

The Dynamics of Finding Identity as Feminine Figure in *Beautiful Boxer*

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The *Beautiful Boxer* Film portrays a man's life journey who struggles with his gender identity and internal conflict. This man works as a Thailand boxer which is closed with masculinity while he has a feminine soul. This research aims to answer the questions: how is the adaptation process with his gender identity conflict, the role of social support, and coping efforts which was done related to the conflict and the meaning of *muay thai* for him. Semiotic method was adopted to answer those questions. This research has begun with interpreting the visual codes in several scenes of the movie which reflect any symbols. Highlights in this research are: the man's life process revealing his struggles to find his identity, the role of social support, the combination of three coping methods (seeking support, restructuring, and taking active steps), and the changing of *muay thai* value, from economics, personal and virtues to spiritual.

Keywords: gender identity, interpersonal conflict, social support, coping, personal value, semiotic

Film *Beautiful Boxer* mengisahkan perjalanan hidup tokoh dengan masalah identitas gender dan pergulatan proses internal yang dialaminya. Tokoh ini mendalami profesi sebagai petinju Thailand yang sarat dengan maskulinitas meskipun memiliki jiwa yang feminin. Pertanyaan penelitian yang akan dijawab adalah Bagaimana dinamika penyesuaian diri tokoh dengan masalah identitas gender yang dialaminya, peran dukungan sosial, usaha *coping* yang dilakukan terkait konflik yang dialami, dan makna *muay thai* bagi tokoh. Penelitian dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode semiotika. Penelitian diawali dengan pemaknaan kode-kode visual dalam beberapa adegan film yang dianggap sebagai simbolisasi visual. Beberapa hal yang menonjol dalam kajian ini adalah tahapan kehidupan tokoh yang menjelaskan dinamika penemuan jati dirinya, peran dukungan sosial, perpaduan tiga usaha *coping* yang dilakukan, yaitu: seeking support, restructuring, dan taking active steps, dan adanya pergeseran nilai *muay thai* yang berawal dari nilai ekonomis, personal, kemuliaan/virtues, dan kemudian spiritual.

Kata kunci: identitas gender, konflik intrapersonal, dukungan sosial, *coping*, nilai pribadi, semiotika

Film is a media record in form of photographic object which is close to human life. (Madiyant, 2003). Karan (2008) describes film as the medium which portrays a professional world related to cinematographic as the image or picture which interacts with the audience. Film provides the scenes which often contain symbols to express real meaning behind it. Symbolization sometimes is used by the director to solve the limitation of time in depicting a story for the audiences. Considering that film is a visual medium, makes symbolization in each scene also use film arrangement system, which is visual language.

Beautiful Boxer which is directed by Ekachai Uekrongtham shows the directors's competence in

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packaging the journey of life and internal struggling process which is experienced by Toom, a character who struggles with gender identity. This true story is displayed in visual medium for about two hours. Toom's life can be counted as a contradictory life because as an individual with feminine tendency, he feels uncomfortable to live in his masculine body which commits to do masculinity work as *muay thai*, while others who experiences the same problem like to avoid doing something related to their sex (Freedman, 1998). This contradictive side is being described in the movie's title, *Beautiful* which means pretty and gives feminism impression, and the word "boxer" which is someone who do boxing and has masculine impression.

Basically, this film depicts the story of Parisnya Charoenphol or Nong Toom. Toom is a man who feels