THE REPRESENTATION OF KATHOEY CHARACTERS IN THAI COMMERCIAL FILMS

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A MASTER THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN PROFESSIONAL ENGLISH MEDIA STUDIES (MA PEMMS)

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Abstract

This study discusses the development of the kathoey characters in three Thai commercial films, *Kung Fu Tootsie* (Mokjok, 2007), *It Gets Better* (Sukkhapisit, 2012), and *The Last Song* (Akaraseranee, 2006) with the view to exploring the representation of the kathoey, as well as the stereotypes associated with their portrayal. The three selected films belong to different genres: comedy, drama, and tragedy. The study uses qualitative research methods and is based on textual analysis. Character development is discussed in three parts related to characterization, deep character, and character’s arc and each level of character design is examined for its potential contribution to stereotypical representation. Despite the difference in genres all the films exhibit similarities in the way their kathoey characters are portrayed, and their representation can often be found stereotypical, both in relation to the characters’ strengths and weaknesses.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Thailand is often recognized for its large transgender population. Apart from the two standard gender-normative sexes, *kathoey* is a specific term used to describe third gender categories in Thailand. Therefore, the traditional Thai three-sex system are man, woman, and *kathoey*. Kang (2012) refers to the *kathoey* as transgender women and effeminate gay or male (p. 476). However, in everyday life Thai gender categories remain fluid. Even though, the word *kathoey* is used as a general term combining all third gender categories, Thai people view and use this term differently depending on the situation. For instance, *kathoey* may refer to glamorous middle-class male-to-female transgender people. On the other hand, the same word can be used as a put down to describe low-class gay people from outside Bangkok in an offensive way. So, it seems there is a lot of confusion as to what exactly *kathoey* is. In my writing, I will use the term *kathoey* as referring to male-bodied effeminacy or male-to-female transgender.

*Kathoey* are becoming more visible in the media. There are many films that have central *kathoey* characters, for instance *Iron Ladies* (Thongkongtoon, 2000) or *Beautiful Boxer* (Uekrongtham, 2004). Yet, the way *kathoey* are portrayed in these films is still stereotypical and it is an illusion. It is also significant that *kathoey* are mostly portrayed as comic or tragic in the media (Kang, 2012, p. 480). At the same time, *kathoey* become part of the popular media by being given a chance to participate in talk shows to promote social understanding, as well as gender expression. This seems to reflect the openness and acceptance of Thai society because it increases their visibility. On the other hand, however,
the visibility and apparent acceptance of *kathoey* may also stir concerns about national identity and the future of Thai society. As a result, it is safe to say that not all *kathoey* are tolerated by the Thai people. The *kathoey* who appear fully feminine and have polite manners are the most admired ones (Jackson, 1999, p. 230). Thus, the media play an important role in contributing to the visibility of *kathoey*.

1.2 Rationale

Films have an influence on the way we live our lives and they also reflect society, as well as people’s daily life. They reflect “true stories” and stories that are made up in order to entertain the audience. At the same time, many films choose to present their stories through the realistic mode of production, which makes them seem more authentic, even if the fictitious elements have been added to make their plots more interesting. Film plots are constructed for different reasons and serve different purposes. In the past, there was a limitation on making films regarding sexuality because people believed that sex-related stories, especially homosexual stories conveyed negative meanings. The increasing number of films with gay or third gender characters in Thai cinema reflects a change in Thai society. As a result of this change, Thai filmmakers have started to make films related to the issue of sexuality, also homosexuality (Urapong & Surakij, 2012, pp. 147-148).

