

PERFORMATIVITY ON THE SCREEN: EXAGGERATED FEMININITY OF *WARIA* CHARACTERS IN *CATATAN SI BOY* (1980s-1990s AND 2023) IN INDONESIAN CINEMA

Gabriellia Pradnya Paramita^{1*}; Desi Dwi Prianti²; Fitri Hariana Oktaviani³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Brawijaya
Malang, Indonesia 65145

¹mitaub@student.ub.ac.id; desidwip@ub.ac.id; desidwip@ub.ac.id

Received: 9th January 2025/Revised: 10th September 2025/Accepted: 17th September 2025

How to Cite: Paramita, G. P., Prianti, D. D., & Oktaviani, F. H. (2025). Performativity on the screen: Exaggerated femininity of *Waria* characters in *Catatan si Boy* (1980s-1990s and 2023) in Indonesian cinema. *Lingua Cultura*, 19(2), 179-190. <https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v19i2.12885>

ABSTRACT

This research examines the representation of waria (transgender women) in the Indonesian film series Catatan Si Boy, comparing portrayals from the original Catatan Si Boy in the 1980s-1990s period and the 2023 remake. Drawing on Judith Butler's concept of performativity, this research analyzes how waria characters are constructed through stylized and exaggerated expressions of femininity that align with social stereotypes of "woman-like" behavior. These portrayals often position waria as sources of humor and entertainment, while simultaneously shaping their role as visible yet marginal figures within popular cinema. The research employs Foucauldian Discourse Analysis and thematic analysis to investigate how language, fashion, and body gestures contribute to the performative construction of gender. Findings reveal both continuity and transformation in the portrayal of waria: while the earlier films emphasized flamboyant femininity and comedic relief, the 2023 remake integrates modern slang and English expressions reflecting broader cultural and generational shifts. Overall, the analysis highlights the dual role of media in reinforcing and challenging gender norms. By situating these portrayals within Indonesian popular culture, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how cinema mediates perceptions of minority gender identities, showing how performance and representation can both reproduce and contest dominant social expectations.

Keywords: Waria, performativity, representation, transgender, Indonesian cinema

INTRODUCTION

Media representations play a critical role in shaping societal perceptions of gender and identity. In particular, films often serve as cultural texts that reflect and reinforce dominant social norms while occasionally providing space for marginalized identities to be seen and understood. Stereotypes, as one form of media representation, can be uncovered by practices like role reversal, which involves imagining changes in a character's features to evaluate their narrative roles and societal implications (Krijnen & Bauwel, 2021). For transgender women, or *waria* in Indonesia, such representations are often complex, occupying a spectrum between empowerment and caricature.

Judith Butler's theory of performativity posits that gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily, gesture, movements, and enactments constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self (Butler, 1990, p. 191). In this framework, gender is not an inherent attribute but a construct continually produced through repeated acts, behaviours, and language that gradually become naturalized. Recent studies have applied his perspective to media and cultural text, highlighting how performativity shapes the presentation of marginalized identities, including *waria* in Indonesian cinema (Inayah & Agus, 2024). These performative acts are particularly significant in understanding how *waria* are represented in media,

as they often emphasize exaggerated femininity to align with social expectations of 'woman-like' behavior. This exaggerated performativity, however, can serve dual purposes—both reinforcing stereotypes and offering visibility to minority identities. *Waria* also often use word play which is used for language variation to make it seem relaxed, funny and add creativity (Narahawarin, Sri, & Marni, 2019).

In the context of *Catatan Si Boy film series*, particularly the installments released in the 1980's-1990's and the 2023 remake, the character Emon is not only depicted as an individual with a distinct gender expression, but also as one who performs femininity through language, gestures, fashion, and humor. The series not only reflects the cultural dynamics of its time but also introduces characters that have become iconic within Indonesia cultural text for examining how gender and minority identities are represented in mainstream cinema. Butler's theory of performativity provides a relevant framework for this analysis because it highlights how gender is constructed through repeated acts, gestures, and linguistic expressions rather than being an innate attribute (Butler, 1990, p. 191). In Emon's case, every action, such as the use of a distinctive style of speech, a fashion of clothing that highlights elements of femininity, or social interactions that reflect 'femininity,' is a form of performativity. This action creates an image of herself as a *waria* in the eyes of the public and the media.

Media plays a central role in both reflecting and shaping societal norms, functioning as a mirror of cultural values while also producing and reinforcing them (Wijaya, 2022). In Indonesia, cinema during the late 20th century was particularly influential in shaping public attitudes toward *waria* (transgender women). Popular films such as *Catatan Si Boy (The Diary of Boy)*, *Dorce Sok Akrah*, and *Betty Bencong Slebor*, which attracted large audiences in the 1980s and 1990s, provided a platform for the representation of *waria* identities. Among these, the character Emon stands out as a flamboyant, humorous figure who embodies performative femininity and captivates audiences. With the release of the 2023 remake of *Catatan Si Boy*, these portrayals warrant renewed analysis to understand how representations of *waria* have evolved alongside broader cultural shifts and changing societal attitudes.

Previous research related to the representation of transvestite characteristics and understanding of transgender film audiences has pointed to a variety of important issues, including negative stereotypes that are often depicted, as shown by the research of McLaren (2021) and Matheson (2019). Other studies, such as Wang and Xueqin (2020), also shows a growing understanding of negative and positive stereotypes about LGBTQ+ people. In Indonesia, masculinity in print media that privileges the male body Prianti (2019) and subjectivity centered on women's freedom and empowerment Oktaviani (2023) are important concerns in gender discourse. This research aims to

fill this gap by examining the representation of *waria* in the *Catatan Si Boy*, specifically by comparing the portrayal of Emon in the 1980s-1990s series with the remake in 2023. The study explores the intersection of gender, performance, and entertainment in Indonesian popular culture, using Butler's performativity framework to analyze how Emon displays femininity through linguistic, fashion, and humorous creativity. In addition, this study investigates the continuity and transformation in the media's portrayal of gender identity in Indonesia, as well as how the broader social discourse on transvestite identity is represented. Thus, this research contributes to understanding the role of the media in shaping and challenging gender norms in Indonesian culture. Media systems play a dual role: they cater to audience demands while reflecting and reinforcing societal structures. The rise of cinema as a mass medium allowed filmmakers to address diverse cultural narratives, including sensitive themes that challenge societal norms. Cinema has thus become a platform for exploring minority identities, such as transgender individuals, through compelling storytelling (Nabila & Fauzi, 2020). While films can serve as cultural texts that reflect societal changes, they are often constrained by audience expectations and the commercial imperatives of mass media. This tension shapes how minority groups, including *waria*, are represented on screen.

