

## Gender Identity Representation in the Film Scene *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* by Garin Nugroho

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and analyze the representation of gender identity in scenes from the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* (My Beautiful Body), by Garin Nugroho, which portrays the life journey of Juno, a Lenggèr dancer from a village who experiences a series of events that shape her gender identity in an unconventional way. This film not only presents a personal story, but also reflects the clash between self-expression and rigid social norms in the context of Indonesian culture. The story setting, which is rich in visual symbols, body gestures, and audio elements, becomes an important area for exploring how gender constructs are formed, negotiated, and contested in a patriarchal social space. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach and analyzes data through Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, which includes three layers of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. Data was obtained from in-depth observation of the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku*, including scene excerpts, dialogue transcripts, and notes on relevant visual and audio cues. Denotation analysis reveals that Juno is often portrayed with feminine attributes and gestures, whether through her costumes, dance, or body language.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the development of modern society, gender identity has become an increasingly complex topic, socially, culturally, and politically. Gender identity is not a static and singular category, but rather a social construct influenced by various factors, including culture, tradition, religion, and the media. Amidst global efforts to recognize the diversity of gender expression, Indonesia, as a country with strong patriarchal cultural roots, still harbors resistance to forms of gender expression that are considered deviant from the dominant norm. In this context, the mass media, especially films, play an important role in shaping, representing, and challenging social constructions of gender.

Language plays a central role in human life, not only as a means of communication, but also as a tool for shaping perspectives and social identity. In the world of education, language not only serves to convey knowledge, but also shapes critical, reflective, and open-minded thinking towards diversity. This is in line with the view that language is a system of meaning that shapes and is shaped by the social environment (Mailani et al., 2022:2).

Language is also a key element in literary works and visual media such as films. Literature and film use language (both verbal and non-verbal) as a medium to construct narratives, convey messages, and represent social realities. In the context of education, literature and film can be used as tools to foster understanding of human values, including issues of identity, culture, and gender.

Film is classified as a type of literary work, because all forms of film presentation are consistent with the features of literary texts and can be explained within a textual framework. The main purpose of watching films is for entertainment. However, films can also have informative, educational, and persuasive functions. Historically, films were a means of mass communication that developed in the late 19th century (Lubis et al., 2023:1757). In the world of education, films have proven to be an effective medium for conveying values, norms, and socio-cultural concepts. As an audio-visual work of art, films not only serve as entertainment but also as educational tools that enrich understanding of various topics, including language and literature. In the context of learning Indonesian, the use of films can help students understand the use of language more broadly and explore the hidden meanings in the dialogues, narratives, and visuals presented.

The film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* (2018), directed by Garin Nugroho, is one of Indonesia's cinematic works that explores the issue of gender identity in depth. The film tells the story of a male *lengger* dancer named Juno who lives in a traditional cultural environment. Through the character of Juno, the film examines how the body and gender expression become an arena of struggle between personal experience and prevailing social norms. The film's uniqueness lies in its rich visual and audio symbolism, as well as its use of powerful body gestures to convey meaning. This creates an opportunity to analyze the film through a semiotic approach, particularly Roland Barthes' theory, which allows for a deeper and more contextual understanding of signs.

Although films are essentially cinematographic works, they can also be positioned as part of literary works. This can be said because films have a narrative structure similar to literary texts, such as plot, characters, setting, theme, and symbols. Films are born from scripts written in text form and produced into audio-visual works. Films can still be read and analyzed as texts through a literary approach. In this context, films become visual texts that contain signs, symbols, and meanings that can be interpreted semiotically. Therefore, this research falls within the realm of literary research, particularly in the study of representation and semiotics. The focus of this study is not on technical aspects of cinematography such as lighting, shooting, or editing, but rather on the meaning and representation of gender identity that is presented in the scenes of the film. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, this study reads the scenes, body gestures, dialogues, and narratives in the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* as a system of signs that reflect social constructions of gender. This research is important because it offers a new reading of film as a cultural text that depicts conflict, tension, and the formation of gender identity in Indonesian society. In addition, this research is also novel because it examines the representation of gender identity in the film in depth using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach.

In the context of the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku*, Barthes' approach can be applied to analyze how visual symbols (such as dialogue) are used. The novelty of this research lies in the increasing public discourse on gender and identity in the digital age, which on the one hand brings awareness of diversity, but on the other hand also gives rise to resistance and discrimination. In this context, research on gender representation in films is an important contribution to opening up a more inclusive and in-depth dialogue on identity and diversity.

