

The Construction of Masculinity in *Layangan Putus*

Mercillia Widodo¹ and Jenny Mochtar²
Petra Christian University, INDONESIA^{1,2}

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Corresponding Author:

Jenny Mochtar

Petra Christian University, INDONESIA

Email: jennymd@petra.ac.id

ABSTRACT

A phenomenal *sinetron*, *Layangan Putus*, has enraptured and polarized Indonesian audiences when it was aired. With its accessibility and popularity, *sinetron* is a powerful tool of the construction of identity and is a source of potent, though sometimes invisible, ideologies. The construction of masculinity is evident through four social forms of images, myths, discourses and practices proposed by Reeser (2010). The main character, Aris, is portrayed as the ideal man with his capability to provide and attract women. This notion is in full contrast with other male characters portrayed as ‘failed’ or mediocre, and whose weaknesses only showcase Aris’ dominance. The *sinetron* depicts the reality as Aris’ qualities are encouraged and even catapulted as the epitome of masculinity. On the other hand, his loss of masculinity in the end serves as a critique towards the idealized masculine man. This suggests the double nature of gender representations in mass media.

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INTRODUCTION

Layangan Putus (A Drifted Kite) is a ten episode Indonesian *sinetron* or soap opera which tells the collapsing marriage of its main characters: Kinan and Aris. Streamed online through the video-on-demand platform, WeTV, on November 26, 2021, it quickly became the trending topic in social media and is used as popular memes. Although soap opera has long been considered to be “of inferior quality, as fantasy and escapism for women”, it has attracted broader audiences “from a wider demographic range including men and teenagers” (O’Connor & Boyle, 1993, p. 108). The medium in which *Layangan Putus* is available is perhaps one of the reasons for its popularity and extension of audience. WeTV is an online platform with application basis originated from China which expanded to Indonesia in 2020. Its goal is to provide Asian audiences with Asian series that can be enjoyed in local languages. The highlighted feature of WeTV is their original series which they claim to have similar cinematic qualities to films (Prasetyo, 2020). *Layangan Putus* is one of their original series. Because it is streamed online, it offers convenience to its viewers. Anyone who has access to a mobile phone, a laptop and internet can watch it online and can enjoy it with friends, or solitarily at his/her own preferred time and location. Such comfort may be one of the reasons why *Layangan Putus* achieves considerable popularity success. Its success went beyond its intended local audiences as it became the number one trending topic in fifteen countries including the USA, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and Japan (Fitria, 2022).

Another reason for its popularity is that it talks about conflicts in marriage life caused by the third person, a topic which can be found in many other series, including the recently popular Korean series such as *The World*

of the Married and *The Penthouse*. The seemingly happy life of Kinan and Aris is disrupted by Aris's affair with Lydia. The agitated Kinan, who feels that Aris is cheating, at first fails to prove her suspicion; whereas Aris skillfully hides his affair from Kinan and even his best friends. Since episode 1, Aris is portrayed as the ideal man for a husband because of his look, his wealth and his obvious affection for Kinan and their daughter, Raya. Even Kinan's best friends, Lola and Dita, who are single, wish that they would get a husband like Aris. When Aris is around, girls are attracted to him more than to other men. Aris is represented as an ideal man who exerts his masculinity that can easily draw women to him. By analyzing how Aris is represented in the *sinetron* as the epitome of masculinity through his ability to provide for the women in his life and in consequence is desired by many women, we want to show how masculinity is depicted and constructed by the *sinetron* as a representation of a cultural masculine ideal, yet at the same time, is criticised for its futility.

