



Patriarchal Culture in Film: Between Myth and Meaning (Audience Reception Analysis of The Film “Yuni”)

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Abstract

Film as an art form is a representation of reality. However, film can also mean reality itself, which is visualized. Film or cinema is embedded in culture and has an exciting relationship with ideology and audience. Thus, films can intervene in human thoughts and feelings. The storyline and film content convey the culture and myths that develop in society. Among the cultural forms that are also part of a film's narrative is patriarchal culture. Patriarchy is a social system that places men as the main authority figure in social organization. The position of men is higher than that of women in all aspects of social, cultural and economic life. This study aimed to find out the meaning of the audience regarding the patriarchal culture depicted in the film “Yuni”. This research approach is qualitative with the reception analysis method of Stuart Hall's ‘encoding-decoding’ model. Data collection techniques used focus group discussions (FGD) with five informants. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the informants are in the opposite position in depicting patriarchal structures in aspects of the patriarchal state, male violence, patriarchal relations and patriarchal culture. They interpret it as a picture of the patriarchal structure still shackles women's lives.

Keywords: Film; patriarchal culture; myth; audience reception

Introduction

Film cannot be separated from culture and society as mass media. In particular, film is a powerful medium for conveying the values and beliefs of contemporary society. However, on one side is what the audience creates, while on the other is the film's content and what the producer wants (Cloete, 2017). The film can be interpreted as a text that, at the marker level, consists of images representing events in real life. The film is an aesthetic work in the form of audiovisuals with a moral message that can be understood and used as a lesson for society. Intrinsically and substantially, films can impact how humans interact and behave (Tjhing & Y., 2022).

Bazin (Joret, 2019) defines the film as an integral representation of reality (in sound, color, movement and three dimensions) and emphasizes the need for technological progress, including industrial, social and artistic considerations. Bazin, on the other hand, describes this situation as an 'inverted pyramid'. Social conditions, industry, and the technology at its base make the film look like the top of an inverted pyramid. A film cannot stand when this pyramid is turned upside down, and its tip hits the ground unless the bottom is balanced for a moment—an explanation of this idea in terms of how the language of film has changed.

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Film can be seen as an essential medium for a specific meaning as a cultural product and medium. Cinema and film are embedded in culture; therefore, a complex and exciting relationship exists between film, culture, ideology and audience. Film is considered a pervasive and influential art form, while film stars are often seen as 'cultural icons' (Cloete, 2017). Corrigan and White emphasize that film is a work of art rich in cultural practices. This art is further described as a creative and hybrid form within a dynamic framework between 'realism' and 'fantasy'; 'art' and 'entertainment' (Cloete, 2017).

Films combine images, stories and sound to provide context to themes of everyday experiences such as love, hope, death, good, evil, violence and peace. It appeals to a wide range of ages because it reflects our stories, communities and the world in which we live. Cinema reproduces our world, capturing life for future generations, with narrative as an audience-moving "engine" with significant social and cultural value (Cloete, 2017).

Myth and film are two different arts but have similarities. Myths are stories of the past about gods, heroes, and the human world. As modern art, film is tied to technology and its historical moment. Even though they are different, films can be used to tell ancient and contemporary myths (Angeline, 2015; Septiana et al., 2019).

Rather than isolating myths to a pre-modern in the past, films reveal the myths we tell ourselves and bring us closer to our ancestors. As rationalists and products of the 'Enlightenment and scientific revolution', we might think we are too advanced to create myths. If we detach ourselves from the idea that we are different from—or even superior to—the mythmakers of the past, we are more

likely to see the myths of our world, the myths we accept as accurate (Strayer, 2018).

Myths are at the heart of culture, underlying the beliefs and assumptions that shape personality and culture (Bilton & Soltero, 2020). They manifest in values, goals, and philosophies, shaping our reality. Mythology helps us understand the world and humans' place in it, influencing our attitude to life. It is also important in human history, philosophy, and science (Shykaruk et al., 2018).

Among the cultural forms that are also part of a film's narrative is patriarchal culture. Patriarchy is a social system that places men as the main central authority figures in social organizations (Rawat, 2014). Men's position is higher than women in all social, cultural and economic aspects (Israpil, 2017). Patriarchal culture is the unequal power distribution between men and women in certain aspects of society (Facio, 2013).