Due to the visibility of the *kathoey* in films, they have become more accepted but the negative feelings and opinions of Thai audience still remain. One reason for that can be because *kathoey* characters are particularly prominent in Thai comedies. The exaggeration of their portrayal and the way these characters are represented in the films creates an illusion which is then taken on by other media (Urapong & Surakij, 2012, p. 149). This can lead to the formation, or the strengthening of the existing stereotypes in the audience. For example,
many people tend to think that *kathoey* have a good sense of humor. Moreover, their characters are sometimes created to show improper behavior, for instance when they use impolite words when talking to each other. Because of such stereotypical representations, *kathoey* are often assumed to be tactless but also good entertainers whose role in society is to create happiness by making people laugh. It is therefore clear that all this can contribute to presenting a stereotypical idea to the Thai audience.

Many films that have *kathoey* characters are comedies. This allows Pimrapee Thungkasemvathana to conclude that “*kathoey* characters offer comic relief” (*Bangkok Post*, 2004). This “comic relief” function can be the reason why *kathoey* characters are often portrayed in comedies and the audience becomes familiar with their portrayals. The *kathoey* characters have been part of Thai cinema for a long time. In the past, they played only minor roles in films. As notions and attitudes of Thai people changed, the role of *kathoey* characters changed too. *Iron Ladies* (2000) as an example here due to the film’s unprecedented success. The film turned out to be highly profitable, generating 98.70 million Baht of revenue in 2000 and inspired the productions of two sequels in 2003 and 2014. It was also the first movie that had *kathoey* characters featured in major roles throughout the film. It inspired filmmakers to make other films with *kathoey* characters (Prakaikavin, 2011, p. 11) and it conveyed the message that “Thai cinema has room for everything” (Vick, 2007, p. 236).

However the *kathoey* are not only portrayed in comedies. which is why in this study three different films with *kathoey* characters have been selected to represent three distinct genres of Thai cinema: a comedy, *Kung Fu Tootsie* (Mokjok, 2007), a drama, *It Gets Better* (Sukkhapisit, 2012), and a tragedy *The Last Song* (Akaraseranee, 2006). The study will examine whether the difference in genre affects the way the characters are represented and whether certain genres increase or decrease the likelihood of stereotypical portrayals.
1.3 Objectives

- To discuss the development of the *kathoey* characters in the selected Thai commercial films in order to see how the *kathoey* characters develop throughout the films, from superficial to deeper layers.
- To examine the construction of the *kathoey* characters in the selected Thai commercial films, in order to see how the media, especially films, create *kathoey* characters and how the *kathoey* are seen.
- To focus on the *kathoey* characters’ positioning in the context of representation and stereotypes that *kathoey* characters usually embody based on the analysis of the three selected Thai commercial films.

1.4 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the two following research questions:

- How are *kathoey* characters represented in selected Thai commercial films?
- What kind of stereotypes can be associated with the *kathoey* characters in the selected Thai commercial films?
1.5 Methodology

The researcher selected three films and each film has different scenes to be analysed to highlight three elements of character design, the discussion of which will lead to the answering of the research questions. The selected scenes are analysed to discuss the following elements of character design.

1. Characterization of the kathoey characters.
2. Deep character of the kathoey characters.
3. Character’s arc of the kathoey characters.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Kathoey refers to a person who has two genders in oneself. It is a Thai word referring to a person whose gender identity does not match his or her biological sex. The term describes all third gender categories in Thailand. In this thesis, kathoey refers to male-to-female transgender persons, male cross-dressers, as well as effeminate males. In this thesis, this term refers predominantly to male to female cross-dressers and all males who exhibit effeminacy regardless of their external appearance because all effeminate males who do not cross dress are also included in the category of kathoey.

Kathoey-Noi refers to a young kathoey or little kathoey who presents himself in between gay and kathoey due to his make-up and dressing. He does not fully dress like a woman but he has make up on his face. He is an effeminate boy who acts and dresses like a girl.
Queer cinema refers to films that deal with the theme of homosexuality. The films usually present queer issues or sometimes they are made by homosexual filmmakers. In the context of this thesis, the term queer cinema refers to the films that have a queer character as the main character or protagonist. This includes cross-dressing characters in which the main characters cross-dress as women even though they are not effeminate. However, this term is mostly used to describe Western films.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

Chapter One is the Introduction of the thesis. This chapter includes the background of the study explaining how the author uses and understands the term kathoey. It also includes a brief discussion on the problematization of the visibility of the kathoey in the media that seems to reflect Thai society. This chapter also introduces the methodology and the criteria that will be used to analyse the representation of the kathoey in selected films.