Using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, this study attempts to uncover how cultural myths related to gender are formed and disseminated through film media. In semiotics, film is studied as a representation of social reality and moving images that contain many signs and symbols (Prasetya, 2019:41). The researcher uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. Roland Barthes' semiotics is very relevant because Barthes emphasizes the importance of understanding the meaning behind the signs in the text. Roland Barthes' theory consists of denotative, connotative, and myths obtained from examining signifiers and signifieds. The researcher chose denotation, connotation, and myth in this research analysis because they can be used as a reference for signs in this study, namely gender identity in the form of images or dialogue in films. By using this theory, the researcher can see how this film represents gender identity and the social norms that surround it. Based on the above background, the researcher is interested in examining "The Representation of Gender Identity in Scenes from the Film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku*".

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### ***Literature and Film***

Literature and film, despite being presented in different mediums – one in written form and the other in audiovisual form – actually share many fundamental similarities, both structurally and functionally. Both are forms of artistic expression and communication used to convey stories, ideas, emotions, and cultural values to an audience. In terms of narrative structure, both literary works and films have story elements such as characters, plot, setting, theme, point of view, and conflict. This is confirmed by Bordwell and Thompson (2008) in their book *Film Art: An Introduction*, which states that film is essentially a visual narrative and structurally has many similarities with narratives in literary works. This means that films can be viewed as a narrative form that develops stories visually, just as literature develops stories through language.

### ***Gender Identity Representation***

Gender identity does not always correspond to the sex assigned at birth. A person may identify as transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, or with another gender identity that does not fit into the traditional male/female framework. Gender identity is an integral part of a person and plays a major role in shaping their overall identity. Gender identity focuses on how signs and symbols are used to construct, represent, and communicate gender identity in society. Gender is something that cannot be avoided; every human being born into the world is assigned one of two genders: female or male. In the concept of gender, the differences between men and women are based on social and cultural constructs. Socio-cultural characteristics are constantly changing, and gender can change over time (Harahap et al, 2019:69). Gender is the differentiation of roles, functions, and responsibilities between men and women that results from socio-cultural constructs and can change according to the times (Larasati & Novia, 2020:74).

### ***Roland Barthes' Theory of Semiotics***

#### **1. Denotation**

Denotation in Roland Barthes' semiotics refers to the first or basic meaning of a sign, which is the meaning that is immediately apparent, objective, and literal as captured by the senses without additional interpretation or cultural reading. In media studies, denotation is often used to identify the literal meaning of images, texts, or symbols before analyzing them further to a deeper level of meaning.

#### **2. Connotation**

Connotation is a second level of meaning that involves additional interpretation based on cultural, social, and emotional context. Connotative meaning arises from associations formed by experiences, values, and norms that prevail in society. In *Semiotics: The Basics*, it is stated that connotation enriches the meaning of signs because it opens up space for broader and more contextual interpretations. Thus, connotation reflects how signs are socially constructed and interpreted, which cannot be separated from power relations, cultural values, and dominant worldviews in society.

### 3. Myths

In Barthes' context, myths are not fictional stories or legends, but rather a deeper system of meaning that shapes and reinforces the dominant ideology in society. Myths are a form of message or narrative that must be believed to be true but cannot be proven (Septiana, 2019:2). Myths are a way for cultures to explain or understand aspects of reality through symbols that seem natural or normal. In the example of the man in traditional Javanese clothing, the myth that may arise is the idea that Indonesian national identity is closely tied to Javanese culture, or that cultural authenticity can only be found in certain traditions.

### METHODOLOGY

The type of research used in this study is descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena in depth, emphasizing meaning, experience, and the perspectives of subjects in specific social and cultural contexts. In this study, a qualitative approach was used to explore gender identity representations in scenes from the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* through Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. Meanwhile, a descriptive approach was used to systematically and factually describe the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings that emerge in the representation of characters and scenes in the film.

Data can also be in the form of documents created by other parties and found by researchers, such as diaries, audio or visual recordings, official documents, photographs, newspaper articles, and various other forms of information sources. The data source in this study is the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* by Garin Nugroho, but the data analyzed does not cover the entire content of the film. Instead, scenes that are strongly relevant to the formation and representation of the gender identity of the main character, Juno, were selected purposefully.