Patriarchal culture is a culture where men have a higher position than women. In this culture, there are visible differences regarding the duties and roles of women and men in social life, especially in the family. Patriarchal culture has, for generations, formed differences in behavior, status and authority between men and women in society which then becomes a gender hierarchy. As leaders or heads of families, men have power that includes control over economic resources and a sexual division of labor within the family. This situation causes women to have less access to the public sector than men. Patriarchy is a term used to describe a social system in which men as a group control power over women (Israpil, 2017).

Walby in Sari defines patriarchy as a social structure system and practice in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Oktaviani & Azeharie, 2020). Six main patriarchal structures together form the patriarchal system. Among them is the patriarchal mode of production in which women's labor is taken over by their husbands, patriarchal relations in wage labor, patriarchal state, male violence; patriarchal relationships in sexuality; and patriarchal culture.

The presence of film media has an impact as a medium of mass communication, which is considered adequate not only as an entertainment activity, but its presence can be a medium of information in many aspects, such as education, which can include psychological conditions and social impacts (Effendi, 2003). The emergence of films with specific themes has the potential to trigger various receptions, meanings and comments from the audience. Every individual has a different perspective and perception in assessing a film. Audience reception is a prominent area of research within the broad spectrum of media and cultural studies. Every text assumes an audience. Sometimes, it even builds its audience.

Stuart Hall's "encoding-decoding" communication model is included in cultural studies, applicable to news broadcasts and TV programs and to any analysis of media discourse production, such as film studies. Because each domain can interact with each others through individual interpretation and more considerable public discussion. Wang also mentioned that the theory has specific explanatory power for film production and distribution. Prysthon further stated that this

theory can connect itself with the audiovisual sector, the world of film, and film theory (Al, 2022).

The audience of film media is an essential element in the context of the film's existence in society. Reception theory provides a means of understanding media texts by understanding how audiences read them. Theorists who analyze media through reception studies are concerned with the experience of watching cinema and television for audiences and how meaning is created through that experience. An essential concept of reception theory is that media texts—individual films or television programs—have no inherent sense in and of themselves.

Instead, meaning is created in the interaction between the audience and the text; in other words, the sense is created when the audience 'watches' and processes the film. Reception theory argues that contextual factors, more than textual factors, influence how audiences view a film or television program. Contextual factors include elements of the audience's identity and the circumstances of the exhibition, the audience's preconceived notions about the genre and production of the film or television program, and even broad social, historical, and political issues. In short, reception theory places the audience in context, considering the factors influencing how they will read and create meaning from the text. Reception theory aims to identify the various possible reactions and interpretations at a particular historical moment (Film References, 2018).

Furthermore, related to previous research related to reception analysis, research on audience reception analysis of self-reception in the film media "Imperfect"

conducted by Anggraeni & Sukardani (2021) states that the meaning of self-reception carried out by informants is the result of a different point of view, in his mind according to the experience experienced by the informant, so that differences in experience will give rise to different interpretations from the informant's point of view regarding the concept of self-reception in a person.

Apart from that, the factors of age, background, and physical characteristics of an individual, as well as experience in a person's field of work, also influence how they view self-reception in films. "Imperfect".

Meanwhile, Dwita & Sommaliagustina (2018) conducted research entitled "Interpretation of Feminism: Analysis of the Pekanbaru Community's Reception of the Film 'Kartini'" found that understanding the differences in definitions between emancipation and feminism was one of the causes of differences in interpretation. Informants with strong life experiences interpret feminism as a struggle to end injustice. Informants included in the dominant hegemonic position group are high school graduates who admire the Kartini figure. Individual audiences and film practitioners are informants in a negotiating position. Oppositional position informants are individuals with doctoral degrees and are religious.

A film that narrates patriarchal culture as its theme is the film "Yuni". The film by director Kamila Andini was successful in receiving many awards, such as at the Toronto International Film Festival, was included in the 2020 Oscar selection, and received 14 Citra Cup nominations, including Best Film. Apart from that, Arawinda Kirana, who acts

as Yuni, also received an award at a festival in Los Angeles called the 2021 Asian World Film Festival. (Kompascom, 2021).

