Metaphor in *Sĕrat cariyos ringgit purwa lampahan Dora Wĕca mawi sĕkar macapat* by Raden Mas Panji Arja Suparta

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ABSTRACT

The *Sĕrat cariyos ringgit purwa lampahan Dora Wĕca mawi sĕkar macapat* is an example of a translation of a wayang play into poetry, a popular phenomenon in the late nineteenth century. To create aesthetic effects Raden Mas Panji Arja Suparta, the author of the text, makes ample use of metaphors. Some of these metaphors are well-known literary clichés. Others, which are woven into riddles (*wangsalan*), bring the real world of everyday life in Java vividly into view.

KEYWORDS

Metaphor; wayang; aesthetic effect; *lakon malih-malihan*; *wangsalan*.

INTRODUCTION

In this article I will examine a passage from a poetic version of a leather-puppet (wayang) play, *gagrag Surakarta* (in Surakarta style), that was composed in the late nineteenth century, when rewriting wayang plays as *macapat* poems was very popular. The *Lampahan Dora Wĕca* seems to have been well-known in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The excerpt below is taken from a printed version of the play published in Surakarta in 1925. The *Lampahan*

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1 For manuscripts of *pakĕm* (concise prose summary) and *macapat* versions of the play kept in libraries in Surakarta, Yogyakarta, and Leiden, see Florida (2012), Behrend (1990), and Pigeaud (1968). Carey (2008: 405) says that Dipanagara’s eldest son, Muhamad Ngarip, mentions the wayang play *Dora Wĕca* in his allegorical poem about his father, *Babad Dipanagaran Surya Ngalam*, written sometime in the mid- or late nineteenth century (see Pigeaud 1970: 383).

2 For a detailed summary, including the metre and first line of each canto, of the 1906 edition of Arja Suparta’s poem, see Poerwasoewignja and Wirawangsa (1921: 311-315), where the
Dora Wĕca (or Durawĕca) is a lakon carangan, that is, a newly created wayang play that forms a “branch” (carang) to the sequence of stories in the main repertoire drawn from the Indian epics. There are several types of carangan play, including wahyon (featuring a character who receives a revelation), wejangan (with a character who receives instruction), raben or alap-alapan (about a wedding), lair-lairan (about a birth), murcan (about a character who disappears), riwatan (an exorcism), lucon (humorous incidents), and malih-malihan (about a character who changes form). Sĕrat caryos ringgit purwa lampahan Dora Wĕca mawi sĕkar macapat is a malih-malihan play.

A short synopsis of the play is as follows. Janaka (Arjuna) has disappeared, leaving his wife Sĕmbadra (spelled Sumbadra in our text) at home in the kingdom of Dwarawati mourning his sudden and unexplained departure. In his absence, a holy man named Dora Wĕca (who is in fact Bathara Guru, the supreme deity in the Hindu pantheon, in disguise) arrives and seeks Sĕmbadra’s hand in marriage, waiting patiently in a garden outside the palace until she agrees to receive him. Meanwhile, outraged when they hear the news that Dora Wĕca is intent on marrying their sister, Krĕsna, king of Dwarawati, and his brother Baladewa conceal themselves inside a covered platter of food and have it brought to Dora Wĕca by Krĕsna’s son Samba accompanied by a close ally, Sĕtyaki. When he opens what he thinks is a gift of food from the king, Dora Wĕca is startled to find Krĕsna and Baladewa. They chastise him for his designs on Sĕmbadra, but Dora Wĕca magically transforms them into a pandanus and a white banyan tree respectively. Samba and Sĕtyaki run off. Meanwhile, Srikandhi, accompanied by Sĕmbradra’s son Abimanyu, sets off in search of the vanished Arjuna. After many adventures they find him. Together they return to Dwarawati where Janaka breaks the spell that turned Krĕsna and Baladewa into trees. Janaka confronts Dora Wĕca, who reveals himself as Bathara Guru, chastises Arjuna for running off for so long from home, and returns to heaven.

