Tank-top, Indonesian Music Video, and Mythologizing Modern Women: Some Theoretical Notes

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Abstract

Tank-top has recently become a popular costume in the Indonesian music video. As a theoretical note, this paper shows that music video has been analyzed with two different but interrelated approaches, i.e. contextual and textual analysis. The contextual analysis emphasizes the broader political economy surrounding the production, distribution and consumption of the music video. The textual analysis, which could be conducted in three types of analysis, i.e. narrative, content, and semiotics, focuses on the representation practices in the music video. This study also shows that tank-top, an underwear moved out into outerwear, is a kind of femininity technique, characterized by the appearance and projection of the female body. The use of tank-top in music video shows the 'new order for intimacy' through the 'ritualization of nudity and sexuality'. This phenomenon also examples the way of mythologizing modern women, through which the representation of modern women have become a myth. However, this very construction of modern women is inseparable from the ideological discourses and power relations that naturalize these representational practices.

Keywords: *Indonesian music video, tank-top, representation, modern women, myth, ideology.*

Introduction

In 1999, Agnes Monica (AM) appeared in public again with her new single album Teruskanlah (Sacredly Agnezious). Tank top or sleeve shirt, the only type of clothes, wear and modified almost all in her costume. Before Teruskanlah, AM often appear wearing a tank top, i.e. in the music video for Bilang Saja (And The Story Goes, 2003), Bukan Milikmu Lagi and Tak Ada Logika (Whaddup A'..?!, 2005), single Matahariku (Sacredly Agnezious, 2009) and Karna Ku Sanggup (2010). Although the tank top to show the 'sensuality', chance combinations with other types of clothing will expand the meaning of costumes worn. The implication, the meanings that refer to the whole costume in forming a set of signs that represent women in music videos. The combination of fashion tank top refers to the meaning of 'sensuality'. So the concept is to be treated as a statement of the woman.

Take an idiom from Malcolm Barnard, a combination of a fashion tank top and long skirt is a 'communication tool' the woman on the condition or feelings in a social environment. "Through fashion, clothing, and apparel", according to Barnard, "a person's

position in the social order is experienced and communicated" (Barnard, 1996: 56). Keep the music videos associated context, deliberate fashion to modify is of course motivated by the interests to strengthen or add the meaning of song lyrics.

> "my life with anyone/I do not know who you are/you are my love/but someone else for me//...//You do not need me/I'm a statue for you/love is not your need"

> (ku hidup dengan siapa/ku tak tahu kau siapa/kau kekasihku tapi orang lain bagiku//.../kau tak butuh diriku/aku patung bagimu/cinta bukan kebutuhanmu)

The lyrics of the song a woman who expects an intimate relationship and happy engagement but should receive a treatment that seems far from love. The man remained indifferent to him, although AM was wearing a tank top. In the context of this engagement, relationship significance brought tank top.

Meanwhile, Sanny Aura Syahrani or Aura Kasih (AK) is known as the controversial singer. Since his first appearance through the single Let Me Love You (Mari Bercinta) (Malaikat Penggoda, 2008 and Puncak Asmara, 2009) AK wearing a mini-dress and open. Besides, the lyrics of the song Mari Bercinta shows the desire to be hugged, kissed, cuddled, like in the chorus:

> "let's all dance with me/I with folded arms and drift me/with the rhythm and flirty/release desires you//"

> (mari semua dansa denganku/dekap aku dan hayutkanku/dengan irama yang menggoda/melepaskan hasrat dirimu//)

As part of the culture media, two music videos have the potential tank top in the formation of myths. The music video is loaded with ideological meanings in popular culture media construct the concept of modernity. Construction of tank top in the music video as a medium of popular influence on the representation of socio-cultural meaning. Costumes as part of a fashion to be part of the "popular consciousness" (Wilson, 2003: 157). In addition, Dominic Strinati emphasizes the significance of Roland Barthes's concepts of mythology in mass culture, because "the myth is a form of popular culture" (Strinati, 2004: 103). So, myth or ideological analysis of media is important for cultural constructions in the media.

