
**REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE MASCULINITY IN THE FILM
INTERCEPTOR (2022) BY MATTHEW REILLY: A SEMIOTIC STUDY**

Cintya Marvika

University of Bangka Belitung

Email: cintyaerick24@gmail.com

Dr. Diana Anggraeni, M.Hum

University of Bangka Belitung

Email: diana-anggraeni@ubb.ac.id

Donal Fernando Lubis, M.A

University of Bangka Belitung

Email: donal-lubis@ubb.ac.id

Abstrak

Film, sebagai bentuk representasi budaya, merangkum konstruksi masyarakat tentang gender, termasuk maskulinitas, yang melampaui asosiasi dengan fisik laki-laki. Penelitian ini berusaha untuk menggambarkan makna denotatif dan konotatif dari adegan-adegan dalam film *Interceptor* (2022) yang disutradarai oleh Matthew Reilly, yang menggambarkan maskulinitas perempuan, dan untuk meneliti bagaimana makna konotatif ini memengaruhi penggambaran maskulinitas. Dengan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini menggunakan kerangka semiotika Roland Barthes, bersamaan dengan gagasan Judith Halberstam tentang maskulinitas perempuan. Analisis ini menemukan 19 adegan yang merangkum makna denotatif dan konotatif. Representasi ini ditandai dengan enam atribut mendasar: keahlian dalam persenjataan dan kemampuan tempur, superioritas fisik, ketahanan dan otonomi, kemahiran teknologi dan kepemimpinan strategis, pembangkangan terhadap penindasan patriarki, dan validasi masyarakat terhadap kepahlawanan perempuan. Hasil penelitian ini mendukung pernyataan bahwa maskulinitas bukan hanya karakteristik laki-laki, tetapi juga dapat dimanifestasikan melalui tokoh-tokoh perempuan sebagai sebuah tindakan performatif yang menantang binari gender tradisional dalam film laga.

Kata Kunci : *Maskulinitas Perempuan, Semiotika, Interceptor, Gender.*

Abstract

Film, as a form of cultural representation, encapsulates societal constructs of gender, including masculinity, which transcends mere association with the male physique. This investigation seeks to delineate the denotative and connotative meanings of scenes in Interceptor (2022), directed by Matthew Reilly, that portray female masculinity, and to scrutinize how these connotative meanings influence the depiction of masculinity. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative methodology, this research employed Roland Barthes', in conjunction with Judith Halberstam's notion of female masculinity. The analysis uncovered 19 scenes that encapsulate denotative and connotative. This representation is characterized by six fundamental attributes: expertise in weaponry and combat capabilities, physical superiority, resilience and autonomy, technological adeptness and strategic leadership, defiance against patriarchal oppression, and societal validation of female heroism. These results support the assertion that masculinity is not exclusively a male characteristic but can also be

manifested through female figures as a performative act that challenges traditional gender binaries in action cinema.

Keywords: *Female Masculinity, Semiotics, Interceptor, Gender.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender is a human-made or human-created concept that is formed by society dynamically and can change due to differences in customs, culture, religion, value systems of a country, society, and ethnic group. In addition, gender can change due to historical progress, political, economic, social and cultural changes or developments. Therefore, gender is not universal and does not apply in general but depends on the circumstances in society (Fibrianto, 2016). Gender is a condition in which individuals are born biologically as male and female, then obtain social categorization as male and female through the attributes of masculinity and femininity which are often supported by the values or symbol systems of the society concerned (Branston & Stafford, 2010).

The issue of masculinity and femininity, particularly female masculinity, is particularly interesting to discuss because it challenges the conventional binary view of gender roles that is deeply rooted in society and culture. Traditionally, masculinity has been associated with men and femininity with women. However, the emergence of female masculinity highlights how women can embody attributes such as strength, leadership, toughness and authority - traits that have historically been considered masculine characteristics (Halberstam, 1998).

One medium that is powerful in reflecting and shaping these gender constructions is film. Film is a type of mass media that is very complex in nature (Alfathoni & Manesah 2020). In film (especially action films), masculinity is often associated with male characters and femininity is associated with female characters. However, the film *Interceptor* features a female character who has masculine attributes or female masculinity.

Interceptor is an action-adventure film about a fight between a female soldier named J.J. Collins and a group of terrorists. The film *Interceptor* is interesting to study because it presents the representation of women in a masculine space that has historically been dominated by men, especially in the action film genre. Through the character of Captain JJ Collins, the film presents a woman who is not only physically strong, but also strategically smart and resistant to emotional pressure. This representation challenges traditional gender stereotypes and opens up space for new meanings of masculinity that are no longer exclusive to men. This film potentially analyzed uses the theory of semiotic analysis put forward by

Roland Barthes to determine denotative and connotative meaning in female masculinity and uses Judith Halberstam's theory to show female masculinity.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The method used in this study is a qualitative method which is intended to describe everything related to this topic. Qualitative research is descriptive in nature, namely researchers are interested in the process, meaning and understanding obtained through words or images (Creswell, 2014,p.145).

