

Radical feminist heroines: Gender philosophy in Joko Anwar's three films

Anton Sutandio 

Universitas Kristen Maranatha, Bandung, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This article discusses three films directed by Joko Anwar between 2015 and 2019: *A Copy of My Mind* (2015), *Satan's Slave* (2017), and *Impetigore* (2019) within the context of gender philosophy to address the gender issues in the film. Joko Anwar is a well-known Indonesian director whose works are box-office hits and range from horror to drama, but typically feature marginalized members of society, especially women. *Impetigore* was the first horror film to receive *Citra* Award, the highest film award in the Indonesian film industry, as the best film of 2020. He was also the winner in the Best Director category based on the same film. These three films were chosen for qualitative analysis, as each features a major female character struggling against societal norms. This issue is examined by closely focusing on the films' cinematography and mise-en-scène, including the shot types, camera angles, framing, and dialogue. The obtained findings reveal Joko Anwar's gender philosophy that champions non-normative female characters willing to challenge the accepted norms and closely aligns with the concepts promoted by radical feminism. While his work emphasizes the universal value system of patriarchy as the source of oppression and subordination toward women, the main female protagonists' performance continuously reproduces double meaning in the context of challenging patriarchal and societal norms.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 3 September 2023
Revised 18 December 2023
Accepted 23 July 2024

KEYWORDS

Joko Anwar; radical feminism; horror; Indonesian cinema

SUBJECTS

Filmmaking and Postproduction; Film Studies

1. Introduction

The issue of women's representation in the Indonesian media industry, including in the world of television and cinema, has always been a fascinating study to follow. The representation of women in the Indonesian film industry is often characterized by gender bias and certain assumptions that men are better than female in certain departments. This is what gender philosophy or philosophy of gender is about: to address the problem of gender inequality from a philosophical perspective. Women in film are often there to sweeten things up and highlight body curves or parts of a certain body, and they are willing to accept that their acting is less important than their physical appearance (Irawan, 2014). Hannah Al Rashid, an Indonesian actress, states that the Indonesian film industry has not yet reached the ideal level of gender equality, even though there are more women now sitting in the director's, producer's, and crew's chairs...because the stakeholders and decision-makers are still male-dominated (Meodia, 2020). Well-known female directors such as Nia Dinata (*Arisan!*, *Berbagi Suami*, *Ini Kisah Tiga Dara*), Mouly Surya (*Marlina si Pembunuh dalam Empat Babak*, *Fiksi*), Kamila Andini (*The Mirror Never Lies*, *Yuni*), Lola Amaria (*Betina*, *Minggu Pagi di Victoria Park*), and Djenar Maesa Ayu (*Mereka Bilang*, *Saya Monyet*, *Hush*) have attempted to put much emphasis on women representation or other minorities in their films, yet because they are minorities in the male-dominated field, their works are often underappreciated by general audience.

Most Indonesian male directors are aware of the under/misrepresentation of females in films, for example, Hanung Bramantyo often depicts the struggles of women living under a patriarchal system, such as in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, and *Kartini* among others. Another male director, Riri Riza, also raised this issue for example in *Bebas*, *Eliana Eliana*, and *Athirah*. Garin Nugroho, the

CONTACT Anton Sutandio ✉ anton.sutandio@lang.maranatha.edu 📧 Universitas Kristen Maranatha, Bandung, Indonesia

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

internationally well-known Indonesian director, is also concerned about women's representation in his films, for example in *Opera Jawa*. Many other male directors have the same concerns, however, among other male directors, Joko Anwar is the one who, I believe, consistently created distinctive female protagonists that separate her characters from other typical female characters, especially in his horror films. Compared to other genres, the horror genre often delves into topics surrounding power, gender, and sexuality, thus it makes the horror genre more appealing to analyze when it comes to gender relations. Not to mention, the horror genre in general often have women characters whose roles are either as victims or damsel in distress. When there are strong and resourceful female characters, their traits are often likened to those of men. Joko Anwar's female protagonists are non-normative although they still carry the burden of patriarchal power that surrounds them, and this is the reason why they are interesting to discuss. Among his films, the depiction of non-normative female protagonists is mostly evident in his three films which happen to be dominated by horror, except for the first one: *A Copy of My Mind* (Anwar, 2015), *Satan's Slave* (Anwar, 2017), and *Impetigore* (Anwar, 2019).

Joko Anwar (Figure 1), is a highly versatile and dynamic 47-year-old Indonesian film director, producer, screenwriter, and actor who can easily switch from one genre to another. Yet, the characteristic that permeates all his films is the focus on the important issues happening in Indonesia. This perception is confirmed by the statement Joko Anwar made in one of his interviews: "films that I directed, whatever the genre, usually respond to Indonesian political or social issues. One of the most important issues that I raised in my films is women issue" (Mario, 2020). Clearly aware that there is something wrong with women's representation in Indonesian cinema, Anwar "subverts societal norms and expectations...[and]... puts women at the heart of his stories" (Raslan, 2020, para.5).

The fact that he strongly challenges the societal norms that are dominated by patriarchal power through the portrayal of his female characters shows Anwar's unwavering commitment to the movement aimed at profound structural changes in gender relations. Given that Anwar considers himself a feminist, it is not surprising that many of his films feature non-normative female characters, including the three films in focus of this article—*A Copy of My Mind* (Anwar, 2015), *Satan's Slave* (Anwar, 2017), and *Impetigore* (Anwar, 2019)—in which the main female protagonist is played Tara Basro (Figure 2). Although Tara is a big star and often gets a leading role in Anwar's films, she is humble and always attends all auditions (Soraya, 2020, para. 6).