Chapter Two, Literature Review, discusses the theories that help us understand how Thai people view the kathoey. The chapter then moves to the theory of representation. Last but not least, the chapter focuses on the history of American and Thai queer cinema.

Chapter Three, Methodology, includes the restatement of the research questions and the method of analysis. This chapter also consists of the criteria and sample explanation of the analysis, as well as the selection of scenes. The researcher also discusses examples of common scenes in which the kathoey are usually portrayed.
Chapter Four, Analysis and Discussion, includes the synopsis, as well as scene descriptions from all the movies. This chapter also includes the analysis of all the selected scenes from each movie. The analysis will be done according to the criteria set out in the previous chapter. In addition, the researcher will apply the theories from the literature review to the discussion of each scene.

Chapter Five, Summary of Findings, includes the restatement of research questions. The summaries and the answers of the research questions are provided. The researcher discusses the limitations of this research and gives suggestions for future studies related to the topic, such as the study of independent movies and mainstream movies that have *kathoey* characters represented.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The discussion in this chapter begins with Thai views on gender and sexuality. In this section, the researcher reviews the article on “Three Sexes and Four Sexualities: Redressing the Discourses on Gender and Sexualities in Contemporary Thailand” by Morris, the article on “Kathoey ‘in trend’: emergent genderscapes, national anxieties and the Effeminacy in Thailand” by Kang, and the chapter on “Tolerant but unaccepting: the myth of a Thai ‘gay paradise’” from the book by Jackson (2004). This is followed with the discussion on representation. The researcher reviews two books, Representation (2013) written by Hall and Reading the visual (2004) written by Schirato and Webb in this section. Then the next section is the discussion of queer cinema, based on Now you see it (1990) written by Dyer, Coming out to the mainstream: new queer cinema in the 21st century (2010) edited by Juett and Jones, and Film and gender (2014) edited by Thornham and Richardson. Finally, Thai queer cinema is discussed in the last section, based on Queer Bangkok: twenty-first-century market, media, and right (2011) edited by Jackson. Besides, the character development in films is discussed in this chapter as well.

2.1 Thai Views on Gender and Sexuality

Thai gender and sexuality categories are historically and culturally related. The recently available text provided as a historical record is Pathamamulamuli, a palm-leaf manuscript translation (Morris, 1994, p.20). The text relates the origin of universe that emerges from the combination of cold and hot air and of Lan Na humanity. The Pathamamulamuli suggested
three sexes which were female, hermaphrodite, and male which is central and fundamental of human origin. However, the text does not provide description of this sexual trinity. Instead, hermaphrodite appears in the narrative together with both the female and the male. It is associated with Buddhism in which it was suggested that every sex and gender is a form of suffering and it faces with agonies (Morris, 1994, p.21).

The term *kathoey* was understood differently in different times. In *Pathamamulamuli*, hermaphrodite cannot be seen as a second identity, but it has the same existing status as the male and female characters. As a result, the ideal vision of three sexes of *Pathamamulamuli* is derived from the vision of two sexes (Morris, 1994, p.23). On the contrary, Carl Bock referred to hermaphrodite as *kathoey* and *kathoey* referred to a maleness category in which they can be seen as men cross-dressed as women (Morris, 1994, p. 22).

According to Morris (1994), apart from men cross-dressing as women, women also cross-dressed as men. This can be seen in *Si Phaendin* (Four Reigns) epic melodrama written by Kukrit Pramoj. The character of a female cross-dresser appears as a shadow figure in late-nineteen century, neither a focus nor a major discussion of the writer. In addition, this female cross-dresser does not have a specific name of the category.