Object of The Study

The study object used is a film entitled Interceptor by Matthew Reilly.

Data Collection

In this study, data was gathered through film analysis, specifically by viewing and interpreting scenes that exemplify the concept of female masculinity in the film Interceptor

Data Analysis

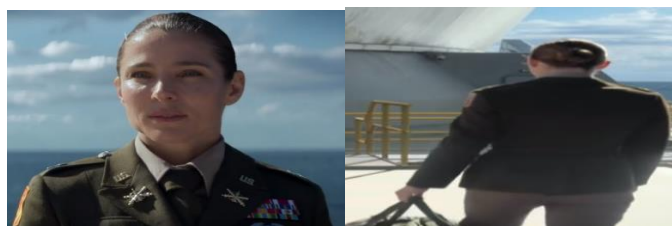
To ensure a systematic approach, the following steps will be taken:

1. The objective is to analyze and interpret the data presented in the Interceptor film, which is based on the theoretical framework of Roland Barthes and Judith Halberstam. This analysis will be conducted according to the types of denotative, connotative, and female masculinity meanings.
2. The findings should be discussed and conclusions reached based on the concepts of denotative, connotative, and female masculinity meanings obtained from the results of the Interceptor film.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Denotative and Connotative Meanings in Scenes that Represent Female Masculinity

1. Data 1



Scene at 00:03:15 (Introduction of Capten JJ Collins)

The denotative meaning is that the woman wearing a complete military uniform and her hair in a neat bun walks with an upright posture and a serious face towards a base with a military bag in her hand. and the connotative meaning is that this scene shows a woman with traditional masculine attributes: a military uniform, a firm posture, and a facial expression that shows firmness. Halberstam (1998) explains that physical appearance is an important aspect in the performativity of female masculinity, where the female body becomes a place of expression of masculine codes.

2. Data 2



Scene at 00:12:16 (JJ Collins Aiming the Gun)

In denotative meaning, this scene shows a female military officer directly involved in a dangerous situation and preparing to attack or defend. According to Roland Barthes (1977), connotative meaning is born out of the sign's relationship with the wider cultural system. As such, this scene carries connotative meanings of courage, professionalism, and combat readiness in the female body that symbolically challenge traditional gender norms.

3. Data 3



Scene at 00:12:18 (Armed Women in Attack Formation and the man beside her)

In denotative meaning the situation of preparation for attack or defense in a military or paramilitary context. There are a number of visual signs that build connotative meaning, namely the position of women as active attackers conveying messages of power, courage and aggression. In this scene, women take over the role, resulting in connotations that shake up traditional myths of female softness or passivity (Barthes, 1972).

4. Data 4



Scene at 00:12:27-00:13:05 (JJ Collins Strangled and Fought Back)

This scene displays the denotative meaning of the woman in a weak position fighting back with a strong kick towards her opponent. This scene carries complex connotations such as the position of being strangled which connotatively suggests patriarchal domination and attempts to subjugate women, representations that often appear in the media as a form of power relations. This forms a new myth of female power that they are also capable of showing aggression and courage under pressure (Barthes, 1972).

5. Data 5



Scene at 00:17:13 (JJ Collins standing upright)

The denotative meaning of this scene is that a woman is in a defense position in the server room. The presence of rifles and protective vests signify a high alert situation or the possibility of an impending attack. The connotative meaning of this scene implies symbols of masculinity such as strength, vigilance, and ownership of authority over strategic spaces. The upright stance while holding a weapon indicates readiness for action, which is culturally often associated with heroic male figures in action films (Barthes, 1977).

6. Data 6



Scene at 18:05 – 18:17 (the woman carrying and operating the welding machine with the man behind her)

In denotative meaning, this is a moment when two characters, a man and a woman, work together on their mission using heavy technical equipment. The woman appears to be in primary control of the welding equipment, demonstrating technical competence in a dangerous situation. In connotative meaning, this scene represents a shift in traditional gender relations. In Barthes' eyes, this scene dismantles the myth of masculinity that has been attached to the male body through the visual representation of women who play the role of technological control figures (Barthes, 1977).

7. Data 7



Scene at 00:25:41 (JJ Collins' fight with the enemy)

This scene features JJ Collins in a fierce fight with a man. They attack and defend each other using their bare hands. In denotative meaning, this scene shows a physical fight between a woman and a man without weapons. In connotative meaning, this scene goes beyond mere physical violence.