Anwar is also known for his portrayal of father or male figures in his films as absent or unreliable (KumparanHITS, 2017). This is a deliberate choice, as it allows his female characters to exercise greater control over their destiny, rather than being seen as weak creatures that need the protection of men (KumparanHITS, 2017). This strategy is a direct challenge to "the appropriation of women by men within

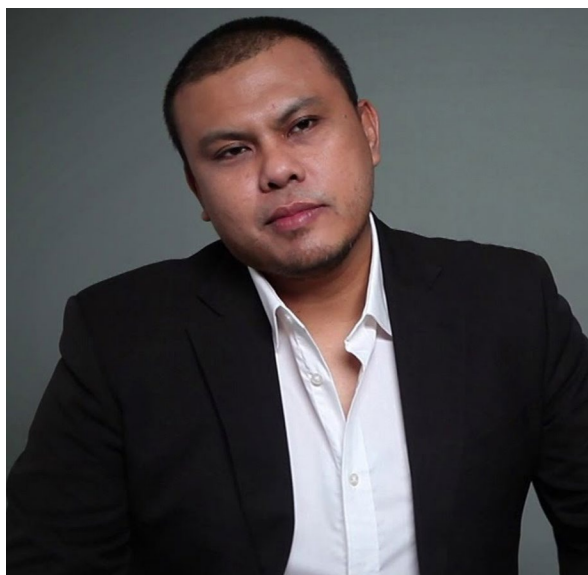


Figure 1. Indonesian director, Joko Anwar (MLDSpot, 2016).



Figure 2. Indonesian actress, Tara Basro (Redaksi, 2023).

the framework of a patriarchy ... [which according to radical feminism] ... is manifested in the control over their bodies, including their sexuality and motherhood" (Cottais & Feldner, 2021, p. 3).

Specifically, the issue of motherhood and fertility is Anwar's "trademark". Anwar often depicts pregnant women in his films, and most of them face suffering and even unthinkable events. In *Janji Joni*, a pregnant woman has to give birth in the taxi on the way to the hospital. In *Kala*, a pregnant woman is hit by a truck. In *Forbidden Door*, there is a depiction of statues of pregnant women which stomach is filled with stillborn fetus or baby. In *Modus Anomali*, a pregnant woman is stabbed to death. In *Gundala*, the antagonists inject abnormal serum to pregnant women, then in *Impetigore*, pregnant women give birth to skinless babies. In *Satan's Slave 2*, a pregnant woman dies in a lift accident. One may think that his obsession with pregnant women and how he treats them in his films are un-feminist or even establishing the patriarchal power. However, I argue that the continuous appearance of pregnant women in many of his films suggest otherwise, that he has a strong concern about them and when these women face tragic events, those scenes will raise awareness of the audience about the issue of gender inequality and the flaw of patriarchy that often simplifies women's role to motherhood and nurturing. In sum, Anwar is fully aware of the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of women in contemporary Indonesian film and his work directly challenges the dominant patriarchal system that also constructs the societal norms on gender issues.

A Copy of My Mind (2015) is a drama with a political background that tells the story of Sari, a young woman who works in a cheap beauty salon and seeks solace in watching pirated DVDs. One day, after buying a DVD with terrible subtitles, she complains to the seller, Alex, who also does the subtitling. Gradually, they develop fondness for each other. In the course of the story, Sari becomes accidentally involved in a political intrigue when she is told by her boss to provide facial treatment for a female inmate convicted for political corruption. The inmate happens to have a collection of DVDs in her cell and one day Sari takes one of her DVDs, unaware that it contains a recording of the inmate's relationship with an assistant of a political figure who is running for the presidency. From thereon, Sari's life is in danger as she is threatened by a powerful adversary who is trying to bury the proof. She manages to survive the ordeal although she loses Alex in the process.

Satan's Slave (2017) is a gothic horror film set in the early 1980s that is loosely based on the original *Satan's Slave* (1980) directed by Sisworo Gautama Putra. It revolves around the family of seven that consists of a grandmother, a father, a mother, three sons, and one daughter, Rini, the oldest child and the main female protagonist. As the mother suffers from a mysterious illness that prevents her from talking or walking, she lies in her bed and uses a bell to call her family when she needs something. Due to her mother's incapacity, Rini not only does all the household chores and cares for the entire family, she is also the breadwinner as her father is jobless and is dependent on his daughter. As the story unfolds, the viewers learn that the mother and father were unable to have children and became members of a satanic cult due to their desire for offspring. Their pact with the cult granted them four children, but also demanded that they sacrifice their youngest when he reaches a certain age. Unable to cope with this

loss, the mother eventually dies and returns to haunt the family. The film ends with the family running away from their house when they are attacked by the cult members.

Impetigore (2019) is a horror film that deals with mysticism and a tradition of *wayang* (leather puppets) performance. The narrative revolves around the character Maya, a young, independent, and orphaned female who struggles to survive in the metropolitan city, Jakarta. She takes odd jobs to meet her basic needs and when she learns that her late parents have left her a property in her home village, she is determined to go there and claim her inheritance. Upon arrival, she finds out that all newborn babies in the village are killed in an attempt to lift a curse that has plagued its residents due to the secret that involves her parents.