Yuni is a coming-of-age genre film that raises the issue of women and the patriarchal social system in Indonesia, especially in areas with a conservative environment. Set in the city of Serang, Banten, the film "Yuni" is presented in the Javanese-Serang (Jaseng) regional language throughout the film. The main issue Kamila Andini raises in this film is the discussion of early marriage (Dimensi, 2002).

Based on the background above, this research aims to determine the audience's meaning of patriarchal culture in the film "Yuni" from a cultural and mythical perspective.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with the reception analysis method "encoding-decoding" by Stuart Hall. The focus of research is the observation and detailed documentation of exciting phenomena. According to Mulyana (2018), qualitative research does not depend on mathematical logic, numerical principles or statistical methods. This type of research aims to preserve the form and content of human behavior and analyze its qualities rather than turning it into a quantitative entity.

Meanwhile, Stuart Hall put forward three dimensions in audience decoding. There are three main positions or "types of audience perception and reception of cultural representation through cinematographic art, namely preferred (sometimes called dominant), negotiated, and oppositional." (Al, 2022).

They are also known as dominant-hegemonic, preferential, or isotropic interpretations in dominant decoding. The message is decoded according to how the encoder encodes it. In this position, the 'message' or information tends to be translated harmoniously with the original code without misunderstanding between the sender and recipient. The negotiation position (or compromise/reconciliation position) combines adaptive and oppositional factors. The decoder understands the message partly based on the meaning intended by the medium and partly by considering its social background. While maintaining some degree of agreement with their group's dominant ideology and position, they ultimately neither entirely agree nor reject it (Al, 2022).

The oppositional position and the preferred position lie at the opposite end of the continuum, also known as the aggressive position. Audiences sometimes adopt decodings that do not match the dominant coding based on personal experiences and backgrounds, including reflection and rebellion. Such audiences do not follow the producer's path, illustrating the connotations and meanings of information, but "decode counterintuitively" –integrating information (including lotteries and connotations) within a particular frame of reference. Sometimes, the audience in this position is entirely at odds with the dominant ideology (Al, 2022).

In this research, data collection was carried out by conducting a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in October 2022 involving five informants, with the following criteria:

1. Male and female gender.
2. Age between 30 – 50 years.
3. Have watched the film "Yuni"
4. Already married (husband or wife).

5. Has a predominantly patrilineal and matrilineal ethnic background.

The following is a list of scenes in the film "Yuni" that depict aspects of patriarchal culture:

Table 1. Scenes in the film "Yuni" that depict parts of patriarchy

No.	Scene
1.	A local official told the female students to take a virginity test, which Yuni opposed.
2.	Yuni's meeting with Suci, a widow who experienced domestic violence, made Yuni more aware of equal rights as a woman. Suci also said her husband divorced her because she could not produce children due to frequent miscarriages.
3.	Yuni met with her neighbours, who discussed that girls should get married immediately to avoid getting pregnant out of wedlock.
4.	Yuni rejected a second proposal from a man who brought a dowry of 25 million rupiah, with 25 million rupiah, if Yuni was still a virgin on the first night.
5.	A school friend of Yuni's was forced to marry because she was accused of committing adultery, so her soul was shaken, and she lost her self-confidence, ultimately making her surrender because no one believed her.
6.	In two scenes, but with the same context, Yuni's neighbor and grandmother say that it is important for women to be good at caring for the household, such as in the bed, kitchen, well, and dressing up.

The questions asked refer to Walby's definition of patriarchal structure (Sari, 2020), which states that patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit

women. Six main patriarchal structures together form the patriarchal system. Among them, 1) the patriarchal mode of production in which women's labor is taken over by their husbands; 2) patriarchal relations in wage labor; 3) the patriarchal state; 4) male violence; 5) patriarchal relationships in sexuality; and 6) patriarchal culture.