Masculinity is not a popular topic in Indonesia. The study of gender in Indonesia in general can be said to be mainly focused on 'women's issues' and the research conducted in this area has been neglecting men and masculinity (Oetomo, 2000, p.46). In fact, in the "last 15 years or so, scholarship in Indonesian gender studies has, on the whole, been much slower than in other countries to incorporate the study of men and masculinities" (Clark, 2010, p. 14). This quite possibly has something to do with the nature of masculinity itself that is considered to be invisible and given. Whereas "men and masculinity become the benchmark against which everything else about human nature is explained" because they refer to all people in general, the "individuals, groups or categories have typically not been problematized" (Hearn & Howson, 2020, p. 19). Masculinity is not something that is talked about or even investigated because there seems to be no need to do that. Men are not in repression, therefore, they are not worthy of study. This is something that has recently been considered to be an issue.

Masculinity is "the set of social practices and cultural representations associated with being a man" (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004, p. 80). It is a cultural construction that sets the standard of what a man is supposed to be and act in a certain culture. Culture itself is much more than "a set of things", but a "a set of practices" that is "concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings" within a certain society or group (Hall, 2003, p. 2). Therefore, to understand masculinity, we need to examine the practices that produce and exchange meaning in a particular environment. As Reeser (2010) pointed out there are four social forms from which masculinity as an ideology can be constructed; they are through images, myths, discourses and practices (p. 21). These social forms are distinct, yet they might overlap with each other in a way that a cigarette ads which displays an image of a rugged looking man construct the notion of masculinity through image (the way the man looks) and through practice (the way smoking a cigarette is considered as masculine). The construction of masculinity through myth can be explained by the popular myths that surrounds a certain culture, usually in forms of religious stories or popular folktales that build the idea of how a man should be or do. Lastly, through discourse, the notion of masculinity is constructed through small and large settings of discussions, common understanding in a specific culture, or even governmental law which set the rules of becoming a man (Reeser, 2010, p. 23).

The construction of masculinity, as mentioned earlier, must be examined through a set of social forms, and this is evident abundantly in visual media, including in soap operas. It is "through analyzing representations of gender in visual and other media" that "we can gain insight into the tensions and ambiguities inherent in gender ideology" (Bain, 2005, p. 101). A study by Miyose (2015) which analyzes the construction of masculinity in K-drama series which depict the Flower Boy persona concludes that despite their seemingly revised portrayal of the modern, young Korean man, they maintain the patriarchal hegemony by portraying the men as better than the women, and use the women only to help showing this idea. Another study of a popular British TV reality show *Love Island* by Silverio et.al. (2021) shows how the notion of masculinity is "never

far from being contested as being performed in the ‘wrong’ way” as the appearance of bromance between two male characters in the show presents a “more diverse and homosocial masculine identities”; yet, receives negative comments from its viewers once their female partners were taken from the equation (para. 2 conclusion). These two studies show how TV shows depict both the reality and the culturally construct ideal notion of masculinity. In similar way, through this study, we want to show how that the representations of masculinity in *Layangan Putus* offers a “double nature” quality as they depict the reality of masculinity that is already available in the specific culture, and at the same time, they construct that depiction. On the other hand, these representations might present a critique toward the notion of masculinity that exists in a specific cultural situation (Reeser, 2010, p.25). The *sinetron* offers a depiction of the notion of masculinity through the portrayal of Aris, the main male character, who is depicted as the epitome of masculinity, but in the end is losing almost everything. The *sinetron* then serves as both the depiction and a critique toward the existing notion of masculinity in Indonesia.

The social practices evident in *Layangan Putus* depict and construct the notion of masculinity by presenting Aris as an ideal man physically, characteristically, and socially; and contrasting him to the other male characters in the *sinetron* whose ‘inabilities’ only highlight Aris’ seemingly perfection. By being able to be a provider for the women in his life and desired by many women, Aris’ over confidence leads him towards his own misery at the end, and in a way, his loss of masculinity.

