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Representation Of Women's Body In The Imperfect Film By Ernest Prakarsa

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Abstract

Women's films are here to accommodate female audiences by raising the theme of women's lives as the main story. Since the 1970s until now, women's films have not changed much, the patriarchal ideology that is rooted in and dominates the political economy market still makes women passive objects which are interpreted as marginal people in the order of life. One of the themes raised, for example, talks about the female body as a commodity which is debated, constructed and represented from all perspectives. The film Imperfect by Ernest Prakasa is here to try to break the stigma about the female body, where happiness is not judged by a perfect body

shape. This paper looks at the representation of the female body in the film *Imperfect* through the characters Rara, Neti, Maria, Endah and Prita are described as disproportionate and not ideal. From the narrative point of view, this film clearly describes in detail the form of female body imperfections that cause problems in life. The audience is led to commodify the contents of the spectacle and then draw it into the reality of their lives. In terms of dialogue, the sentences that emphasize the imperfect forms of women's bodies are far more than sentences about the importance of being happy. Even at the end of the film, the main character seems to emphasize his fat body shape as a form of imperfection. In terms of the attributes used, the authors see that some attributes are indeed attached to a woman's body image that is not ideal, namely through make-up, shoes, bags and types of food. The main thing is, the film *Imperfect* failed to break the stigma about the female body that has been prevailing so far. The director's efforts to represent happiness through the shape of a woman's body actually seem to reinforce the stigma that the ideal woman's body is white and slim.

Key words

Representation, Women's Body, Film, Construction

Introduction

The feminism movement has changed since the 1970s where studies of culture, film and media have shifted the attention of feminists to the image for women in the media, especially women's films. Women as the main characters present viewpoints and narratives that revolve around their lives; family, household, romance and emotions and experiences that occurred before an event that changed their lives (Hollows, 2010: 52-53). In essence, women's films exist to accommodate female audiences. But are women's films really produced for?

women's needs? Mary Ann Doane sees female audiences as characterized by the closeness between women as objects in the film and women as subjects on the side of the audience. When female audiences identify themselves with women in the film, they are indirectly invited to witness their own commodification and then seek the image of women in the film to be attached to their own image because women in films are identified as ideal beauty (Doane, 1987: 24)

NSa we link women's bodies in political economy activities, especially in the process of media production (television, films, videos, music, magazines, newspapers, paintings and fashion) where women are commodities in various capitalist entertainment media. In this case, we do not only talk about economic relations but also talk about ideological relations, namely how the use of women's bodies signifies a social relationship that is constructed based on the ideological system. Women become the object of exploitation of the dominant group (men) so that inequality, subordination, marginalization and sexism in gender relations are natural or natural Piliang in (Kopp & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2011). So it is not an exaggeration if we then assume that women in films are objects that are exploited through their bodies.

FissionThe ideal woman is emphasized on physical proportionality, namely body size and shape. The growing stigma confirms that slim women get more respect than fat women (Melliana, 2006: 46). Physically, beauty will be judged from head to toe. In her writing, Indirawati Zahid mentioned that physically beautiful is characterized by a clean white face, thick shiny black hair, a dense plump body or what is commonly called slim, flawless skin without defects, tall and clean

(Zahid, 2020: 32). Another definition states that a beautiful woman must have a smooth and clean body, a slender body, slim, full body, long and blonde hair, lips, eyes, breasts, The definition of beautiful above is in fact described quite well in the mass media. Advertisements, soap operas, magazines, music and films will never be separated from the beautiful concept that has been applied so far. Banin Diar Sukmono in his research stated that there had been exploitation to women through and by the media (television) in the form of cute girl commodities where there is symbolic violence and an emphasis on women to have a slim body (Sukmono, 2012: 14). There are many women's films that portray women's bodies as objects of spectacle, one of which is the film *Imperfect* which premiered in Indonesia on December 19th 2019 directed by Ernest Prakasa. This film is adapted from the book by Meira Anastasia of the same title who is Ernest's own wife¹. So indirectly this film is lifted from the perspective of women who are commodified through the point of view of men.