The *Catatan Si Boy* series exemplifies how Indonesian cinema has negotiated these tensions. Emerging in the late 1980s and 1990s, the series gained significant popularity for its engaging storylines and iconic characters. Among these, Emon, a transgender character, became a particular focus of audience attention. Emon's portrayal stands in sharp contrast to that of the protagonist, Boy, who is depicted as a traditionally masculine, kind, and handsome figure (Suryatenggara, 2023). This juxtaposition between the two male characters highlights the distinct ways gender and identity are performed, aligning with Judith Butler's theory of performativity.

The enduring popularity of *Catatan Si Boy* is evidenced by its commercial success. The second installment, released in 1988, ranked as the third best-selling film in Jakarta with 475,021 viewers (R.Soenarso, 1988). Subsequent installments also enjoyed strong viewership, with the third film in 1990 attracting over 1 million viewers (Avianto, 2023). Even decades later, the franchise maintains cultural relevance; the 2023 remake of *Catatan Si Boy* drew 148,613 viewers within eleven days of its theatrical release (Suryatenggara, 2023). These figures underscore the franchise's significant role in shaping public perceptions of gender and identity in Indonesian cinema.

While *Catatan Si Boy* gained fame for its captivating narratives and characters, its representation of *waria* raises critical questions about how gender is constructed and performed for audience consumption. Emon's flamboyant yet humorous portrayal reflects broader societal expectations of *waria* as entertainers,

while also challenging traditional gender norms through performative acts of femininity. The contrast between the original series and the 2023 remake further highlights evolving cultural attitudes and the role of cinema in both preserving and transforming societal perceptions of minority identities.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach, combining thematic analysis and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to examine the representation of *waria* in the *Catatan Si Boy* film series. These two steps were applied in a complementary manner: thematic analysis was used to identify recurring motifs and character traits, while the FDA provided a critical framework for examining how discourses construct subjectivity and power relations in cinematic texts.

Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns related to the portrayals of Emon, such as 'exaggerated femininity', 'entertainer roles' and 'language as identity' (Oktaviani, 2023). Data collection involved systematic scene sampling from the films *Catatan Si Boy 2* (1988), *Catatan Si Boy 3* (1990), *Catatan Si Boy 5* (1991), and the 2023. Since Emon does not appear in *Catatan Si Boy 4*, that film was excluded from the analysis. Audio-visual data were extracted in the form of transcribed dialogue, still frames, and descriptions of gestures, costumes, and interactions. Coding was carried out manually with the assistance of qualitative data analysis software, ensuring that key segments of dialogue and visual representation were systematically categorized. To enhance validity, categories were refined through repeated cycles of coding, comparison, and verification against the raw data.

FDA was employed to explore how discourses of gender, humor, and social marginalization are articulated through Emon's character. The analysis drew on Butler's concept of performativity alongside Foucault's focus on subjectivity and power or knowledge relations. Units of analysis included visual imagery (costume, gestures, bodily performance), linguistic elements (speech patterns, wordplay, code switching), and narrative positioning (Emon's role relative to other characters). The FDA enabled the study to interrogate how *waria* identities are simultaneously made visible and marginalized, and how such representations reproduce or challenge dominant gender norms in Indonesian society.

As this research addresses a sensitive topic involving minority gender identities, reflexivity was an important consideration. The researcher acknowledges their personality as an observer who interprets cinematic texts from a scholarly perspective rather than from within the lived experience of *waria*. To mitigate potential bias, the analysis was grounded in established theoretical frameworks and supported by secondary literature on gender and media in Indonesia. This reflexive stance recognizes both the limitations of

the researcher's standpoint and the need for sensitivity in analyzing minority representation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Catatan Si Boy, produced by Parkit Film and directed by Nasri Cheppy, debuted in 1987 and quickly became one of Indonesia's most iconic film franchises, spawning several sequels in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The series follows Boy, a wealthy and charismatic young man, and his circle of friends, among them Emon, a flamboyant *waria* character who blends comic relief with subtle social commentary. In the 2023 remake by MD Pictures, the story was reintroduced to a new generation with updated settings, language, and cultural nuances. While Emon was originally portrayed by acclaimed actor Dedi Petet, leaving a lasting cultural imprint, the remake cast social media influencer Elmand, whose performance reflects contemporary shifts in style and audience expectations. This study compares these portrayals, focusing on three aspects of Emon's characterization: the construction of *waria* as performative figures, the stylization of femininity, and their representation as entertainers in Indonesian cinema.

Didi Petet, a prominent figure in the Indonesian film industry, gained widespread recognition for his portrayal of Emon in the *Catatan Si Boy* series, beginning with the first film in 1987 and continuing through the fifth installment in 1992. Petet's performance brought warmth and relatability to the character of Emon, whose flexible and adaptive nature endeared him to audiences and established strong connections with other characters in the narrative.

In contrast, Elmand, a TikTok influencer with 218.3 thousand followers, was cast as Emon in the 2023 remake of *Catatan Si Boy*. While Elmand's online popularity contributed to his selection, it did not translate into the same level of audience connection or prominence for the character of Emon. Unlike Didi Petet's portrayal, which resonated deeply with audiences and elevated Emon's significance within the story, Elmand's performance struggled to achieve a comparable impact in the remake.

Fashion and Visual Elements in Representing Emon are two types of performative *waria*, namely the way they present themselves and the linguistic use of language (Nabila & Fauzi, 2020).