ARIS THE IDEAL MAN

Reeser (2010) pointed out how gender is a socially constructed notion which are cultivated through four mediums: images, myths, discourses and practices (p. 24). These four mediums are distinct, yet might overlap each other as they work together to build a socially accepted and sometimes invisible notion of gender. These four mediums are present in *Layangan Putus* as the *sinetron* depicts and contributes in the construction of the notion of masculinity in Indonesia through the character of Aris and his interaction with other male as well as female characters. Two of the most evident notions of masculinity depicted by Aris are his role as a provider and his desireability in the eyes of the women.

The first and the most foregrounded notion of masculinity in *Layangan Putus* is the discourse of men as a provider for other people. Masculinity is constructed by putting Aris in the traditional role as the breadwinner for the family. Even though Kinan used to be a doctor, she is a full time housewife once she is married. She depends on Aris as the provider for the family, a role that Aris does very well. The role as the breadwinner of the family is a socially constructed and accepted practice that many Indonesians believe to be accountable for men. Because many men conform to this role, then it is believed to be the norm, and in return, more men are doing it (Reeser, 2010). Aris is depicted as a self-made man who manages to climb the social ladder with his own effort. The *sinetron* opens with the scene of *siraman*, which is a Javanese tradition of welcoming a soon to be born child. The Aris that is introduced to the audience in the beginning of the soap is a man who is successful. He is handsome, fit, well-spoken and well-mannered. But above all this, he is wealthy. The audience is introduced to Aris and his wife, Kinan’s house which is a typical wealthy house often used in *sinetrons*, complete with a state of the art kitchen, spotless dining room, spacious garden and, of course, a swimming pool. Aris is driving a Mazda, not particularly a luxurious car, but is a medium level brand that sends signals of youth, modernity and coolness. His wife is driving a different Mazda. Kinan uses her car to go to her daughter’s school and to meet her friends. The audience soon learns that she does not work. The image of Aris as the ideal man with his good looks, good manner, and wealth represent the socially accepted idealized notion of masculinity. Aris is one of many similar main male character represented in Indonesian *sinetron* which contributes to the socially construct notion of an ideal man in Indonesia.



Figure 1. Aris the loving husband and the doting father



Figure 2. The sprawling mansion of the seemingly ideal couple

Later in the *sinetron*, it is revealed that this couple met when Kinan used to work as a doctor, and Aris was her patient. The flashback shows a different image of a younger Aris, in casual clothes and speaks casually, not like the cool and reserved version of his mature self. The audience can see the transformation that happens before and after Aris marries Kinan, how their life is now affluent and comfortable, how they shop for jewelry without thinking about the money, how their servants complain that the food is always in excess, mostly because Aris hardly ever eats at home and always comes home late. Aris is working almost every time, although later the audience finds out that he is *not* always working when he is not at home. But he continuously uses his work as an excuse to not being at home, even on weekends. And the fact that this is acknowledged and accepted by Kinan unquestioningly (at first) shows that she understands that the lavish life she is living is the result of Aris' success. Men and his success in work then becomes the norm of the ideal man. Work then is a socially accepted practice that constructs masculinity.

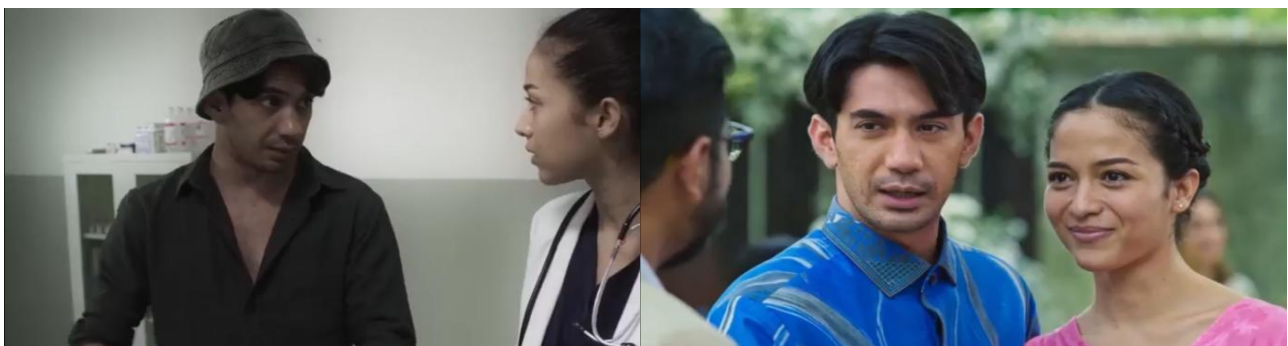


Figure 3. Aris transformation in appearance and charm before and after he gains success in work