The ideological nature of the tank top did not escape the influence of the formation of modernity in a global culture. A tank top that appeared in parts of Europe and then used and adopted as a costume in a music video in Indonesia is part of the phenomenon of global product localization. This phenomenon is a cultural practice that gives meaning to the representation of women (modern). Inevitable, modernity is characterized by freedom, independence, and change intimate, intersect with local values or traditional

Thus, this study examines the questions: how the significance of tank top in the relationship of visual and verbal text Teruskanlah and Mari Bercinta music videos? How is the representation of women in Teruskanlah dan Mari Bercinta? How modernity of woman re-interpreted in relation with traditional? However, this is not simply a study of visuals and lyrics. Using a semiotic approach, I argued that the modernity of women becomes a myth, "type of speech".

Music Video as Media Culture: Two Types of Analysis

In this part, the researcher considers several types of analysis in the study of music videos as part of the phenomenon of media

culture. There are two types of analysis, those are contextual and textual analysis type. These analysis types are determined by the method and data. This contextual analysis type is more developed with a political economic approach and does not focus on music video texts too much, but rather pays attention to the socio-political-cultural context of music videos as part of cultural production. In addition, many types of textual analysis use content analysis, narrative analysis and semiotics methods, while the data analysis elements are only related to textual data from music videos (verbal, musical, visual).

1. *The Contextual Analysis: Political Economy*

Douglass Kellner has analyzed the function of fashion in music videos as providing "models and materials for building identity" (1995: 264). Kellners assumption refers to the relationship between political economy, identity, and media culture, especially when he analyzed the mediation and implications of the Madonna phenomenon from her music videos, concerts and songs.

Kellner stated that the approach he used to examine the issues between media culture and society like Madonna is transdisciplinary (1995: 27). He made use of various theories, such as critical theory, postmodern, poststructural and Birmingham cultural studies, as model for social theories and cultural criticism. On the methodological side, he did not only see the Madonna phenomenon with textual analysis, but added that the approach of "political economy and cultural production is an important key to the Madonna phenomenon" (1995: 269). In this way, Kellners approach is twofold, because it combines textual analysis methods and political economy. Madonnas music videos, for Kellner, is a starting point for analyzing the wider media culture conditions, namely the cultural industry

that has developed as a commodification of the Madonna phenomenon, such as the production of Madonna T-shirt, Madonna-like hairstyles, films about Madonna and so on.

Although Kellner managed to link Madonnas image in the music video as a mode of sexuality with her commodification in American popular music, he doesnt really pay attention to the relationship between music videos and song lyrics. Kellner is more focused on Madonna as the super star of popular cultural in America, rather than examining the text of her music video (lyrics and images). In addition, Kellner analyzed Madonna not to focus on music videos, but related to her concerts and mediation in various other media.

2. *The Textual Analysis: Narrative, Content and Semiotic Analysis*

The textual analysis type uses narrative analysis by John Fiske and Anthony Juliaan Tamburri. John Fiskes study of Material Girl Madonna (1989: 115-132) emphasizes the romance genre as a feature of this music video. Although he managed to show womens resistance to patriarchy in Material Girl, Fiske only saw the lyrics of the song as limited to two opening verses. He did not consider the entire song lyrics text to be very instrumental in constructing the meaning of the music video.

Narrative analysis tends to pay attention to characterizations (characters), setting, action chronology, and plot. Narrative analysis sometimes pays less attention to costume as an index of characterization. This is evident in Tamburris study of Like a Prayer Madonna. The significance of skin color, between Madonna (white skin), and male character (black skin), is quite successful in Tamburris view as social narrative construction (race) in the music video. However, the significance of objects, such as saints dress, the Madonnas sensual costume, the

red color of the Madonnas costume, and other objects are not paid attention to their meaning in the construction of the meaning of the visual text.

