

# MASCULINITY OF WOMEN IN RED COBEX, A COMEDY GENRE

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## Abstract

Visualization in film has great influence in the audience's mind. In this case the cinema viewers who regularly watch a comedy genre unconsciously form a certain perception of an underlying description in gender construction. The description in this particular movie that will be examined is the visualization of gender differences in comedy, especially masculinity on women on Red Cobex the movie produced in 2010. A particular visual construction will create meaning in the audience' mind on certain stereotype over gender issue. Using deductive content analysis the visualization of women that affect the perception of the audience is broken down.

Keyword : cinema, comedy, masculinity, women.

## Abstrak

*Visualisasi dalam film memiliki pengaruh besar dalam pikiran penonton. Penonton film secara tidak sadar membentuk persepsi tertentu terhadap gambaran pokok dalam konstruksi gender. Dalam hal ini gambaran yang akan diteliti dalam film ini adalah perbedaan visualisasi perempuan dalam sinema dengan genre komedi khususnya maskulinitas perempuan dalam film "Red Cobex" yang diproduksi pada tahun 2010. Konstruksi visual tertentu akan menciptakan makna pada pikiran audiens akan membuat konstruksi stereotype tertentu atas gender. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah analisa konten sebagai model untuk menjabarkan perbedaan visualisasi gender yang mempengaruhi persepsi audiens.*

*Kata Kunci : komedi, maskulinitas, perempuan, sinema.*

## INTRODUCTION

Cinema does not create social norms, it does recreate them and stream them into our living rooms by utilizing the social norms of the period to create characters and tell stories (Buikema and Van der Tuin, 2009: 26). Cinema as a medium presents

us with a continuous stream of images almost all of which are deeply familiar in structure and form. It uses codes that are closely related to those by which we perceive reality itself. It seems that it is a natural way of seeing the world. It shows us not our names but our collective selves (Fiske & Hartley, 2003:17).

Nowadays cinema takes a central stage in our culture, which makes it undoubtedly important. It somehow becomes one of the hobbies of the people in our modern world. It is taken for granted like the language we speak, but both cinema and language are complex and vital to an understanding of the way human beings have created their world (Fiske & Hartley, 2003:3-4). In the twenty-first century, the majority of cinema viewers have grown up with technology, and cinema often goes unquestioned because of the sense of familiarity, even when the structure of content is part of people's daily life.

Visualization of women is one of the important issues in cinema. It is considered as a significant tool for the social and economic viability. Female bodies are often sold as a 'commodity' in cinema and media consider this as something commonly accepted. Female bodies are constructed deliberately by the media as a tool in the process of distribution of a product produced by the media. Image of women in a cinema comedy had economic interests; the body becomes a commodity for a comedy like this (Chaplin, 1994:219).

Movies of comedy genre that maintain such values have developed new stereotypes of women, the concepts of sex and gender include sex as identification to distinguish male and female anatomy in biological terms sex that reflect reproductive problems and sexual activities (Suzanne and Wendi, 1997:67).

The representation of women in this comedy genre is opposed to the typically negative or helpless character. In terms of the binary opposition, especially in Indonesia that is widely known live in a patriarchal society, men have such a positive character like being active, civilized, rational, intelligent, while women on the opposite side are stereotyped as passive, close to nature, emotional, less intelligent. Cinema comedy is generally produced to offer an ideal and sexy female body to cater men's fantasies. In *Red Cobex* the movie all the stereotypes relating to women are broken.

## DISCUSSION

### **Masculinity of Woman on *Red Cobex* (2010)**

*Red Cobex*, which was produced in 2010, is a comedy genre movie that stimulates audience to laugh. Hobson found that watching cinema is part of the everyday life of viewers' and many of the comedy's that her respondents enjoyed were transmitted in 'a period of frantic activity in their daily lives (1982: 110). On one side, *Red Cobex* is a comedy genre that is produced to be as an attractive film as possible, but on the other side, this film does not put enough attention to the psychological, sociological, ecological and aesthetic aspects of the society.

In *Red Cobex* there are five women characters: the character of Mama Ana played by Tika Panggabean is the leader of Red Cobex gang, the character of Mbok Bariah played by Sarah Sechan is a woman from Madura, the character of Cik Memey played by Cut Mini Teo is an Indonesian born Chinese woman, the character of Tante Lisa played by Indy Barends) is a woman from Manado, and the character of Yu Halimah played by Aida Nurmalala) is a Javanese woman.

The women characters in *Red Cobex* are portrayed as subordinate (secondary) image due to their dark past. They are actually inmates in prison but they have such strong characters. In the following picture, there are a number of symbols that are questionable because it indicates unusual social norms. It keeps some hidden messages that are often an enigma sign as representation. Comedy cinema usually portrays something normal happening in people's everyday life. On stage setting substantially, the brightly coloured dominant clothing, with perfect makeup, will all be marginalized in due to the dominance of the main actors. *Red Cobex* has a lot of interaction and symbolic meanings of the existing visual. This study will further explores how far the signs and meanings represent stereotypical image of women.