Thai history and culture are relative with the system of three sexes. The three-sex system in Thailand is female, male, and *kathoey*. *Kathoey* is understood as mediation, ambiguity, or internal subversion (Morris, 1994, p. 21). Morris contrasts Thai three-sex system with four-part modern Western sexuality system. The system is based on the binaries of male vs. female and homosexual vs. heterosexual (Kang, 2012, p. 476). It creates four positions of female-heterosexual, male-heterosexual, female-homosexual, and male-homosexual. The Western four-sex system and Thai three-sex system are not totally comparable but the traditional Thai system is being replaced by the modern one.
All third gender categories and non-normative genders in Thailand can be referred to by the general term *kathoey*. However, *kathoey* does not often refer to female-bodied individuals. Social class and education also have an effect on how Thai people conceptualize gender. For the middle-class people in Bangkok, *kathoey* only refers to male-to-female transgender people (Kang, 2012, p. 477). Male-to-female transgender people can be seen or made visible by their practice of cross-dressing and using make-up. Some third gender people who do not want to show their femininity in the public can be considered gay. Based on my reading, I refer to the term “cross-dressing” as the way male-to-female transgender people dress. Nevertheless, there are also some people who present themselves in between gay and *kathoey* due to and the way they express their identity. For example, a person who dresses like a man and makes up like a woman can be considered as a *kathoey-noi*, which translates as “little kathoey”. Therefore, gay and *kathoey* categories are still fluid (Kang, 2012, p. 478).

The visibility of the *kathoey* in the media has increased. Their visibility has also exposed the way the Thais view the *kathoey*, for instance through criticism expressed in social media. The case of a group of high-school students known as “Wonder Gay” cited by Kang can be an example. “Wonder Gay” was a group that recorded a video to the song “Nobody” by the Korean band Wonder Girls to join the contest. The prize was free tickets for the Wonder Girls’ concert in Bangkok. The video went viral on YouTube. This popularity led to the criticism that this group of young students might encourage effeminacy in other boys (Kang, 2012, pp.484-485).

Greater visibility can lead to the understanding that *kathoey* seem to be accepted in Thailand. Thai people acknowledge that Thailand has a large group of *kathoey*. The fact that there are many *kathoey* in Thailand can be like a circular logic in which Thai people say that there are many *kathoey* because the society accepts them. And the society accepts them because there are many *kathoey* (Kang, 2012, p. 483). On the other hand, the increased
visibility does not always mean the acceptance of Thai people but it can lead to the consequence of family rejection, as well as job discrimination. So, instead of being accepted, kathoey are tolerated by Thai people.

This tolerance becomes evident when we consider the classification of kathoey. Jackson (2004) analysed the newspaper report from the 1970s which showed that kathoey were divided into two classes – the high class and low class. The kathoey who did not have masculine features and became successful were those who presented high class behavior. On the other hand, the kathoey who suffered from their poverty were those who presented low class behavior and they were considered to have low status. These views could be the reasons why kathoey were not actually accepted (p. 230). It is arguable whether this kind of classification still holds in current times. At the same time, it seems true that while some Thais are more accepting of the kathoey, others are merely tolerating their existence. One positive change may be the fact that the kathoey have recently been allowed to compete in the same reality show as women, which can be seen from the auditions of The Face Thailand season 3 where transgender women are allowed to join to contest. As a result of this change, gender equality has been emphasized as an expression of acceptance.

2.2 Representation

The general concept of representation can refer to saying something meaningful or representing the world meaningfully to others by using language. Representation links “meaning and language to culture” (Hall, 2013, p. 1) as well. It has become a significant area in cultural study. Moreover, representation is also important in terms of producing and exchanging meaning among members of one culture, in which language, signs, and images are used and involved in the process of representing. The example given by Hall is the use of
concept and expression through language. When people see an object such as GLASS, they can recognize what they see and use the concept of the object in their heads to decode their visual perception. They express the object by language, which is the word GLASS, to refer to the object they see. And the concept in their heads also tells them what the object is without seeing it. In other words, they can imagine a picture of a glass in their head, even though they do not see the actual glass. As a result, “the meaning of the concept” is produced via language when something is represented (Hall, 2013, p. 3).