Figure 1 One of the Emon-patterned T-shirts in *Catatan Si Boy 2* (1988)

Emon: *Emm emm emm, aduh dah sorry weice, Emon telat, udah lama nunggunya?*
 [Emon: Emm emm emm, oups, sorry, *weice*, I'm late. Have you been waiting long?]
 Priska: *udah setahun Mon, sampek keriting rambut gue*
 [Priska: It's been a year already, Mon, my hair even turned curly]
 Emon: *Keriting?? Bakmi kali keriting (keduanya tertawa bersama)*
 [Emon: Curly? Noodles curly, haha] (They both laughed together)
 (*Catatan Si Boy 2*, 1988, 08:50-09:01)

Based on Figure 1, we can see that the first performative aspect is evident in the way one presents oneself, as demonstrated by Emon's character in *Catatan Si Boy* during the 80s and 90s, as well as in the 2023 remake. One example is Emon's outfit in the second *Catatan Si Boy* movie (1988), where he wore a patterned t-shirt paired with a white vest. To complete his stylish look, Emon consistently wears sunglasses while traveling and carries a small bag. This representation shows that transgender women are not only associated with wearing heavy makeup but can also embrace a casual and fashionable style. This portrayal further reinforces Emon's representation as a wealthy individual, highlighted by his use of a car and sunglasses.

The second performative type is the use of linguistic language, as displayed by Emon from 1980 to 1990 and in 2023, with striking similarities. The use of the pronouns 'me' as *eike* and *yei* as 'you'. The language used by *waria* serves to familiarize relationships with their counterparts. Language variation is used by *waria* to stay closer to one another or to familiarize themselves with others (Narahawarin, Sri, & Marni, 2019).



Figure 2 Emon struts around in a *copty* outfit in *Catatan Si Boy 3* (1989)

The first performative aspect can be observed in the style of presenting oneself, as can be seen in figure 2, demonstrated by Emon's character in *Catatan Si Boy* during the 80s and 90s, as well as in the 2023 remake. One example is Emon's outfit in the second *Catatan Si Boy* movie (1988), where he wore a patterned t-shirt paired with a white vest. To complete his stylish look, Emon consistently wears sunglasses while traveling

and carries a small bag. This representation shows that transgender women are not only associated with wearing heavy makeup but can also embrace a casual and fashionable style. Rather than simply signaling style, Emon's use of accessories such as cars and sunglasses also constructs an image of social status, suggesting that his flamboyant femininity is intertwined with markers of wealth and modern urban identity



Figure 3 Emon is serving food for Boy and Cindy in *Catatan Si Boy 5* (1991)

Emon: *Okey ready yaa, Vina do you like nasi ya? Mas Boy, nasi bahasa Inggrisnya apa sih? (sambil mengambil nasi)*
 [Emon: "Okay, ready? Vina, do you want rice? Mas Boy, What's rice in English again?] (While serving rice)
 Boy: *Stone (batu)*
 [Boy: Stone]
 Emon: *oh stone ya? Masa sih? Perasaan batu gak sih, ih mas Boy bohongin Emon (sambil tertawa dan mengambil nasi Boy)*
 [Emon: Stone? Really? Isn't that batu? You're lying to me, Mas Boy!" (laughs while serving Boy rice)]
 (*Catatan Si Boy 5*, 1991, 12:12-12:57)

Based on Figure 3 in the fifth *Catatan Si Boy* movie, Emon is seen wearing white, patterned clothing paired with an apron. In several scenes from the 1992 film, Emon is graceful and responsive as she helps Boy and Cindy with their food. During a conversation, Emon, whose English proficiency is limited, attempts to speak English as best as she can, mixing it with Indonesian. This creates a humorous moment when Emon asks Boy about the word 'rice' in English, and Boy jokingly replies 'stone' with a smile. Emon quickly realizes that Boy is teasing her, which makes both Boy and Cindy laugh at her reaction. In these scenes, Emon is dressed in a white t-shirt with a pattern covering the entire shirt. Wearing an apron, Emon fully embraces her role as the one preparing lunch for Boy and Vina.

In a scene shown in Figure 4 from *Catatan Si Boy* (2023), Emon is shown having a discussion with Boy and Andi. Emon's self-presentation style is evident as he wears a brightly colored, patterned shirt with great enthusiasm. He is dressed in a pink-patterned

shirt with a white base, further complemented by his cheerful demeanor. Emon's exaggerated expressions are highlighted through his animated gestures, such as waving his hands while speaking, which adds a dramatic touch to his response to the situation.



Figure 4 Emon dresses in a brightly patterned shirt in *Catatan Si Boy* (2023)

Emon: *Eh eh eh..aduhh....MasyaAllah MasyaAllah, sorry Na, haduh habisnya Emon kaget sih, haduh hampir saja jantung Emon copot weice, coba kalau copot hemmm game dong eike!*
[Emon: Oh my...MasyaAllah..MasyaAllah.. sorry Na, I was so shocked, my heart almost jumped out. If it really did, game over for eike!]
(*Catatan Si Boy* 3, 1989, 07:34-07:49)

The use of the word 'eike' shows that *waria* groups tend to avoid using the word 'I' to refer to themselves. This strategy serves as an identity marker, enabling this minority group to be more easily recognized by the audience. A strong sense of confidence within the *waria* community plays a significant role in shaping and strengthening their identity. Therefore, this minority group often uses specific language in daily interactions as part of the construction of the identity they want to convey. The use of the word 'eike' also creates a special closeness between *waria* and other characters in their social sphere.

Emon expresses his shock through hyperbole and exaggeration. As seen in the sentence above, Emon stated that he was shocked and could make his heart fall out.