2. Method

The method used in this research is a qualitative method in which data is collected from the three films analyzed. The data collection method is done by watching the three films multiple times with a focus on how the films represent the female protagonists through cinematography and *mise-en-scène*. Cinematography is simply defined as camerawork that comprises camera angle, camera movement, and camera type. While *mise-en-scène* is defined as everything placed inside the frame including color, lighting, costumes, actors, dialogues, music, special effects, and props. The collected data in the form of dialogues and screenshots are then analyzed closely against the radical feminism theory.

Radical feminism "...is a feminist theory course that starts from the idea of conflict between the sexes as a fundamental conflict, and oppression against women as a direct implication of patriarchy" (Vukoicic, 2013). This theory is predicated on the idea that all social behavior is the product of limitations and coercion. It further contends that while certain types of interacting constraints exist in every social system, repression is not always the inevitable outcome. Thus, "Radical feminists...insist that women's oppression is of a systemic nature: patriarchy is a system of oppression, found in all societies and at all times" (Cottais & Feldner, 2021). This directly relates to the Indonesian societies where patriarchy is dominant and oppression or subordination of women is maintained due to some supposedly inherent characteristics of women such as obligatory motherhood and reproductive obligation. Not to mention the social construction of femininity and female sexuality and the existence of male-favored institutions such as the traditional family models. Radical feminism sees this as the root of women's oppression and it believes that to end the oppression, things to do among others are rejection of traditional gender roles, changing of construction of women in media, and the struggle for reproductive freedom and freedom from obligatory motherhood.

To get a better understanding on the films' philosophical perspective on gender issue, the discussion will focus on two aspects: the socioeconomic and marital status, and the gender stereotypes and non-stereotypes. The first one, socioeconomic and marital status are pertained to all the three aspects mentioned above: the traditional gender roles, construction of women in the films, and the issue of obligatory motherhood. By looking at the depiction of the female protagonists from these two aspects, the gender representation and relationship will be more apparent. The gender stereotypes and non-stereotypes elaboration is also prominent to compare and contrast the portrayal of the female protagonists against the patriarchal norms of how a woman should behave within the traditional gender hierarchy.

3. Discussion

When analyzing the three female protagonists in the aforementioned films, focus is first given to their (1) socioeconomic and marital status, before addressing the (2) gender stereotypes and non-stereotypes. This approach is adopted in order to provide a clearer understanding of Anwar's gender philosophy that reflects the key concepts of radical feminism. In the context of this research, status is defined as "a position within the social structure, which is shaped according to various criteria, based on evaluations of the dignity and reputation of the individual" (Ozgul & Yuksel, 2019, p. 1). In the analyses, the term "socioeconomic status" is mainly used to denote "social status according to role, and social status according to prestige" (Farkas, 2022, p. 425). Likewise, marital status is classified as married, single, or divorced to reflect the socially

accepted categorization. Finally, stereotypes refer to the “characteristics that are commonly believed and shared between people of a certain culture” (Osman, 2021, p. 341) which usually carry negative connotations. Accordingly, gender stereotypes are defined “as women’s characters and skills aimed to steer people’s behaviour, depending on their gender” (Osman, 2021, p. 341). They are in focus of this investigation as “Nearly everywhere, Indonesian gender ideology emphasizes men as community leaders, decision makers, and mediators with the outside world, while women are the backbone of the home and family values” (Dauley, 2017, p. 6). In addition, according to Syarif (2022), “the most common stereotypes of women in Indonesia ... are females are supposed to cook and do house work, and females are not as strong as male.... The third dominant stereotype in Indonesia is females are supposed to have ‘clean’ jobs such as teachers, nurses, secretaries, and librarians” (p. 106). Thus, in the Indonesian society, women are primarily seen as wives or mothers, as they are deemed to be more emotional and physically weaker than men and are perceived as better suited for nurturing roles. This treatment of women as subordinate to men is challenged by radical feminism based on the premise that oppression of women by patriarchy is the most fundamental and universal form of domination (Bryson, 1992). Accordingly, the portrayal of gender non-stereotypes in Anwar’s three films is also examined, as his female protagonists do not follow the commonly accepted societal norms and serve as a vehicle for his criticism of Indonesian society.

3.1. Socioeconomic and marital status

Similar to most places in the world, socioeconomic status in the Indonesian context is based on a person’s social standing that derives from their job title, position, and income. Accordingly, due to “the patriarchal values that are still greatly rooted and dominating in the sociocultural life in Indonesian society” (Ginano, 2022, p. 1), Indonesian women still face obstacles in many life domains. Their socioeconomic status is particularly impacted by the social norms which dictate that:

women should always be obedient and focus on domestic work. Domestic work refers to women should and must only manage household and become a full-time mother. Their responsibilities and purposes are to be a mother, do household chores such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, etc., and taking care of her husband and her children. Women should only become a supporter to her husband and that having a job should not be more important than being a mother and a wife.

(Ginano, 2022, p. 3)

The underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women in society is reflected in the Indonesian film industry, as there are hundreds of male directors, but fewer than 30 female directors. This disparity is recognized by Anwar, who has repeatedly called for a radical change as Indonesian film industry needs women’s perspective. This sentiment is shared by Mouly Surya, one of the female Indonesian directors, who argues that when talking about a director, there should not be a gender distinction (Suryowati, 2020). Yet, the same patriarchal domination is also apparent in the representation of women in the films as they often get negative stereotypes. Women are considered only selling beauty, sexiness, and behavior that only men want when appearing on the big screen (Irawan, 2014). In addition, when female protagonists display unacceptable behaviors (within the social norms constructed by males) on film, they will be deemed morally corrupted and would be punished or corrected by the powerful patriarch. This plot line is adopted in many pre-reformation Indonesian films in which non-normative female characters are “tamed” by the dominant patriarchal figure to restore “order”.