Result

The film "Yuni" depicts the social life of teenage girls in the city of Serang, Banten. Yuni, a bright and ambitious girl, has high aspirations in education. When she received a proposal from an unknown man, Yuni refused, and this rejection spread into gossip around her. Even though he was rejected, a second proposal came, which Yuni also rejected. However, there is a myth that rejecting a man's proposal twice will prevent marriage.

The film "Yuni" highlights women's issues and patriarchal culture. Yuni, the main character, is faced with choosing to continue higher education. Even though she asked her parents, Yuni couldn't find an answer and had to decide for herself. During pressure to marry from those around her, Yuni felt hopeless, especially after rejecting two marriage proposals and becoming the subject of gossip. A meeting with Suci, a widow who experienced domestic violence, opened Yuni's eyes to a woman's right to determine her path.

The encoder of the film "Yuni" packages the concept of patriarchal culture and breaking myths in scenes showing Yuni "going against" social norms. For example, she rejected two men's proposals and opposed virginity tests, supporting her friends in rejecting existing myths.

Meanwhile, the decoder of the film "Yuni" is the audience for this film. Audiences of the film "Yuni" interpret the scenes according to the decoder's cultural point of view. The decoder will adjust the new shape according to the background and its characteristics.

The following are the results of research based on Focus Group Discussions (FGD) conducted with informants:

1. Male Domination in the Economic/Labor Area

In this structure, it is known that all informants are in an opposition position. It can be seen from the statements of the informants who did not see any element of male dominance in the work, which is the domain of women in the scenes visualized in the film "Yuni". The informants saw that the film positioned women as figures who took over men's duties and roles.

2. Patriarchal Relations in Wage Labor

The informant stated that he did not find the second aspect of the patriarchal structure, namely patriarchal relationships in paid work. It was expressed by FF, one of the informants in this research.

"In this film, it is clear that several female characters act as breadwinners for the family. Like Suci, who shows the figure of a woman who fights for her family even though her husband is hurt." (translated)

3. Patriarchal State

The state supports a well-maintained patriarchy (Billo, 2020; Kocabıçak, 2023). Although there may be some limited reforms, such as fairer educational opportunities and easier divorce laws that have protected women from patriarchy to some extent, the state remains patriarchal (Candraningrum, 2014).

The three female informants in the research were in a position of opposition to patriarchal scenes in films. The scene involves a female official ordering a virginity test at school. One informant criticized the role of women in this instruction. Another informant highlighted gender inequality because only female students were tested. Two male informants argued that this scene reflected the reality of today's free sexual behavior and that it was necessary to be aware of its negative impacts.

4. Male Violence

The fourth aspect of Welby's patriarchal structure (Sari, 2020) is the aspect of male violence against women. Based on the interviews, it was discovered that all informants stated that there were scenes of psychological violence against women in the film, namely when Yuni became the subject of gossip when she rejected the first proposal from a man she had just met. It was expressed by RA, one of the informants in this research.

"Confused about being a woman. It's strange to receive a proposal from a man you've met for the first time. It's definitely against the heart. But if it is rejected, everyone will give it a stigma. Once you reject the proposal, it will be difficult to find a partner." (translated)

There is a scene where Yuni rejects a proposal for the second time from a man who brings a dowry of 25 million rupiahs, and 25 million rupiahs will be added if Yuni is still a virgin on the first night. In the context of this scene, the five informants are in an oppositional position. They believe there is too big an age gap between Yuni and the man who proposed to her, that Yuni is even more worthy of being their child. It is also considered to reduce Yuni's self-esteem as

a woman who is only valued by a certain amount of money.

In another scene, the character Suci talks about the failure of his household due to experiencing family violence. His family also ostracized him because he was considered to have damaged the family's good name due to his divorce. Three informants were in a negotiating position in interpreting this incident, where they believed that having a relatively low educational background and economic level and being at a young age were vulnerable to the problem of early marriage. They can understand that this condition is common in society but still regret that there is no resistance from Suci and her family. Meanwhile, two other informants were in opposition, stating that regardless of socio-economic background, anyone, including Suci, could reject and fight what happened to her.

Another scene depicts a school friend of Yuni's who was forced to marry because she was accused of committing adultery, so her soul was shaken, and she lost her self-confidence, which made her surrender because no one believed her. All the informants were in an oppositional position, stating that Yuni's friend could actually fight against getting married and firmly denied the accusation of adultery that she had committed.