Emon: *Cha, Let me tell you something ya. Mas Boy aja guardian angelnya aja ada dua dan deise udin ada pancaroba alias pacar.*
[Emon: Cha, aku kasih tau ya.. Mas Boy malaikat penjaganya aja ada dua dan dia udah punya pancaroba a.k.a pacar (girlfriend)]
Ocha: *Soo?*
[Ocha: Teruss?]
Emon: *"Yei-yei jangan modus, eike tahu maksud yei apa undang-undang yei sandora ke party yei. Heh kite ini anti pelakor-pelakor club loh say dan pere mau jadi pacarnya mas Boy itu mesti pinter dan berwawasan luas"*
[Emon: Don't try to fool me! I know what you have in mind by inviting him to your party.

Listen, we are against boyfriend stealers, and anyone who wants to be Boy's girlfriend must be smart and broad-minded!]
(*Catatan Si Boy*, 2023, 07:03-07:26)

However, some scenes in the 2023 remake of *Catatan Si Boy* differ from those in the 1990s version, particularly in the use of language. In the 2023 version, Emon often combines English with Indonesian slang. Meanwhile, in the 1990s, Emon frequently mixed Indonesian with Sundanese. Over time, language differences have emerged, with English becoming more prominent while regional languages like Sundanese are gradually fading.

Emon's character development from the 1980s to the 1990s and the 2023 remake shares certain similarities, such as the use of the word 'yei' by minority groups as an effort to gain recognition from their surroundings. Additionally, it reflects the group's unique behavior, often resembling childlike expressions. Thus, the use of the word 'yei' serves as a way for this minority group to attract attention and affirm their presence in their environment.

The performance carried out in the film *Catatan Si Boy* from the 80s to the 90s, and the remake in 2023, has undergone a very significant change. Especially in the choice of dressing done by Emon's character. The uniqueness built by Emon's character is achieved by using light-colored and patterned clothing. The performativity displayed by Emon in building his character relies primarily on the use of colorful clothing. Consistently, Emon in the 80s, 90s, and even the 2023 remake wears brightly colored and patterned outfits. The characteristics developed by *waria*, like Emon, still reflect a touch of masculinity through the use of shirts. Additionally, Emon occasionally wears crop tops to add a sexy element to his appearance.

In addition, Emon uses metaphors in 1990 and 2023 to create a dramatic effect and a sense of humor. Emon's use of certain terms has changed significantly over time. In the 80s and 90s, Emon's limited English skills did not make her character seem inferior, but instead created a unique sense of humor. Meanwhile, Emon's character in 2023 has a better English vocabulary than Emon in the 80s and 90s. Along with the changing times and technological developments, the language choices made by Emon's character in 2023 make English the language of communication used daily in the Jakarta social scene, so that Emon in 2023 uses more English terms. Equipped with the slang language of the city of Jakarta, which was quite famous in its time.

Most of the femininity groups in Emon's character are skilled at maintaining and building relationships with their surroundings. They are also very close to children and women, as they are considered more adaptable and possess an open and welcoming attitude toward their environment (Sakinah, 2021).

Emon: *Tuh kan..apa Emon bilang! Bener*

kan mbak Vera marah sama Emon katanya, “Kenapa kamu yang disuruh datang kemari? Kalau dia memang merasa benar suruh dia yang ngomong. Bilang sama Boy jangan suka ngegombal shit shit shit.” Emon jadi sebel mana ada macan nek macan!

[Emon: See..I told you! Mbak Vera threw a fit at me! She said, “Why are you here? If he thinks he is innocent tell him to come here. Tell Boy to cut the crap!” Emon is so upset. Not to mention the tiger!]

(*Catatan Si Boy 2*, 1988, 64:13-69:30)



Figure 5 Emon told after helping in Boy's relationship with Vera in *Catatan Si Boy 2* (1988)

In several scenes in Figure 5, Emon's concern for Boy is evident through his efforts to help improve Boy's relationship with Vera. This is shown in the 1988 movie *Catatan Si Boy 2*, where Emon, with his expertise in cooking, plays a significant role in Boy's life. Conversely, Boy also influences Emon by encouraging him to try new things, such as becoming a navigator in a rally. The relationship between Emon and Boy goes beyond mere friendship. Additionally, Emon's adaptable attitude and flexibility with his surroundings make him a bridge between Boy and Vera, helping to address their issues.



Figure 6 Emon's expression when he saw Vera and Boy fighting in *Catatan Si Boy 3* (1989)

Emon: (Berbicara dalam hati) “Baru aja di bawah peluk-pelukan’ emmm.. Emon jadi sebel deh kalau ada kode perang bakalan mau dimulai heh!”

[Emon: (speaking in his mind) “Just now they were hugging downstairs and now’....mmm, I can already sense a war coming. I’m so annoyed.”] (*Catatan Si Boy 3*, 1989, 56:36-56:44)

Based on Figure 6, we know excessive worry is evident in Emon's expression in the movie *Catatan Si Boy 3* (1990), particularly during the scene where he witnesses Boy and Vera's fight. The combination of sadness and annoyance on Emon's face conveys helplessness, as he is unable to take any action—especially since he has just arrived in Los Angeles for a vacation at Boy's house. Emon's presence in Los Angeles reflects his deep concern for Boy. However, Emon is also preoccupied with figuring out how to help Boy and Vera reconcile quickly.



Figure 8 Emon reading storybooks and playing with baby in *Catatan Si Boy 5* (1991)

Emon: *Heh sini sini kentang, ...*’then I and Mary sow (showed) them around down the hul (hole)..’ *ehem*” (Boy tertawa kecil melihat Emon membaca cerita dengan bahasa Inggris yang tidak jelas)

[Emon: Hey, Potato! Come here..] (Boy giggling watching Emon reading to the baby with inaccurate pronunciation.)

Boy: *Mon, besok gua mau ke Jakarta*”

[Boy: Mon, I’m going to Jakarta tomorrow.”]

Emon: *Terserah, ‘we saw two things.. bum* their kite on the wall (*Emon lanjut membaca*)”

[Emon: Whatever...] (Emon continued reading ignorantly)

Boy: *Loe mau nitip gak buat nyokap loe?*

[Boy: Do you want to send something for your mom?]