In the three films in focus of this analysis, Anwar offers different portrayals that challenge these social norms. However, due to the pervasive patriarchal domination in Indonesian society, he cannot escape the gender stereotypes entirely. Anwar’s *Satan’s Slave*, depicts the main female protagonist, Rini, as a single young woman from a low-class family living in an old house in the suburbs that belongs to the fraternal grandmother. Rini struggles to make ends meet as her father is unemployed and her mother is gravely ill. We also learn that, before she got ill, her mother was a well-known singer and was thus the breadwinner of the family. The family’s longing for those better times is shown in the film by having them play her old records or listening to her songs on the radio from time to time. However, when a strange illness renders her bedridden, Rini must drop out of college to start earning income to support the family. As the eldest, Rini not only works but also does all the chores, takes care of her three younger



Figure 3. Rini (middle) talks to her youngest brother Ian, while her other brother Tony is watching (Dea, 2019).

siblings, her ill mother, and her wheelchair-bound grandmother (Figure 3). Still, when the father suggests that they should sell the house and move to a smaller one, Rini refuses as it is the grandmother's house. In contrast, the original *Satan's Slave* (1980) features wealthy family with the father as the breadwinner. This difference further highlights Anwar's desire to give voice to the underrepresented and marginalized people through his films. In this particular case, the low socioeconomic status of the family is also reflected in their low social standing, as they have no influence in the society and thus no prestige, which faded along with the worsening condition of their once famous mother.

The main female protagonist in *A Copy of My Mind*, Sari, is also portrayed as a single young woman from a low-class family. She works in a small beauty salon and lives in a dorm room in a densely populated area of Jakarta. This is emphasized in one of the scenes when the camera follows Sari walking home from her workplace. The cinematography features many shallow spaces to convey the constrained feeling brought upon by living in a densely populated area. In other scenes, Sari is shown following her daily routine such as cooking a bowl of instant noodles for dinner and queueing to use the public bathroom in the morning. While the viewers are not given any information on Sari's educational or familial background, she is likely a poorly educated migrant who came to Jakarta in search of a better life. Thus, as a single young female, she must work hard to fulfil her daily needs, including accepting a side job that later lands her in a dangerous situation. Still, she dreams of having a home theater so she can watch films, which is her hobby, more comfortably, suggesting that she is rather simple-minded and unrealistic about her life prospects. Maya, the major female character in *Impetigore*, is also portrayed as a young, single woman who belongs to the lower class, as she works in a variety of odd low-paid jobs, ranging from toll booth attendant to selling clothing in a traditional market in Jakarta. Her socioeconomic condition is also conveyed in the opening scene of the film's official trailer shown in Figure 4, where she is seen walking along a busy city street, holding some clothes that she is trying to sell. As she desperately needs more capital, she decides to return to her home village upon hearing that her late parents have left her a house. Unbeknownst to her, her return to the village will almost cost her life, due to its sinister history that relates to her parents.

As indicated by these brief descriptions, Rini, Sari, and Maya are single young women of low socioeconomic status and represent those that are marginalized in the Indonesian society. They are the main film protagonists, as Anwar is keen to challenge the societal norms, and does so by portraying them as single independent women without dominant patriarchal figures in their lives. All three struggle to survive the hardships of life but are determined to persevere, thus aligning with the struggle of radical feminists to be free from men's domination and reverse the subordination of women in society.

3.2. Gender stereotypes

Despite Anwar's effort to feature non-conformist female protagonists in his films, there are still some lingering gender stereotypes, one of which relates to the "feminine" or low-paying jobs his characters hold. Yet, this choice also highlights that, in Indonesia, "women are always left behind in the economic,



Figure 4. Maya walking down a busy city street.

educational, health, occupational, and political fields. One of the causes is the patriarchal culture that developed in indigenous Indonesian society" (Larasati, 2021, p. 446). In particular, there is a clear demarcation between "femininity and masculinity. The gender stereotype is having much influence of patriarchy cultural background. This patriarchy set a segregation on gender stereotype which clearly define in two different stereotypes, femininity on female and masculinity on male" (Sari, 2022, p. 281). Accordingly, the portrayal of the three female protagonists serves as a confirmation of the prevailing stereotype (which states that women, especially those that are not well-educated, have fewer job opportunities), and as a way for Anwar to give voice to the marginalized or less fortunate.

In *Satan's Slave*, for example, Rini must abandon her studies because she has to work to support her family once her mother falls ill. However, her younger brother who is in high school still goes to school. This disparity highlights the bias in the Indonesian society that gives precedence to males, which is reflected in the way sons are favored over daughters.

Most [Indonesian] parents underestimate the empowerment of their daughter and place a lot of hope in their sons in term of the family's dignity... For many parents, the important education that should be attained by girls is lessons about how to manage household properly. No matter how old the girl is, if she has been graduated from elementary school and is capable of managing household tasks, she is allowed to be married. (Fachrunnisa, 2020, p. 350)

As Rini is aware of this stereotype, she sacrifices her education for the sake of her brother's without any complaints. She also takes on all domestic duties, while constantly looking for ways to earn money. The family's situation becomes more desperate when the father abandons them, leaving Rini as the head of the family.