What is interesting about this film is that it is not only the main character who becomes the object of the sufferer through his body's incompatibility with the existing ideal concept, but several women who are depicted as marginalized people with their physical shortcomings. In addition to Rara as the main character, who is shown with a fat body, dark skin, and curly hair, there is also the figure of Prita with a tomple face, Maria who has frizzy hair, Endah who has unkempt teeth, and Neti who is fat with a big chest. One thing that is typical in films that tell stories about women's bodies is the presence of female characters with ideal bodies as comparisons to other characters who are categorized as not ideal.

Three criticuses who formed a new thought about women and film where their works later became the reference of young critics, namely Claire Johnston, Pam Cook and Laura Mulvey. Cook and Johnston stated that women are an empty sign in films and tend to be defined negatively. Dominant films do not display a distorted image of women but construct and reproduce a patriarchal ideology in which men with masculinity mark activity while women with femininity mark powerlessness and passivity. The presence of women's films actually makes the image of women unnatural because it is compared to the image of women in dominant films (Cook & Johnston in Constance, 1988: 27-8)

Laura Mulvey sees in the world of cinema, women as objects of display and men as active viewers. Women stand as markers in patriarchal culture bound by a symbolic order where men can fantasize and fulfill their obsessions through linguistic mastery of the image of women as meaning bearers, not meaning makers. The film focuses attention on the human form to satisfy curiosity and see

form through the human body and face and the relationship between the human body and the presence of the people around it. Women are seen and presented for a strong visual and erotic impact that connotes being seen. The woman featured in the film has two functions, namely as an erotic object for the characters in the story and as an erotic object for the audience. Thus, women as objects are shown to fulfill the need for gaze and pleasure from men. The beauty of women as objects and screen space merge; women as perfect products with their bodies arranged and fragmented to satisfy men's desires. The world is governed by sexual imbalance, where pleasure in seeing is separated between men in an active position and women in a passive position (Kellner & Durham, 2006: 342-352). Men are always shown as actors who are powerful, independent, rational, intelligent and as decision makers. Women are shown as more irrational, emotional, dependent and emphasize physical beauty more than brain intelligence.

Mary Ann Doane in her book *The Desire to Desire* emphasizes the position of women as audiences in women's films. Women as viewers are seen as closeness between subject and object (women on screen) which leads to a form of narcissism, not voyeurism like men. And therefore, women as the audience will try to identify themselves with the main female character. This is where the cinematic image operates as a mirror that makes female audiences mistakenly recognize themselves so that their subjectivity will be synonymous with its objectification (Doane, 1987: 33). Jackie Stacey sees how women as viewers view other women in the film as a representation of admiration between women. The female audience through a gaze full of admiration sees the female figure being watched as something she recognizes in herself (Stacey in Hollows, 2010: 75). In short, women today are a form of representation of women who are shown in the media they watch.

People who are in an aspect different from the majority will often be shown in binary form as the author wrote above. It seems that they are represented through very contradictory, polarized and binary extremes because they are different (Hall, 1995: 229). Real representation depends on images and signs that already exist and are understood culturally through the function of signs representing what we know from the reality that has been experienced so far. Race and gender in the media are examples of how reception analysis is applied (Hartley, 2010: 265-266). Although in reality the number of women with ideal bodies is not as many as women with bodies that are not ideal, the marginalized group is still women with bodies that do not meet the ideal criteria. The thing is this cannot be separated from the role of the media as an extension of the capitalists for construct the meaning of the ideal body which is identified as a condition of acceptance in society in all aspects of life.

Representation has a considerable influence in the study of culture influencing meaning and language to culture. Representation means using language to convey something or represent something meaningful to others. The meanings produced are then exchanged between members who represent a culture through language, signs and images. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary reveals

two relevant definitions of representation, namely; 1) to represent something is to describe it, to describe it then call it to mind through the imagination in our minds, 2) to represent something means to symbolize it, exemplify and put something into a sentence, for example "the cross represents the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus" (Hall, 1995: 13).