Work becomes so unquestionably important to men that Aris uses it as the justification for being late or absent from home on the weekends, and this excuse is used in his defense when things start to be suspicious for Kinan. Kinan later notices strange things about her husband: he once comes home late and when he opens his jacket,

Kinan sees that he misses one shirt button; he says that he is working on weekends, but Kinan sends food to the office one Saturday and discovers that the office is always closed on weekends; Aris saves his mistress' number in his phone in the name of his fictional client. The fact that Aris continuously uses the office and his work as an excuse to his negligence as a husband and father shows that work, and in consequence, being a provider for the family is an important notion of masculinity. So important that when this is used as a reason for misdemeanor, it is accepted without question by the wife. The ability to provide a comfortable life for his family then is an important notion of masculinity.

The discourse of men as a provider is emphasized by Aris' relationship with his mistress, Lydia. Right after the audience learns that Aris is cheating on his wife, the audience also learns that Lydia lives in an apartment that is gifted by Aris. She repeatedly thanks Aris for the apartment and when Aris visits her in the apartment, she would provide him with food, drinks and even offers of sexual intercourse. Aris also gives presents to Lydia, most notably a pair of earrings which later is found by Kinan and further strengthens her suspicion. Although Lydia continuously insists that she loves Aris, it is apparent too, that she envies Kinan's life as Aris' wife. Lydia wants what Kinan has. There is one memorable scene where Lydia and Aris go to Kinan's house, and Lydia looks around the house, goes into the rooms, and even seduces Aris to make love to her in Kinan's bed. Lydia wants, and she shows this with explicit words as well as implicit facial expression, what Kinan has, and that does not only mean Aris, but also the lavish life that is depicted by the house that Aris and Kinan live in.



Figure 4. Lydia roams and marvels at Kinan and Aris' house and subsequently seduces Aris in Kinan's bed

Furthermore, a masculine man is not only a willing provider like Aris, but is also expected to be a lavish provider, which is depicted in the dating scene between Kinan's best friend, Lola and the man he met in online dating. She is meeting him for the first time in a club. The man unfortunately comments on Lola's weight, saying that she looks bigger than her online profile, and Lola, who is self critical about her weight, does not take it well. She decides to order so much food and drinks, and offers them to the man, who refuses and grows more worried as the date progresses. After Lola finishes eating, she excuses herself to the toilet and while she is there, she asks the waitress to send the bill to the man. The man looks at the bill and gapes, confusingly

checks his wallet, showing the audience defeated look on his face. The audience can tell that he does not have enough money to pay for the bill. The man could actually send back the bill, ask the waitress to ask Lola to pay since he does not eat or drink any of them. But he does not do that. In fact, we believe few men will do that given the same circumstance. A man will lose his face if he does that, especially on a first date. This unwritten code, or understanding between men and women, is based on the assumption that being masculine is being a provider. The way the sinetron ridicules the man by showing his incompetency in providing the needs of a woman is constructing the idea of a *loser* as the opposite of the masculine man. The man who Lola dates is the opposite of Aris, who manages to provide the needs of not only one woman, but two.

