

Representation and Commodification of Female Body in the Indonesian Post Reform Horror Movies

Verena Vinandia Larasati & Abdul Wahid

Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya

laurenciaverena@gmail.com, wabidjumai@ub.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the representation and commodification practices of female bodies in the Indonesian horror films produced in the Post Reform Era. Three horror movies, i.e. *Terowongan Casablanca* (2007), *Tali Pocong Perawan* (2008), and *Air Terjun Pengantin* (2009), have been analyzed with qualitative textual analysis. This study finds that the female body is commodified in the movies through the costumes that show clearly their sexy bodies, the actions and gestures that demonstrate their seductive lust, and the setting of scenes that emphasize their sexual desires. These representations are closely related with the producers backgrounds and track records in the way that they are used to producing horror movies that mostly using sexy woman as lead actress.

Keywords: *representation, commodification, Indonesian horror movies, female body.*

Introduction

Indonesian horror movie has evolving dynamics in accordance with Indonesian filmmakers' creativity and the diversity of audiences.

Heider (Rusdiati, 2011) stated that Indonesian horror movies in New Order era can not be separated from three things: comedy, sex, and religion. Unlike religion thing, comedy and sex still be a manstay for Indonesian horror movie today. For example, there are horror-comedy movies in Indonesia such as *Ada Hantu di Sekolah* (2005) and *Hantunya kok Beneran* (2008). In addition, there are some horror movies that tend to exploited women's body

and erotical scene, such as : *Terowongan Casablanca* (2006), *Tiren* (2008), *Tali Pocong Perawan* (2008), *Hantu Jamu Gendong* (2009), *Air Terjun Pengantin* (2010), dan *Arwab Goyang Karawang* (2011).

There are some researches about Indonesian movies, especially about Indonesian horror movies. Heeren (2012) discuss about the flow of Indonesian horror movie in New Order, Reformation, and Post – Reform era in general. M. Yoesoef (2013) tried to reveal how Indonesian horror movie attractiveness from audience perspective. Pratama (2014) studied on woman body exploitation.

But, none of those analyze about the correlation between commodification practice with Indonesian horror movies in post – reform era in particular way. Thus, this study try to problematize how commodification in Indonesian Horror Movie in post-reform era. To make this research more specifif, it analyzed Indonesian horror movies that used woman as main role and gained more than 1.000.000 audiences.

Literature Review

Indonesian first movie is *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* that made in 1926 and directed by G. Kruger and L. Heuveldrop. As time goes by, with the development of technology and the development of human resources, Indonesian movie makers start to make another movie. If *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* can be categorized as silent movie, in 1931 Indonesian movie makers start to make movie with voices and sounds, and the title of that movie is *Boenga Roos dari Tcikembang* that produced by The Teng Cun. After *Boenga Roos dari Tcikembang*, The Teng Cun started to produced movie in another genre. In 1934, The Teng Cun produced the very first Indonesian first horror movie and the title is *Doea Siloeman Oeler Poeti en Item*.

According to Rusdiati (2011), there are two more movies that are referred as first horror movies in Indonesia namely *Tengkorak Hidoep* (1941) and *Lisa* (1971). Both of them have become the basic of Indonesian movie genre. *Tengkorak Hidoep* (1941) featured demonic horror, a monster resurrected and wanted to revenge to the reincarnation of he person that killed him. Meanwhile, *Lisa* (1971) intended to horror of personality (psychopath).

Furthermore, there are *Ratu Pantai Selatan* (1980) movie and *Ratu Ilmu Hitam* (1981). But unfortunately, in the next following year, the number of Indonesian horror movie

production has been decreased, this is in line with the slowing down of Indonesian movie industry at that time.

However, in the 2000s era, horror movies start a new era. *Jelangkung* (2001) managed to give different touch in Indonesian horror movie production. Movies in new era began to invade audiences in Indonesia. In addition, the story does not depend anymore to rural stories and place. Most of Indonesian movie in 2000s era presents urban characters and urban places, which had no been used by previous Indonesian horror movies in previous era.