In his macapat version of this popular wayang play, which was published in Surakarta three times between 1906 and 1925 (see Arja Suparta 1925 and Illustration 1 for the cover of this edition), the author Arja Suparta uses figurative language that provides various aesthetic effects. In my discussion I want to focus on his use of metaphor, a form of figurative language according to Gorys Keraf (2007:15). According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa 1989: 580), metaphor is defined as the use of words or groups of words that are not the true but figurative in meaning based on similarities or comparisons. For instance, Soekarno is referred to as a roaring lion from a podium, feared by the Dutch. The “roaring lion from a podium” is a metaphor which conveys the sense that Soekarno was a great orator with a fluent, powerful speaking style that ignited the people’s
enthusiasm, and the way he spoke on the podium resembled a roaring lion, the king of the jungle. Variation in the use of language, especially figurative language in literature, falls under the rubric of stylistics, which examines a writer’s technique in using elements and rules of language as well as the effects of that use. In other word, stylistics examines the poetic function of language. The aspects of language examined in stylistics include figures of speech, sound and rhyme (Sudjiman 1993: 3; Suwondo 2003: 152).

In my essay I examine both general and specific instances of how metaphor is used. In general, Arja Suparta uses metaphors to symbolize human behaviour as manifested in the characters Dora Wĕca, Sĕmbadra, and Krĕsna. The behaviour of the main characters (Dora Wĕca, Sĕmbadra, Krĕsna) resembles human behaviour in real life. All the characters, stories, conflicts, even the settings in the play are in fact representations of real life. In the story, Dora Wĕca, as his name itself suggests (“tell a lie”), is considered a troublemaker because he had the audacity to propose to Sĕmbadra, who was abandoned by Arjuna, then fought with Krĕsna and defeated him. Yet Dora Wĕca considered Arjuna to have been wrong to leave his wife. And he stood up to Krĕsna’s majesty and power. Notwithstanding the negative sides to his character, Dora Wĕca (who is in fact the all-powerful Bathara Guru) is depicted as a powerful and unswerving figure as he pursues his goal to make Sĕmbadra his own.

I am interested in discussing a passage in the Gambuh metre (7u, 10u, 12i, 8u, 8o) from Canto Four (see Illustration 2 and Poerwasoewignja and Wirawangsa 1921: 312), in which Dora Wĕca pours his heart out to Sĕmbadra’s lady-in-waiting Rarasati, to be interrupted by the arrival of Samba and Sĕtyaki with their little “surprise package” from King Krĕsna.
Illustration 1. Front cover for the 1925 edition of *Sĕrat cariyos ringgit purwa lampahan Dora Wĕca*. (Photograph by the author).
Illustration 2. Page from the 1925 edition showing the beginning of Canto Four (Gambuh). (Photograph by the author).
1. Oh, my princess
you are a sea-water pearl!
Is there no way for you to pity
me who for nearly three months
has been waiting in the garden, frustrated?

2. Why is it, darling,
"stingy with leaves, flower with a purple stem",
that you do not pity the lover who cherishes
you,
who is only suffering and yearning
for you, a ruby just revealed?

3. Day and night
I do nothing but think of you, lovely one,
"water scoop at the well, an animal brave in
the forest”.
Consider me, my princess,
your constantly delirious servant.

4. If, swept off my feet
I receive no cure for my lovesickness
"ashes from the fire, a princess’s hair knot
undone in the morning”,
then truly I won’t recover
and I will die.

5. Whoever is able to look at her,
Dyah Manggada4 is the brilliance in the night. Only, your form surpasses the loveliness of
the moon,
whose radiance is extinguished.
Diamonds and fine jewels can’t compare.

6. “Golden rays of the essence of essences”:
To seize sweetness with you can’t be resisted!
"Black serpent, death of things that have
been done.”
Even the angels of almighty heaven
are only worthy to be your servants.

7. Oh, my ruby, the destination of desire!
My princess, don’t be led astray.
Having stubborn ideas will lead to no good!
Try simply to follow
all my commands.