In *A Copy of My Mind*, Sari works in a beauty salon, which emphasizes her femininity but also her marginalized position, given that, especially in developing countries, "Workers in beauty salons, hairdressers, and barbershops are marginalized in terms of their economic status, their ability to exercise their right to organize, and the extent to which they obtain their rights as per labor legislation" (Taha, 2023, p. 14). As all the salon workers and customers are women, the film portrays the beauty culture as one of the feminine stereotypes in which women are depicted in mainstream media as body products user especially beauty products such as body cleaning, cosmetics, and fashions stuff (Sitoresmi & Hariyatmi, 2014). Sari's decision to work in another beauty salon, albeit a fancier one, suggests that she cannot move to a different field of work due to her limited skills and work experience. In the new place, she must start at the lowest position and her status is further undermined by the physical abuse she suffers from the beauty salon's male supervisor who becomes angry when she asks him to let her handle the customers. This scene sadly reflects the treatment of many female workers as, in a survey conducted by Never Okay Project and the ILO in 2022 in Indonesia involving 1,173 female respondents, "70.93% [stated that they] have experienced or have become a victim of one of the forms of violence and harassment at work" (N.n., 2022, para. 3).

Maya, who is the main female protagonist in *Impetigore*, also works odd jobs that do not require education or experience. She works night shifts as a toll gate attendant, exposing her to danger from

humans as well as traffic pollution, given that toll gate attendants have a risk factor for lung function disorders as a result of exposure in the form of vehicle exhaust which is quite high (Fithri, 2017). These dangers are shown in the film, as she experiences physical abuse from one of the tollway regulars who tries to hurt her.

Another stereotypical aspect that particularly relates to gender relations is the presence of male characters that come to the rescue of the female characters although these women do not entirely depend on them. This template where the male protagonist saves the day first emerged in the New Order era and has persisted to this day, even though to a far lesser extent than before due to the growing awareness of gender issues. This new trend is exemplified in *A Copy of My Mind*, whose main male protagonist is Alex, a closed captioner of pirated DVDs who forms a relationship with Sari. At some point, Sari unintentionally steals a DVD that contains evidence of corruption involving a well-known politician. To force her to give up the DVD, some thugs abduct Alex, but as Sari does not get the message in time Alex is executed. In *Satan's Slave*, Rini and her family are saved from zombies at the end of the film when Budiman Syailendra, a senior journalist who investigates mystical matters, comes to their rescue. Rini drives the whole family to safety, except for the youngest brother who is taken by the cult. Similarly, in *Impetigore*, Maya finally manages to run away from the cursed village when she hitchhikes a passing car driven by a man. In all three cases, a male character becomes a kind of "savior" even though the major female characters have much more significant roles.

The third gender stereotype relates to the concept of nurture that is often associated with women. As noted by Vanhanen (2022), "In most societies women are predominantly seen as nurturers. It is implicitly expected that women will care for the young, the sick and the elderly. Women help others grow, they bring them back to health, respond to their needs and offer support. A woman is expected to be nurturing" (para. 1). The character Rini in *Satan's Slave* embodies these nurturing traits as she must give precedence to the needs of others relative to her own, such as going to college. She takes care of everyone in the family by cooking for them, tending to her ill mother and old grandmother, and educating her younger brothers, as well as by becoming the breadwinner when the father leaves them to find work. Although one of the younger brothers is already a young adult, most of these responsibilities fall on Rini, not only because she is the eldest, but because she is a woman and is supposed to be nurturing.

In *Impetigore*, the nurturing aspect of Maya is shown through her empathy toward the pregnant women in her home village, whose presence is yet another example of this common stereotype. In general, 'women are depicted as more interpersonally oriented and empathetic than men' (Loffler & Greitemeyer, 2021, p. 220). As the village is cursed, all babies are born skinless and are killed by the dominant male character. This prompts Maya to plot with one of the pregnant women to fight against this cruel practice. She is helped in this endeavor by the ghosts of two children that were sacrificed in the same manner, allowing her to establish the cause of the curse as well as learn how to break it. The fact that the children's spirits come to her aid emphasizes her nurturing nature.

Sari in *A Copy of My Mind* shows this nurturing aspect through her relationship with Alex. Even though they barely know each other, Sari gradually develops a sense of responsibility for his well-being. Thus, when she cannot find Alex (who, unbeknownst to her has been captured and killed by the thugs), she becomes hysterical. Sari's nurturing nature is also evident near the end of the film when she is seen to be tending to the senile woman who manages Alex's boarding house. Now that Alex has disappeared, rather than running away, she decides to stay to keep her memory of Alex alive and take care of the old woman.

3.3. Gender non-stereotypes

The main non-stereotype in all three films analyzed here derives from Anwar's decision to depict his female protagonists as single and independent, even though in Indonesia women are still expected to get married and have children as their primary goal in life. During the New Order regime, separation between public and private spheres was obvious, as men were expected to occupy the public sphere whereas the private/domestic sphere was reserved for women. Accordingly, in most families, mother is still seen as the organizer of the home while the father is the breadwinner and protector, and is thus superior. Accordingly, in the society, "The complete women were the ones who became mother,

specifically defined as the ones who give birth to a child but also with the roles in the domestic space” (Udasmoro, 2017, p. 295). These views are challenged by Anwar’s female protagonists, as Rini is the breadwinner and protector of her family even though she must also do all the domestic chores. In *Impetigore*, Maya independently struggles for her livelihood, and even her biological father, who epitomizes the patriarchal power, commits suicide at the end of the film.