5. Patriarchal Relationships in Sexuality

In the context of patriarchal relationships in sexuality, there is a scene where Suci tells the story that her husband divorced her because she could not be pregnant. After all, she had had several miscarriages due to early marriage. An informant is in a dominant hegemonic position, believing divorce is not a problem because he does not have children. Meanwhile, the other four informants were in

an oppositional position, where they thought that having children was God's will and that the two prominent families should be able to provide understanding to Suci and her husband, both physically and emotionally. Her family had to provide education that Suci had a miscarriage because her uterus was still weak, considering she was pregnant at a very young age.

6. Patriarchal Culture

The final aspect of Welby's patriarchal structure (Sari, 2020) is patriarchal culture. The scene depicts this patriarchal structure in the community around Yuni, stating that women do not need to go to high school and are only limited to being wives because, in the end, they will take care of the house and serve their husbands. All informants in this research were in an oppositional position. All informants know that women have the same rights as men, including access to the highest possible education. It was expressed by FA, one of the informants in this research,

"This is the social reality; women are positioned as objects that only deserve to occupy the number two position and do not have the power to make decisions for themselves. Studying in college is just a dream because, in the end, the kitchen, well and bed are considered the best places for women." (translated)

Another scene is when her grandmother keeps trying to match Yuni with a man from her friends and relatives. In this case, all informants were opposed, stating that the matchmaking system should no longer be used, especially for young women. Women also have the right to determine their mate based on their desires and needs.

The object of this research is the audience's reception of the film "Yuni", especially in patriarchal culture. It was

found that most of the informants were in an oppositional position, where, according to the informants, several scenes depicted things that still shackled women.

Based on the findings above, it can be said that what is presented in the film is still related to the myths inherent in society's culture. In this case, according to the informant's view, the myth contained in the film "Yuni" is the dominance of patriarchal culture in the life of a teenage girl and other female characters in the film. As stated by Strayer (2018), films are productive vehicles that can tell modern and ancient myths.

Rather than isolating myths to a pre-modern in the past, films reveal the myths we tell ourselves and bring us closer to generations long before us. It is because myths underlie a culture. The myth is that if a woman rejects a man's proposal twice, she will never find a partner, and women are said not to need to pursue higher education. According to the reception of informants in opposition positions, this is an actual form of how films can contain views that are not necessarily true but exist in society.

Another finding in an oppositional position is that the film "Yuni" illustrates how the patriarchal culture still exists in society and needs attention. In one scene, it is said that only female students were instructed to take virginity tests. At the same time, there were no instructions for students to share their experiences of sexual activity because the informant was of the view that sexual activity related to virginity issues also involved men. Several informants believed this scene could be interpreted as depicting how men are placed in a higher position or authority, which is a form of patriarchal cultural practice.

It aligns with what Pinem (Israpil, 2017) explained: patriarchy is a social system that places men as the primary authority in social organizations. The position of men is higher than women in all aspects of social, cultural and economic life.

Furthermore, suppose it is related to the findings in previous research. In that case, it is known that the first research which focused on the aspect of self-reception in the film "Imperfect" resulted in the finding that the point of view following the informant's experience determines how the informant gives meaning to the concept of self-reception. Other research results regarding the audience's response to the film "Kartini" found that differences in understanding the definitions between emancipation and feminism caused differences in interpretation. Meanwhile, the results of this research focus more on the informants' views regarding aspects of myth and patriarchal culture depicted in the film "Yuni".

Conclusion

In the film "Yuni", the myths of patriarchal culture are depicted in several scenes, including that women do not need to continue their education to a higher level and cannot reject a man's proposal more than twice because, as a result, he will never get married forever. Another depiction of the myth of patriarchal culture is that women should marry at a young age to avoid slander from the people around them. Audiences of the film "Yuni", who are informants in this research, are relatively in an oppositional position in terms of describing the patriarchal structure in the aspects of a patriarchal state, male violence, patriarchal relations and

patriarchal culture. They interpreted these scenes as an illustration of the party structure that still shackles women's lives.

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