4 Dyah Manggada is Citrawati.
8. **yĕkti kabĕgyan agung**  
**pira-pira kamulayan pinangguh**  
**ngendraloka janaloka den parĕki**  
**kawibawan kang linuhung**  
**reh satuhune wus condhong**  

8. Indeed, that is a great good fortune!  
Prosperity without limit to be gained!  
In heaven and on earth we’ll draw near to  
the most exalted power and glory,  
because truly, that is our destiny!

9. **ngong petang saka kawruh**  
**caraka kawĕdhar caranipun**  
**ran Sumbadra aksara sa pan neng ngarsi**  
**ganĕp astha nĕptunipun**  
**de Dora Wĕca ran ingong**  

9. I’ve made calculations, based on my  
knowledge,  
revealing the inner meaning of the alphabet  
is the method.  
The name Sumbadra begins with letter “s”.  
In the horoscope that is an even number,  
“eight”.  
As for Dora Wĕca, that’s my name.

10. **aksara da ing ngayun**  
**katĕmu nĕm ganĕp nĕptunipun**  
**dadi sira lan insun padha tan ganjil**  
**saporane runtung-runtung**  

10. The letter “d” at the beginning  
is an even number “six” in the horoscope.  
You and I are both not odd numbers!  
Wherever we go, we will always be  
inseparable,  
truly we make a perfect match,

11. **rukun saindĕngipun**  
**wus mangkono kuwate ing petung**  
**sajĕg bakal nora tau benceng pikir**  
**kinapakna wong wis rukun**  
**ginesehna nora enjoh**  

11. harmonious wherever we are!  
Thus is the power of the calculation!  
Throughout our life we will never disagree.  
Whatever happens, always united!  
Quarrel, never!

12. **layak ngong nora gumun**  
**si Janaka lan sira tan tutug**  
**si Janaka petunge katĕmu ganjil**  
**ja tĕlulas nĕptunipun**  
**mĕsthi bae yen tan condhong**  

12. Naturally, I’m not surprised  
Janaka and you didn’t stay together.  
For Janaka the numerical value is odd.  
“J” is “thirteen” in the horoscope.  
For sure there would be disagreement

13. **dhaup lan pujaningsun**  
**gathet ganĕp yĕkti datan mathuk**  
**nyang ĕndiya bae kalah salah siji**  
**katujune jiwaningsun**  
**kabĕnĕr tan bisa keyok**  

13. if he married my beloved.  
Odd to even doesn’t compute!  
Wherever you might go everything would fail.  
Luckily, my love,  
there is definitely no mistake.

14. **la wong jojodhon ngawur**  
**buwang adat dadak tanpa petung**  
**tuwas bae tiwas nambut silengkrami**  
**beda petung kang wus jumbuh**  
**lir sira iki lan ingong**  

14. Yes, a married couple throws caution to  
the wind  
to ignore custom and act on impulse,  
without a horoscope.  
There’s simply no point to marry!  
It’s different when the numbers match,  
like you and me!
15. **pinēgatna ping satus**

lēt samudra yékta bali kumpul

wus kacētha mring jro rontal iladuni

**titenana ajuringsun**

yen ing tēmbe kongsı linyok

It has been revealed in old manuscripts about knowing the future:

**Watch carefully as I am reduced to dust if ever I go so far as to tell a lie!**

16. **marma mĕngko mas ingsun**

bĕnang pisang waringin ron pingul

dipun nuli biratēn tyas ta prihatin

**ilangling lakinta antuk**

ijol wiku kotos-kotos

**16. Therefore my dear love**

"banana thread, white leaves of the banyan tree."

Hurry and banish sorrow from your heart!

Accept that your husband has vanished and in his place, there’s a brand new one, a holy man!

17. **Ken Rarasati ngrungu**

mencĕp mlengos nabda noleh pungkur

dhuw ewaku nĕmĕn mring si dhawuk iki

ngaku kotos-kotos berut

**mĕsthi bae wingka atos**

**17. Ken Rarasati listened,**

poked out her lower lip in a sneer, looked away and said:

Oh my, how I despise this drab little man, pretending to be someone special. Bullshit!