Horror movie is one of movie genre that presents scary, thrilling, and chilling things. Main concept or a horror movie is basically terrorizing the audience through various frightening scenes. In early appearance, stories in horror movie generally describes people's life that disrupted by monster. Those monster commit murder and persecution. Horror movie according to Dharmawan (Permana, 2001) is movie that designed to create terror, fear, or scared feeling to the audience. In horror movie flow, various events, power, or sometimes evil characters are appear from supernatural world, and go into humans everyday life.

Political economy has helped to understand the many different ways that corporations and governments shape the full range range of media content from news to pornography (Jacobs in Mosco, 2009, p.12). Commodification applies to audiences as well as to content. Political economy has paid some attention to audiences, particularly in the effort to understand the common practice whereby advertisers pay for the size and quality (propensity to consume) of an audience that a newspaper, magazine, website, radio, or television program can deliver.

In general, commodification itself is a change from use value into sale value. Horror movie use value supposes to give terror and frightening feel to audiences, but those value not be preferred to Indonesian horror movie in post - reform era. They more preferred to prioritize sexual and taboo content in order to increase their income, and it means the Indonesian horror movie filmmakers in Post-Reform era change the value into commercial and sale value.

Method

This research approach is qualitative. Qualitative research is research that aims to provide detail explanation of certain phenomenon through deep data collection and data analysis. Type that used in this research is descriptive. Kriyantono (2006, p. 69) stated that purpose of this type of research is make systematical, factual, and accurate descriptions about certain object. This research used textual analysis. Textual analysis emerged as one of methodology to interpret and construct values or interest in a text. This method used to find latent meaning that contained in media texts.

Data collected from Indonesian horror movies that used woman as main cast and reach more than 1.000.0000. Data collection technique is by documentation. This data analysis unit are Scene and dialogue that taken from *Terowongan Casablanca* (2006), *Tali Pocong Perawan* (2008), and *Air Terjun Pengantin* (2010) movie. This research limitation is Indonesian horror movies that produced and shown in cinemas in Post – Reform Era that used woman as main cast and reach more than 1.000.000 audiences and also other documents that related to Indonesian horror movies.

Female Figures in Indonesian Horror Movies

Female figures have strong dominance in Indonesian horror movies, both in Orde Baru era and in Post – Reform era. In Orde Baru era, female figures use as main cast in Indonesian horror movies. Such as Suzanna that being main roles in some movies such as *Malam Jumat Kliwon*, *Ratu Ilmu Hitam*, *Bangunnya Nyi Roro Kidul*, Farida Pasha in *Misteri Gunung Berapi* television drama, and Kiki Fatmala in *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol*. All of those actresses appear in those movie and serial as ghost or witch, none of them play role as human. In Orde Baru era, Indonesian horror movies tend to use female figure as ghost, because the main character of those movies mostly ghost that illustrated as a woman.

Difference with Indonesian horror movies in post-reform era, in Indonesian horror movies in post-reform era, female figure also used as main cast and have strong dominance. But, actresses in post-reform era tend to play role as human that got terrorized and threaten by the ghost and the woman who play role as the ghost itself is someone that not too famous. This condition contra with Orde Baru era, in Orde baru era, the female who play role as ghost is the most famous actress and the human that got threaten by the ghost is actor or actress that not too famous. It can be concluded that female figure already has strong dominance in Indonesian horror movies since Orde Baru era.

In Indonesian horror movies in Post-Reform era, female figure did not only seen by their roles, but also from the characteristic. But, females figures in Indonesian horror movies mostly did not illustrate as one exact characteristic. For example in *Air Terjun Pengantin*. In that movie, all of the females did not illustrate as strong woman, but did not illustrate as weak woman too. They scared when

the Jelangkung Mancung appear, same as all the men when they see Jelangkung Mancung. They also defend themselves when they got attacked by Jelangkung Mancung. They did not have exact characteristic and just appear in that movie. Same as *Terowongan Casablanca* and *Tali Pocong Perawan*. All the women that appear in those movies did not have exact characteristic too.

But there are some differences when the women stand alone and when there are men among them. When the women stand alone, they seem strong enough to protect themselves. When men appear, all the women immediately looking for men's protection and suddenly act like they are so weak. In those horror movies itself, male look like attract with female body, not only by their figure. They tend to look after for female body and set aside the figure and characteristic itself.