The weakness of the study which only paid attention to the part of the song lyrics, such as Fiske's study above, was responded by Barbara Bradby who analyzed Material Girl from all of her song lyrics (1992: 59-78). Bradby's analysis rests on pronouns as a form of addressing and subjectivity, "I" (I and me) are pronouns for women (Madonna) as subjectivity, and "they" (they and them) as pronouns for teenage a boys (boys) who wanted close to Madonna. The conclusion is quite surprising, that the music video does not only refer to the ideology of materialism but also maternalism, a notion that emphasizes maternal impulses that are manifested in attitudes and views of life. Maternalism is reflected in the use of the mode of addressing through the pronoun "they" (they) in the song lyrics of Material Girl to refer to boys, not adult man. The form of this pronoun also determines the position of the subject, I represent the singer, as an active or passive subject in the song lyric text. Passive subjectivity does not necessarily indicate the identity of the singer (female) equal to that of men.

Semiotics as an approach to music videos is to operationalize the principles of semiotics in the practice of marking music video texts. The main assumption is all visual, musical, and verbal elements are understood as a form of language or marking practice. In contrast to the types of content and narrative analysis that do not really interpret objects, semiotics pays close attention to the significance of objects. The objects in a music video can consist of objects, costumes, plants, and so on. These objects have the potential to construct ideological or mythical meanings in the music video text.

Dimas Prajaka Yanuardi, in his research entitled Semiotic Analysis of Video Clips REL BAND (Symbolization of Women in Songs Remembering) "(2004), applied semiotic analysis to music videos. Yanuardi only focuses on the denotation and visual connotation aspects (pictures). While the syntagm and paradigm elements in the Barthesian structural semiotic analysis he did not apply. Ignoring the syntagm and paradigm elements of course overrides the permutation element in semiotics and the nature of music videos as a moving image or a series of images (syntagmatic).

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As a medium consisting of a combination of verbal and visual texts (words and pictures), the nature of the relationship between song lyrics and pictures is as a relay, or to explain to one another, to add and complement meaning. According to Roland Barthes, this type of relay linguistic message relationship has almost the same properties as dialogue text in films or balloon text in comics. Researchers will focus on 1). Analyzing song lyrics and music video visual text, 2). In the visual text, researchers concentrate on the significance of objects, especially the tank top costumes worn by each singer, 3). Checking the representation of women between the relationship between song lyrics and pictures (costumes).

Meanwhile, Roland Barthes divides the "clothing system" into three systems of substance in the level of communication. First, "clothes as written": a description of the dress experts in a magazine. Second, "clothes as a picture" (clothes as a photograph): clothes imaged through an image. Third, "clothes as

worn": everyday clothes (Barthes, 1985: 25-27). In the context of a music video, costume as an object is enclosed in a photographic dress system as a form imaged in an image whose sign relations are spatial.

It is necessary to recognize the type of message, namely iconic messages (images) and linguistic messages (song lyrics) to read images as a representation containing signs of clothing. In a music video, an iconic message is a recorded and visible image that is symbolic (coded iconic message) because the concepts are also regulated by cultural codes, for example, the meaning of the tank top itself is coded in fashion. At this level, rhetorical systems in fashion open up the level of fashion connotations (Barthes, 1983: 225).

The connotative dimension of fashion is inseparable from the rhetorical system that expands clothing not only from the material (markers), but to signs that refer to the ideology of fashion. This rhetoric of fashion can be determined by the code in the world (history) of fashion. Besides iconic messages, an image sometimes has a linguistic message (song lyrics). This type of message also connotes the image by transmitting (relay) the meanings complementing the meanings in the image (picture). Apart from the rhetoric of images, what cannot be separated from the level of connotation is myth analysis. The researcher uses the mythical semiotic concepts at the image level to examine the relationship of signs in the two music videos. Myth semiotics underlines media representation as a cultural construct. On the other hand, image semiotics is an analysis to trace cultural stereotypes in the representation system.