In the process of representation, there are two systems that work; a) a system in which all kinds of objects, events and people are correlated with a set of concepts that we have in our heads because without them it is impossible for us to make sense of the world. Meaning depends on the relationship between objects in the world and a conceptual system that can operate as a system of mental representations. Although each of us interprets the world in a different and unique way, the communication process can still take place because we share the same conceptual map broadly, so the possibility of how we interpret the world can be the same. b) Language as an important point involved in the process of building meaning. Language in this context is every sound, word, the image or object that functions as a sign is then organized with other signs into a system that carries and expresses meaning. There are at least two systems of representation related to the formation of meaning processes in culture; 1) representation allows us to give meaning to the world by building a set of correspondences or chains of equivalence between things, our conceptual map and our concept system, 2) representation depends on trying to build a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs which are then organized into language to represent the concept. This process that connects objects, concepts and signs is called representation. In the end, representation connects language and meaning to culture,

Stuart Hall explains that the term circuit or cultural vortex is a form of research that questions the representation of the practice of social life. The cultural circuit illustrates the relationship between representation and regulation, identity and consumption and production related to how meaning is produced through the depiction of identity and events related to consumption, regulation, meaning production processes and ends with representations in the mass media (Ida, 2014: 49)

RePresentation is the process of producing meaning in our minds through language that is connected with concepts that force us to refer to the real world of fictional objects, people, events or events and imagination. This paper looks at how the form of representation of the female body is tried to be depicted in the film Imperfect through the characters Rara, Maria, Neti, Prita and Endah as women who are described as having non-ideal bodies.

¹<https://www.kompas.com/hype/read/2019/12/19/153415466/sinopsis-film-imperfect-yang-tayang-hari-ini>

Is this film able to break the pattern of the patriarchal work system or does it still display the image of women who are forced to dominate so that it looks unnatural like in women's films in general.

Methods

This research uses qualitative methods with a film analysis approach. Mikos (2013) said that film is a medium of communication, therefore film analysis must be systematically investigated and the structure of film texts, their production and reception conditions, as well as the context of society. In researching a film can be analyzed based on its layers based on the function of the film text structure. According to Mikos (2013) There are 5 levels of Film levels can be analyzed based on their level,

1. Content and representation
2. Narration and dramaturgy
3. Characters and actors
4. Aesthetics and configuration
5. Contexts. Film analysis can be limited to just one level but it can also consider other levels.

The data analyzed in the form of a film entitled *Imperfect* by Erne Prakaza. In this study, researchers tried to explain how the female body representations of the characters of the *Imperfect* film players. This research is limited to the level of content and representation & character and actors because it focuses on the representation of the body of women visualized in the character of the actor in the film.

Result

Women's films that make women the main characters will try to show the potential of women which should be realized and constructed by the female audience themselves. But so far, women's films have in fact failed to break the patriarchal ideology that so strongly dominates the political economy of the capitalists. No matter how great the figure of a woman is shown in women's films, there must always be a man who supports that power that makes it meaningful and worthy of respect through the masculinity that is displayed. The film *200 Pounds Beauty*, for example, shows a male figure as a source of inspiration and motivation for the female lead to perform plastic surgery and change her appearance, or the telenovela drama *Yo Soy Betty, La Fea*, which tells the story of a woman with a terrible appearance who is willing to change her appearance to get the love of the man she dreams of. In the film *Imperfect* there is also the character Dika who is described as a man with a kind heart and sincerely loves Rara regardless of Rara's physical condition. Actor Reza Rahardian who plays the character Dika physically is considered to represent the masculinity and strength of a man who supports the fragility and emotional imbalance of Rara's character in this film.

The narrative of the film *Imperfect* tries to highlight the strength of women throughout the film through the figures of women who are not physically ideal and the bad luck they receive regarding these shortcomings. The character of Rara is described as having the ability in the field of qualified work but has to deal with

physical conditions that do not allow for his career advancement. The character of Neti with a short body with large chest is described as an unsuccessful salon owner and restless because she is not married, Maria's character with frizzy hair has problems because her hair does not match her job at a hijab shop.