However, the concept may not be the same for each person because people make sense of the world differently. It is because they do not “belong to the same culture” (Hall, 2013, p. 4). Another important element is the use of language. People are able to represent or exchange meaning when they are in “shared language”. Therefore, language is involved in creating meaning. Nevertheless, this concept can also be applied to the concept of seeing as reading, as argued in the study of Toby Schirato and Jen Webb (2004). It has been said that culture creates perception and meaning, in which they are created according to “psychological and physiological” contexts (Schirato & Webb, 2004, p. 15), so that people understand things around them in accordance with their culture and the availability of “meaning, ideas and categories” (Schirato & Webb, 2004, p. 15) that are the elements through which people make sense of the world.

Media companies large and small are the producers of representations in the media. Inevitably, small companies such as independent companies can be influenced by large organizations such as broadcasting organizations. But if all the media institutions are considered in terms of media studies, it can be seen that the dominant representations are influenced by “stereotypical white, middle-aged men, and media production reflect this bias” (Lacey, 2009, p. 160). Considering Western society, the dominant group should be a political and economic reflection made by the producers of cultural meaning. Nevertheless, despite the
fact that many Western countries have become more multi-cultural in recent years, “this has yet to be reflected in the make-up of media institutions” (Lacey, 2009, p. 160).

In the analysis of representing gender, ideological values of the society need to be examined in order to see how obvious they are in the representations, or how the dominant representations are expressed by the producers. The starting discussion of representing gender can be the portrayal of gender in the printed media such as magazines and ads. Nick Lacey (2009) has suggested an example of representing gender differences between men and women in terms of their visibility of being topless in two different magazines in the year 2008. It was found that the percentage of women shown topless on the magazines was higher than the percentage of men. This example uses quantitative content analysis that helps to keep away from subjective impressions. Even though this technique seems to be an over-generalized simplification it works as a model of how gender is represented by the mainstream texts. Lacey also mentioned Gillian Dyer (1982) whose analysis of ads has suggested that the portrayal of gender has been promoted according to cultural stereotypes in which women have been shown as “sex objects” in a very submissive way. In contrast, men have been shown to have power over women. From this analysis, it can be seen that the representation of men and women appears to be opposite in which men have been represented as more powerful. Besides, Lacey also agreed with Dyer that the smaller gestures used by women, such as being respectful to men, were shown to emphasize the status of women that is lower than men.

Lacey also discussed the study of Goffman regarding the changing roles of women in the last thirty years. The representation of gender was anticipated to demonstrate increasing gender equality in Western society. Lacey mentioned that Goffman’s study had shown that freedom of women can be expressed in “consumerist terms”. So, the terms like wife, mother, or housewife, which convey “the traditional image” (Lacey, 2009, p. 192) of women have
been substituted. That is the representation of women has changed to show their freedom by exhibiting women’s confidence, which it is a way of becoming “ideal woman” (Lacey, 2009, p. 192). This study can highlight that there are two aspects of portraying gendered image which are “active/male and passive/female”, which leads to be an imbalance of representing gender in the world (Lacey, 2009, p. 194).

Another example of representing gender in the media is film. It has been said that women are usually represented as erotic objects, which can be divided into two levels. Firstly, women are presented as erotic object on the screen for the characters in the movie. Secondly, women are presented as erotic object for the viewers in the theater. Laura Mulvey (1975) has given the example of the showgirls in Hollywood cinema who allow the characters and the viewers to be integrated without breaking the narrative flow. However, the narrative flow can be broken by the pauses of erotic display, in which the character of showgirl is used for a close-up, which the fragmented body of women is shown on the screen. The close-up of a fragmented body such as legs or face will be displayed on the screen. Even though this possibly disrupts the narrative, it suggests that the ideology is to represent femininity as an abstract thing. On the other hand, men are shown as part of the environment, as they often play active roles leading the story with their control and power.

