Transgender Seeking for Justice: An Analysis of Transgender Images in "Madame X"

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Abstract
Transgender existence is real in many aspects of life for a long time, yet is still controversial in most societies. A film does not only act as a medium for representing life, but also serves as a mirror to reality about transgender. It builds a cultural construction of transgender in the society, as well as distributes and embeds the image in the mind of the society. The reason is to form a simplified and at once complicated stereotype that may limit the transgender rights as human beings.

Unlike many films that put transgender as extras, “Madame X” puts transgender not only as the main character, but also as the main theme of this film. “Madame X” is a film about a transgender who becomes a superhero and defeats a militant and homophobic organization that always terrorizes the transgender community. Madame X is a superhero that is different from most other super heroes, such as Batman that have burly body, or sexy look like Cat Woman. However, Madame X has one thing in common with other super heroes and that is fighting for justice.

This study aims to dissect the image of transgender through a cultural study as an attempt to form a perceptive of the real image of transgender. The result reveals that the image of transgender in the film is able to reduce the stereotype of a transgender, which views a transgender to be weak, unable to fight, can only work in beauty parlor or become prostitute.

Keywords: Transgender, super hero, discrimination, stereotype, image
Introduction

Lately, mass media in Indonesia has caused a stir on the pros and cons of the existence of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender), especially the LGBT’s presence in the educational environment as well as on Indonesian TV. On January 2016, the University of Indonesia banned the LGBT counseling activities organized by the Research Center on Sexuality Studies (SGRC) University of Indonesia. This ban has become viral in various national media and social media and risen a lot of pro and cons arguments of the existence of LGBT groups, to the extent that the Minister of Research and Technology and Higher Education also participated voice. Not long ago, the world of Indonesian’s entertainment also enlivened by the news of some artist's in attempt of doing sexual harassment with the same-sex. This news becomes viral and airs every day on TV stations nationwide, even the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) has to warn television stations nationwide in order to caution against viewing this news as "smelling" LGBT.

Although it is a controversial thing, the presence of LGBT in Indonesia is not a new thing, it often can be seen in the shows of television or films in Indonesia. Soap operas or comedy shows often show transgender characters. This character becomes very attached to the actor and is loved by the public, like the character of a comic group Srimulat, Tessy. There are not many people who know the original name of the character actor Tessy is Kabul Basuki. Most people only know him as Tessy. Film Indonesia also occasionally featuring LGBT in his films, perhaps the most famous one is the movie "Betty Bencong Slebor" starring Benjamin Suaeb in 1978 and the movie "Arisan" (2003) featuring the intimate scenes between characters Sakti (Tora Sudiro) with Nino (Surya Saputra). Interestingly, although the LGBT scene lifted the controversial and widely repudiated in the community, these films are actually liked by the community itself, and even the movie "Arisan" managed to steal five Citra trophies in 2004.

In 2010, “Madame X” directed by Lucky Kuswandi was released. It was a film that told us about LGBT as the major theme. There are not many films in Indonesia that raise transgender issue as the main character as well as its main theme, except "Madame X". In the film of “Madame X”, the main character who is a transgender is made to be a super hero. This film tells the story of a transgender named Adam (Aming) who works in a salon and whose livelihood is threatened by the "sweeping" conducted by a group led by anti-LGBT Kanjeng Storm (Marcell). Adam, who is celebrating his birthday at the time of the raid hits Kanjeng Badai and militant forces who are supposed to have died. HE is thrown and falls into the tub of a pickup truck carrying vegetables. Unfortunately, when Adam regains his consciousness, he gets harassed by the driver of the pickup truck and later leaves him in a quiet side street. Adam is helped by a dance group leader of a former drill sergeant (Roby Tumewu) and his wife who also turns out to be a transsexual (Ria Irawan). Later on, Adam is trained by them to become a superhero to defeat the Kanjeng Badai’s group as to get freedom for transgender people.

The film is considered to be interesting to be analyzed as a research object because it has a rare theme which is about transgender. The film is trying to raise the realities faced by transgender in Indonesia, as well as a satire against marginalized transgender.
The analysis of the image of transgender in the film "Madame X" is expected to obtain stigma, identity, resistance and view on transgender are represented in this film. This Research on transgender is of course not the first, there are many researchers who have conducted a research related to the existence of transgender in Indonesia. Similarly, in the study of the image of transgender in the film "Madame X", this study is not the first, there are at least two other studies of the figure of transgender in this movie, but this study attempts to show a study which is different from the previous studies. This study is not only limited to the analysis using a semiotic approach but also confining to the elaboration of the representation of the characters in this film.