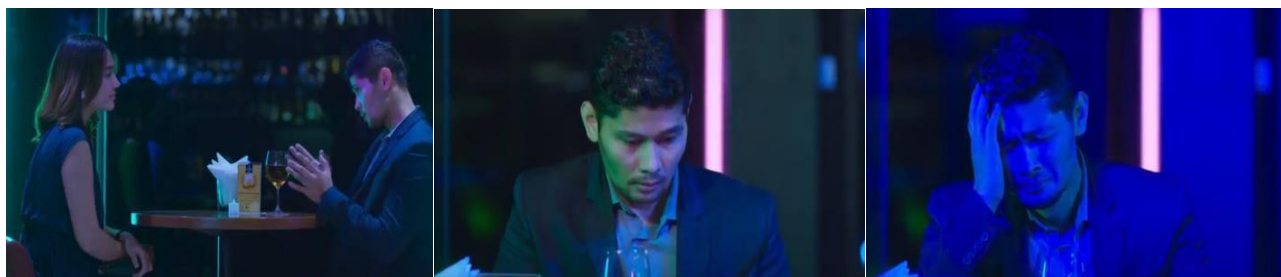


Figure 5. Lola's doomed date, commenting on Lola's figure and gaping at the exorbitant bills

The idea of a *loser* is also depicted in the character of Eros, Miranda's husband. In contrast to Aris, Eros fails in his role as a provider. This failure as a provider is constructed as the loss of masculinity. As Miranda becomes the provider, replacing Eros, then Miranda is given the 'masculine' right to have an inamorato (male mistress). When Miranda is confronted by Kinan about her affair, the question that Kinan asks to her is whether or not the affair is making her happy. To this question, Miranda says that she has lost respect toward her husband, that she has watched him fail in achieving his dreams so many times that now she has lost faith in him. Miranda mentions that she does not care whether Eros is successful or not as long as he is trying to achieve his dream, but this statement is in contrast to her later statements that show that she thinks of her husband as a failure. It is not revealed clearly in the sinetron about Eros' job as he is a minor character who appears seldomly on the screen. But there are repetitive remarks on Eros' effort in building a business that has not yet become fruitful, and in contrast, it is very clear that Miranda is a successful career woman, who is very competent in her job and who can support herself well. It is finally shown near the end of the sinetron that Miranda and Eros are divorced and their son moves to live with Eros in a different city. Eros then is an example of the *loser* man, who is unable to secure a stable life for his family and therefore, serves as *the other* of the discourse on men as the provider. Again, this is in total opposite to the depiction of Aris as the lavish provider of both his family and his mistress.

The second notion of masculinity evident in the soap is that masculinity is identical to being desired by other women. A masculine man possesses attraction and charisma that is wanted by women. This notion is foregrounded in the characterization of Aris. The discourse of Aris' desireability are built in the *sinetron* by the comments made by other female as well as male characters who acknowledge and even perpetuate Aris' desireability. In the beginning of the series, Aris is referred to as the "hot daddy" by Merry, Kinan's neighbor who often drops by unannounced and gives unsolicited comments on the nature of men. In a conversation between Kinan and her best friends, Lola and Dita, when they are talking about online dating, Lola admits that the men in the online dating application are not as attractive as Aris. She acknowledges that a 'complete' man like Aris is hard to find nowadays. Even Kinan's mother once says that she does not trust Aris and has doubts about him when he asked Kinan's parents for their approval in their marriage plan. Kinan's mother believes that Aris is too perfect.