8. Data 8



Scene at 00:26:30 – 00:26:33 (JJ Collins' fight and a man from the enemy side)

In denotative meaning, this scene shows a physical fight between a woman (JJ Collins) and a man. In connotative meaning, this scene shows a representation of masculine strength inherent in the female figure. Barthes (1964) explains that connotation is a second-level sign system, where meaning is created through culture. In this context, the scene connotes that women can assume the role of protector, warrior, and a figure capable of active and effective physical resistance.

9. Data 9



Scene at 26:39 (JJ Collins fired the weapon at a man)

The denotative meaning of this scene shows a woman (JJ Collins) using a firearm and taking aggressive action against a man who is in close proximity. The connotative meaning of this scene contains symbols of dominance, courage, and militaristic power that are traditionally attached to masculinity. In Barthes' (1964) semiotic framework, firearms are not only tools of combat, but also symbols of power, authority and control.

10. Data 10



Scene 00:45:20 – 00:46:00 (the story of JJ Collins' past)

The denotative meaning of a hostage scene where the perpetrator humiliates the victim. JJ seemed unable to fight back, only able to react through facial expressions. And the connotative meaning is the patriarchal system's attempt to discredit and humiliate masculine women by exposing their past as a form of symbolic control.

11. Data 11



Scene at 00:49:42 (JJ Collins pointed his firearm at the two male characters lying on the floor)

In denotative meaning, this scene shows a woman in a dominant physical position, pointing a gun at two men. In terms of connotative meaning, this scene contains a deeper symbolic meaning, namely the reversal of power positions and shifting gender roles. The dominance shown by women in this scene by Judith Halberstam (1998), which is a form of expression of masculinity that does not depend on the male body, but instead emerges from the female body that challenges gender binary norms.

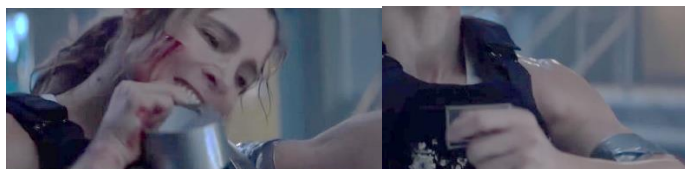
12. Data 12



Scene at 00:50:00 (JJ Collins is waging a fierce battle against his enemy)

The denotative meaning of this datum is that two women are physically fighting with high intensity, using their body strength and fighting skills. The connotative meaning is that this fight symbolizes women's courage, physical strength, and mental resilience. In the context of female masculinity (Halberstam, 1998), both women in this scene represent masculinity in a form that does not depend on the male body.

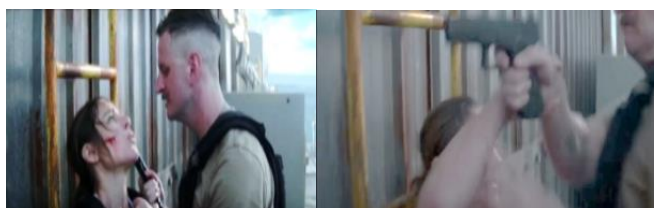
13. Data 13



Scene at 00:53:33 – 00:54:01 (Captain JJ Collins is seen treating a wound on his arm using silver duct tape)

The denotative meaning of a woman treating a wound on her body using duct tape. She did this on her own, in an emergency and without proper medical facilities. The connotative meaning of strength, independence, and resilience. It is symbolic of masculinity in the form embodied by the female body-where strength and the role of savior are not tied to gender (Halberstam, 1998).

14. Data 14



Scene at 01:19:19 – 01:20:03 (Captain JJ Collins was cornered, held at gunpoint by a burly man but able to fight back)

Gives the denotative meaning of a stressful situation, where a woman is in a threatened position by an armed man. However, the woman does not give up or appear afraid, but instead shows signs of physical resistance. The connotative meaning of this scene highlights the tension between masculine domination and resistance from female power.

15. Data 15



Scene at 01:18:25 – 01:18:46 (laptop operation to disable missile attacks)

The denotative meaning obtained from this explanation is that the woman is seen performing a very crucial technical action, accessing the system and stopping the missile. The connotative meaning is the representation of female masculinity in the form of intellectual power and strategic control. In terms of Halberstam's (1998) theory of female masculinity, this is an alternative form of masculinity performed by the female body - not simply mimicking male roles, but redefining power and authority from a female perspective.

16. Data 16



Scene at Scene 01:20:00 – 01:20:10 (JJ Collins uses pieces of barbed wire and wraps them around his enemy's neck)

Has a denotative meaning of a woman wrapping barbed wire around a man's neck in a physical fight scene. The man appears to be in pain and helpless, while the woman shows physical dominance and mental toughness. The connotative meaning implies the dominance and aggressiveness of a woman in a masculine space, the arena of physical violence.