Production of the Indonesian Post Reform Horror Movies

In economy politic of media theory, ownership have big impact of the media product itself. In television industry, the ownership and the one who have power to rule the media is the high officials or the sole proprietor of the television channel itself. The owner or the sole proprietor have right to arranged the content of their own television channel, even it is for their personal interest. Start from the commercials until news that aired from that television channel. Likewise in Indonesian movie industry. In Indonesian movie industry, production house and producers have big influences in determining storylines, contents, and the selection of actors and actresses that appear in the movie.

In Post-reform era, there are some production house that in charge in making Indonesian movies. There are some production

houses that already established since Orde Baru era and production houses that established since post-reform era. There is no production house that established in Reformation era. Some production houses that established since Orde Baru era are : *Rapi Films*, *Soraya Intercine Films*, and *Starvision Plus*.

In Reformation era, there are so many production houses that start to establish such as *Falcon Pictures*, *Indika Entertainment*, *Miles Production*, *SinemArt*, *MD Entertainment*, and *Maxima Pictures*. All of them are production house that famous in Post-Reform era. But not all of them concerned in Indonesian movie industry. Some of those production houses tend to produced more television drama than movie.

Terowongan Casablanca produced by Shanker R.S under *Indika Entertainment*. *Indika Entertainment* itself is one of production house that have a long track record in Indonesian horror movie industry. There are some Indonesian horror movies that produced under *Indika Entertainment* such as : *Rumah Pondok Indab*, *Hantu Jeruk Purut*, *Hantu Ambulance*, and *Kereta Hantu Manggarai*. From some movies that mention before, it can be seen that *Indika Entertainment* produced a lot of rural horror movies, that connected with one or more urban places, especially in Jakarta. Similar with *Terowongan Casablanca* which is use as one of this research data object. As mention before that *Terowongan Casablanca* inspired from Jakarta urban legend, which is *Terowongan Casablanca* tunnel in east Jakarta. The urban legend of this place is there are many of *Kuntilanak* appear in that tunnel, because that tunnel build above a cemetery.

Although urban legend was picked up as the background place and story, but the movie itself did not highlight about the original urban legend in *Casablanca* tunnel. The storyline of this movie concerned to the polemic of teenagers that lived in urban places and other

polemic that did not related with the tunnel itself. Same like other horror movies that produced by Shanker R.S, the movie concerned to other parts rather than the horror parts. Because *Terowongan Casablanca* produced under *Indika Entertainment*, the actress who plays main role in this movie same with other movies. For example Asha Shara, she appeared to in *Rumah Pondok Indah* and *Hantu Jeruk Purut* movie.

Unlike *Terowongan Casablanca*, *Tali Pocong Perawan* and *Air Terjun Pengantin* that produced by Ody Mulya Hidayat under *Maxima Pictures* tend to create their own ghost and did not related with one or more urban legend and urban places. Both of those movies tend to concerned with actresses who acts in the movies. *Maxima Pictures* tend to use some sexy actresses to be their main role such as Tamara Blezynski in *Air Terjun Pengantin*, Dewi Perssik in *Tali Pocong Perawan* and *Paku Kuntilanak*, Rin Sakuragi (Japan sexy actress) in *Suster Keramas*, and Catherine Wilson in *Pocong Keliling*. Same with *Indika Entertainment*, *Maxima Pictures* also has long track record in Indonesian horror movies industry. Some movies that produced by *Maxima Pictures* are : *Setan Budeg*, *Suster Keramas*, *Tiren : Mati Kemaren*, and *Paku Kuntilanak*.

In some horror movies that produces by *Maxima Pictures*, can be seen that ghost or supernatural creature that appear in those movies is not an usual ghost that we can see in other Indonesian horror movies. *Maxima Pictures* tend to modified and made the ghost itself. For example *Suster Keramas* movie and *Kuntilanak Merah* in *Terowongan Casablanca*. Both of them come from *Kuntilanak* figure that modified into a new ghost.

