Revealing Indonesia Through The Grief of Film: Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts

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Abstract*:*

> This study is based on qualitative research using the grief of film model in the five stages of Kubler-Ross. The aim is to unveil the grief of the film "Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts" by Mouly Surya, constructed through the exotic cultural anthropology of Indonesia, inspired by a true story in the Sumba region. The research results indicate that the film depicts the character Marlina undergoing a grief process in constructing its narrative. The film's foundation lies in the truth of reality, interpreted through Indonesia's ideology, utilizing the grand power of art and culture. This ultimately gives rise to the concept of the essence of interpreting nationalism through the character 'Marlina' as a representation of marginalized women challenging the nation's reality.

Keywords: *Grief, Film, Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts*

Introduction

Film serves as a potent tool for disseminating ideas or opinions to audiences by providing audio-visual meaning that encompasses the values of human life. Heidegger's thought (2008) considers film as a medium that reflects and shapes reality as a form of existence created by its elements. The aesthetic system built influences the psychological nature of language, image combinations, movement, sound, color, and editing strategically placed to explore emotional experiences phenomenologically (Izod and Dovalis, 2015). As a result, various artistic elements in film serve as conduits for reality, both externally and within society in a country, to understand various aspects of life, including grief.

Grief of Film establishes a connection between human life and both visible and hidden realities. Neimeyer (2009) argues that *'a central process in grieving is the reconstruction of a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss, understood in terms of world assumptions, life illusions, or personal constructs that are shaken or shattered by sometimes traumatic life events*.' Grief in film generally forms the foundation of the story's conflict, including in Indonesian films, expected to be a medium for expressing everything about Indonesia's film ideology. Indonesia is a unique country with a heterogeneous or multiethnic population (1,340 tribes), abundant natural resources, the world's largest archipelago, and natural diversity shaping its socio-political dynamics. Grief, as the root of a nation's socio-political dynamics, is experienced by Indonesia as a country that has been colonized by five nations and has undergone three phases of governance since its independence. Through the grief of Indonesian films, we can understand Indonesia's ideology and the facts recorded in films born within the context of social politics. McQuail (2001) states that film, as a mass communication medium, has another function as a propaganda tool. Implicitly and explicitly, many films incorporate ideological elements into their storylines. Thus, the expression of Indonesia's film ideology can be achieved by analyzing the grief of Indonesian films.

The Indonesian film titled "Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts" was produced in 2017 and directed by Mouly Surya. "Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts" is a drama film directed by a woman named Mouly Surya, released in 2017. The film is based on the true story of a widow from Sumba, Nusa Tenggara Barat (eastern Indonesia), who beheads a robber and takes the head to the police to seek justice. Through grief, the film narrates the resistance of women who successfully convey social and political issues in Indonesia. The film is considered to be a reader of Indonesia's ideology through the expression of its society in a film that highlights local wisdom as a representation of Indonesia's cultural diversity.

Review of Literature

Choi (2006) states that '*a national cinema's association with its national history or heritage is just one of the various ways in which a national cinema can assert itself'*. Indonesian cinema has the potential to discuss its film ideology as it represents a reciprocal relationship between the work, its sources, and its purpose as a film of a nation. Thus, Indonesian cinema is born and exists to affirm its own identity as an ideology among the many films produced worldwide.