The depiction of the characters in Imperfect Film with the problems that arise from the non ideal body shape legitimizes the meaning that develops in everyday life. The emphasis on imperfect body shape becomes a source of problems in the lives of the characters leading the audience to see or draw similarities about what happened in the film into his life. The audience is led to see their physical imperfections and find a match between these shortcomings and the problems of life that are being experienced. Even though at the end of the story, changes in the narrative are found in several characters, for example Neti who later succeeded in her salon because many customers wanted curly hair models to continue to struggle with matchmaking problems or Rara, who succeeded in becoming a Manager in her company after successfully changing her appearance, actually showed unhappiness with her achievements. This shows the unscientific image of a woman and tends to be forced as Cook and Johnston previously stated. The point is whether in ideal or not ideal body shape, women in this film are described as unhappy, because the center of happiness that is constructed lies in the acceptance of himself and the people of the main character's body shape. Happiness becomes a point that depends no longer on how the main character sees himself but more on the views of the people around him. The main character will be faced with a dilemma which shows that the ideal body is the center of happiness and the key to success. Another example of the unscientific image of women in women's films, for example in the film *Shallow Hal*, which displays an unreasonable narrative when a man is hypnotized to see the woman he likes thin, even though the woman is actually very fat, then when the hypnosis is stopped, the main character is told that she is disappointed with her relationship. And the shape of her lover's body even though in the end they remained together.

Through Due to the imperfect body shape, the characters in the film Imperfect are led to share the meaning of life and the problems that arise as a result of these imperfections with female audiences. The same conceptual map even though the cases are different shows the main meaning in this film never running away from body shape as a symbol of success and happiness for women. And the climax of the film which shows Rara's transformation into a beautiful body with an ideal body also seems to confine the audience in the same concept map, namely that an ideal body also does not guarantee happiness and staying in imperfection will also give many problems. The audience is led in circles on the same dilemma. In the end, the point of this narrative brings happiness in the middle of the plot of the film when the character Rara is able to achieve her ideal body shape as an affirmation of the source of women's happiness is body shape ideals.

Even though Even trying to break the stigma about female body shape and happiness, the film Imperfect is actually quite successful in framing the meaning

and constructing the ideal body type as a condition for happiness and success. The depiction of characters who do not have ideal bodies for almost half the duration of the film becomes a point of emphasis which is then accepted and perceived by female audiences into the reality of their lives. The existence of a bond of fate that is felt by the audience and the characters in this film actually has the same interpretation that body shape is one of the reasons for their misfortune and unhappiness. Although the narrative was later changed,

The film *Imperfect* also emphasizes the negative stigma about body shape from the chosen language. The dialogues that are chosen to perpetuate the stigma of the ideal body are far more than the dialogues that try to break the stigma. For example, when Rara's parents disputed the shape of their child's body through sentences that lead to body shaming, it was stated firmly such as "remember your thighs..." or "Actually, in terms of your abilities, you are decent, but because of your appearance, you are unable to compete". The dialogues that represent body shape can also be seen from the sentences spoken by Rara's office colleagues such as "ra.. remember fat, but it's okay with nutrition for pregnant women" or "rara wants to lead us..? How about learning how to dress up first?" The sentences that refer to the rejection of Rara's fat body condition in the world of work are things that the audience can and has felt in their daily lives. The dialogue that was built emphasized the negative stereotypes about the female body shape that developed in society. Rara as the main character represents a woman who has an imperfect body complete with self-doubt, an unattractive appearance and limited access to success just because her body shape is not ideal.

Not only from the surrounding environment, in fact the main character in this film, namely Rara also emphasizes her body shape as an obstacle and serious problem in her life such as "duh... my stomach wants me to cut..." or "I am an item, fat, ugly, I don't choose born with this condition ma..".the sentence is a form of representation of the body that is considered imperfect as a picture of women's unhappiness. Although trying to show a form of confidence and feeling comfortable with her body shape at the beginning of the film, in fact the director also emphasized the discomfort and insecurity of the main character through words of affirmation from Rara about her body shape which was considered not ideal. The audience is led to realize that fat is a form of imperfection or not the ideal body type for women.