Therefore, this study tries to do an analysis of cultural studies using a broader range and can touch the real society more closely. This study attempts to show resistance through the study conducted by transgender symbols which are displayed visually and audio, as well as to reveal the ideology.

Baker quoted Stuart Hall, declared "cultural studies is a formation diskrusif, which is a set (or formations) ideas, images and practices that provide ways to talk about, providing forms of knowledge and behavior associated with, a topic, social activities or certain regions in the institutional community. Cultural studies formed from a regulated manner of objects and coalesce around concepts, ideas, and issues key ".

Meanwhile, Bennet (in Baker, 2000: 8-9), states that "cultural studies was defined as an interdisciplinary field that selectively take various perspectives from other disciplines to examine the relationship between culture and politics. Bennet states that cultural studies also have enormous interest in various forms of cultural power, which including the gender, race, class, and more. Studying how these forms are interconnected and influence each other."

As a study drawn to culture, this study has the key concepts that are used when performing a cultural studies. Key concepts are: Defining, representation, materialism and non-reductionism, articulation, power, popular culture, the text and the reader, as well as the subjectivity and identity.

The method used in this study is a qualitative text analysis. Qualitative research is research that seeks to explore, describe, explain, and predict events in a social setting. While the tools used to dissect the problem is television codes proposed by John Fiske.

**The Image of Transgender**

Based on the prevailing gender in Indonesian society, there are two identities, male and female. The community provides a distinct identity construction on the gender. For example, a man equals masculine and a woman equals feminine. Each culture has its own way to provide attribution, nature, and roles to men and women. In accordance with gender, humans will give meaning to her identity through a role constructed by society. One identity imposed by society against the division of the sexes is garments, such as men are identified as wearing trousers, while women wear a skirt. Although in modern times, it is a common thing for a woman to wear trousers and still does not eliminate her identity as a woman. However, problems may arise
when men wear skirts. If a man wears a skirt, he will be considered as losing their gender identity and obtain designations transvestites.

In this millennium era, transsexual or transgender characters are often found in the mass media such as movies and television programs. Media represents identities that have already existed in the community. In other words, the media constructs people’s mind with certain identity. Identities that are constructed by the media are then displayed in various forms and views, so that people can consume.

As a media conveyor of reality, a film presents a real social situation. A character is portrayed and made to resemble the real situation in the real world. How a character dresses and behaves is created in such a way that the audience can understand and believe what is desired by the filmmaker. This is also found in the film "Madame X". The film "Madame X" is served not only as a medium for constructing transgender identity that has formed in the community, but through the depiction of a transvestite character as a super hero, the film has tried to deconstruct the transgender image, especially the image of transgender people in Indonesia.

Using the Fiske’s television code, "Madame X" was split into three levels; the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology. The level of reality is a condition where an event is constructed through the media. In the film, the rate is linked to the appearance of reality, environment, gesture, and expression. The level of representation is how the realities describe it. In the movie, the level of reality is associated with a camera, lighting, and music. While at the level of ideology, such events are organized in such conventions ideologically acceptable. The codes of representation associated with social coherence, such as social class, or dominant beliefs that exist in society.

**Reality**

At this level, there are four social codes that appears in the film "Madame X", ie the appearance code, environment code, the code of gesture and expression code. The appearance of the characters in "Madame X" is made in accordance with the reality that can be understood by the audience. The casts are given identity through the costume they are wearing. For example, the role of the army trainers who are wearing army clothes and the role of a religious Kanjeng’s wives who are wearing clothes that covered the body, sort of burqa.

Identification as superhero costumes plays an important role in the construction of superhero identity. It is not just a costume or clothing, but also a mask or veil that is used to identify a superhero. Associated with the representation of female superhero who refer on the behavior and actions of male superhero.