Due to such a portrayal of men having power over women, especially in the patriarchal society, it seems to make sense if women want to be men (Lacey, 2009, p. 198). Women cross-dressing as men can be seen as sexy. In contrast, men cross-dressing as women can be seen as funny and the question of why men want to be women can arise. These characters can be seen as queer due to the opposition they embody. And queer characters are those who are presented as lesbian, gay, bisexual, as well as transgender. It can be noticed that mainstream texts usually characterize the character as heterosexual but homosexual texts also exist. But, the representation of homosexual tends to be full of negative stereotypes. In
addition, sexuality is likely to be a primary aspect in defining homosexual characters, in which they have been defined as “deviant, tragic, predatory and/or comic figures” and it has become a standard for many years (Lacey, 2009, p. 204).

In terms of representation and reality, the real world is not a concern of the media, which instead are concerned with the “conventions” (Lacey, 2009, p. 228) that represent the real world. Realism is suggested by Lacey as a conventional mode of representation that is defined to be closer to the reality compared with other representation forms. Because the reality of the world cannot be shown by the media texts, both the reality and our perception towards the world are “mediated” (Lacey, 2009, p. 228). In other words, the reality is not shown through the media, rather media texts are created to be close to the reality, which is called realism. And, the creation of the reality in the media texts may be expressed as an example of real life. At the same time, realism reminds us that the production of convention is the result of dominant ideology, which leads to all representations (Lacey, 2009, p. 228).

2.3 Stereotypes

In order to discuss the argument of stereotype as a signifying practice, the consideration of how presentation works is essential. Stuart Hall (2013) wrote after Richard Dyer (1977) about the difference between “typing” and “stereotyping”. The argument is that if we did not use “types” we would have difficulty making sense of the world. People refer things or events around them to the general classification to understand the world in accordance with the culture that they belong to. Moreover, people usually make sense of things in “wider categories” (Hall, 2013, p. 247). For example, people are assigned as members of distinct groups by classifying their class, gender, nationality etc. In other words, “personality type” is used to order people into each category. Hall quotes Dyer (1977) arguing that “a type is any
simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characterization in which a few traits are foregrounded and change or ‘development’ is kept to a minimum” (Dyer qtd. in Hall, 2003, p. 247).

Stereotyping utilizes the “splitting” strategy, which is based on the separation between normality and abnormality and being acceptable and unacceptable. Then, everything that does not belong to the same category will be excluded and what is considered as difference is rejected. So, the practice of “closure and exclusion” (Hall, 2013, p. 248) becomes another element of stereotyping. Based on this practice, Hall has suggested the term “image community” (Hall, 2013, p. 248) to include those who are defined as normal into this group. On the other hand, those who do not belong to the image community are considered to be “deviant”, which means they are excluded. This is because a boundary between those two categories is created. Due to the creation of the boundary by stereotyping, “social and symbolic order” (Hall, 2013, p. 248) is maintained. Thus, the deviant or the group that does not belong will appear to be negative to people in a particular society. In addition, stereotyping is likely to be caused by the existence of “gross inequalities of power” (Hall, 2013, p. 248) in the society, where power is used to against the inferior or excluded group. Hall agrees with Foucault that stereotyping is called a “power/ knowledge sort of game” (Hall, 2013, p. 248) because social norm and construction are used as a classification to exclude people or group as others. Moreover, Hall also mentions Dyer’s observation that this classification of people could be called as a feature of “the struggle for hegemony” (Hall, 2013, p. 248).