Heidegger (2008) emphasizes the effort to uncover the hidden through what is visualized and to discover what is spoken or expressed in the text as language. Therefore, the focus in analyzing the object of grief in film is an analysis of human existence and the interpretation of thoughts beyond the limits of metaphysics concerning recollection and its relation to tradition (keeping in mind). Thus, interpretation is carried out through the five-stage Kubler-Ross model (2005) in the grief of film: *1) denial, it is a way to protect themselves and to avoid having their heart broken by the truth, 2) anger, it is grieving people whom project their anger or other negative emotions on others or on themselves, because the truth is unbearable, 3) bargaining, it is a mindset if only they could do something different, they might be able to alter reality, 4) depression, it is when they fall into despair, and 5) acceptance, this stage is about acceptance of the reality.*
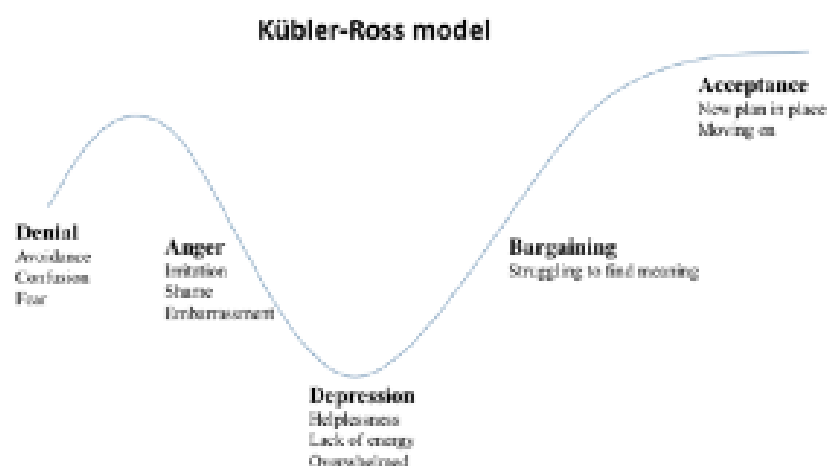
Model *grief* Kubler-Ross (1969)

1. Denial

In this stage, grieving people, consciously or unconsciously, refuse to accept the truth, that they are losing their loved one, because the loss would leave them heartbroken. Hence, they deny reality and accept their preferred reality, believing that their loved one is still alive. This is a way to protect themselves and to avoid having their heart broken by the truth.

2. Anger

Having no choice but to face the truth, that they are losing their loved one, grieving people project their anger or other negative emotions on others or on themselves, because the truth is unbearable.

3. Bargaining

Using the phrase "if only" or "what if" to instill hope, mourners provide themselves with a temporary escape from their grief. They try to bargain and negotiate to deal with the reality of losing the one they love, thinking that "if only" or "what if" could prevent their loved one from dying.

4. Depression

However, though trying to bargain with God through prayer or using "what if" to instill hope, those grieving people do know that the facts cannot be changed. Therefore, they fall into despair or depression. This depressive stage leads mourners to feel numb about everything. Moreover, depression may bring additional negative effects, mentally or physically, such as insomnia, a loss of appetite, and even suicide attempts.

5. Acceptance

For those grieving, this stage is about acceptance of the reality that their loved one is dead or is going to die. Though not comfortable about the loss of their loved one, mourners eventually realize that they cannot freeze the past; hence, they learn to adjust and to accept the reality that their beloved one has passed away.

Based on Kübler-Ross's model (1973; 2005), the five stages of grief vary from person to person. Not every person goes through every stage; some people may go through only a few of them. Kübler-Ross believes that everyone will go through at least two of them. However, no matter how many stages one experiences, the final stage is always acceptance. In order to give a further illustration of the varying stages of grief during the bereavement process, the study would further analyze those characters suffering bereavement in Indonesian Film Marlina Pembunuh dalam Empat Babak (2017).

Methodology

In a qualitative approach, Indonesian films are analyzed through the interpretation of grief in Indonesian cinema, aiming to express the ideology of Indonesian filmmaking to draw conclusions about the revelation of Indonesia's film ideology through the grief of film. This research utilizes the grief of film model with the five stages of Kubler-Ross - denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance - as a framework to analyze how grief is portrayed in Indonesian films, specifically in "Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts" (2017), which serves as the research data. The film is identified based on how it is produced as an Indonesian film according to the grief of film process model.

Finding

Grief process of Film: Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts

Denial of Marlina in Film Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts

Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts is a film that encapsulates internal struggles. In the first scene, Marlina, a widow, is ruthlessly harassed by a group of robbers. In playing her role in society, women often depend on or adapt to the cultural or customary conditions prevailing in their environment. In this film, Marlina portrays a Sumba widow living alone in the midst of the savanna. Her character in the film is depicted differently from the typical Sumba widow, as generally, Sumba widows are portrayed with lower status than men due to the patriarchal culture that still prevails in Sumba society.

Picture. 1

In this scene, Marlina, grieving, refuses to accept the reality that she has lost everything, including her husband. This marks the beginning of the grief process, as she attempts to come to terms with the situation by choosing to stay alone in her hut. This is her way of avoiding heartbreak amid the harshness of life as a widow, having her livestock stolen, and facing an attempted assault by a gang of thieves.