He’s just a piece of tough old roofing tile.

18. **ngĕndi wingka sing ĕmpuk**

ya mung lagi kojaha si dhawuk

ya ta wau Sang Rĕtna Banon Cinawi

**mring Rarasati dhadhawuh**

bibisik sabdane alon

**18. Where do you find tiles that are tender and tasty?**

Just keep on babbling old man, whatever!

Just at that moment Sang Rĕtna Banon Cinawi gave Rarasati an order, in a low whisper:

19. **heh Rarasati gupuh**

wangsulana Dora Wĕca iku

**nging arahēn supaya enak kang ati**

priye saakal-akalmu

**mrih glis lunga sing ngarsèng ngong**

**19. Psst, be quick, Rarasati,**

give an answer to Dora Wĕca,

make him feel good,

how you do it is up to you, as long as it gets him to depart immediately!

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5 These are well-known texts for making prophecies using ilmu iladuni. The term iladuni is explained in Gericke and Roorda I (1901: 121) with reference to its Arabic etymology (ʻilm ladunī). Ann Kumar (1997: 427 note 107) gives the following definition: “iladuni, presumably a contraction of ‘ilm laduni, knowledge imparted directly by God through mystic intuition, a Sufi concept”. The search function (telusuri) of the website https://www.sastra.org/leksikon yields twenty-six mentions of a petangan (calculation), jangka (prophecy), ngelmu falak (astronomy), and primbon (handbook of astrological knowledge) iladuni in various Javanese texts, including the Sĕrat Cĕnthini and the Babad Tanah Jawi. For manuscripts of the Iladuni text in the Leiden University Library, including one that belonged to Mangkunagara IV (1853-1881) and was later published, see Pigeaud (1970: 250), “iladuni”. There is extensive scholarship on this “bestowed” (ladunī) knowledge.

6 The name of the garden where Dora Wĕca has been waiting and pining for Sĕmbadra is Bata (or banon, Krama for bata) Cinawi, ‘brick wall decorated with flowers’. Sang Rĕtna Bata Cinawi, ‘Her Highness Queen of Rĕtna Cinawi’ is a synonym for Sĕmbadra.
20. My eyes start to hurt if I look too long at someone like this. Rasarati lifted her hands in obeisance then quickly spoke in measured tones to Dora Wëca saying slowly:

21. Gracious me, your honour and holiness, I am conveying the wishes of the princess: From this moment on, your little sister and goddess has no more disobedience in her heart and is mindful of the rules for health and prosperity!

22. When just now she encountered them, your lordship’s words were most appealing to her. From now on she will obey all you desire, submitting to your worship’s commands, resigned to the decrees of the All-Seeing.

23. How could she do otherwise? Mankind must exist with its actions governed by the splendid gods. Every step is a duty carried out. Suddenly it was obvious: It’s all about Duty!

24. At that the holy man Dora Wëca, as he listened to what Miss Larasati was saying, fell over backwards, hit the ground, then regained his seat, laughing and quietly speaking:

25. Well, that’s just excellent, just continuing to be beautiful and obedient, knowing what’s best, able to weigh evil and good! That’s what’s called being a beautiful woman, not refusing to do this and that!

26. In the meantime she has been persuaded to go along. For a moment there I thought she was refusing to! Rasarati gave him a nasty look and replied: But my lord, your Holiness, please try to be patient.
27. The reason is that your love the princess is currently busy with something else, meditating for three months. She’s just finished two months, just a month to go.

28. Once she has finished then anything you want she will obey with all her heart. When the holy man Dora Wĕca heard what Rarasati said he appeared to be deeply disappointed,

29. but he didn’t let it show. The holy man slowly spoke: Never mind, Rarasati, I will wait. Be sure your mistress’s promise doesn’t end up being a lie!

30. So then, farewell! Continue with all the amusements that will please your mistress the princess. Right now I want to meet with the messengers from the king.