In the data collection and procurement stage of this analysis, the researcher used documentation techniques, namely written documents in the form of literary works such as films. This documentation technique involved recording and collecting data directly from texts or images as the main documents. The validity of the data in this study uses the theory triangulation technique. Triangulation is a technique for examining the validity of data outside of the data itself.

### RESULTS

#### *Denotation and connotation of visual and audio signs in the film My Beautiful Body*

In the film *My Beautiful Body*, the main character Juno shows an unconventional gender identity construction that differs from the heteronormative views commonly found in Indonesian society. Juno, a man, is portrayed as having a dominant feminine side, which challenges prevailing gender norms. Gender identity construction refers to the process by which a person's gender identity is formed and influenced by social, cultural, and social interaction factors. The formation of the main character Juno's gender identity takes place through a series of traumatic events, alienation, and a search for

identity through body art (dance). The events that shape Juno's gender identity through costume design are as follows:

**1. Costume Design**



**Figure. 1 Costume Design**

Table 1. Denotation, connotation, audio and visual cues in scene 00:69:29

Denotative meaning	Juno practiced dancing wearing traditional dance costumes. Her hand movements were graceful, her body flexible.
Konotative meaning	This scene depicts how Juno's body becomes a medium for articulating a non-masculine gender identity.
Audio and visual signals	Juno was bare-chested, wearing a red shaw on her shoulders and a batik skirt. Traditional gamelan music

Table 1 above shows an icon in the form of an image with the denotation "Juno wearing a dance costume." The connotation is "Scarves and fabrics are socially associated with women's clothing. Soft and flexible movements signify an expression of femininity." The audio and visual cues in the image above indicate the costume design icons that Juno uses.

**2. Character Image**



**Figure. 2 Character Image**

Table 2. Denotation, connotation, audio and visual cues in scene 00:29:04

Denotative meaning	The dance teacher taught Juno a dance that was performed only by two people..
Konotative meaning	The dance teacher had the authority to shape and guide Juno.
Audio and visual signals	Dance teacher: Juno Rene Sek, practice first... this movement is not right yet.  Juno danced while following her teacher's instructions.

Table 2 above contains icons in the form of images with the denotation “Image of the teacher as a loving figure.” The connotation is “the dance teacher gives Juno extra lessons because Juno is not focused during group practice.” The audio-visual cue is Juno's conversation.

### 3. Desires and tastes



**Figure. 3 Desires and tastes**

Tabel 3. Denotasi, konotasi, tanda audio dan visual adegan 00:55:02

Denotative Meaning	Juno and Petinju were spending time together. Petinju put flower earrings and rings on Juno's ears and fingers.
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Konotative Meaning	Juno was happy to be treated kindly and sweetly by Boxer
Audio and visual signals	Melodious music... The sound of romantic music Juno and the Boxer's dialogue Juno: Smile... Boxer: ...

In Table 3 above, there is a visual sign in the form of an icon of boxer putting earrings and rings made of flowers on Juno's ears and fingers. The denotative meaning shows that Juno is spending time with Petinju in an intimate and personal atmosphere. Juno's smiling and calm facial expression shows her feelings of happiness and comfort with Petinju's treatment. The connotative meaning of this scene not only depicts the interaction between the two characters, but also contains a representation of affection and intimacy that goes beyond a normal friendship. Meanwhile, the audio-visual cue is in the form of melancholic music.

**4. Character traits**



**Figure. 4 Character traits**

Table 4. Denotation, connotation, audio and visual cues in scene 00:43:02

Denotative Meaning	Juno walked through the boxing training headquarters to meet his sewing customer.
Konotative Meaning	Juno was embarrassed, scared, or felt unsafe and uncomfortable at the village boxing gym.
Audio and visual signals	No conversation, just quiet music playing in the background.

Table 4 shows a visual icon of Juno walking in a boxing training area while carrying kebaya clothes for her sewing customers. The denotative meaning of this scene shows Juno's activity as a seamstress who is delivering her sewing work to the boxers' headquarters. The connotative meaning of this scene suggests the feelings of discomfort, embarrassment, and fear that Juno feels when she is in a space dominated by symbols of masculinity. Audio cues such as calm music and the absence of conversation reinforce the awkward atmosphere and psychological pressure experienced by Juno. Visual cues such as cautious steps and a downcast face become icons of vulnerability and inner conflict between personal identity and masculine social norms.