Another example of how the soap reinforces the discourse on Aris' desirability is in the scene of 'the boys going clubbing'. Aris' best friends, Alif and Irfan, ask Aris to join them for a "boys night out" to do some "chill-out time" in a club. They allure Aris to come by emphasizing on the need to relax and hang out with friends, although they are fully aware that Aris is married and his wife is expecting a baby. The friends even stress out that the night is "ladies night" meaning that there will be many women in the club. They also mention that they have invited some women to join and accompany them. At first, this is something strange because the friends seem to be suggesting that Aris needs the accompaniment of other women to relax, even though they know that he has a wife. However, later in the club it is revealed that their intention is to use Aris' desirability to lure women to accompany them in the club. Apparently, Aris' friends are using Aris as bait to lure women. They know that Aris is attractive and that women are attracted to him. In the club, as predicted, the women they invite automatically hover around Aris, asking questions and talking seductively to him. Aris is being polite to these women, but he does not show signs of interest as he is not interested in these women. But his friends are using Aris to 'elevate' their position in the eyes of these women, knowing that if they are being acknowledged to be in the same group with Aris, then they are as attractive to women as he is. When Aris asks to leave earlier, the women are protesting, asking when they will see him again. Aris says that it depends on his friends. This shows that Aris is giving 'permission' to let his friends being acknowledged into his circle, into his position as an alpha male. Right after Aris is gone, Alif says to one of the women that Aris is gone so she can focus on him.



Figure 6. Aris in the spotlight and in the center of the women's attention

The last and probably the most obvious example of the discourse of Aris' desirability is the relationship between Aris and Lydia. It is shown that Aris was the one making the first move when Aris and Lydia met for the first time in a coffee shop. It was a chance meeting, and was unplanned. But after they have become lovers, Lydia is showing aggressiveness and assertiveness toward Aris. She seduces him with midnight calls and provocative messages. In one scene, Lydia even comes to Aris' office and makes love to him in the parking lot. This is her own idea and has never been suggested by anyone before. In the second half of the soap, the audience is introduced to a new character named Dion who is attracted to Lydia. Dion is young, attractive and successful. He is the owner of a business that is recruiting Lydia for a project. Dion shows immediate interest in Lydia and even continues to pursue her persistently when he knows that Lydia is in a relationship with another man. It is interesting to analyze why Lydia is not attracted to Dion who is as attractive, and as successful as Aris, and who is undoubtedly single. This unwavering attraction to Aris seems to be rooted on a notion of masculinity that when a man is desired by many women, other women will desire him too. The fact that Aris is married and has a beautiful wife increases his 'position' in the eyes of society and women in particular and makes him a more desired object than other attractive men.

Normalization of Infidelity

The two foregrounded notions of masculinity constructed in the soap: men as a lavish provider and as desired by women serve as the basis for another discourse seemingly inherent in the soap. The privilege that the main character, Aris, gives to his wife in terms of luxurious house, cars and easy lifestyle as well as his desirability in the eyes of other women provide him with a sense of entitlement to provide and being desired by *another* woman; thus, his right to infidelity. Throughout the soap, Aris does not show any remorse, regret or guilt about his secret affair. In fact, the only time he feels guilt is when he cannot be reached by phone when Kinan is in pain due to her high blood pressure which is caused by stress. At the time Kinan is in terrible pain, he is in Lydia's apartment and oversleeps. By the time he finally gets to the hospital, Kinan is already taken care of by her friends and maids. His guilt is apparent. But his guilt is not based on remorse over his infidelity, rather on the fact that he does not keep his promise to take Kinan to the doctor. In other words, his guilt is based on his inability to become a provider for Kinan, in this case, providing service and comfort to his pregnant wife. The next day, he even calls his mistress early in the morning, another proof that his remorse for his infidelity is nonexistent.

Aris does not show guilt or remorse regarding his infidelity even after Kinan loses the baby due to her high blood pressure. Their marriage is practically over at that point, although Aris still thinks that he is able to hold on to both his family and his mistress. Aris shows true grief for his dead son, but he does not feel that it is because of his infidelity. Right after the funeral of his son, he continues to contact Lydia and resumes his affair with her as if nothing happens. When Kinan confronts him and confirms that she blames him for the death of his unborn son, Aris does not believe it. He does not think that Kinan's blood pressure is caused by the stress of his infidelity. Right after the big quarrel, Aris storms out of the house and goes to Lydia's apartment. The pattern is clear here. Whenever Aris is under pressure, he goes to a place where he is always welcomed, to an apartment that he bought, to a woman he provided and cared for and who desires him because of those reasons.