31. Samba is the one he sent with Sĕtyaki as his companion. After speaking the holy man stood up and left. Arriving outside he was met by the two knights, ambassadors from the king.

32. He invited them to be seated. Dora Wĕca the holy man spoke and welcomed those who had just arrived: Are both of you who have just arrived well in body and spirit?

33. The two knights sat down showing respect. After they had been welcomed and wished every success, Raden Samba uttered gentle words: With your leave, my lord, your holiness, your two humble servants have come,
34. ngutus rakanta prabu matēdhakkēn dhawuh kang pangestu kaping kalih paduka dipunparingi dhahar tapak asmanipun raka tuwan rama katong

35. munggeng sumbul mas agung nanging agnyanta jēng rama prabu jēng paduka paman dereng den lilani ambuka tutuping sumbul lamun tuwan dĕrèng sagoh

36. ambatang isinipun dhadharan kang neng ironing sumbul sang bagawan Dora Wĕca duk miyarsi mring Dyan Somba aturipun angakak gumuyu moncos

34. we were sent by your elder brother the king to ask that your blessing be bestowed upon us. Secondly, your lordship has been invited to partake of leftover food that has been touched by your elder brother the king.

35. here in the large golden rice platter. But the command of the king is that you, reverend uncle, are not permitted to open the lid of the platter if you have not yet made a promise.

36. to guess its contents, what kind of food is inside the platter. When the holy man Dora Wĕca heard the words offered by Dyan Somba he smiled and let out a guffaw: “Hahaha.”

**Commentary**

Dora Wĕca wonders if Sĕmbadra had the slightest of compassion for him. He has been waiting in the garden for three months (which is the proper waiting period in Islam before asking the hand of a widow in marriage), infatuated with Sĕmbadra and dreaming of her face. In verses 1 and 2, the author uses a metaphorical figure by comparing Sĕmbadra with the words mutyara her laut ‘seawater pearls’ and mirah ‘rubies’. In the next verse, the metaphorical use of images taken from the natural world continues. The phrase kikiring ron sĕkar gagang wulung serves as a metaphor for Sĕmbra’s indifference to his suitor. At the same time, it can be read as a riddle or wangsalan, in which the word kikir, translated here as ‘stingy’, can also mean a file for making something smooth, a meaning which is picked up in the next line in the word mĕlas, ‘pity’: the syllable las, which combined with the word watu, means ‘polishing stone’. Meanwhile, the sĕkar gagang wulung, ‘flower with purple stem’, puts the reader/listener in mind of the word tlasih, ‘basil flower’, which is suggested by the phrase dasih kaswasih. Thus, the whole phrase, kikiring ron sĕkar gagang wulung, plays metaphorically with the idea of Dora Wĕca’s feeling of rejection as well as with associations between flowers, polished rubies and the beautiful princess Sĕmbadra. Here and in the verses that follow, Dora Wĕca’s florid figurative language heightens the reader/listener’s sense of him as a comical character, an ugly old man hopelessly infatuated with a beautiful princess who not only will never reciprocate his feelings for her but is already married to the most glamorous lover of them all, Arjuna. Of course, the humorosity of the scene is enhanced by the fact that the knowledgeable wayang audience already knows the true identity of Dora Wĕca!
In verse 3, the author conveys the infatuation of Dora Wĕca for Sĕmbadra with the phrase siang pantoreng dalu, ‘day and night’, nora liya mung enget wong ayu, ‘I do nothing but think of you, lovely one’. In verse 5 the opposition of day to night will be turned into figurative expressions of Sĕmbadra’s beauty. Here we find figurative language at work in the wangsalan “water scoop at the well, an animal brave in the forest”, where the complementarity of ‘the water scoop’ (gayung) and ‘the well and the brave animal’ (satwa wira) and the forest where he lives anticipates the argument that Dora Wĕca will make in verses 9-11, that he and the princess are a perfect match made in heaven. In verse 3, line four, the words timbang, meaning ‘counterbalance’ or ‘partner’, in timbangana and mong, meaning ‘tiger’, in nglamong answer the riddling hints thrown out by gayung and satwa wira in the wangsalan. In verse 4, another wangsalan, ‘ashes from the fire, a princess’s hair knot undone in the morning’, translates Dora Wĕca’s fear of rejection into vivid metaphors of extinguished and unravelled desire. The word awu is then barely concealed in the phrase nora wurung (‘won’t recover’, like ashes that can never turn into fire) and the answer to the riddle posed by the phrase ukĕling dyah wudhar enjing, ‘a maiden’s hair knot undone in the morning’, is found in the last line of the verse, manira nĕmah layon, ‘and I will die’, where one can hear the word for ‘spouse’, semah.