The Words choice in each dialogue in fact strengthen and reinforce the stigma about women's bodies so far. At the end of the film, there is very little dialogue that shows breaking through to the stigma, as expressed by Dika, Rara's lover, "teach me to accept your perfection, because all this time I have loved your imperfection." anything..". The sentences that are presented as an effort to break the domination of meaning about the female body in fact also emphasize the existence of imperfection itself. When the figures of Dika and Rara try to emphasize that imperfections exist and deserve acceptance, they actually show and admit that Rara's fat body shape is not the ideal type of a woman. In the end, this effort

actually strengthens the meaning that has been formed previously. Slim, white, tall with straight hair are markers in the concept of the ideal female body.

Dialogues leads to affirmation of character acceptance and recognition of imperfect body shapes can also be seen when Maria and Endah admit their shortcomings to each other "I'm also ashamed if my hair looks like broccoli" the sentence conveyed by Maria feels that frizzy hair is not included in the ideal category of a person. woman. Endah's sentence then also emphasized something that was not much different from "you are delicious, maria's curly hair... I.. curly teeth" emphasizing this non-ideal body shape is then drawn on by the audience to be interpreted together, thus strengthening the stigma of shape. existing ideal body. Rara, Maria, Endah, Neti and Prita are described as women who are not comfortable with their body shape.

The presentation of the female body shape in the film Imperfect is not only seen in the narration or the language used. The author sees that in the selection of costumes or appearances, the characters depicted as having imperfect physiques also support and strengthen their 1st sister weakness women here. The attributes that are chosen to strengthen the character of the characters depicted as imperfect again become a means of affirmation of how ideal and non-ideal women are constructed. At the beginning of the film, Rara's character is shown with a choice of clothes that actually accentuate her fat body shape, hairdo that looks unkempt and less well-groomed and face that does not make-up. Rara's appearance at the beginning of the film was deliberately prepared to support Rara's drastic change at the end of the film as shown in the image below:



Figure 1. The Transformation of Rara's Character in Imperfect
source : Internet

Neti who has a big breast and short body in tight dress, mini-clothes that accentuate her large thighs and large chest. The presence of the characters Neti,

Maria, Endah and Prita is in fact present as material to please the audience by showing their bodies that are not ideal supported by their nature and behavior which is considered to be "bolt" or shallow. They are presented as comfortable as joke material to emphasize to the audience that a non-ideal body is the best laughing stock. Neti, Maria, Endah and Prita are shown as women who admire the male main character, the handsome and masculine Dika. In some dialogues, even those who are described as liking Dika will be made a laughing stock because they are considered imaginative or just "lucky" and the proposition of a face that is considered beautiful can only be limited to imagining to get the attention and love of a handsome man like Dika.

Representation of body shape through clothes and make-up, other attributes that are also attached to ideal body shape and non-ideal body shape in women are also very clearly described. These attributes can be physical or attributes that are attached to characters to emphasize a meaning. The physical attributes in the film Imperfect that support the concept of ideal and non-ideal bodies for women can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Comparison of Supporting Attributes of Female Body Shape in Film Imperfect

	Attribute pe	Ideal Body	Unideal Body
1.	Make Up	Full make-up as beautiful face concept booster.	Non make-up as reinforce the concept of a face that is considered unattractive
2.	Shoes	High heels identify an ideal woman	Sneakers (sports) Will identify unideal woman's.
3.	Bag	Shoulder Bag considered to support the ideal female body shape.	Backpack deemed suitable for big women (not ideal)
4.	Food	Veggies and Fruit (salad and juices) are considered as the main points that make up the body to be ideal	Chocolate, porridge, pizza, Padang Cuisine, grilled chicken and rendang are considered as the main points that make the body not ideal.
5.	Place to eat	restaurant or Café as a place to eat for girls with ideal body	The place on the side of street is represented as the location of eating for unideal body woman
source: processed by the author.			

Makeup in this film is described as an attribute that is attached to women with ideal bodies, characters with ideal body appearances equipped with full make-up that support the beauty of a woman. Meanwhile, female characters with non-ideal body shapes are shown without make-up to emphasize their imperfections.