Emon: *ehem..ehem..ehem* (sambil menggelengkan kepala)

[Emon: *hmmm..hmmm..hmmm* (while shaking his head to show refusal) (*Catatan Si Boy 5*, 1991, 27:15-27:40)

Not only that, in Figure 8, we know that Emon also reads storybooks and invites Potato to play. Emon is very meticulous and uses simple English mixed with Indonesian to add humor when talking to Potato, who is still a baby. In this scene, although Emon appears annoyed with Boy, he still makes an effort to accompany the baby girl and play with her.

Boy: *Halo Mon!*

[Boy: Hello Mon!]

Emon: *Hallo mas Boy, kemana aja sih ini si Andi kayaknya mau aneh-aneh deh.*

[Emon: Hello mas Boy! What took you so long?

Andi is planning something really bad!]
 Boy: *Di mana?*
 [Boy: Where?]
 Emon: *Dia mau ke Mercurius Billiard*
 [Emon: He is going to Mercurius Billiard.]
(Boy langsung mematikan telepon)
 [Boy hung up immediately]
(Catatan Si Boy, 2023, 93:11-93:19)



Figure 9 Emon calling Boy about Andi's fight in *Catatan Boy* (2023)

In the 2023 remake of *Catatan Si Boy* (Figure 9), Emon panics when he learns Andi wants to start a fight and takes the initiative to call Boy. Emon is depicted doing nothing but panicking and telling Boy about Andi's problem. As shown in the examples above, Emon's character demonstrates an empathetic spirit, especially toward women and girls, during the 80s and 90s. However, in 2023, Emon's empathy is primarily shown when his friends are in danger. For instance, Emon sought help by calling Boy and following him to the scene when Andi confronted Jefri at one of the billiard clubs they frequented. Emon demonstrates a strong sense of empathy and a deep connection to the problems around him. This distinction is quite significant, particularly in Emon's role, which is highly supportive in Boy's life. In contrast to the 2023 remake, where Emon is portrayed only as a friend providing physical assistance, Emon in 2023 lacks the initiative to be actively involved in every aspect of Boy's actions.

Emon's empathy and sympathy develop naturally, making him a beloved character among his friends. Although Andi occasionally uses him as the subject of jokes, Emon remains accepted and cherished by his peers. His caring nature is evident in various actions, such as looking after small children, providing excellent service to Boy and Vina during meals, and helping Andi during difficult times. Emon's attitude is one that is well-liked and appreciated within the community. While *waria* are not always associated with wearing thick makeup, their feminine qualities are often naturally expressed, especially when facing challenging situations.

For some minority groups, such as *waria*, their employment is often limited to the entertainment world, for example, as entertainers (Murtagh, 2011). Thus, it can be used to assist minority groups in opening new jobs. The low employment rate of *waria*

is evidence that minority groups can only work in the entertainment sphere. They make language and humor as their identity markers, this can be seen from the character of *waria* groups in breaking up any form of atmosphere. Each *waria* group has its own way of building its own sense of humor.



Figure 10 Emon talking with Boy's sister, Ina, in *Catatan Si Boy 2* (1988)

Emon: *Eh na, Emon bingung, bingung, bingung deh aduh pingin rasanya kepala Emon dijedotin dijedotin, eh na loe punya kampak gak sih?*

[Emon: Na, Emon is confused, so confused. I feel like banging my head over and over. You got an axe?]

Ina: *Kampak?*

[Ina: Axe?]

Emon: *He em, haduh Emon bingung habis mas Boy nyosot mbak Vera lagi!*

[Emon: Hmmm, I just don't get why Mas Boy falls for Vera again.]

Ina: *Wah gua kagak ngarti deh Mon, kakak gua memang suka Ajaib sih*

[Ina: Wow, I don't get it either, Mon. My brother is so unpredictable.]

Emon: *Emon jadi kasian deh sama Priska, Priska kan saudara Emon, coba kalau Priska tau, mas Boy sama mbak Vera bisa-bisa Priska minum baygon rasa jeruk nek, gimana tuh? (sambil tertawa)*

[Emon: Emon feels sorry for Priska. She is my family. If Priska knew mas Boy is back with Vera, she could drink that orange-flavored baygon!] (laughing together)

(Catatan Si Boy 2, 1988, 37:41-38:14)

In the second installment of *Catatan si Boy* in the '80s, Emon often used highly exaggerated words and metaphorical expressions, which became his trademark. This way of speaking made Emon's experiences and stories seem very dramatic and humorous. Overall, Emon's character is known for his role as an entertainer, making his presence highly anticipated.

Emon: *Halo, bisa bicara dengan mbak Vera?*

[Emon: Hello, can I talk to Ms. Vera]

Asisten Rumah Tangga Vera: *What speaking?*

[Vera's Helper: Who's speaking?]
 Emon: *Don King! Speakang speaking speakang speaking nih Emon nih mau bicara sama mbak Vera ada gak?*
 [Emon: Don King! What are you saying? This is Emon, can I speak to Vera?]
 Asisten Rumah Tangga Vera: *Just a moment please ya*
 [Vera's Helper: Just a moment please ya.]
 (Catatan Si Boy 3, 1989, 39:29-39:46)



Figure 11 Emon calling Vera to plan a trip to Los Angeles in Catatan Si Boy 3 (1989)

In Catatan Si Boy 3, in Figure 11, Emon is seen planning his departure to Los Angeles with Vera, using very simple English. This creates humor unique to Emon's character. For instance, Emon uses a mix of English and Indonesian. Since Vera's family is fluent in English, Emon, who struggles with the language, attempts to use it as much as he can, adding to the comedic effect for the audience. Despite his mistakes, Emon continues speaking English confidently, further enhancing the humor.



Figure 12 Emon pouring water for Boy and Vina in Catatan Si Boy 5(1991)

Emon: *Mas Boy, dosky kok bisa ngomong rendang sih? (sambil menuangkan air ke gelas)*
 [Emon: Boy, how is it that dosky (she) can speak about rendang? (while pouring water into a glass)]
 Boy: *Namanya juga punya mulut!*
 [Boy: She has a mouth to speak, after all.]
 Emon: *Maksud Emon, dosky kok bisa ngomong bahasa Indonesia?*
 [Emon: What Emon means is, how can she speak Indonesian?]