Anger of Marlina in Film Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts

In the second act, Marlina has no choice but to confront the reality that she has lost everything, including her honor as a woman. Grieving Marlina projects anger and other negative emotions due to the events that have befallen her. In the film, Marlina displays actions that contrast with the customs of Sumba society in their acceptance of grief. She exhibits extraordinary courage, a departure from the usual portrayal of Sumba women or widows who are often seen as weak and powerless. With confidence, Marlina daringly swings her machete to decapitate the leader of the robbers who dared to disrespect her.

Picture. 2

In this stage, the film depicts Marlina's long journey in seeking justice. In this scene, the traditional life of the Sumba community is showcased, evident through limited transportation access and relatively deserted road conditions. Visually and through sound, the film portrays the arid and remote conditions, far from urban life. Throughout this sequence, the film illustrates a woman carrying a human head, symbolizing her quest for justice against the authorities.

Bargaining of Marlina in Film Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts

Picture. 3

In this stage, the grief process is in the phase of placing hope on the experienced condition. Marlina attempts to bargain and negotiate to face the reality of losing everything she possesses. Marlina embarks on a journey as far as possible to seek justice, bringing the head of the robber she killed to the police station in pursuit of justice.

Depression of Marlina in Film Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts

The depression stage is a phase for those grieving to realize that the facts cannot be changed. Therefore, they fall into despair or depression..

Picture. 4

In the third act of the film, it depicts a situation where the enforcement of the law is somewhat challenging in Sumba. When women are harassed and their property is seized, the authorities do not consider it urgent to address the issue immediately. Marlina becomes depressed and loses direction in her efforts to seek justice.

Acceptence of Marlina in Film Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts

Picture. 5

For those experiencing grief, this stage is about accepting reality. They learn to adapt and accept the grief they are going through. Despite feeling uncomfortable with the loss of everything she had and the social conditions imposed on her, Marlina cannot change the past. The fourth act marks the end of Marlina's struggle as she is about to

give birth to her child. In these four acts, Mouly Surya presents it skillfully to reveal Marlina's identity, which holds many mysteries in the film.

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Mouly Surya drew inspiration from Garin Nugroho's story, who is the theme himself. It's a tale of a woman's attempt to awaken women in Indonesia, urging them not to stay silent when their dignity is degraded or violated by men. This is evident in the portrayal of the main female character, Marlina, a resilient and strong-willed woman. She refuses to stand idly by as her livestock is taken by a group of robbers who also intend to assault her honor. Marlina defends herself by killing the robbers, showing her refusal to succumb to the will of men and bravely resisting.

The scriptwriter of the film "Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts" states that this depiction coincides with the increasing incidents of violence against women in Indonesia. In 2017, there were 406,178 cases recorded due to violence against women (KTP). This number increased compared to the previous year, which was 348,466. Some data comes from cases handled by the District Court/Islamic Court, gathered from three sources: [1] 392,610 cases from the District Court/Islamic Court, [2] 13,568 cases from partner institutions of the National Commission on Violence Against Women, [3] 415 cases directly reported to the National Commission on Violence Against Women, with 367 cases through telephone, and [4] 191 cases through letters and 261 cases through electronic mail from the Monitoring Sub-Commission handling complaints.

Based on the collected data, the most prominent type of violence against women is domestic violence (KDRT/RP) in the personal domain, reaching 71% (9,637 cases) (National Commission on Violence Against Women, 2019). The researcher identified grief in this film depicted through Marlina's unusual resistance against a group of robbers invading her home. Apart from showcasing women's lives and struggles under a patriarchal system, the film also illustrates various forms of sexual violence commonly experienced by women. Through the grief of this film, the story aims to convey a message to all women out there not to be afraid and to dare to take risks in any situation, even if they are alone. Marlina bravely resists. Therefore, "Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts" conveys its message to Indonesian society about the importance of awareness of gender equality and the significance of obtaining equal rights for both women and men in social and legal aspects.

Conclusion

The film "Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts" depicts the character of Marlina facing the process of grief in constructing the film. The harsh reality of life in rural Indonesian society in Sumba serves as the foundation for the film "Marlina The Murderer in Four Acts," which is built with an interpretation of Indonesian ideology through the powerful art and grand culture that ultimately brings forth the concept of the essence of understanding nationalism through the character 'Marlina' as a representation of marginalized Indonesian women in challenging the nation's reality.

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