

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

A serial drama is a type of television show that is divided into episodes. Serial drama is a noun that shows a series of stories that are related to each other. So if there are parts that are not followed, it will be difficult for the audience to understand the next story. Serial drama is one of three types of drama that is built from a story that is packaged dramatically (Fossard, 2005: 8). The advantage of this type of drama is that the screenwriter only needs one idea for the next episodes. In addition, serial drama has several characteristics, including; having a continuous story; strong involvement with the lives of others; having a lot of characters; emotional turnover, and; and opportunity to develop strong feelings (positive or negative) in the characters.

The serial drama serves as a medium to communicate diverse messages to the public via stories conveyed through plays, expressions, and body language. The purpose of this serial drama is not only for entertainment for the audience, but also as a medium to create, learn, and raise certain issues that are currently happening in society. Currently, there are many serial drama being broadcast on the Netflix platform, one of them is “*Sweet Home*” (2020). “*Sweet Home*” is a serial drama adaptation of a famous Korean webtoon of the same name by Kim Kan-bi and Hwang Young-chan. This serial drama tells a mysterious virus outbreak that turns greedy humans into terrible monsters. In the serial drama

“*Sweet Home*”, it is described that women are able to lead and are more courageous in making decisions and going against monsters. The reason for conducting research on the serial drama “*Sweet Home*” is not just because it has a unique and unusual storyline and the visual depiction of monsters, but also because of the female characters played in the serial drama. This serial drama has many female supporting characters who play a big role in helping, leading, and being independent. The female characters are eight people with different characteristics and behaviors. 1) Lee Eunwoo, a student who dropped out of school; 2) Yoon Jisoo, a girl who lived alone; 3) Seo Yi Kyeong, a fireman; 4) Park Yoori, a girl who had asthma; 5) Ahn Sun-Young, a wife of a selfish and patriarchal man; 6) Cha Jin-Ok, a mother who lost her daughter on her way to the apartment; 7) Son Hye-In, a woman who lives only with her pet dog, and; 8) Lim Myeong-Ja, a mom who had lost her baby a year ago and caused profound trauma. Also in this serial drama, there is no portrayal of weak female characters. As we know, the majority of the female characters are shown as weaker than the male characters. Moreover, the representation of women, especially in Indonesia, has decreased. Television shows that don’t make sense and don’t educate women, also exacerbate the construction of women and make people close their eyes and belittle women.

Different from South Korea, even though there is still a patriarchal and anti-feminist culture there, films and serial drama, portray independent women who have leadership qualities to reduce patriarchy. Korean serial drama is an educational forum that is easily accessible to anyone at any time. Especially now,

the public can access Korean serial dramas through online streaming platforms such as Netflix. Through the signs that appear in the scenes, they produce representations of female characters. Therefore, to analyze the signs and meanings of the signs that appear in Korean serial dramas, this study uses the John Fiske code of television theory.

According to Fiske (1987), the code of television is a system or code that produces a sign displayed on a television screen which is a social reality, in other words, a product produced by humans. Reality does not only appear through code but is processed through the senses of the audience. This makes a code perceived differently. Through the codes that have been disclosed in John Fiske's theory, social codes are divided into three levels are follows:

- 1) Level of Reality (appearance, dress, environment, behavior, conversation, gesture, expression, voice, etc).
- 2) Level of Representation (camera, lighting, editing, music, sound). These codes provide conventional images that form representations, such as narrative, conflict, character, action, dialogue, setting, casting, etc.
- 3) Level of Ideology (individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism).

Various research studies utilizing semiotic theory of John Fiske, including the research entitled "John Fiske's Semiotic Analysis: Representation of Social Criticism in *Pretty Boys*" by Tasya Arlina and Reni Nuraeni (2022) and "Semiotic of Multiculturalism Representation on Child Characters in the Film *Cuties*" by Aldi Purnomo et al (2022).