Sari is the only one that has a boyfriend but she is still portrayed as stoic and capable of controlling her emotions. For example, when Alex disappears and is presumed dead, rather than submitting to her sadness, she devises a plan to fight back. She gives the DVD containing the corruption proof to Alex’s employer who thinks that it contains just another film. The employer then unknowingly makes multiple copies and sells the DVDs to the public. The film does not show what happens to the corrupt officials, but rather ends with a close-up of Sari smiling while standing at the balcony of Alex’s boarding house. In one scene (which features in the film’s trailer, shown in Figure 5) when someone asks Sari if she has a boyfriend, she replies that she is fine living alone. This strongly suggests Anwar’s intent to highlight the non-stereotypical portrayal of Sari as an independent woman. Her response shows that she is not actively looking for someone to depend on.

Another non-stereotypical portrayal of Sari relates to her sexuality, as it challenges its conceptualization by radical feminists as an instrument of patriarchal domination. In the film, Sari has casual sex with Alex multiple times and often takes a dominant role, emphasizing gender equality. Stereotypically, “women who engage in casual sex have low self-esteem” (Krems et al., 2021, p. 871), and in the traditional stereotypes about sex and gender, “women [are perceived] as docile, passive, sexually modest, and emotionally sensitive” (Siegel & Meunier, 2019, p. 333). Sari is not modest either, and can be seen in one of the scenes asking Alex to play a porn movie while they are having sex. Sari is also portrayed as a person who has high self-esteem, as she demonstrates confidence when she tells her boss that she does not need training to do facial treatments because she already has the required skills and experience. Her confidence is also evident from her decision to release the corruption proof DVD through Alex’s employer.

All female characters are also portrayed as resilient and resourceful, as they navigate their lives and overcome obstacles they face. These traits are non-normative, given that the patriarchal society expects women to be timid and submissive. Rini in *Satan’s slave* manages to survive the ordeal by being brave and protective towards her family, and assumes the role typically occupied by a male head of household. During that time, the children face terror from ghosts and zombies that try to take the youngest child, Ian. As the eldest, Rini does all she can to protect her siblings from the evil power, even though she feels afraid and terrorized as well. Her resilience and resourcefulness are evident from the way she and her younger brother keep trying to find out what has happened to their family. They look at old photo albums, they consult with journalists of mystery magazines, and they ask for help from a local ustadz (Islamic clerk) when their house is invaded by evil spirits.



Figure 5. Sari in *A Copy of My Mind* responding to her friend’s question about whether she has a man or not (Anwar, 2016).

Sari in *A Copy of My Mind* shows her resilience and resourcefulness when she tries to find a better job by applying to a posher beauty salon, and especially when she strategically manipulates the shady pirated DVD company to disseminate the proof of corruption of some government officials. In a way, her relationship with Alex also shows her resourcefulness because it allows her to move in with him and stop paying rent for the dorms. Still, when asked if she has a boyfriend, she replies that she is fine living alone, indicating that she does not need or want to depend on anyone.

Maya in *Impetigore* shows the same traits as she accepts tiring or dangerous jobs to survive. When she goes back to her village to claim her inheritance, her resilience and resourcefulness are further demonstrated, especially when she manages to run away at the end of the film and survive despite the unthinkable conditions that relate to her past life.

The findings of the analysis of gender philosophy in Anwar's three films are summarized in the table below

Title and female protagonist	Socioeconomic status	Marital status	Gender stereotypes	Gender non-stereotypes
Satan's Slave – Rini	Low class and underprivileged	Single	Unemployed College dropout, prioritizing her brother's education Domestic work Presence of a male figure who saves them from the zombies Nurturing aspect: taking care of the family	Single, independent Resilient, resourceful Breadwinner of the family after the mother dies Protector of the family in the absence of the father
A Copy of My Mind – Sari			Low-paying job related to women (beauty salon) Subordinated at work by the male worker Presence of a boyfriend who dies protecting her Nurturing aspect: caring for Alex, the old woman, and the salon customers	Stoic Single, independent Sexually active/ can be as dominating as her boyfriend Resilient, resourceful
Impetigore – Maya			Low-paying odd jobs Presence of an unknown man in a truck that takes her to safety Nurturing aspect: care about the pregnant women and the three child spirits	Single, independent Resilient, resourceful

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the portrayal of female characters in three Anwar's films—*Satan's Slave*, *A Copy of My Mind*, and *Impetigore*—reveals the director's desire to challenge the prevailing gender stereotypes in the Indonesian society. Being a patriarchal country, Indonesia generally sees and believes women as the lesser gender. The findings strongly suggests that the issue of gender inequality in Indonesia in general and in cinema specifically, is significance. The Indonesian cinema industry is still male-dominated although the awareness of gender equality in the world of moving art is generally stronger than in other domains of life. This is evident through how Anwar intentionally undermines and belittles the patriarchal roles and at the same time uplifts and radicalizes the roles of female to give rise to a discourse of gender role change. The socioeconomic and marital status are two important aspects in Indonesian gender relations in which women often receive oppression. The socially accepted norms in which male is the breadwinner and the head of a family within a marriage institution, in addition to the reproductive demand and obligatory motherhood, put women in a disadvantage situation in term of gender relation. The patriarchal-based gender norms are set in such a way that make women to be likely dependant on their male counterpart in life, and trapped in domestic chores inside a marriage institution. Thus, the decision to discuss the gender philosophy from the two aspects is relevant and reinforcing the centrality of gender roles and power dynamics in the films discussed.

