stimulus are built through Duryudana's dialogue with Kresna, the emergency situation until the climax Duryudana builds resistance with Kresna, and the resolution occurs with the presence of Salya (number 3); the stimulus and urgency are continued with Sangkuni provoking Burisrawa to pull Setyaki from the horse-drawn carriage, the climax occurs, the war between Setyaki and Burisrawa, then Kresna's cessation in the war is continued with Kresna changing his form into *Brahala*, the cessation by Narada (number 4); The *pathet sanga* section of the event is built by the screenwriter (director) with the appearance of the *punakawan* and Bambang Irawan, continued with the cessation and climax, the war between Bambang Irawan and the forest giant (numbers 5 and 6); *Pathet manyura* section: dramatic events are built by the scriptwriter (director) by showing the scene of the Panggombakan duchy, Dewi Kunti imagines the condition of the Pandawas until the arrival of King Karna, there is a stoppage (number 7); Dewi Kunti faints, the climax is after Karna is about to fight the Pandawas, Karna takes his leave and King Kresna comes to help support Dewi Kunti's body (number 8); the story ends with a resolution,

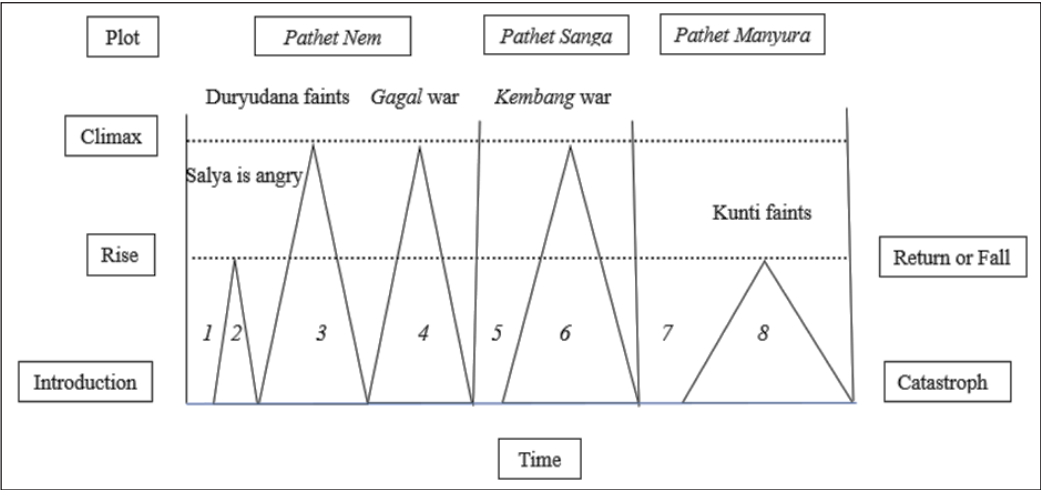


Figure 4. Series of events in the Play KD

namely Kresna's failure as the Pandawa ambassador (number 9).

Freytag's Pyramid (1900), in its implementation in the staging of the *KD* play, experienced a development towards repetition in scene after scene. The pyramid is formed not only in one structure but in several levels. The construction of introduction, rise, and climax is continued with dissolution and resolution in the play in the first part (*pathet nem*), the second part (*pathet sanga*), and the third part (*pathet manyura*). The dramatization process problems through dialogue devices do not always reach the climax phase. The war in the *pathet nem* section is placed by the screenwriter (director) in the *gagal war*, the *pathet sanga* section in the *kembang war*, and there is no climax in the *pathet manyura*. The first scene in the *pathet nem* section is conflict construction or even a climax. Likewise, in the *pathet sanga* section, the appearance of the punakawan and Bambang Irawan, there is no emergency; in the *pathet*

*manyura* section, Dewi Kunti imagines the Pandawas, and there is no emergency or climax. (See Figure 4)

### Setting of Place, Setting of Time, and Setting of Social

The setting built by the screenwriter (director) shows the representation of social reality concerning the natural conditions of Indonesia. The Wirata Kingdom and the Astina Kingdom depict the situation and conditions of the Indonesian state during the golden age of the palace in Indonesia. Places conventionally shown by the screenwriter (director), such as the Wirata Palace, the Astina Palace, the *alun-alun* (a large field in front of or behind the palace), the forest, and the Panggombakan duchy, are vehicles to express the situation and conditions of social reality, namely the relationship between the ruler and his people.