Gambar 2. 5 (five) Main characters of female of *Red Cobex*  
(Courtesy of Starvision)

### Semiotics Analysis of *Red Cobex*

As well as being built into the lives of individuals, cinema is integrated into the households in which they live physically, as a point of focus in the arrangement of one or more rooms, but more importantly, socially, as a locus of attention and social interaction. (Gunter, 1986:54). Cinema is often assigned as every day's priority where interactions take place around those who are watching.

The women who are cast in *Red Cobex* are portrayed as five female gang members of a prison who are put in prison due to different violations. Each of them has their own character. Despite the fact that they are inmates who have to deal with rejection of the society and regarded as third class citizens, they actually are quite powerful as a group. The image on Figure.2 is impressions taken from several episodes in *Red Cobex*.

Character	Denotation of Character	Connotation of Character
Mama Ana	Middle aged woman, the dominant, and masculine.	A leader, with a loud voice and always walks in front of the gals.
Mbok Bariah	Middle aged woman, the follower, talkative	A joker and talks hilariously; walks and talks like a man.
Cut Mini	Middle aged woman, feminine, high pitch voice	A sassy woman and confront like a girl but masters kung fu on the sly
Tante Lisa	Middle aged woman, follower, low pitch voice	A stereotyped-Manadonese woman. Everyone is scared when confronted by her.
Yu Halimah	Middle aged woman, follower, the wiser one	A kind lady but fights like a man.

**Table 1.** Characters and signs

Character	Figure Behaviour	Costume
Mama Ana	Masculine, endomorph, tall, deep voice, Maluku ethnicity	Short curly hair, wearing long jeans pants and t-shirt with jeans vest
Mbok Bariah	Masculine, mesomorph, high pitch voice, Madura ethnicity.	Short straight hair, leather jacket and long jeans pants. Madura's accent
Cut Mini	Feminine, ectomorph, high pitch voice, Aceh	Leopard pattern bodysuit and furry vest. Ponytail and full make-up. Chinese accent
Tante Lisa	Masculine, small, mesomorph, deep voice, Manado ethnicity	Orange bodysuit, wavy short hair, Manado's accent
Yu Halimah	Feminine, small, mesomorph, high pitch voice, Javanese	Painter hat, wavy short hair, t-shirt opened and double shirt inside, Javanese accent

**Table 2.** Mise-en-scene of Red Cobex's characters

The hidden signs of the casts that are represented in the costumes and the behaviours of the characters are all important elements in the *mise-en-scene*. The hidden signs are also called enigma. Each cast represents a particular cultural meaning and diverse features of masculinity.

We can easily find narrative cinema being used by filmmakers in ways that fit this model. Entering the later stage in their lives and getting their images from the cinema/movie's perspective, filmmakers

seek to preserve images of the world as they like to 'remember' it – fundamentally polite, civilized and good humoured. The lighter sitcoms and dramas help support this perspective of the world.

Elements that are obstructed in a cinema in general are visual and sound (audio). These elements that are constructed in a single scene have a complete story with meanings. Visual element of film uses the *mise-en-screen*, which are: setting or background, costumes, the behaviour of actors (character's behaviour), and lighting (Bacher, 1976:36). In this

Femininity	Masculinity
Soft	Hard
Fragile	Tough
Passive	Active
Suits	Mini Skirt
Inferior	Superior

**Table 3.** Mapping of binary opposition

case the exploration of female actors are embedded with their costumes (including make up, hair styles and accessories).

Framework of the public sphere, they retain a challenging relevance as the debates over cinema's role in democracy have indicated particular unusual norm on public perspectives. Grounded in the legacy of the Enlightenment, has favoured such notions as transmission of information, development of knowledge, centrality of dialogs, reflection, and reasoning. Cinema and the contemporary media milieu in general, is in part supportive of this legacy, yet in part presents an obstacle to its realization. (Dahlgren, 2005: 415)

## CONCLUSIONS

Characters in *Red Cobex* (2010) reveal a dominant role of the ideology of patriarchy. This is significant in the body language in the characters. In this case the study of the body of women shows some significant texts in contrast to physical messages. Women's body language is equipped with costumes in order to continuously portray the image of masculinity of women in a comedy cinema. Body language and gesture portray the way they embed the masculinity character.

In the context of the ideological construction of masculinity and femininity in the patriarchal world, there is a potential of slippage between the two orders of meaning as constitutive to the making as subjects.

Cinema shows that the image is often creating a mythical female subordinate. This is especially true for women, which are not always aesthetically pleasing, particularly in comedy movie. In this movie dominant position is represented in the narrative. Although sexist ideology will still exists even without a movie, media will always construct new traditions for people to believe in what they see. Cinema allows people to see a new representation of women; therefore visual images signify the philosophical process in redefining the image of women.

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