Anwar is known for his feminist views and his concern for the marginalized and underrepresented, and strives to give them voice through his films. The three female characters examined here are of low

socioeconomic status, and while they conform to some gender stereotypes they also exhibit many non-stereotypes. In that sense, they clearly convey Anwar's gender philosophy while also depicting the reality of contemporary Indonesian gender relations where patriarchal power is still dominant.

The three female protagonists are resilient and resourceful, unlike most female characters in Indonesian films. Rini in *Satan's Slave* actively does all she can to unravel the mystery shrouding the deaths in her family while doing all she can to protect her loved ones. Sari in *A Copy of My Mind* actively seeks a better job in order to have a better life, and when she is threatened by powerful opponents, she fights back by wittingly exposing the corrupt officials. Maya in *Impetigore* uses her resourcefulness to elevate her status by seeking out her inheritance, and when confronted by immense obstacles and dangers, she cleverly manages to survive against all odds.

In addition, Sari in *A Copy of My Mind* breaks the paradigm of sexuality as one of the instruments of patriarchal domination by being active and dominant when having sex with Alex. As all three female characters are single, they challenge the prevailing patriarchal norm mandating that women should be married, have children, and work in the domestic sphere. The independence of the three female protagonists is yet another gender non-stereotype, as even though they are marginalized and of low class, they are independent and are willing to work hard to survive without the help of male characters.

The discussions presented in this work also reflect the concept of radical feminism through the portrayal of the three female protagonists. First, the three films undermine the patriarchal power which, according to the radical feminism, is the source of women's subordination. The major male protagonists in the films are flawed: the father in *Satan's Slave* is unemployed, Maya's biological father in *Impetigore* commits suicide, and Sari's boyfriend Alex dies at the end, precluding the possibility of a happy ending for the couple. Second, they are all single and, according to the radical feminism, family institution can be exploited by men to oppress women. Third, their portrayal as breadwinners or independent of men in terms of fulfilling their daily needs points to a rejection of the patriarchal ideal of women as solely destined for reproduction, childrearing, and domestic chores.

In conclusion, Anwar's three films showcase his concerns regarding some social issues that he sees in the Indonesian society, particularly the gender inequality that often leads to violence against women. He challenges the common view that women are weak creatures who must obey men as their protectors, and instead creates these memorable female protagonists, fighting the long and hard fight one film at a time.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

About the author

Anton Sutandio is an associate professor at the Bachelor Programme in English, Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industries, Maranatha Christian University. He got his doctoral degree from the School of Interdisciplinary Arts, Ohio University, USA, majoring in Film and Theatre. Anton has written two books on film and numerous academic papers published in both national and international journals. His passion is in film studies and cultural studies.

ORCID

Anton Sutandio  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9125-5938>

References

- Anwar, J. (2015). *A copy of my mind*. CJ Entertainment, Lo-Fi Flicks, Prodigihouse.
- Anwar, J. (2017). *Satan's slave*. Rapi Films, CJ Entertainment, Paramount Pictures.
- Anwar, J. (2019). *Impetigore*. Netflix.