The time setting in the *KD* play is depicted in the first scene, which states

that the chosen play has entered the Udyogaparwa era, the 3rd *parwa* of the Mahabharata epic. The time setting in the narrative text presented throughout the performance describes the events of Kresna's departure from the Wirata palace as the Pandawas' ambassador to his failure in his peace mission as an ambassador. The social setting is built by the screenwriter (director) since the first scene in the Wirata kingdom upholds the values of dharma and knightly heroism; however, it needs to be maintained and fought for through efforts to seek protection from Kresna as the embodiment of the god who preserves and builds the universe. The social background built by the screenwriter (director) in the narrative text depicts the ideal idea of the social reality that is to be achieved, namely, a peaceful and prosperous atmosphere. In the first scene, it is clearly described that the state that exists is guided by virtue, justice, and truth. The setting of place, time, and society in the narrative text of the performance is arranged based on the situation and condition of the kingdom society concerning other kingdoms, the palace outside the palace, and the palace as the city center, with the countryside and mountains that depict the traditions and customs carried out by the Javanese people. The tradition of isolating oneself in a place far from the city to perform asceticism in quiet by the Pandawa knights and their descendants provides direction and an example for the Javanese people. Bambang Irawan is a reference for the Javanese people to carry out various actions to get closer to God.

### **Ethics of Power in Narrative Strategy**

The idea of power is oriented towards Javanese cultural values concerning the relationship between power and knowledge. Refinement is a characteristic of a *priyayi*, and that refinement can be obtained. Refinement can be achieved through traditional means, namely, asceticism and inner discipline. Inner discipline cannot be achieved but is only possible through education in certain forms of special knowledge, and knowledge is the key to power" (Anderson, 1990).

Power as a supernatural reality influences and determines itself. The person's power is only a vessel that contains power but does not determine it. Power is sovereign; its struggle and use are not the responsibility of the individual who contains it. At least, they adjust themselves to accept it through asceticism, meditation, and approaching sacred objects. Conversely, the king's self-interest reduces his ability to accommodate cosmic power within himself. As a natural power, power still determines itself (Suseno 1993).

Anderson (1990) explains that the concept of power in Javanese culture is concrete and homogeneous; the amount is fixed throughout nature and does not question legitimacy. The narrative strategy implemented by the scriptwriter (director) in staging the play *KD* applies a strategy built through narrative devices and available staging elements by 'bringing closer', 'highlighting', 'strengthening' the values (norms) of truth and untruth, justice and injustice, and good and evil framed in the ethics of power. The essence of the



supernatural powers obtained by King Kresna is implemented in human life to stem evil actions, which will disrupt and damage the universe. In the Javanese view, such a human being has been accepted as an effort to get closer and unite with nature and God. The existence of humans, nature, and God are three elements that cannot be separated and always form a unity in a harmonious relationship. Humans practice with concepts, methods, and applications in a quiet space to gain knowledge. Efforts to gain knowledge are based on awareness and understanding of the nature of God. The knowledge obtained is not intended to damage and disrupt humans and the universe, but rather to build and maintain it so that it is in harmony. This effort is a continuous mission for humanity, having a chivalrous character to fight to uphold truth, justice, and virtue on earth. Harmony and respect between fellow human beings are the ideals of the Javanese people, which are always maintained, cared for, and upheld to create harmony in life.

As an idea about the ideals of a collective cultural value system, the ethics of power applied in life are always oriented toward truth, justice, and virtue. Power related to knowledge is the power of truth that continues to be fought for to gain victory over the left forces trying to shake the universe. The mastery of science personally by someone is not arbitrary in utilizing it in life, but must always be oriented towards the values of truth, justice, and virtue. Power is a concrete form that is always related to the entire nature, cannot be felt only externally,

but needs to be understood by using inner powers because of its supernatural nature. This system of ideas becomes a guide and reference for scriptwriters (directors) to compose all elements of narrative and staging so that the right position as a variable of truth, justice, and virtue is placed in a position that always wins the fight. The criteria of humans like Kresna, who have supernatural knowledge, awareness, and understanding of themselves, can become a myth that can direct society. Humans in their status and role as Kresna are always guarded and protected by God. Power in the context of science is always used to maintain harmony in life between one human and another, humans and nature, and humans and God. Kresna's victory over Duryudana in the play *KD* is the victory of truth over untruth.