Hegemony is a form of power that can be considered as a power structure. Inevitably, the perception of people is manipulated by power. And, the expression of power structure in the society can be seen from “ideology and discourse” (Lacey, 2009, p. 111). It can be noticed that there is an imbalance of power distribution in the society and Lacey has given
Western society as an example. It creates an existence of an inferior group of people, which is called by Lacey as “subordinate” (Lacey, 2009, p. 111). In the case of the media, the dominant ideology can be seen in the representation of gender. The concept of subordination can be applied to female characters in the media texts, especially in Western society. This is because women characters are often represented as “weak and passive” (Lacey, 2009, p. 112). In comparing with men, they are represented as “powerful and dynamic” (Lacey, 2009, p. 112). It is clear that our perception has been influenced by ideology and hegemony, since our society is controlled by power. Lacey gives an example of American crime television series or films as evidence of “hegemonic representation” (Lacey, 2009, p. 113). It can be seen in many media texts that the producers assign ethnic or minority groups as well as working class members to perform the role of criminals. Therefore, it suggests that these minorities can be considered as subordinate and their position in the society is enhanced by the assigned roles. From these examples it is visible that “hegemony is an extremely powerful tool of social control” (Lacey, 2009, p. 114) that makes people accept the distribution of power in their society naturally.

The term ideology can refer to “systematic framework of social understanding” (Lacey, 2009, p. 100), which is motivated by power. It also influences the way of thinking in which a society or group will accept something as right and widely support it. However, a dominant ideology exists according to the current status that “inform[s] the status quo” (Lacey, 2009, p. 100) and the ideology is affected by the past. According to Lacey, based on Raymond Williams (1977), ideology can be divided into two types which are residual and emergent.

According to Williams, residual ideology refers “experiences, meanings and value” (Williams, 1977, p. 10) that the dominant ideology cannot corroborate and reveal but it has been the practice that is passed on to the present time. In other words, it can be a previous
social construction that has been followed and practiced, which is called by Williams a cultural and social residue. The obvious of dominant ideology can be “religious values” (Williams, 1977, p. 10) which has been a practice in the modern world. However, the distance between residual ideology and dominant ideology exists in which residual ideology has become part of dominant ideology by incorporation, since some previous residual ideology got incorporated into dominant ideology.

Emergent ideology has been defined by Williams as “new meaning and values, new practice, new significances and experiences” (Williams, 1977, p. 11) that have been constructed. Williams argues that there has been an attempt to incorporate emergent ideology into contemporary practice due to their existence as a portion and yet not a portion of each other. Nevertheless, according to Lacey, emergent ideology is a development of new cultures that may replace the dominant ideology. He gives an example of women’s right. Women were given the right to vote. This was the attempt to empower women in the patriarchal bourgeois system, even if the real gain came several years later. The dominant ideology was forced to adapt to include this development although it was not fundamentally changed.

2.3.1 Stereotypes in Social Groups and Gender Stereotypes

Attention paid to stereotypes increases with the number of people who know about them and propagate them. It has been suggested that if different stereotypes are shared by an individual, these stereotypes can gain only little interest. However, “shared stereotypes” are said to be useful in terms of “predicting and understanding” group behaviour (McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2004, p. 5). If people in a given society share the same stereotypes, it becomes significant to know why these stereotypes are shared. The idea of sharing the same stereotypes in a particular society is attributed to a “common environment” in which people
live that gives “similar stimulus experience” to each person. This leads to finding similarities and stereotypes of people. Nevertheless, McGarty, Yzerbyt, and Spears, have found evidence that shared stereotypes may appear without the “stimulus experience” (2004, p. 6). They suggest instead that the production of stereotypes is associated with “a shared cultural pool of knowledge, social representations, ideology or culture” that create similar perspectives of people in the society (McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2004, p. 6).

The idea that stereotypes are shared due to the coordination of behaviour of people in the society has been the most interesting. Stereotypes have been observed as “normative beliefs” (McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2004, p. 6), in which people in the society do not just simultaneously have “common experience” or the “shared knowledge”, but also strive to distinguish their groups from other groups. On the other hand, since group members influence one another within a group, they become similar to one another in terms of “relevant dimensions” (McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2004, p. 6). Therefore, stereotypes that are shared by many people are important because they receive more attention in which people consensualize the norms they share, as well as understand among the group members.