Boy: *Dosky dulu pernah tinggal di Jakarta, bingung kan?*
 [Boy: She used to live in Jakarta before. Confusing, right?]
 Emon: *Emon pikir cinawina Indo, gataunya asli.*
 [Emon: Emon thought she was Chinese Indonesian, turns out she is local.]
 Emon: *Bener gak sih Vina omongan mas Boy?*
 [Emon: Is that true, Vina, what Boy is saying?]
 Vina: *Saya memang pernah tinggal dan sekolah di Jakarta selama tiga tahun, saya dulu ikut ortu yang bekerja pada sebuah oil company di sana.*
 [Vina: I did live and go to school in Jakarta for three years. I followed my parents, who worked for an oil company there.]
 Emon: *Ohhh bisa ngomong ortu juga ya, kenapa ga dari tadi dong ngomong bahasa Indonesianya, weeh..Emon jadi bingung.*
 [Emon: Oh, so you can also say 'parents.' Why didn't you speak Indonesian from the beginning then? Emon is confused.]
 Vina: *Saya senang saja melihat kamu bingung.*
 [Vina: I enjoy seeing you confused.]
 Boy: *Bukan bingung tapi bingung.*
 [Boy: Not bingung, but bingung (confused).]
 Vina: *Bingung or bingung ah saya jadi bing.."*
 [Vina: Bingung or bingung ah I'm bing.. (con..)]
 Emon: *..ngung! duh, bokis kamu!*
 [Emon: ..ngung (..fused), huh..you're so extra!]
 (ber 3 tertawa bersama) [laugh together]
 (Catatan Si Boy 5, 1991, 12:12-12:57)

In Catatan Si Boy 5, shown in Figure 12, Emon also uses certain terms, such as *dosky*, which means 'she' and refers to Vina. Additionally, Emon speaks English confidently, even though his pronunciation is often incorrect. One example of a simple yet humorous conversation is when Emon teaches Vina to say *bingung*, but it is originally pronounced as *binggung*. In a nutshell, Emon's flexibility leaves a positive impression when meeting new people. As a result, Boy is quite happy with his presence.



Figure 13 Emon interrupting Boy and Ocha's conversation in Catatan Si Boy(2023)

Emon: *Excusez-moi sebentar ya Emon cek dulu. (sambil membuka undangan)*
 [Emon: *Excusez-moi.. Emon will check this*

first.]

Emon: *Indong undangannya buat satu orang banget? Ini undangan Birthday Party apa undangan vaksin sih pelita bangsa deh alias pelit banget!*

[Emon: Why is this invitation strictly for one person? Is this a birthday party invitation or a vaccination invitation? So *Pelita bangsa* a.k.a *pelit* (stingy)]

Ocha: *Emang bukan buat elo. Ini Boy. (sambil mengambil paksa undangan yang ada di tangan Emon dan memberikannya ke Boy)*

[Ocha: It's not for you. It's for Boy.] (while forcibly taking the invitation from Emon's hand and giving it to Boy)

(*Catatan Si Boy*, 2023, 07:40-07:56)

In Figure 13, Emon shows discomfort when Boy is talking to Ocha. Emon, in the 2023 movie *Catatan Si Boy*, also shows strong solidarity with Boy's life. When Ocha began to approach Boy with a certain intention, Emon immediately reacted by taking the invitation from Ocha's hand and opening it. Every word and movement of Emon's body shows that he is not happy to see Ocha approaching and talking alone with Boy. The sense of care that Emon gives to Boy becomes a form of Emon's weapon to protect Boy. Therefore, excessive attention can form a special form of loyalty between minority groups and their environment.

Words like *excusmemoi* show that Emon often uses exaggerated wordplay to add to the cute and flamboyant impression. Emon also uses abbreviations such as *pelita*, which means *sangat pelit*. *Pelita* is generally a noun that refers to lighting; however, Emon uses "pelita" as an abbreviation. So, it can add a creative impression and add humor to it. The word is used as a pun to make the situation informal and in various senses because it connects with the actual meaning.

Some vocabulary from the *Catatan Si Boy* movies, spanning the 1980s and 1990s to the 2023 remake, highlights the use of English, particularly in the 2023 Remake. The blending of English and Indonesian has been a feature since the 1980s. In the earlier films, Emon often played with words and showed strong confidence in using English, even when it was incorrect. Similarly, in the 2023 remake, Emon frequently uses jumbled English, adding a unique element of humor. Emon's courage to approach his best friend in San Francisco demonstrates that a transgender woman is not only characterized by flamboyance but also possesses the bravery to take independent steps without being influenced by others.

Emon's character in *Catatan Si Boy* showcases how language and humor serve as powerful identity markers for *waria*. By blending linguistic creativity with humor, Emon not only entertains but also challenges and reshapes societal norms surrounding gender identity. These identity markers highlight *waria*'s dual role as both cultural participants and agents of change within Indonesian society. Future studies could

delve deeper into how humor and language intersect with other social factors, such as class and race, to broaden our understanding of identity construction.

Gender norms are social constructs that encompass informal rules and social expectations that differentiate behavior by gender. These norms are not universal but vary across societies. For transgender women, these gender norms often pose unique challenges, as their identities may not align with traditional gender expectations. However, the role of Emon shows the challenging and reinforcing gender norms; they exemplify how gender norms can be negotiated and reshaped within society (Cookson, Lorena, Maria, & Jennifer, 2023, p. 17).



Figure 14 Emon is navigating Boy during the rally race in *Catatan Si Boy 2* (1988)

Emon: *"tuhh kan bener nabrak aaaa"* (Boy nabrak kandang ayam dan kandang kambing)

[Emon: We're crashing!! Aaa]

(Boy crashes into a chicken coop and a goat pen.)

Boy: *gak salah loe Mon?*

[Boy: Really, Mon?!]