Normalization to infidelity is also evident in the appearance of Merry, a neighbor of Kinan who is mentioned earlier. She is a minor character and her appearance is ridiculed as her character is a stereotypical gossiping neighbor, a trivial character who does not contribute to the plot of the story but is important as she is one of the familiar elements of Indonesian sinetron whose comments might represent the opinions of Indonesian viewers. Merry is a divorcee, and she uses her experience with her previous husband to build a generalization on men. The first time the audience is introduced to Merry, she comes to the house warning Kinan to be careful about letting Aris drive Raya, Kinan's daughter, to school because Aris will meet the other mothers. Merry is convinced that the other mothers will be attracted to a 'hot daddy' like Aris. Merry continues to say that there are only two types of men: the first one is the men who are so *bejat* (evil) that it is impossible for them to be faithful no matter what the wives do, and the second one is the men who are basically good but can be tempted (to cheat on their wives) with as little as a text message from another woman. This is how men are perceived by women.

Normalization to infidelity is also evident in the way Aris' friends, Alif and Irfan, joke about him. In one scene where the three of them are meeting up in a cafe before a motor touring, they are ready to join the touring but Aris then receives a text message that he claims from his client who urgently asks for a meeting. Disappointed, the two friends ask whether it is his real client or 'client', meaning another woman.

"Hey bro, let's be real. We are all men right? Are you meeting a client or a 'client' (smirking)?" (Layangan Putus, ep. 1, our translation).



Figure 7. Aris canceling his touring plan for a ‘client’ and Alif’s insinuation of an affair by putting the word client in quotation marks

Then, Irfan re-affirms by asking whether Aris has a girlfriend. Aris denies their suspicion and claims that he works to provide for his wife and daughter, again using work as an excuse and masquerade for his infidelity. This seemingly innocent remark by the ‘boys’ shows that it is common knowledge that married men are infidel, and that those who do not are the exception. This is how men are perceived by men.

An interesting part of how masculinity is constructed in the sinetron is how infidelity is not the domain of men. Miranda’s infidelity is important to note since it shows how masculinity is not only possessed by men. By being the provider of *her* family, and by showing attractiveness, Miranda is exerting the same characteristics as Aris. Miranda is often shown as Aris’ equal as they are equal partners in their firm and as they negotiate their dominance toward each other. Aris is aware of Miranda’s affair, and Miranda is aware of his. They both use this knowledge as a leverage to conceal their infidelity both from the public as well as from their respective partners.

The Nature of Men

“Do you believe Aris?” Alif asked.

“Well, I believe him more than I believe you, *buaya!*” Irfan answered.

“Hey, *buaya* accuses *buaya!*” Alif scoffed.

(*Layangan Putus*, ep. 1, our translation)

There are differences of opinions regarding the nature of crocodiles (English translation of *buaya*) among scientists. Some consider it to be one of the most loyal animals in the world, and in Betawi culture the faithfulness of love is symbolized by *roti buaya*, a traditional bread that is customary to be given to the bride-to-be family as a symbol of faithfulness of the future groom (Afrisia, 2015). A research in Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge found that 70% of female crocodiles show “extraordinary loyalty to their partners” while it was not yet concluded if the male crocodiles show the same faithfulness, but all of the offsprings from one female crocodile for three consecutive breeding seasons show one patrilineal source (World Today News, 2022). In general, crocodiles are considered to be a loyal animal.

In Indonesian popular culture; however, the term *buaya darat* (land crocodile) is used to describe a man who cannot be faithful to a woman. In the Indonesian online dictionary published by *Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa* (the Directorate of Language Development), *buaya darat* means two things: *penjahat* (criminal) and *penggemar perempuan* (womanizer). It is not clear how this term got spread and on what basis, but popular singers from Irwansyah to Ratu, and popular *sinetron* from *Pacar Gue Buaya Darat* to *How to*

Train Buaya Darat, all build on the discourse of men as unfaithful beings. Men are considered as a creature who is naturally polygamous and cannot restrain themselves from being attracted to beautiful women.