17. Data 17



Scene at 01:21:21 (JJ Collins is seen hanging by just one hand on a metal ladder at the bottom of the ship's structure)

The denotative meaning implied is that the woman is hanging by one hand from a metal structure above the sea. The situation looks precarious and high-risk. The connotative meaning implies JJ Collins' incredible physical strength, endurance and determination.

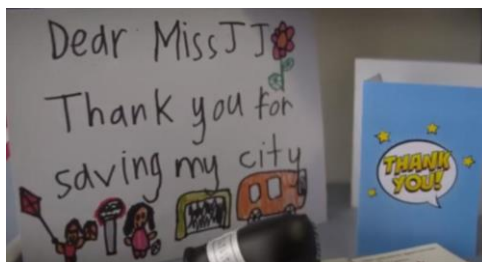
18. Data 18



Scene at 01:26:16 – 01:26:30 (JJ Collins was in a fierce fight against a man on a military base)

The denotative meaning is that a woman and a man are fighting on a military base. In the connotative meaning, JJ Collins appears as a woman who is able to dominate and fight masculine forces head-on.

19. Data 19



Scene at 01:27:50 (Appreciation for Capten JJ Collins Heroic Actions)

The denotative meaning of this datum is that the children are expressing gratitude to JJ for saving their city. The connotative meaning is that the greeting cards from children (usually synonymous with innocence and hope for the future) illustrate social acceptance of the heroic role played by a woman.

Female Masculinity Representation in Interceptor: A Connotative Analysis

1. Weaponry Mastery and Combat Expertise

In Datum 2, connotative meaning Collins carries symbols conventionally associated with masculinity: "Firearms symbolize strength, power, and potential aggression. Military uniforms represent hierarchical structures, nationalism, and dominance" (Datum 2). Furthermore, in Datum 9, The connotative meaning contains "symbols of dominance, courage, and militaristic power that are traditionally attached to masculinity" (Datum 9).

2. Physical Combat and Dominance

In Datum 7, Connotatively, this scene represents "women taking a masculine position as active and powerful subjects" (Datum 7). In Datum 8, shows "a representation of masculine strength inherent in the female figure".

3. Resilience and Self-Reliance

In Datum 13, portrays "strength, independence, and resilience" and "symbolizes courage and the spirit of survival" (Datum 13). In Datum 17, Connotatively, this position implies "incredible physical strength, endurance and determination" (Datum 17).

4. Technological Mastery and Strategic Control

In Datum 15, "the representation of female masculinity in the form of intellectual power and strategic control" (Datum 15).

5. Resistance to Patriarchal Domination

In Datum 10, "the patriarchal system's attempt to discredit and humiliate masculine women by exposing their past as a form of symbolic control" (Datum 10). However, in Datum 14, this scene "highlights the tension between masculine domination and resistance from female power" (Barthes, 1977).

6. Social Acceptance of Female Heroism

In Datum 19, The connotative meaning of this scene is that "female masculinity does not have to be synonymous with violence or alienation, but can instead be a warm form of rescue and heroism" (Datum 19).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

There were 19 scenes that showed masculine female characters. The denotative meaning shows women playing roles in situations that are traditionally dominated by men, such as wearing military uniforms, fighting physically, operating weapons, and mastering technology. Meanwhile, the connotative meaning of these scenes depicts challenges to traditional gender norms by displaying power, authority, physical strength, independence, and mastery of technology as traits that are not exclusively male. Further analysis identified six main characteristics of female masculinity in this film, namely: (1) mastery of weapons and combat skills, (2) physical combat and dominance, (3) resilience and independence, (4) mastery of technology and strategic control, (5) resistance to patriarchal dominance, and (6) social acceptance of female heroism. This representation is in line with Judith Halberstam's theory of female

masculinity (1998), which states that masculinity is not only attached to the male body. JJ Collins shows an alternative form of masculinity that does not imitate men but still maintains a female identity. In addition, this film also shows that female masculinity can be socially accepted, not only identical to violence.

Suggestion

This study is expected to be a reference for future research on gender representation in action film genres or other genres and can explore how gender stereotypes in films affect people's perceptions of gender roles in real life. This study is also expected to provide new insights into semiotics and gender analysis, which aims to help students of literature, communication, or gender studies understand how media shapes people's perceptions of gender.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cintya Marvika is an English Literature student at the University of Bangka Belitung. He was born in Toboali on April 18, 2001. Her friends usually call her Tya. She spends most of his time to play a game, hangout. She was active on social media such as Instagram and she was active in Organitations. She hobby include cooking, reading and watching.

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