*Cultural myths about gender that exist in Indonesian society in the film Kucumbuh Tubuh Indahku (I Kiss My Beautiful Body)*

Garin Nugroho's film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku (My Beautiful Body)* deeply portrays cultural myths about gender that live and operate in Indonesian society, especially in rural Java. This film not only depicts a social reality that suppresses non-normative gender expression, but also highlights how cultural, traditional, and religious narratives create myths that shape society's views on gender and the body. Here are some cultural myths about gender identity that appear in the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku*.

**1. Male masculinity**



**Figure. 5 Male masculinity**

Table 5. Denotation, connotation, audio and visual cues in scene 00:15:45

Denotative Meaning	Juno witnessed firsthand an act of violence by a dance teacher against a male student.
Konotative Meaning	Violence became a way for men to show their superiority.
Cultural myths	Men were associated with strength, dominance, and assertiveness.
Audio and visual signals	Teacher: I'm sitting down, you sit down too!!! The victim's screams of pain Juno: was shocked to see this.

Table 5 contains a visual icon depicting Juno's shock upon witnessing the violence committed by the dance teacher against a male student. The denotative meaning of this image shows the factual situation in which Juno witnessed the murder. Meanwhile, the connotative meaning of this scene shows that in the social environment depicted in the film, violence is a way for men to demonstrate their superiority or power. Masculinity norms are portrayed as rigid and dangerous, where gentleness is considered a weakness and only violence can maintain male dominance.

**2. Real men should not dance**



**Figure. 6 Real men should not dance**

Table 6. Denotation, connotation, audio and visual cues in scene 00:69:02

Denotative Meaning	Juno was seen practicing lengger dance movements in a quiet and peaceful atmosphere.
Konotative Meaning	Lengger dance is associated with femininity.
Cultural myths	There is a myth that dance, especially those that emphasize the softness and beauty of the body.
Audio and visual signals	The quiet sounds of the night echoed.

Table 6 shows a visual icon of Juno practicing the Lengger dance in the quiet of the night. The denotative meaning of this image is that Juno is deeply immersed in the dance movements with full concentration, in a calm and quiet environment. The body movements she is practicing emphasize flexibility, expression, and body aesthetics, which in the Indonesian social context are often associated with femininity. The connotative meaning of this scene illustrates that Juno is entering a space that has traditionally been considered not to be a male domain. Lengger dance in Javanese culture is often associated with softness, grace, and feminine body movements. Therefore, when a man, especially one with body movements like Juno's, enters this realm, there is a stigma that he has stepped outside the boundaries of conventional masculinity.

*Representation of gender identity in scenes from the film Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku (I Kiss Your Beautiful Body)*

**1. Gender Construction**

**a) Abandoned by her father**



**Figure 7. abandoned by her father**

Table 7 Denotation, connotation, myth, audio and visual cues in scene 00:32:57

Denotative meaning	Juno appears to be sleeping alone after being abandoned by her grandmother, indicating a lack of
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	direct parental care.
Connotative meaning	This scene shows Juno's emotional isolation. Juno is emotionally isolated.
Audio and visual signals	Audio cue: Juno's last day living with her aunt, then cut to a scene of Juno as an adult.

In scene 7 Juno is shown sleeping sadly after being abandoned by her grandmother. The denotative meaning of this scene shows Juno sleeping alone, which visually depicts loneliness and the absence of direct parental care. This scene indicates that since childhood, Juno has experienced the loss of family figures who should have been a source of affection and protection. Meanwhile, connotatively, Juno's condition of sleeping alone implies a deep emotional alienation, where she grew up in loneliness and without adequate guidance. The absence of father and mother figures in her life became an important factor in the formation of her identity.

**b) Emotional connection with the boxer**



**Figure. 8 emotional connection with the boxer**

Table 8 Denotation, connotation, myth, audio and visual cues in scene 00:45:29

Denotative meaning	Juno helps a man (Petinju) dry himself after showering, in a quiet atmosphere without direct conversation.
Connotative meaning	This scene shows intimate physical interaction between two men that goes beyond a normal friendship.
Audio and visual signals	Audio description: Juno helps Petinju dry himself after showering.

In scene 8, Juno is involved in an ambiguous relationship with a boxer. This shows body language and sexual expressions that do not conform to the norm. This scene reinforces the theme of physical and

emotional attachment, and deepens the complexity of Juno's gender identity and sexual orientation.