The primary topic of discussion in this research is the supporting female characters in the serial drama “*Sweet Home*” which shows the depiction of female characters who are different from reality, have the right to freedom without being bound by patriarchy and culture, have leadership and their courage in making decisions so that everyone in the apartment can survive from monster attacks. Here are some scenes featuring representations of female characters in the serial drama “*Sweet Home*”:

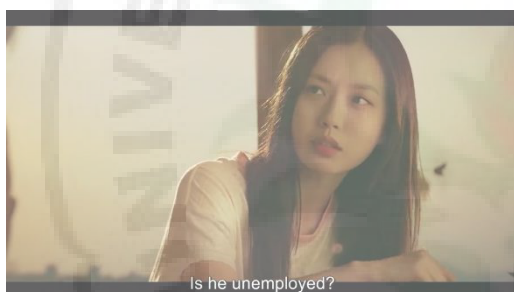


Figure 1. 1
(*Lee Eunwoo curious about the man*)



Figure 1. 2
(*Lee Eunwoo talks to herself*)

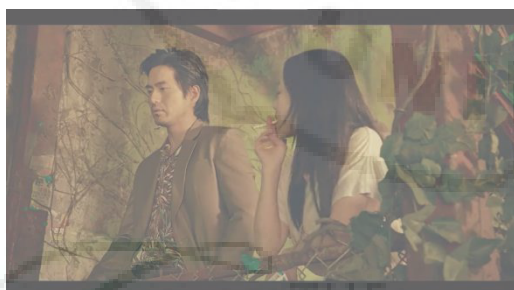


Figure 1. 3
(*Lee Eunwoo stared at the man*)

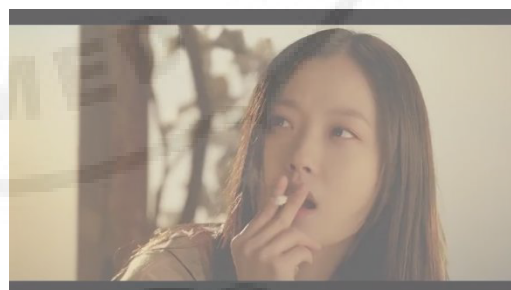


Figure 1. 4
(*Lee Eunwoo smoking*)

In these scenes, a girl named Lee Eunwoo approaches an older man and wants to talk to him. However, because of her impolite behavior, Eunwoo asked herself questions like in the dialogue “*Is he unemployed? He does look like a gangster, though.*” While wondering, Eunwoo also spoke casually and was not afraid that the person being spoken to would be offended. She also came to the

man while smoking. So, viewed from John Fiske's semiotics, code of television, it can be concluded as follows:

1. Level of Reality: a). (*Appearance, dress*) Wearing a plain T-shirt, no makeup, hair down. b). (*Behavior*) smoking and less polite.
2. Level of Representation: a). (*Camera*) Zoom in with a straight angle, and zoom out from the right side. b). (*Conversation*) "*Is he unemployed? He does look like a gangster, though.*"
3. Level of Ideology: Lee Eunwoo describes a female character who is not bound by patriarchy because she dares to smoke, whereas in many places, smoking women are still considered naughty and bad women.

B. Problem of the Study

According to the research background above, the formulation of the research problem can be formulated as seen below:

1. What are the female characters found in the "*Sweet Home*" serial drama?
2. How are the female characters represented in the serial drama "*Sweet Home*"?

C. Objectives of the Study

According to the problem formulation above, the research objectives are:

1. To find out the characterization on female characters contained in the "*Sweet Home*" serial drama.

1. To explain the representation of female characters through the codes of television in the “*Sweet Home*” serial drama.

D. Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is to examine the representation of female characters based on John Fiske’s code of television theory in “*Sweet Home*” (2020) serial drama.

E. Significance of the Study

The following advantages are anticipated from the study’s findings:

1. Theoretically, this research is expected to add insight into knowledge in the terms of semiotics.
2. In practice, this research is predicted to be beneficial for:
 - a. Women are out there so they are not afraid to express themselves (through work and leadership) without thinking about the ridicule of others and so they are not bound by the patriarchal culture that is still attached both in Indonesia and abroad.
 - b. For television show creators in Indonesia to be motivated and inspired to make programs that educate people more about how to describe female characters who are independent, able to make their own decisions, and dare to lead. Because there will be many benefits if we are aware of the patriarchy that still continues in Indonesia.