Even there are some differences from those three movies because of their own production house, two of them still have some similarities that made or arranged by the producers, directors and writers. Firstly, since *Jelangkung*, Indonesian horror movie industry

create same plot and storyline for almost of Indonesian horror movies. In those movies, looking back the synopsis at Chapter IV, movie that concern with supranatural world (which is *Terowongan Casablanca* and *Tali Pocong Perawan*) have same storyline. Firstly, those human living happily and look like there is nothing wrong. After that, suddenly those human started to get terror or threat from supranatural world or ghost. They tried to reveal why they got threaten by the ghost then after they know the reason, they tried to chase away the ghost with various ways and rituals. Later after they did those rituals, the ghost dissapeared. But in the end of the movie, the ghost going back to human world. It means that in those movies, the ghost did not going to supranatural world or dissapear from human world. Those explanation same with Khoo & Barker (2011) statement that said the storyline of Indonesian horror movies tend to be more repetitive and the storyline is the human experience the consequence first and then investigate/reveal the reason behind.

Commodification in the Indonesian Post Reform Horror Movies

In Indonesian horror movies in Post-Reform era, commodification practice appear in some scenes. In Indonesian horror movies in Post-Reform era, commodity that use as exchange value is female body. Especially how female body used as something or good that have value in marketplace. Sri Yuliani and Argyo Demartoto said that female body have big potential to be exploited in the world of media industry. Female body exploited and directed to gain men's interests. So, female image is constructed from male's value, perspective, and desire. In this research, it can be seen that female body exploited and used as commodity to gain men's interest from many sided in those three movies. How women behave in front of

men, what they wear, and what they say in front of men.

Female body have its own attractiveness. Since a long time ago, social construction behalf female body as the symbol of beauty. Female also seen as sex symbol in every part of her body. Movie industry as one of the biggest mass media medium, using female as object that can be sold and make female body as an object that can attract audiences. Mosco itself defined that labor commodification can be done in two ways, arranged labor's flexibility and control and also 'sell' the labor itself to increase the value of the content of the media itself (Mosco, 2009). The attractiveness of female body also used in Indonesian horror movies in Post-Reform era as a commodity.

Based on Anderson (1990), to say that something is properly regarded as a commodity is to claim that the norms of the market are appropriate for regulating its production, exchange, and enjoyment. To the extent that moral principles or ethical ideals preclude the application of market norms to a good, we may say that the good is not a proper commodity. In this case, female body can called as not proper commodity because in *Air Terjun Pengantin*, *Terowongan Casablanca*, and *Tali Pocong Perawan* exploited female body in erotic ways by their clothes, their gestures, and also by their dialogues. Those practices against Indonesian constitution that says that every movie should not contains pornography and degrading human dignity. But still, even that is not a proper commodity, it still can be sold to media or movie marketplace.

As mention above, female body used as goods that have value and can be sold in media marketplace. For provement, the appearance of some famous actresses such as Dewi Perssik, Tamara Blezynski, and Tyas Mirasih can attract audiences to watch those movies. In those movies, all of the actresses wear short or tight

clothes almost in every scenes, from the beginning until the end of the movie. Directors and producers directed almost women or actresses that appear in those movies wear clothes that shows their body curves. When the women wear minimum and tight clothes, the men or actors that appeared in those movies wear clothes that almost covered their whole body and look like they like to see those actresses wear tight clothes. Producers and also directors purposively arranged those actresses to wear tight clothes to increase their movies sale value in order to increase their profit. Actresses that chosen as lead actress or supporting actresses are also actresses that famous for having sexy body. There is no actress that have big body appear in those movies.

Not only from clothes, female body gestures in those movies also slightly different than other movies. Some scenes shot how women's undress themselves and they tend to seduce men with their voice (teasing) and their movement when men appear near them. For example when at the beach, Tiara (Tamara Bleszynski) purposively seduce Lilo and Icing by using body lotion in front of them and then flirt to Lilo. Those provement and statements can be figured as commodification practices, how women directly used as commodity in those horror movies. Remembering those are horror movies, the treating or frighening scenes only show up a bit. Even the frighening scenes show up, audiences still pleased with the clothes that the actresses wear.