*The role of narrative and characterization of the main character in constructing gender identity in the film Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku*

The role of narrative and characterization of the main character in constructing gender identity in the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* is very significant and deeply structured. The film opens with a reflective narrative from the adult Juno, who recounts her life journey from childhood to adulthood. This narrative technique provides a personal, intimate, and subjective point of view, allowing the audience to understand the process of Juno's identity formation as a complex, painful process of searching for meaning. This narrative also serves as a medium for bridging bodily experiences, memories, and gender expressions, as in Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, where visual and verbal signs mutually shape meaning through the underlying cultural structure.

## DISCUSSION

*Denotation and connotation of visual and audio signs in the film Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku.*

1. Costumes of the Main Characters

The costumes worn by Juno in the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* are *Lengger* dance costumes, a traditional art form originating from the Banyumas region and its surroundings in Central Java. *Lengger* dance is characterized by a combination of masculine and feminine elements, which are clearly seen in the costumes, makeup, and dance movements. Within the framework of Roland Barthes' semiotics, the *Lengger* costume in this film can be interpreted on three levels of meaning. At the denotative level, it is simply a traditional stage costume commonly worn by *Lengger* dancers. At the connotative level, this costume carries associations of femininity, gentleness, and a different aesthetic of the body from the dominant construction of masculinity in Javanese society. At the mythical level, this costume reinforces the ideology that men who wear feminine attributes are outside the "natural" gender norm, and therefore deserve to be stigmatized or viewed as deviants. Interestingly, this film utilizes this myth and then deconstructs it through Juno's narrative, which shows that the boundaries between masculine and feminine are merely social constructs that can be negotiated through art.

*Cultural myths about gender that exist in Indonesian society in the film Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku*

1. Male Masculinity

In the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku*, the concept of male masculinity is critically depicted through the interactions of the main character, Juno, with his social environment. Masculinity here does not simply refer to the physical characteristics or behaviors traditionally associated with men, but also to the social constructs that regulate how a man "should" act and appear. From the beginning of the narrative, the film shows the clash between the hegemonic masculinity embraced by the village community, which is synonymous with physical strength,

assertiveness, and emotional distance, and Juno's graceful, refined, and expressive identity. This clash creates narrative tension while also opening up space for criticism of rigid gender norms.

Hegemonic masculinity in the film is portrayed through supporting male characters, such as the village fighter, the masculine young man who mocks the Lengger dancers, or the absent father figure who remains the standard of masculinity for Juno. The concept of masculinity is brought up by the group of men in Juno's environment who view the art of Lengger dance as something unworthy of real men. This view is reinforced by the use of rough body language, loud voices, and physical activities considered masculine, such as fighting or working hard physically.

### ***Representation of gender identity in scenes from the film Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku***

#### **1. Gender Construction**

In the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku*, gender construction is presented as the result of complex interactions between cultural values, social norms, and personal experiences that shape the identity of the main character, Juno. This film shows that the roles and behaviors attached to men and women are not natural, but rather formed through a long social process. Since childhood, Juno has been faced with the expectation that men must be assertive, strong, and masculine. However, his involvement in Lengger dance opens up space for a different understanding of identity, where graceful movements, physical softness, and artistic expression become an integral part of himself. The village community, family, dance teachers, and peers act as agents who, consciously or unconsciously, instill these gender norms through language, attitudes, and social space arrangements.

The process of gender construction in the film takes place in various arenas, from homes and dance studios to village stages and public streets. In public spaces, social norms function as a mechanism of surveillance that limits bodily expression, while in private spaces Juno is able to express himself more freely. The tension between personal identity and societal expectations is the main source of conflict in the narrative.

### ***The role of narrative and characterization of the main character in constructing gender identity in scenes from the film Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku***

In *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku*, the narrative and characterization of the main character are the main instruments in constructing a complex gender identity. The film's narrative is structured episodically, showing Juno's life journey from childhood, marked by the loss of her father, to adulthood as a Lengger dancer facing social stigma. Each chapter in the story not only drives the plot, but also becomes a piece of experience that shapes her understanding of herself and gender. Juno's characterization is built in detail through body language, costume choices, interactions with other characters, and her emotional responses to important events. The film deliberately positions her as a figure who continues to negotiate between her personal identity and the norms imposed by society.

