



Musamus Journal of Language and Literature, Vol. 07. No. 02 (2024), pp. 326–331  
Received (August 2024) / Revised (December 2024) / Accepted (December 2024)

**Musamus Journal of Language and Literature**

DOI Prefix 10.35724 by Crossref

P-ISSN: 2622-7843 | E-ISSN: 2622-7894

<https://ejournal.unmus.ac.id/index.php/lite>

## **Semiotic Analysis of Gender Inequality Representation in the 2023 Movie *Gadis Kretek***

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### **Abstract**

This research discusses the gender gap in the movie *Gadis Kretek* episode 1 where women are implied as second divine beings. In this study, the character Jeng Yah experiences this discrimination. This research methodology uses descriptive qualitative research method using Charles S. Pierce semiotic analysis and gender approach. The text features three scenes depicting a woman's struggle in public, lack of confidence in public, and a caged bird. The first scene shows a woman smoking at a banquet, and the second scene shows a closed blue door, emphasizing restraint and limitation. The third scene depicts a bird in a cage, symbolizing powerlessness and cultural limitations. This article analyses the film *Gadis Kretek* using semiotic analysis and gender and feminist analysis. It shows how cigarettes are associated with men and masculinity, and how women are discriminated against in the public sphere. The film encourages women to think of themselves as secondary and shows how sexism prevents women from achieving their.

**Keywords:** Gender, *Gadis Kretek*, Women, Semiotic analysis, Charles S. Pierce.

### **1. Introduction**

Because women are God's creatures, women have two sides. First, woman is beauty. Men can be infatuated by a woman because of her charm, and it is not uncommon for them to be willing to do anything for a woman. On the other hand, women are perceived as weak. Because of this situation, some men use this opportunity to take advantage of women, so men often only see women as objects.

There are so many perspectives in society about women. These opinions have led to the marginalization of women. Fakihi (2004) stated that most women are still considered as second-class creatures of God, for example, women do not need to study a lot of knowledge because they will also work in the kitchen.

Patriarchal culture in Indonesia towards women is still strongly attached to thinking in society, where there is still a lack of real gender equality in everyday life. This view assumes that women who smoke are considered bad in society. Conversely, if men like bright colors, such as pink, they will be considered strange and feminine. Men are also not allowed to take care of themselves, from cosmetics to body care. Men are even forbidden to cry in patriarchal cultures (Hacker, 2018).

Cigarettes have been known for a long time in Indonesia before the era of independence. In that era cigarettes were just cigarettes, objects made of tobacco and other materials, nothing to do with morals and ethics even though the consumer was a woman because at that time social construction did not look at gender. With the development of the over time, the social construction of cigarettes has changed to have social identification and become an object that is synonymous with men. Moreover, with the existence of mass media where the thing that is displayed for cigarettes in the mass media is a man without any negative judgment about it.

Women are specified into two types, namely good and bad into titles in social and media construction, as shown by Santi in Susilo & Haezer (2017). In everyday life, social views and the media have become accustomed to the view of prostitutes as synonymous with men according to Nangoi & Daeli (2023), in every "An Ethnographic Study on Stigmatization and Conformity of Women Smokers in a Patriarchal Culture" there are still many cases where smoking is associated with men and masculinity. Therefore, female smoking is considered an "offense" or at least considered "naughty" by most of society. This discrimination against female smokers may be a result of the enduring patriarchal culture in Indonesia. This negative stigma is reinforced by the portrayal of female smokers in the legend of *Roro Mendut* and Indonesian movies.

The perception of female smokers as negative figures springs not solely from the fabric of everyday society, but also from various media industries such as movies. The negative stigma of women smoking is linked to how women were portrayed as naughty, even immoral, in 90s movies. Female characters who smoke are similar to unruly teenagers and even women who work as commercial sex workers (Christy, 2012). On the other hand, men smokers are considered masculine, even Christy added that men who wear Muslim clothing still look natural if they smoke in addition, the negative stigma that is held against women who smoke has been inherent since the beginning (Christy, 2012).

Issues about women are always interesting topics to be discussed in depth. All of these things are focused on the image of women from various aspects of their lives. Some of the self-images portrayed by women also prove that women are not only individuals but also social beings who need other people in their lives. The quality of women is a broad issue for writers of literary works. With the help of literary language, writers are able to incorporate imagery into aesthetic works, appreciating the qualities of women in the context of life.

The author is a figure who builds the image of a woman in his work. The image of a woman is a visual portrait in the form of a picture that the general public has of an individual or an impression of a mental picture. In addition, the image of a woman is also a visual evoked by words or sentences that appear from her role or function in people's lives described by the characters in literary stories (Aurelia, 2016).

There have been many works of literature that address women and social construction. One such work is Ratih Kumala's novel *Gadis Kretek* which has been adapted into a movie. In the captivating "Gadis Kretek" series, a myriad of pivotal characters graces the screen, with Jeng Yah standing out as a prominent female figure who frequently steals the spotlight; she is the beloved daughter of Roemmaisa, her mother, and Idroes Moria, her father. At the core of the tale lies Lebas, the youngest heir to the illustrious Djagad Radja Kretek empire, whose journey weaves the narrative

together. The enigmatic figure destined to turn Jeng Yah's world askew is Radja, a vagabond whose presence commands Jeng Yah's full focus this charming drifter, who harbors feelings for her, is rumored to have aspirations of uniting in matrimony with Jeng Yah. Lebas is asked by her elderly father to find Jeng Yah. The search for Jeng Yah brings Lebas to know the story of her father's past. The television series is set in the 2000s, where the character Lebas searches for Jeng Yah. The tragic story and romance between Jeng Yah and Radja are set amidst the clove factory movement in the early independence of the Republic of Indonesia.