As for identifying the transgender characters, the clothes of course are the same outfit as the woman's identity. The clothes worn by the cast transgender is a women's clothing, such as skirt, tank top, and so forth. However, because the transgender have a different physical appearance with a female lead, then the transgender wearing a long wig colorful as the reinforcing transgender identity. Even when the figure of Adam turns into a super hero, transgender identity is shown through the costume he wears. In this film there is a scene when the character turns into a super hero Adam,
Adam figures is still shown as a figure who has the physical characteristics as male, but dressed as a woman. Adam figures do not have breasts like a woman, but he was wearing super hero costumes have shaped bra top which is identified with the identity of the woman.

Weiss (2005) states that the environment can create a picture of the background theme of the film's title was created. That is because if the environment is not adequate against the background of the film, then the film may not necessarily be a quality film to get people watching it. In the film, Adam figures depicted life in a lower middle class people to work in a small beauty salon. This picture is very acceptable to many people of Indonesia who identified transgender as a beauty salon worker, musician, or prostitutes.

Gesture code shows in figures transgender movement as graceful and coquettish. First is when Adam is dancing. His movement exceeds gracefully more than female characters around him. Next is a code expression, where the expression looks very cute and sometimes excessive. For example when transgender characters get angry, the lips cast will become pique raise. It is an expression that is not visible in the figures of men and the other female character in the film, but can be understood by the audience that what is expressed is an identity for transgender.

**Representation**

Representation term refers to how a person, group, idea, or any opinions displayed through a medium. This representation displays two very important things, whether an individual or group displayed properly, and how such representations are displayed. The word should be above refers to whether a person or a group described as such or impaired. The depiction of disparaging can form an image that can make a person or a group marginalized.

At this level, there are various techniques of shooting with different lighting. Shooting between the figures of Adam and the villain in the film have differences. Adam figures tends to be in quite a long exposure with brighter lighting to give a representation of the difference good and evil characters. It is an interesting thing because the physical appearance of the character Adam is not as attractive as the other characters, but the filmmakers are trying to show a view of the display transgender. Sometimes it is not very interesting to look at, but it has a good character. However, with brighter lighting and longer on the camera's attention, filmmaker is trying to make a good representation of the transgender character.

**Ideology**

At this level, the filmmakers are trying to show the image of transgender correspond to reality. The filmmakers are not only trying to build a good image of the transgender, but also give the audience treats the image of transgender commonly known. In addition to transgender characters are depicted as graceful and dressed like a woman, a dialogue that emerges in the film forms an image of a real transgender. For example the language “sissy salon” is used by the transgender and that can only be understood by them.
Through the performances, the dialogue and the gesture of the transgender, the filmmakers try to present a reality that can be accepted by general public. Besides, the filmmakers are trying to build a new image of the transgender. Transgender is not a group that is weak and marginalized, by making a transgender character as a superhero. An image of a superhero can be seen from the fighting scene of the transgender. He fights fearlessly to give justice for himself, his group and the people around him.

Filmmakers are also trying to encourage people to create a view that transgender can act against evil, and not a group of marginalized, vulnerable groups, or groups that actually vulnerable to prostitution.

In this film, transgender raises as workers in the salon. It becomes attractive later on because in this movie a transgender identity as a salon worker does not receive a denial. Madame X movie makes transgender identity as salon workers increasingly assertive. Transgender usually finds it difficult to get a job. They also cannot rely on the government because the government has not yet approved the status transgender. In the National Identity Card (KTP) there are only two options, Men or Women, and can only be determined from the shape of the genitals, not on their gender. Male and the woman is a dichotomy that has been existing ever since the first human was born.

By making a transgender as a super hero, the filmmakers are trying to construct a new image of transgender. An image of the transgender is not limited by gender ambiguity in the community. In fact, transgender people become part of a community that have important role as to protect justice. It is a construction which is expected to deconstruct transgender imagery that has long been embedded in the community.

Conclusion

The role of super hero has deconstructed the stereotypes that have been formed and made transgender marginalized. Although there are some old stereotypes featured in this film, such as impressions about the discrimination life of a transgender, it is still worth to watch. Moreover, giving some old stereotypes in the film is actually part of the strategy that filmmakers make so the audience can understand the film. By making a super hero transgender, the filmmakers want to deconstruct the stereotypes and discrimination that is built by the dominant culture.

This film is a medium to show a resistance to the dominant culture and ideology that is formed in general public by providing a new picture of transgender. An overview shows that transgender also is a human who has weaknesses and strengths as worthy as men and women.
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