In those movies, there are some scenes that taking places in private room such as bedroom and bathroom. For example when Virnie hugs and kiss with Aldo in bedroom or when Tiara wake up from her sleep and she only wears lingerie. Or even when in public places such as nightclub, roadside, or beach, women still used short or tight clothes in order to showing up their body. It can be concluded that

whenever the background places take in those movies, women always use short or tight clothes that can increase men's desire. And also it is prove that Indonesian horror movie in Post-Reform era tend to use urban places as the background of the story. Different than in Orde Baru era that tend to use village or other rural places as background of the story.

However, in *Terowongan Casablanca*, the used of female body not too visible compared with other two movies. *Terowongan Casablanca* producer and director tend to show urban legend and also urban place as its main story in order to attract urban society. In this movie female body did not exploit much, woman in minimum or tight clothes only appear in 3 or 4 scenes in total. Different with other two movies, women who wear tight or minimum clothes are women that plays role as extras, not women that plays role as main cast or supporting cast. So, sexy women and erotic scenes did not appear much in this movie. But, even *Terowongan Casablanca* used urban legend as its background story, the storyline and the plot more likely to concern to the polemic of teenagers that live in urban city rather than the urban legend of Casablanca Tunnel itself.

In Indonesian horror movies in Post-Reform era, Indonesian horror movies tend to use urban places as its background and used sexy and famous actresses to be its lead or supporting actress. In Orde Baru era Indonesian horror movies industry also do commodification to increase their profit, but in different way than in Post-Reform era. If in Post-Reform era Indonesian horror movies industry tend to use sexy actresses, in Orde Baru era, Indonesian horror movies tend to do replication of the actresses or actors that already famous. For example, Suzanna that act in more than 5 Indonesian horror movies in that era because Suzanna already famous in her role in Indonesian horror movie industry.

Those commodification practice purpose is not to pleased other actors but to pleased the audiences and to attract the audiences. The commodification practice, especially commodification of content, which is using women as commodity in those horror movies can be said successful because all of those movies got huge number of audiences and also billions income even all of them got low rating. In the latest rating in 2017, *Air Terjun Pengantin*, *Tali Pocong Perawan*, and *Terowongan Casablanca* included in top 5 best-selling Indonesian horror movies list in the past 10 years. In that list, in the fifth place there is Setan Budeg movie that aired in 2009. That movie reach 871.000 audiences and got 30,4 billion rupiah as gross income. In the fourth place there is *Terowongan Casablanca* that aired in 2007. This movie reach 1.200.000 audiences and got 33,2 billion rupiah as gross income. The third place there is *Air Terjun Pengantin* that aired in 2009. This movie reach 1,060,058 audiences and got 37,1 billion rupiah as gross income. In the second place there is *Tali Pocong* that aired in 2008. This movie reach 1,082,081 audiences and got 37,8 billion rupiah as gross income. Finally after almost one decade there are no Indonesian horror movies can break *Tali Pocong Perawan* record as best-selling Indonesian horror movie, in 2017 there is *Danur: I Can See Ghosts*. This movie reach 1.100.000 audiences and got 41,8 billion rupiah as gross income.

Conclusion

In Indonesian horror movies such as *Terowongan Casablanca*, *Tali Pocong Perawan*, and *Air Terjun Pengantin*, directors and producers of those movies did commodification of content practices to gain and attract audiences. The commodification of content practices can be seen by how female body used as commodity in those movie. Most of actresses that appear in those movies use minimum and tight clothes

that shown their body curves, those actresses gestures also shows that intentionally seduce men.

The power of ownership really happened here. In this research, there are only two main production house that appear, Maxima Pictures and Indika Entertainment. Those two production houses already produced so many Indonesian horror movies, included *Terowongan Casablanca* (Indika Entertainment), *Tali Pocong Perawan* and *Air Terjun Pengantin*

(Maxima Pictures). Looking from those production houses background and track record, those production houses indeed produced Indonesian horror movies that contain erotic scenes and mostly using sexy woman as lead actress and those part can be seen in those three movies. Some erotic scenes shows and some sexy women chosen as lead actresses.

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