- Bryson, V. (1992). Modern radical feminism: The theory of patriarchy. In: *Feminist Political Theory*. London: Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-22284-1_11
- Cottais, C., & Feldner, C. (2021). *Radical feminism*. Retrieved from <https://igg-geo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Technical-Sheet-Radical-feminism.pdf>
- Dauley, E. (2017). Gender roles (statuses) and Indonesian woman. *Jurnal VISION*, XI(11), 1–16. <http://jurnaltarbiyah.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/vision/article/view/165/144>
- Dea, G. (2019). *Pengabdian Setan review: Menegangkan walau cakupan kecil (Satan's Slaves review: Thrilling even though the coverage is small)*. Cultura. Retrieved from <https://www.cultura.id/pengabdian-setan-review>
- Fachrunnisa, R. (2020). Education of Indonesian girls: The outlook of discrimination, rights, and the impact on society. *KnE Social Sciences*, 4(10), 349–359. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v4i10.7422>
- Farkas, Z. (2022). Social position and social status: An institutional and relational sociological conception. *Human Studies*, 45(3), 417–445. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-022-09640-8>
- Fithri, N. K. (2017). Analisis faktor yang mempengaruhi gangguan fungsi paru pada pekerja penjaga pintu tol Tangerang Karawaci (Analysis of factors that affect lung function disorders in Tangerang Karawaci toll gate attendants). *Jurnal INOHIM*, 5(1), 74–78. https://digilib.esaunggul.ac.id/public/UEU-Journal-19702-11_1108.pdf
- Ginano, R. S. P. (2022). *The role of patriarchy values in Indonesia's sociocultural life, resulting in women's quota in political participation to be hindered*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359999649_The_role_of_patriarchy_values_in_Indonesia's_sociocultural_life_resulting_in_women's_quota_in_political_participation_to_be_hindered
- Irawan, R. E. (2014). Representasi perempuan dalam industri sinema. *Humaniora*, 5(1), 1–8. Retrieved from <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/167169-ID-representasi-perempuan-dalam-industri-si.pdf> <https://doi.org/10.21512/humaniora.v5i1.2975>
- Krems, J. A., Ko, A., Moon, J. W., Varnum, & Michael, E. W. (2021). Lay beliefs about gender and sexual behavior: First evidence for a pervasive, robust (but seemingly unfounded) stereotype. *Psychological Science*, 32(6), 871–889. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797620983829>
- KumparanHITS. (2017). *Perempuan: Kegelisahan terdalam Joko Anwar (Women: Joko Anwar's deepest anxiety)*. Kumparan.Com. Retrieved from <https://kumparan.com/kumparanhits/perempuan-kegelisahan-terdalam-joko-anwar/full>
- Larasati, N. P. A. (2021). Gender inequality in Indonesia: Facts and legal analysis. *Law Research Review Quarterly*, 7(4), 445–458. <https://doi.org/10.15294/lrrq.v7i4.48170>
- Löffler, C. S., & Greitemeyer, T. (2021). Are women the more empathetic gender? The effects of gender role expectations. *Current Psychology*, 42(1), 220–231. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-020-01260-8>
- Meodia, A. (2020). *Hannah Al Rashid bicara soal kesetaraan gender di industri film*. Antaranews.Com. Retrieved from <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/1437984/hannah-al-rashid-bicara-soal-kesetaraan-gender-di-industri-film>
- MLDSpot. (2016). *Joko Anwar; apapun yang berkaitan dalam film, dibabat habis! (Joko Anwar; anything related to the film, cleared away!)*. MLDSpot.Com. Retrieved from <https://www.mldspot.com/trending/joko-anwar-apapun-yang-berkaitan-dalam-film-dibabat-habis>
- N.n. (2022). *Indonesian workers are still vulnerable to violence and harassment at work*. International Labour Organization. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/jakarta/info/public/pr/WCMS_856962/lang-en/index.htm
- Osman, S. (2021). Preservice teachers' perception of gender stereotype beliefs and practices at Tumu College of Education. *Ghana. Journal of Advances in Education and Philosophy*, 5(11), 340–349. <https://doi.org/10.36348/sjodr.2021.v06i11.002>
- Ozgul, M., & Yuksel, S. (2019). The social status of the teaching profession: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Teacher Education and Educators*, 8(2), 183–203. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1227825.pdf>
- Raslan, K. (2020, January 6). Joko Anwar, Indonesian cinema's man of the moment, puts women at the heart of his stories. *South China Morning Post*. Retrieved from https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/3044773/joko-anwar-indonesian-cinemas-man-moment-puts-women-heart-his?module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article&campaign=3044773
- Redaksi, T. (2023). *Intip 7 potret Tara Basro yang selalu cantik meski gak pakai makeup (Take a peek at 7 portraits of Tara Basro, who is always beautiful even when she doesn't wear makeup)*. VOI. Retrieved from <https://voi.id/lifestyle/265704/intip-7-potret-tara-basro-yang-selalu-cantik-meski-gak-pakai-makeup>
- Sari, D. R. (2022). I'm a man, I'm a nurse": Breaking strong gender stereotype towards evocative personal narrative. *English Language & Literature International Conference*, 277–286. Retrieved from <https://jurnal.unimus.ac.id/index.php/ELLIC/article/view/9659/6251>
- Siegel, K., & Meunier, E. (2019). Traditional sex and gender stereotypes in the relationships of non-disclosing behaviorally bisexual men. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 48(1), 333–345. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-018-1226-3>
- Sitoresmi, U., & Hariyatmi, S. (2014). The portrait of women stereotyping in Indonesia as depicted in Indonesian television commercials. *Jurnal Widya Wacana*, 9(1), 1–5. Retrieved from <https://ejurnal.unisri.ac.id/index.php/widyawacana/article/view/944>
- Soraya, S. (2020). *Alasan Tara Basro sering main di filmnya, Joko Anwar: Dia nggak pernah merasa bintang besar (Reasons for Tara Basro often stars in his films, Joko Anwar: She never feels like a big star)*. Kapanlagi.Com. <https://www.kapanlagi.com/showbiz/film/indonesia/alasan-tara-basro-sering-main-di-filmnya-joko-anwar-dia-nggak-pernah-merasa-bintang-besar-ce25a1.html>

- Suryowati, E. (2020, November 14). Joko Anwar: Sutradara perempuan memang lebih sedikit, tapi jago semua. *Jawa Pos*. Retrieved from <https://www.jawapos.com/infotainment/01298312/joko-anwar-sutradara-perempuan-memang-lebih-sedikit-tapi-jago-semua>
- Syarif, J. (2022). Documenting gender bias: A comparative study of India and Indonesia. *Muadalah*, 10(2), 97–109. <https://doi.org/10.18592/mu'adalah.v10i2.7448>
- Taha, L. (2023). *Female workers in beauty salons and male workers in barbershops: A case study from a gender perspective*. Retrieved from <https://pwwsd.org/uploads/15852463571885597344.pdf>
- Udasmoro, W. (2017). Destabilizing gender norm in contemporary Indonesian discourses. *Mozaik Humaniora*, 17(2), 291–303. <https://e-journal.unair.ac.id/MOZAIK/article/download/6072/pdf>
- Vanhanen, M. (2022). *Women's month: The nurturing woman*. Aurelia Psychology. Retrieved from <https://aureliapsychology.com/the-nurturing-woman/>
- Vukoicic, J. (2013). Radical feminism as a discourse in the theory of conflict. *Sociological Discourse*, 3(5), 33–49. <https://doi.org/10.7251/SOCEN1305033V>