Myth analysis is one way of criticizing media culture (mass) which consists of two theoretical frameworks, namely semiological analysis and ideological analysis (Barthes, 1983: 9). As a form of criticism of culture, Roland

Barthes' semiotic approach to myths specifically focuses on ideological criticism. For Barthes, ideology is nothing but a second-order system (connotation). In the discussion of "Myth Today," as the final part of the book Mythologies, etymologically Barthes calls myths, "Type of speech […] myth is a communication system, a message […] it is a mode of significance […] Myth is not defined by the message object but in the way, the message is expressed (1983: 109)"

Because myth is a communication system, the method to be used is the disclosure of the signification system in semiological analysis and ideological analysis. The initial stage of myth analysis is to describe the semiological system of the image in the form of two levels of marking, namely denotation and connotation levels. Denotation is the first level of significance system, in the form of a relation between markers and markers, while the second level of significance system is in the form of connotations built from signs of the denotation system. The markers and markers of the denotation level become the connotation level markers, while the connotation level markers then refer to ideological myths (Barthes, 1983: 114-115).

After the semiological system analysis stage finds connotations from the relationship between song lyrics and images, the next step is, the researcher relates these connotations to complement each other's meanings and determine the main connotations of each music video. The main connotation of the music video is a myth which is constructed and is based on ideology.

Historically, the ideological analysis of the myths of the two music videos has been determined by the mythical marker of a woman with a top tank. The myth of top-ranked women is determined by various stories and discourses in history, especially the history of fashion. As a

second-tier tagging system, myth deforms the first-tier tagging system by imposing new concepts on individual music videos. Myths distort the first-order system of signification by naturalizing, and creating alibis, concepts from particular ideologies. Ideology naturalizes myth into music videos as a pretense, or by forming signs.

Tank-top as a Fashion, Costume and Lingerie

Fashion (fashion, style or method) consists of and refers to the distinction between costumes (costumes, such as dance costumes), clothes (clothing, such as clothes, sarongs, t-shirts), and clothing (dresses, such as weekend clothes, military clothing). Costumes are characterized by the clothes, accessories, and make-up that a person wears in a particular show or event. Costumes are usually worn at special times, such as costumes at Halloween celebrations and dance performances. Costumes are designed according to the main characteristics to be highlighted in the appearance, the purpose of which is to represent and underline the various roles played by an actor (Steele, 2005: 271). Clothing is general in nature, which is what people often wear every day. On the other hand, clothing is determined by the necessity of wearing it, for example, local tourists who travel to the beachwear beach clothes, such as bikinis and swimsuits.

Tracing the etymology, fashion comes from the Latin word *facio* or *factio* which means "to do" or "to make" (Kawamura, 2005: 3; Barnard, 1996: 7). Because it refers more to activity, the notion of fashion refers more to the production of meaning, not solely related to the material characteristics of fashion. According to Yunia Kawamura, "fashion is not visual clothing, but invisible elements attached to clothes" (Kawamura, 2005: 4). Therefore, it is

this invisible nature that fashion often leads to a difference in meaning, a distinctive function of clothing to show the social and cultural status of the wearer.

Fashion is often used as a technique of femininity. Femininity is not given since human birth nor is it permanent. Jenifer Craik shows how the meanings of femininity are obtained, namely through certain practices with specific intentions, especially through choices of fashion (Craik, 1993: 69). This practice is performed as "femininity techniques" characterized by the appearance and projection techniques of the female body. He emphasized that "the fashion system, dress techniques, and decorations are generally more manifested by certain gender techniques in a cultural formation" (Craik, 1993: 43). Related to fashion, a tank top is a kind of lingerie or underwear (underwear) that is moved out into outerwear and then known as a singlet. Before the 19th century, lingerie was better known as linen made garment. Linen itself at that time was a new material used for this type of underwear. In subsequent developments, various types of underwear are actually worn into clothes that are easily visible or placed as outer clothing.