Considering the above, the researcher decided to use the movie series "*Gadis Kretek*" as a medium to convey gender representation. The researcher will look at how this series portrays gender in its delivery. We concentrate on the main character known as "*Gadis Kretek*", who is the object of gender meaning in the context of the kretek industry in Indonesia in the 60s. We also want to know how the movie can reflect culture and history to influence the representation of gender in a particular context. How the movie's narrative and visuals reflect patriarchal values or gender equality. The research investigates how the use of semiotic symbols and codes depict gender, as well as how much gender representation is seen in the movie series.

## **2. Methods**

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, which collects data in the form of pictures or words rather than numbers (Emzir, 2014). Qualitative methods are often used in social research, psychology, education, and health sciences, where an in-depth understanding of the subject's experience and context is essential. Qualitative research typically involves collecting data of a non-numerical nature and using data analysis techniques such as thematic analysis, which allows researchers to identify themes or patterns that emerge from the data collected (Rachmad et al., 2024).

This research uses a descriptive method in a qualitative approach because it wants the object of research to be described or presented systematically, accurately, and factually on four sample photos from the movie "*Gadis Kretek*" 2023 episode 1. The main focus of this research is Charles S. Pierce's semiotic analysis, which distinguishes three types of signs: icons, indices, and symbols.

In Zahrotun's article, Charles S. Peirce explains that semiotic theory categorizes signs into three types: icons, which represent objects through resemblance; Objects, which demonstrate cause-and-effect relationships; and symbols, which signify concepts through convention (Zahrotun, 2024).

Therefore, this research will study three types of signs in the movie "*Gadis Kretek Episode 1*" to understand the messages and meanings conveyed through these signs. This study raises the series "*Gadis Kretek*" by depicting gender and sexuality using a descriptive method to describe the image of Women in the movie "*Gadis Kretek*" 2023 by Kamila Andini and Ifa Isfansyah.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are presented using a gender analysis point of view, based on the research objectives: forms of gender injustice in the movie "*Gadis Kretek*" episode 1, in the female character Jeng Yah. The following are the results of data analysis and research findings of the movie "*Gadis Kretek*" based on Charles Sanders Pierce's semiotic theory approach.

#### 3.1. : Research Results and Discussion Scene 1 and 2



picture 1 scene 1 "00:50"



picture 2 scene 1 "01:20"

Signs: picture 1 scene 1 "00:50" and picture 2 scene 2 "01:20".

Objects: In scene 1, there is a woman walking in the banquet, a man smoking in the room, and talking to people around him and in scene 2, there is a woman smoking in the room.

Symbols: In this scene there is a message about women who are difficult to be free in public places, women who smoke a lot do it only at home in private and privacy to maintain the views of others (Nangoi & Daeli, 2023).

#### 3.2. : Research Results and Discussion Scene 3



Picture 3 scene 3 "09:42"

Signs: picture 3 scene 3 "09:42".

Objects: In scene 3 at minute "09:42" there is a scene showing a blue door that is closed.

Symbols: the door in this scene presents a woman who is still restrained and the lack of trust of women in the public sphere such as politics, education, and other responsibilities. The community typically exhibits a heightened degree of confidence in males who assume leadership positions in contrast to females (Piatak et al., 2022).

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3.3. : *Research Results and Discussion Scene 4*



Picture 4 scene 4 “18:57”

Signs: picture 4 scene 4 “18:57”.

Objects: In scene 4 at the minute "18:57" there is a scene showing a bird in a cage being sold at the market.

Symbols: The bird in this movie is confined within an enclosure that is marketed as a decorative avian. The emblem of liberation, autonomy, and self-assurance is a bird that soars unrestrained in the wilderness. Nevertheless, ensnaring a bird within a cage can signify a deprivation of liberty just like a woman who is merely imprisoned in a chamber and solely engages in tasks such as attending to her spouse, but the avian in this narrative portrays Jeng Yah who possesses no freedom in public spaces and only must follow all the wishes of her family. Caged birds can also indicate helplessness, limitation, and feeling trapped (Khanal, 2022). It can be used to depict the state of someone who feels their life is constrained or they do not have the freedom to express themselves.

Releasing birds from cages can also symbolize the granting of freedom and respect for life in some cultural contexts. This can be seen in traditions that forbid the release of birds as a sign of respect for nature. Therefore, the caged bird can be considered as a semiotic representation of various meanings related to the psychological condition, freedom, and limitations of individuals who feel confined.

#### 4. Conclusions

In this article, conclusions can be drawn by using semiotic analysis on the movie "*Gadis Kretek*" with gender and feminism analysis. Cigarettes are still identified with men and masculinity. Therefore, if there are women who smoke, it is considered an anomaly in society, discrimination against women in the public sphere can be seen from a cigarette which contains patriarchy. The movie "*Gadis Kretek*" illustrates how women get discriminated in the public sphere, even the ideals and rights of women themselves are confined and there is no freedom. Women who enjoy cigarettes alone have to hide in order to maintain their image in the public sphere, this shows discrimination against women, it encourages women to head discrimination as second creatures. Therefore, this movie illustrates how gender discrimination hinders women's accomplishments and their lack of freedom in public settings, where they are compelled to constantly uphold their public images under social norms that are rife with gender inequality because

women are perceived as weak creatures while men are perceived as strong and there is no prohibition for men to express themselves in public spaces.

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