In verse 5, Sĕmbadra’s beauty is compared to the moon and to diamonds, metaphors that Dora Wĕca says are both transcended and rendered inadequate by their subject. The riddle in verse 6, sirat sarining santun, is answered and unlocked by the words manis, ‘sweet’ and apsari, ‘angels’ in subsequent lines, while the riddle sarpa krĕsna sedaning barang kinardi puts the reader/listener in mind of heaven, which is alluded to in lines 4 and 5, where the word mung suggests dumung, a kind of black snake. In the final wangsalan in the excerpt, “bĕnang pisang waringin ron pingul” (verse 16), two natural images serve as riddles to be unlocked in two words in the following line: sĕrat, meaning ‘fibre’, which is suggested by the word biratĕn and prih (also prehi), a kind of fig tree, clearly visible in the word prihatin. In this final example of the use of wangsalan, as in the earlier examples we have examined, natural objects are not simply metaphors for human attributes and emotions. They become themselves riddles that must be solved through the discovery of even more figurative allusions to the real world in words that seem at first glance unrelated to the metaphoric meaning of the passage.

CONCLUSION

There is more to say about literary language in this passage from Arja Suparta’s poem about the adventures of Dora Wĕca, but my intention has been to focus on the use of figurative language, particularly metaphor. Some of the examples of metaphor in this excerpt are straightforward: Sĕmbadra is compared to pearls, a ruby, the moon. In verse 17, Rarasati compares Dora Wĕca to a piece of roofing tile, an amusing, and decidedly disrespectful, metaphoric designation for a god-in-disguise! Mingka, the derived form of wingka, means ‘stubborn, obstinate’, but also ‘horny’ (said of a woman) (Gericke and Roorda 1901, II: 75).
This perfectly fits the “lustful” character of Dora Wēca. These comparisons (with the exception of the last one) are well-known literary clichés in Javanese literature that do not really bring “everyday life” into view.

Much more vividly evocative of the real world, if no less literary, and much more interesting as instances of Javanese metaphor, are the wangsalan (riddles). In the wangsalan in this excerpt, metaphoric comparisons are based on referents drawn directly from everyday life: common plants, the village well, a cooking fire, the forest and its animals, a woman’s unkempt hair in the morning. These referents are not only used for the purposes of metaphoric comparison but also hidden within other, seemingly unrelated words where they must be uncovered if the riddle is to be solved.\(^7\) Like the mystical, numerological significance of letters of the Javanese alphabet that Dora Wēca invokes in order to persuade Sĕmbadra to marry him, many Javanese words contain hidden meanings – either because some of their letters spell out different words, or because they have synonyms, or because they sound like another word altogether – that wangsalan invite us to discover. In this way, wangsalan greatly enhance the playfulness of figurative language that we find in Javanese metaphors generally, extending the power and range of lexical associations by which language refers to specific sights and sounds of the everyday world. Even highly “literary”, poetic Javanese words, which appear at first sight or hearing to have nothing to do with the sights and sounds of everyday life, may end up resonating with and revealing life’s concrete presence in the world of the poem.

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\(^7\) Wangsalan are generally also well-known clichés in Javanese literature. For example, there are collections of wangsalan (in manuscript as well as published form), in which “solutions” for “literary enigmas” can be looked up. Furthermore, wangsalan seem to be particularly used in romantic episodes.
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