In *Layangan Putus*, the discourse on men as *buaya darat* is perpetuated by the women as well as the men. Kinan's friends, Lola and Dita, who come to her *siraman* reception are shocked to find that one of the guests is a very attractive woman. Dita looks at the woman suspiciously and comments that she is *cantik banget* (too beautiful). They are even more shocked when Kinan tells them calmly that the woman is Aris' partner at work, Miranda. Dita smirks and repeats the word 'work partner' in a mocking tone. A beautiful woman is considered to be not just a friend for men. It is impossible for men to be only friends with beautiful women. Although in the *sinetron* Aris is not romantically involved with Miranda, the suggestion that there *must* be something going on between them is based on the assumption of men as *buaya darat*.

This assumption is also corroborated by the men themselves as in their effort to invite Aris to hang out with them in the club, Alif and Irfan bring out the fact that since Kinan is pregnant and the due date is soon, it means that Aris and Kinan have not made love for a long time and this must have caused Aris to be stressed. Again, the assumption that men need biological release and that they need to *watch* attractive women as a form of recreation are closely related to the assumption of men as *buaya darat*.

In her article discussing the role of the feminine in the New Order cinemas, Sen states that in the Indonesian romance films, women are portrayed as strong and willful, but they never seem to be able to steer too far from *kodrat wanita* (the nature of women) that suggests that women's main role as mother are within the scope of family; thus going too far from this scope is a contestation toward the dominant discourse of motherhood (Sen, 1995, p. 117). Women, despite their achievements and education, are bound within the domestic sphere and are always evaluated in referral to their role as mothers. Men seem to be bound within another sphere. The roles of the provider and the conqueror of women that men carry bound them within the sphere of the exterior, always on the peripheral distance from the ones they provide for, in roles of absentee fathers and husbands, and in eternal search for passing, short-lived pleasures of sexual gratification.

CONCLUSION

Masculinity is a socially constructed notion, and in *Layangan Putus* it is constructed through the discourse of men as a provider and as desired by women. These characteristics are possessed by Aris and Miranda. Thus, masculinity is not restricted to men. It can be applied to both men and women. Masculinity is not based on sex; therefore, the common assumption that men should be masculine and women should be feminine is contested. Instead, masculinity is more related to the sphere. Kinan who dwells in the domestic sphere is portrayed as the dedicated wife and mother, and her role is being contrasted to Miranda's portrayal as the breadwinner and the cheating wife. In the same way, Aris' portrayal as the lavish provider and desirable is contrasted to Eros who seems to have lost his masculinity. This suggests that masculinity (and femininity) is not given, but constructed; and a woman like Miranda who is dominant in the public sphere may also show the notion of masculinity, just like Aris. Furthermore, the idea that masculinity is constructed questions the nature of man as *buaya darat* as something that is not intrinsic to men, but rather is constructed. Men's confirmation to the notion of *buaya darat* shows the pervasiveness of the construction itself, but at the same time, opens possibilities where men can contest this assumption and creates a new, and possibly more positive, notion of masculinity.

The *sinetron* is a site of gender construction as it provides a double nature quality as a representation of what the society believes in and at the same time, it constructs the belief of that society. The notion of men as rightful

adulterers are built upon the discourses of men's infidelities abundant in Indonesian *sinetron*. On the other hand, Aris' loss of masculinity at the end of the *sinetron* as he loses Kinan and Raya when Kinan wins the right to take care of their daughter in the civil court, and Aris' last scene in the series which shows him sitting on the side of the bed looking forlornly out the apartment's window, neglecting his mistress who lays with her back facing him, signifies the futility of the idealized notion of masculinity and serves as the critique that the *sinetron* offers to the notion of ideal man that previously was constructed.

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