Emon: *Ala makjan Emon salah mas Boy, maafin Emon ya mas Boy, aaaa kambing aduh tolong, aduh engkong encim tolong, ahhh tolong mas Boy aduh aaa..(tiba-tiba kambing menghampiri Emon)*

[Emon: Oh no, that's my fault, Mas boy. Please forgive Emon, Mas Boy. Aaaa.. a goat!! Oh no, please help! Grandpa, Auntie, please help! Aaaaa help, Mas Boy!] (suddenly a goat approaches Emon)

(*Catatan Si Boy 2*, 1988)

In the second *Catatan Si Boy* movie from the 1980s, based on Figure 14, we know that Emon is depicted as a navigator assisting Boy during a rally race. However, by accident, Emon suddenly becomes unable to read the map when Boy asks for directions. Emon appears confused but responds in a way that convinces Boy to trust him, leading to a mishap where Boy crashes into a chicken coop and a goat pen. Despite his mistake, Emon's funny behavior and guilty expression, combined with his panic when a goat approaches him, do not anger Boy. Instead, Boy finds the situation slightly amusing and proceeds to take the

correct path.



Figure 15 Emon's humorous exchange with Andi in *Catatan Si Boy 3* (1989)

Andi: *Ah nih banser, rese amat, mau mesra kek, mau apa kek itu urusan dia. (sambil melirik kearah Boy dan Vera)*

[Andi: Ah this *banser* (queer), whatever they're doing is none of your business.]

(while glancing at Boy and Vera)

Emon: *Deh kendi rumpi amat sih loe, nyamber aje kayak bensin, eh loe tuh orang apa semut bako sih?!*

[Emon: Hey, you nosy *kendi* (nickname for Andi)! Snapping like wildfire. Are you a person or a fire ant?]

Andi: *Gue gaya dong, dari pada loe, mau ikutan sekolah di LA, orang Amrik juga geli liat loe, ini orang apa anak King-Kong. Hahaha lucu (tertawa sinis)*

[Andi: I've got style of course. Not like you! Dreaming of studying in LA. I think even the Americans would be creeped out seeing you, thinking 'Is this a baby King kong?'] (laughing cynically)

(*Catatan Si Boy 3*, 1989, 12:43-13:11)

As in the scene when Emon in 1990 used verbal humor by mocking his co-star, Andi. Emon frankly uses the term 'body shaming' against Andi as *kendi rumpi*; we can see this in Figure 15. Andi also responded with *aku* to the term *anak King Kong*. Thus, Emon did it with the intention of joking, as did Andi. So, when the atmosphere is initially just silent, Emon uses certain terms to reply to Andi, who has mocked him. So that when people listen to the conversation, they become entertained. In this conversation, it is possible that Emon still uses a very thick Sundanese accent. Thus, Emon still has the characteristics of his home region by calling Andi *loe*.

Boy: *Pizza, Mon.. (sambil memberikannya Pizza)*

[Boy: Pizza, Mon.. (while giving him pizza)]

Emon: *ah kebeneran Emon lagi hongerig nih.*

[Emon: Good timing! Emon is starving.]

Boy: *Gimana Paris Mon?*

[Boy: How was Paris, Mon?]

Emon: *emmm Très bon, monsieur!*

[Emon: mmm..very good, sir!]

Boy: *Enak ga?*

[Boy: Delicious?]

Emon: *Lekker, weyce! Tapi Emon udah bosen sekolah di Paris.*

[Emon: Delicious, weyce! But studying in Paris is boring.]

Boy: *Bosen apa berdingong?*

[Boy: Boring or *berdiong*?

Emon: *Berdiong? Paan?*

[Emon: *Berdiong*? What's that?]

Boy: *Berat di ongkos*

[Boy: expensive]

(*Emon tertawa sambil memakan Pizza*)

(Emon laughs while eating pizza)

Emon: *Mas Boy tau aja deh, emang sih papi Emon sampe ngejual tanah warisan buat ngongkosin Emon di Paris, Emon jadi sedih deh mas Boy.*

[Emon: Mas Boy, you know, my father sold the land he inherited to pay for my stay in Paris. That made me sad.]

Boy: *loh kok sedih?*

[Boy: Why are you sad?]

Emon: *Habis kalau semua tanah warisan dijokul? Emon kebagian apaan dong?*

[Emon: If all the inherited lands are sold, what would I get?]

Boy: *Biji, masa loe tanya gua? (Keduanya tertawa bersama)*

[Boy: Weird! How would I know?!]

(laughing together)



Figure 16 Emon is chatting with Boy while eating pizza in *Catatan Si Boy 5* (1991)

In the 1990s film *Catatan Si Boy 5*, in the scene shown in Figure 16, Boy and Emon are seen expressing their longing together. Emon, who was born into a wealthy family, spends her vacation time visiting Boy in San Francisco. Emon, who was studying design, had complained about feeling sorry for Emon's father, who had to sell the land he inherited to support himself while studying in Paris. Emon's quirks always break the ice and make conversations colorful. Emon's courage to approach his best friend in San Francisco demonstrates that a transgender woman is not only characterized by flamboyance but also possesses the bravery to take independent steps without being influenced by others.



Figure 17 Emon walking with Andi walked after Boy in *Catatan Si Boy* 2023

Emon: *Mas Boy, ih mas Boy!*
 [Emon: Boy! Boy!]
 Andi: *Ayolah, Come on man!*
 [Andi: Come on, man!]
 Emon: *ih ih mas Boy ih gak seru banget deh ah. Ndi, traktir dong. (dengan gerak-gerik manjanya ke Andi)*
 [Emon: hhh, not cool, Boy! Andi, buy me some food, please.]
 Andi: *Enggak! Loe kemana?*
 [Andi: No way! Where are you going?]
 Emon: *Kencana weng-weng. Kencing! (sambil berjalan meninggalkan Andi)*
 [Emon: Piss!] (walks away from Andi)
 (*Catatan Si Boy*, 2023, 86.33-86.46)

Emon's character in 2023 is different from that in the 80s and 90s. Emon tends to depend more on others, namely Boy and his friends, for her life and happiness. As shown in the above scene, Emon seduces Boy to treat himself as a small thanksgiving for Boy's victory in Boy's boxing match. From this example, Emon really depends on Boy for his happiness. Unlike the previous year, when Emon took the initiative to approach Boy in another country.