This process takes place in various spaces that have different social and symbolic meanings. Dance studios and village stages become arenas for self-

expression where Juno can display her feminine and artistic side without immediate judgment, while village streets and markets become spaces of social surveillance that suppress her freedom. Interactions with figures such as her dance teacher, the village head, and her peers are important points in her character development. Her dance teacher provides support and guidance, the village head represents pressure from social authorities, while the general public is often a source of stigma.

Within Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, Juno's narrative at the denotative level shows the chronology of her dynamic life; at the connotative level, it represents the journey of gender identity formation through interaction with the environment; and at the mythical level, her story challenges the belief that gender identities that differ from the norm are unacceptable. By constructing Juno through a series of interrelated events, the film affirms that gender identity is not a fixed category, but rather the result of social construction that can be changed, negotiated, and rearticulated. Through this approach, *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* not only tells the story of a dancer, but also opens up a discourse on the diversity of identities in a society that still strongly holds on to traditional gender myths.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aims to examine how gender identity is represented in Garin Nugroho's film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* (2018) through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. Based on the analysis of visual signs (costumes, body gestures, facial expressions), audio signs (music, dialogue, silence), as well as the film's narrative and characterization of the main characters, a number of important findings were obtained that represent the construction of gender identity as something that is not singular, but rather formed through social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual processes.

First, the representation of gender identity in this film shows that the body is the main arena for the expression and struggle of identity. Juno's body is used as a means of artistic expression through dance, but it also becomes an object of social repression and sexual violence. The body becomes a symbol of the conflict between authentic self-identity and heteronormative and patriarchal social norms. The denotation in the film is apparent in literal elements such as the kebaya, jarik, selendang, or sanggul worn by Juno. However, on a connotative level, these objects symbolize femininity, spirituality, and the symbolic power of the male body expressing its feminine side.

Second, the film's narrative shows Juno's non-linear journey of gender identity transformation. He experiences the loss of his father figure, exploitation by masculine characters, and a search for identity through dance. These experiences influence the formation of his gender identity, which cannot be categorized as binary (masculine or feminine). Juno represents an androgynous identity, which is a mixture of masculine and feminine in one whole body. This identity is constructed through trauma, spirituality, art, and complex interpersonal relationships.

Third, through Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, this film not only conveys the personal narrative of the main character, but also reveals the dominant

cultural myths that govern the concept of “real men.” Myths such as men should not dance, must be strong, should not be gentle, and must be heterosexual are symbolically dismantled in key scenes. This film functions as a cultural text that rejects gender binaries and offers an alternative perspective on the diversity of gender expression in Indonesia.

Fourth, in the context of Indonesian society, which is still steeped in patriarchal norms and religious conservatism, this film presents a counter-narrative to gender normality. Gender identity is not considered something essential or biological, but rather a social construct that can be negotiated. Art, especially lengger dance in the film, becomes a medium of liberation that opens up space to express diversity of bodies and identities authentically.

Thus, the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* not only presents visual and narrative aesthetics, but also functions as a profound social critique of rigid gender norms. Through Barthes' semiotic approach, this film can be understood as a cultural text laden with signs, meanings, and power, reflecting resistance to the oppression of identity and restrictions on bodily expression. This research also affirms that gender identity is a constantly changing field, shaped by bodily experiences, social power, and cultural interpretations.

#### **FURTHER STUDY**

This research was conducted using an in-depth descriptive qualitative approach through analysis of the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku*. Although it underwent a systematic analysis process and referred to Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, there are several limitations that must be acknowledged scientifically in the implementation and results of this research.

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged objectively. First, the main limitation lies in the lack of access to previous studies that specifically examine the representation of gender identity in films using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, especially those from the discipline of Indonesian Language and Literature Education. Most similar studies originate from film, communication, or gender studies, so researchers need to make theoretical adaptations to fit the scientific framework of the study program. Second, the data analyzed in this study is limited to certain scenes in the film *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* that are considered relevant to the construction of the main character's gender identity, not the entire content of the film. This is intended to maintain the focus of the analysis, but at the same time can limit the breadth of meaning of the signs as a whole.

Third, semiotic analysis is subjective because it is highly dependent on the researcher's ability to interpret signs – whether denotatively, connotatively, or mythologically. Therefore, the results of the interpretation in this study are not absolute, but are open to other readings from different perspectives. Finally, this study has not linked gender representation in films to its impact on the audience, because the focus of the study is on the film text as an object, not on audience reception.

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