Jennifer Craik states that "underwear" (underwear), such as corsets, bras, underwear, bikinis, swimwear, and singlets, refers to the connotations of sexuality, seduction, and erotic displays (Craik, 1993: 112-148). Lingerie gives the user a "sensual" impression. Lingerie can be described beyond its function and material, namely as a means of sexual pleasure because it shows a body silhouette (Piveteau, 2005: 31).

At the end of the 20th century, according to Rebecca Arnold, the use of various lingerie marks "underwear (underwear) as outerwear (outerwear) to be a drug of fear surrounding sex and the body" (Arnold, 2001: 66). Arnold also mentioned that since the 18th century there have been symptoms of using

underwear as outerwear to fight public and private distinctions. Entering the 21st century, the concept of lingerie concerns the ambiguity between dress and nude, and its erotic effects (2001: 67).

Elizabeth Wilson said, that "clothing contains several relationships with sexuality" (Wilson, 2003: 91). Clothing gives an erotic impression so that it becomes the object of sexual gratification, from which the artificial aspect of clothing emerges. In addition to natural aspects that refer to the certain social status of clothes, Wilson also emphasizes underwear and cosmetics in relation to aspects of relationship intimacy (2003: 95).

The relationship between clothing, especially lingerie as outerwear, with the intimacy of men and women is expressed by Élodie Piveteau, that "Lingerie, has long been an instrument of domination and deformation (change of shape) [...] its benefits are more than maintaining intimacy" (2005: 32). Piveteau also added that various lingerie is used to remove barriers so that desire is displayed, namely by 'new order for intimacy' through 'ritualization of nudity and sexuality' (2005: 59).

Valerie Steele underscores the use of underwear to 'promote sexual connotations as the initiation of sexual intimacy' (Steele via Craik, 1993: 130). The issue of sexual intimacy between men and women, especially in married life, is related to the affective functions to be pursued in interpersonal relationships in the household. One of these effective functions is through underwear. Regarding intimacy in the household, Jacqui Gabb conducted a sociological study of intimacy and sexuality in the family. He divides four types that can be derived from intimate relationships, among others: first, intimacy is bonding through sexuality and heterosexual relationships; second, the democratization of interpersonal relationships leads to a transformation of

intimacy; third, intimacy and family relationships are practical experiences formed in a special space; fourth, the practice of intimacy related to the interrelation between public and personal things (Gabb, 2008: 64-65).

Mythologizing Modern Women

Modernity as signified and 'erotic', 'independence', 'autonomy', as signifier is not stable and fixed meaning because man is still determining the position of women. Similarly the post-independence women's representation before the reform. Instead of looking for independence or freedom, women are actually 'trapped' in the eyes of men. In addition, the construction of modern women as part of cultural meanings is inseparable from the ideological construction and the effects of the ruling class who naturalize these concepts.

Nevertheless, the ideological construction of modernity is not fully put in a dominant position. This is shown in 'mix and match' traditional clothing (kain panjang) and vests (modern), which blurs the concept of modernity and traditionality so that the relationship both to 'liquid'. Modernity is in the traditional shadow while the traditional (kain panjang) does not seem dominant. Dichotomous separation in the West/East, masculine/feminine, feudal/liberal no longer be assumed, without losing the meaning of each.

On the other hand, the representation of modern women experiencing continuous change and within the meaning is not fixed. In 1900, modernity and the modern woman in interpret as progress in education. When education began extensively and women could go to school, modernity and the modern woman interpreted by adopting Western clothes. However, modern women's representation is always tangent to the ideological construction, such as feudalism or eastern values that view

women should not be too pursue progress, male dominance in patriarchal ideology, and the capitalist ideology that created the illusion that women continually consuming tank top.

Representations of modern women have become a myth 'type of speech'. He is not determined by its material object, tank top, but on the way, messages are spoken modernity.

The historical background of modernity (post-colonial ideology and capitalism) took mythologizing modern woman. Thus, independence, autonomy, or freedom (the myth of the modern woman) is in the region that continues to struggle. Compromise critical attitude is one way to constantly question the representation of modern women.

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