Emon's character as a whole challenges the stereotype of *waria* being solely entertainers in the realms of entertainment and sex. Although Emon represents a *waria*, she is portrayed as a flamboyant figure who also displays a masculine side that occasionally emerges in certain situations, adding a dual dimension to her character. Additionally, Emon is not merely a comedic element but also plays an important role as a caring and supportive friend to the main characters, such as Boy. Her empathy and loyalty are evident in various scenes, such as helping Boy mend his relationship or accompanying her friends in times of trouble.

CONCLUSIONS

This research shows that the portrayal of *waria* in *Catatan Si Boy* (1980s-1990s and 2023) should be understood not as a straightforward mirror of social reality, but as a discursive process through which gender identity is continuously produced, reinforced, and contested. Using Judith Butler's theory notion

of performativity, Emon's amplified femininity, manifested in clothing, bodily gestures, and playful linguistic styles, illustrates how gender emerges from repeated acts that both render *waria* visible and perpetuate stereotypical representations. Such performances expose the paradox between recognition and marginalization, as *waria* are made prominent on screen as flamboyant entertainers yet remain restricted to roles that emphasize humor over broader social legitimacy.

Applying Foucauldian Discourse Analysis further demonstrates that cinema operates as a medium of power and knowledge, actively shaping how society perceives gender and

identity. Comparing the cinema of the 1980s – 1990s with the 2023 remake, how shifting cultural contexts have influenced these depictions, revealing changes that remain ambivalent in their treatment of *waria*. While the study contributes to scholarship on gender, media, and discourse, it also recognizes its limitations as an analysis conducted from an external academic standpoint. Future work that centers on the lived experiences of *waria* will be crucial for providing a richer understanding of subjectivity and representation in Indonesian cinema.

Author Contributions: Conceived and designed the analysis, G. P. P., D. D. P., and F. H. O.; Collected the data, G. P. P.; Contributed data or analysis tools, G. P. P.; Performed the analysis, G. P. P., D. D. P., and F. H. O.; Wrote the paper, G. P. P., D. D. P., and F. H. O.; Other contribution, G. P. P., D. D. P., and F. H. O.

Data Availability Statement:

- Data available within the article or its supplementary materials. The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of the research are available within the article [or] its supplementary materials.
- Data available on request from the authors. The data that support the findings of the research are available from the corresponding author, [GPP Because there are ethical/copyright/privacy restrictions so it cannot be opened freely.], upon reasonable request. Explain the reason why the readers must request the data.
- Non-digital data available. Non-digital data supporting the research are curated at [file, because all data was obtained online].
- Data not available due to [ethical/legal/commercial] restrictions. Due to the nature of the research, due to [ethical/legal] supporting data is not available.

REFERENCES

- Bauwel, K. T. (2021). *Gender and media: Representing, producing, consuming*. London: Routledge.
- Bramantyo, H. (Director). (2023). *Catatan si Boy* [Film]. MD Pictures; MVP Pictures; Dapur Film.

- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Cheppy, N. (Director). (1988). *Catatan si Boy 2* [Film]. PT Bola Dunia Film.
- Cheppy, N. (Director). (1989). *Catatan si Boy 3* [Film]. PT Bola Dunia Film.
- Cheppy, N. (Director). (1991). *Catatan si Boy 5* [Film]. PT Bola Dunia Film.
- Cookson, T. P., Fuentes, L., Kuss, M. K., & Bitterly, J. (2023). *Social norms, gender and development: A review of research and practice* (UN Women Discussion Paper Series No. 42). UN Women.
- Inayah, Z. R., & Agus, M. F. (2024). Pembebasan seksualitas dan gender dalam film *The Danish Girl*: Studi analisis teori performativitas Judith Butler. *Paradigma* 13(1), 131-140.
- Matheson, J. (2019). "About gays by gays": The politics of representation in early Australian gays film culture, 1971-1982. *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 13(1), 16-29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17503175.2019.1591576>
- McLaren, J. T., Bryant, S., & Brown, B. (2021). "See me! Recognize me!" An analysis of transgender media representation. *Communication Quarterly* 69(2), 172-191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2021.1901759>
- Murtagh, J. E. (2011). Paradigms of family medicine: Bridging traditions with new concepts; meeting the challenge of being the good doctor from 2011. *Asia Pacific Family Medicine* 10(9). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1447-056x-10-9>
- Nabila, A., & Fauzi, M. (2020). An investigation of requesting speech act in "Seri pendalaman materi bahasa Inggris for XII grade" English textbook. *Journal of Critical Theory, Art, Language and Literature* 2(2), 138-151. <https://doi.org/10.15575/call.v2i2.9310>
- Narahawarin, M. F., Winarsih, S., & Bawawa, M.. (2019). Variasi bahasa yang digunakan oleh kalangan waria kota Merauke. *Kajian Linguistik* 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.35796/kaling.7.2.2019.28222>.
- Oktaviani, F. H. (2023). Indonesian women leaders navigating hegemonic femininity: A gramscian lens. *Gender, Work & Organization* 31(2), 472-493. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13084>
- Prianti, D. D. (2019). The identity politics of masculinity as a colonial legacy. *Journals of Intercultural Studies* 40(6), 700-719. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2019.1675612>
- Sakinah, N. (2021). The pattern of conflict handling of Arus Pelangi non governmental organizations with the Islamic Defenders Front and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia. *The International Journal of Politics and Sociology Research* 9(1), 26-36.
- Wang, G., & Ma, X. (2020). Representations of LGBTQ+ issues in China in its official English-language media: A corpus-assisted critical discourse study. *Critical Discourse Studies* 18(2), 188-206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1738251>
- Wijaya, H. (2022). Digital homophobia: Technological assemblages of anti-LGBT sentiment and surveillance in Indonesia. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 50(146), 52-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2022.2010357>