The narrative strategy places power as an important cultural value. Narrative elements and staging elements work together to create the figure of Kresna as something from the supernatural realm. The real relationship of power is truth, justice, and virtue, which are connected with awareness and understanding of the nature of God, which will become knowledge with the mission of achieving harmony in life between humans and humans, humans and nature, and humans and God (See Figure 5)

Results of the study show that the narrative strategy of the *KD* play is implemented by the scriptwriter (director) to compose a play that meets the actual, relevant, logical, contextual, and quality. The elements of narrative, characters, series of events, setting, time setting, and

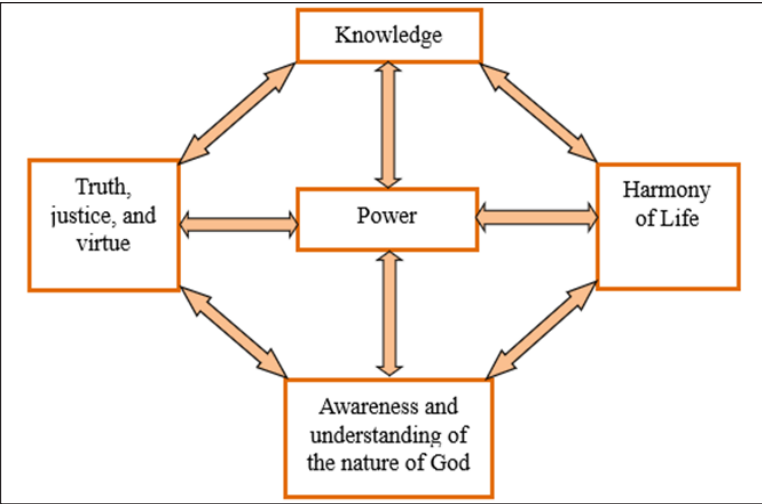


Figure 5. Description of the idea of power in Javanese culture in the context of the Play *KD*

social setting are arranged according to the needs of a certain duration determined according to the general rules of *wayang* performances, namely: *talu* (opening music); Wirata palace scene; Astina palace scene; King Kresna and King Salya scenes at the Astina palace; Astina Palace square; Panggombakan Duchy; closing.

The screenwriter (director) applies narrative strategies based on imagination, intuitive sensitivity, intellectuality, and understanding of cultural codes by adhering to traditional values such as conventions and history in puppetry and myths that develop in Javanese society. The scriptwriter and director combine narrative strategy and staging creativity in placing all elements in the performance to achieve actual, relevant, logical, contextual, and quality criteria.

The narrative strategy of the screenwriter (director) places the *KD* play, containing the ethics of power that originate from Javanese cultural values. Power is obtained by uniting

oneself with the universe in a holy and quiet place so that it is easy to mobilize creativity, feeling, and will toward awareness and understanding of the nature of God that is manifested in the elements throughout the universe. Kresna is a character who has obtained power that originates from supernatural powers. He is the incarnation of the god Wisnu, the ruler of the universe. The truth in Kresna, as a variable of the Pandawas, wins when fighting the falsehood in Duryodhana, as a variable of the Kurawas. The victory of truth over falsehood is a core idea in Javanese culture.

CONCLUSION

The study "Narrative Strategy and Ethics of Power in the *KD* Play: A Review of the Surakarta Style *WW* Performance (Indonesia)" produced several conclusions that can be described as several findings, theoretical implications, and implications

of the findings. Careful observation of the relationship between narrative strategy and ethics of power in the Surakarta style *WW* performance of the *KD* play, this study found answers to the problems raised as follows:

## Findings

Behind the ethics of power about truth that operates and is interwoven in the play *KD*, the storytelling strategy that originates from tradition and convention, as well as history and myth, is operated by the scriptwriter (director) to place and play the power of truth through the narrative construction of the play *KD*. The ethics of the power of truth operate and are interwoven in the storytelling of Kresna as a messenger who conveys knowledge about truth. The scriptwriter's (director's) storytelling strategy positions the character Kresna as the representative of the Pandawas, the manifestation of the God Wisnu, and the essence of the power of truth, justice, and virtue. On the other hand, Duryudana is a Kurawa representative as the essence of untruth, injustice, and unvirtue. Narrative Strategies are oriented towards the power of imagination, intuitive sensitivity, intellectuality, and understanding of cultural codes applied by scriptwriters (directors) to compose literary works aesthetically. Characters and characterization, series of events, setting, time setting, and social setting are narrative elements used by scriptwriters (directors) in composing the ethics of power.

The knowledge possessed by the scriptwriter (director) consists of imagination,

intuitive sensitivity, intellectuality, and understanding of cultural codes. The knowledge related to history and myths, as well as traditions and conventions, tries to accommodate narrative elements completely and comprehensively. The scriptwriter (director) has a wealth of knowledge related to history, myths, traditions, and conventions, trying to make the play in the performing arts meet the criteria of actual, relevant, logical, contextual, and quality. The power depicted by the figure of Kresna shows the importance of thinking to understand truth, justice, and virtue. Power is concrete, widespread, and divided. Every human can obtain: diligently contemplating and meditating in a quiet place to unite with the supernatural world. Kresna's attitude and actions provide a picture to society about the morality of truth, justice, and virtue. Humans strive to create a safe, peaceful, and prosperous world order.

## Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study broadly explain the relationship between narrative strategy and the ethics of power through the study of the *KD* play. Narrative strategy and ethics of power in the context of Javanese culture have provided a theoretical synthesis horizon that is used as an opening for other sciences to approach the object of *wayang* studies in Indonesia. The history of *wayang* concerning religion can be developed in a more complex direction, such as the use of semiotics to study more deeply the meaning of the relationship between the figure of Kresna and the social, cultural, and

political situations as the reality of people's lives and the theory of myths that can be used to explore the relationship between instruments in *wayang* and the belief system that develops in society.

### Implications of Findings

Currently, *wayang* plays have emerged that originate from local wisdom in Java by presenting the figure of Kresna as the focus of the problem. The theme of the puppet play emerged along with the holding of an event, which was adjusted to the local socio-cultural situation, so that it can be used as material for further research related to the figure of Kresna that is oriented towards other styles outside the Surakarta style. This research can be directed to formulate whether the emergence of the figure of Kresna in various styles of *wayang* performances has the same or different characteristics, patterns, structures, and functions. The elements of the performing arts of *sulukan* (the *dalang's* song), *sindenan* (female singer singing), *gending* (composition of tones and rhythms), dance movements, make-up, and fashion accessories are the remaining problems that can be answered and explained in further research.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to express gratitude to Universitas Indonesia for providing the opportunity, motivation, and spiritual support to write an article for the international stage in his field of expertise. He would also like to thank PJSSH for accepting and publishing his article within a processing period of approximately one year.

### REFERENCES

- Abbott, H. Porter. (2002). *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge University Press.
- Anderson, Benedict RO'G. (1990). *Language and Power: Exploring Political Culture in Indonesia*. Cornell University Press.
- Azhari, D. M. (2015). *Eksistensi Wayang Orang: Studi deskriptif eksistensi kelompok Wayang Orang Sriwedari Surakarta di Surakarta* [The existence of Wayang Orang: A descriptive study of the existence of the Sriwedari Surakarta Wayang Orang group in Surakarta]. *AntroUnairdotNet Journal*, 4(2), 175–185.
- Bal, M. (1997). *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of narrative*. University of Toronto Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Approaches* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Sage Publication.
- Darmoko. (2017). *Wayang Kulit Purwa Lakon Semar Mbabar Jatidiri: Sanggit dan wacana kekuasaan Soeharto* [Purwa shadow puppet play Semar Mbabar Jatidiri: Sanggit and Soeharto's discourse on power] [Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Indonesia]. Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia.
- Darmoko. (2020). *Wacana kekuasaan dalam wayang: Sebuah pergulatan sanggit politik dan sanggit estetik dalam wayang kulit purwa lakon Semar Mbabar Jatidiri* [Discourse of power in wayang: A struggle between political sanggit and aesthetic sanggit in the Purwa shadow puppet play Semar Mbabar Jatidiri]. Pusat Dokumentasi Seni Indonesia.
- Freytag, G. (1900). *Technique of the drama: An exposition of dramatic composition and art* (3rd ed.). Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Hersapandi. (1999). *Wayang Wong Sriwedari: Dari seni istana menjadi seni komersial* [Wayang Wong Sriwedari: From palace art to commercial art]. Yayasan Untuk Indonesia.

- Kesenian Wayang Orang (2018, April 23). *Wayang Orang - KRESNA DUTA Bersama Sekar Budaya Nusantara* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GII60WLiIpI>
- Sosič, A. Z. (2022). *A theory of narrative*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Sujarno, S., Budi, N. S., & Nurwanti, Y. S. (2016). *Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandowo: Kajian Tentang Manajemen Seni Pertunjukan [Wayang Orang Ngesti Pandowo (2001-2015): A Study of Performing Arts Management]*. BPNB [Center for the Preservation of Cultural Values].
- Supriyanti, I. N., & Atmadja, B. T. (2021). *Langkah mudah menari Wayang Wong gaya Surakarta* [Easy steps to dance Wayang Wong Surakarta style]. Publishing Agency of the Indonesian Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta.
- Suseno, F. M. (1993). *Etika Jawa: Sebuah analisa falsafi tentang kebijaksanaan hidup Jawa* [Javanese ethics: A philosophical analysis of Javanese life wisdom]. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.