In addition to make-up, we can see that the shoe selection is also part of the attributes that are emphasized in this film, such as when Rara's office friend, who is described as a career woman with a perfect body shape, quipped about the shoes she was wearing, "Ra... your shoes (shoes) are good...but try wearing heels ra.. definitely better" this will also be strengthened by Rara herself when she has got the ideal body to her friend who looks tomboy "yes... try wearing heels, it's also good for body balance". These sentences emphasize that heels are for women with ideal bodies, while sneakers are for women with not ideal bodies. High heels in this film are symbolized as a symbol of women's beauty and confidence, that women with ideal bodies will be seen from the type of shoes they wear.

In the beginning of the film, we can see Rara choosing a food menu that is categorized for women with non-ideal bodies, namely chicken porridge, rendang, pizza and roadside food which are considered unhealthy but when Rara's body shape changes to ideal, it is shown that Rara consumes fruit, juices, , salads and fine dining. Two meanings that can be taken in this picture are social class and the right type of food for a woman's body shape. Women with ideal body shapes are described from the type of food chosen and where to eat which will determine their social class in society. Healthy foods are considered to represent a woman's body shape, the healthier the food that is put into her body, the smaller the portion, the more ideal the woman's body shape is.

The presentation of women in the film *Imperfect* still confirms the negative stigma and stereotypes that have been developing in society. That women are considered to rely on beauty through the ideal body shape that is presented to satisfy the desires of men. Women's abilities are not seen proportionally as in this film which exposes women's bodies only focusing on the ability of the main character to change his appearance from not ideal to ideal. In the end, female actors are not judged on their abilities but on the proposition of their faces and body shapes. The main goal is of course to attract as many viewers as possible which means big profits for producers and directors as well as to satisfy men's desire for women with beautiful faces and beautiful bodies.

Finally the representation of women shown in women's films is the image of women in the eyes of men. The disclosure of the ideal body type in the film *Imperfect* in the end unknowingly discriminates against women who do not meet the ideal criteria such as tan skin, curly hair, short and fat bodies. Although we all realize that the physical characteristics of Indonesian women, who are generally brown skinned, are finally forced to dream of pure white skin through beautiful representations of the media version. Through the attributes displayed to represent each female body shape in this film, the director emphasized that there are some products that are right for women with ideal bodies, and some are suitable for women with non-ideal body shapes.

Woman seem to be constantly focused on body shape over their abilities. Films will continue to use and choose women with ideal body shapes as objects that are consumed by the audience, apart from being a symbol of beauty, films will

always represent a slim, tall, white body with beautiful hair as the ideal type that women desire. Male audiences will continue to be satisfied with their desires and female audiences will continue to be fed the ideal body shape as an achievement in their lives.

Conclusion

At least there are several forms of representation on the female body in Ernest Prakasa's film *Imperfect*. This paper looks at the form of representation of the female body of the characters Rara, Neti, Endah, Maria and Prita through narration, dialogue and attributes used by marginalized characters. The narrative of the film *Imperfect* tells of women who have not ideal body shapes and the problems caused by these imperfections become the strength of the story in this film, even when the narrative changes when the main character will change appearances into ideals has in fact failed to break the stigma about the female body and the ideal concept in society. In terms of dialogue, most of the film's duration shows or displays sentences that emphasize that the imperfection of the female body is a problem. The characters depicted as having imperfect body shapes also ultimately confirm these imperfections. This further emphasizes that the perfect body is a slim body, white, straight hair and wearing make-up. The attributes used in the film also strengthen the representation of ideal and non-ideal female bodies. These attributes include the use of make-up, types of shoes and types of bags as well as choices of food and places to eat as an affirmation of social class for women with ideal and not ideal bodies. Finally, the film *Imperfect*, which was based on a book written by a woman, failed to be represented by a male director. The dominance of men as powerful figures by prioritizing their masculinity side is also still very strong, and women are present as shallow figures emotionally and in terms of thinking that must be supported by dominant male power. This film represents the female body as a commodity that is consumed by both female and male audiences. Female audiences will believe in the female body as a source of happiness, so they strive to meet the criteria and standards set for happiness. Male audiences will consume women's bodies as a means of satisfying their sexual needs and desires. A woman's body that is considered not ideal will be made a laughing stock and an ideal woman's body will be worshiped. In the end, women in the film *Imperfect* are only carriers of meaning and meaning that has actually been formed by the director and audience from the point of view of patriarchal ideology.

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