Gender stereotypes can be an example of shared stereotypes used to express the distinctions between gender roles in the society. Gender stereotypes appear due to the classification of people into gender categories. In other words, gender roles in the society are based on categories such as men and women, and these categories are considered “well-established” (McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2004, p. 72). Eagly points out that men are supposed to be “breadwinners”, while women are “homemakers,” and this gender stereotype reflects “the observed social role-gender correlation” (McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2004, p. 45).
2.3.2 Stereotypes in the Media

In film, stereotypes are frequently used “in long intertextual sequences” (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 42). The audience has become familiar with film structures and these structures have become “conventional” due to their establishment, which depend upon stereotypes (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 42). However, stereotypes in films contain various components, which can be observed through “the construction of the characters and plot” (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 42). Additionally, stereotypes in film genres also perform a function of “conceptualization” (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 42).

In order to analyse the stereotypes presented in films, it is important to examine various aspects of the presented characters. According to Schweinitz, the “conceptions” of stereotypes are expressed in terms of the concern of society with difference, which Schweinitz referred to as “images of the Other” (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 43). This concept can illustrate how the characters are represented, or how the filmmakers make particular “conceptions about people” (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 42). The analysis of the characters, which is the obvious way of interpreting stereotypes in films depends on “social psychology, ethnology, cultural studies, or ideology criticism” (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 43).

Schweinitz suggested that film characters are created according to the stereotypes, which are seen as belonging to a certain culture, conventional in the society and used consciously by people. Stereotypes work as a significant element of character creation. In addition, characters in films are the main drawing force that can lead the audience to participate in film plots that they associate with the “beliefs and values” in everyday life (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 43). However, Schweinitz also discusses an opposite view of how the imagination of audiences is affected by the media. The audience’s thoughts are shaped by what they see. Schweinitz gives an example of the German conceptualization of Americans
pointed out by Irmela Schneider, where the German audience conceptualized Americans according to American TV series and the pattern of the characters represented in them. This idea can be used to show how films can shape audience’s ideas as well (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 43).

The above mentioned example illustrates “limitedness or distortedness”, which provoked consciousness regarding the conception of “images of the Other” (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 43). This became a situation in which the concern was raised that stereotypical perceptions need to be corrected in the view that the audience should be affected positively rather than negatively. This issue became significant in the cinema in the period of “ideological criticism”, which maintained that the audience’s imaginary about the society was interfered by the filmmakers (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 43).

Schweinitz discussed Dyer who used and applied the concept of stereotype to the characters in films. According to Dyer, stereotype has seen as “a sociopsychological category” (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 44). Stereotypical characters are these characters that combine “images of the Other,” which means that they are similar to the conceptualized stereotypes about members of some group. Stereotypes in film characters have been used “as narrative or aesthetic” and have been used repetitively in character design (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 44). Based on this idea, it can be concluded that stereotype has been applied and performed as “a narrative mode” (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 44), in other words, it is a “mode of characterization in fiction” (Dyer qtd. in Schweinitz, 2006, p. 44).

It has been clearly noticed that stereotype can be serve two different functions and belongs to “the world of daily life” and “the intertextual worlds of the imagination” (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 49). The first function is related to socio-psychology, based on reality, and the second function always contains “imaginary elements” which are influenced by the
media. However, these two functions seem overlapping due to the difficulty in making the distinctions between them (Schweinitz, 2006, p. 49).

### 2.4 Queer Cinema

By 1995, many underground films made outside the mainstream US industry were known to have themes that dealt with homosexuality, featured gay characters or even were produced by gay filmmakers (Dyer, 1990, p. 102). The production of underground films was considered as breaking a taboo, they were also rejected as having no “Hollywoodian qualities of finish and clarity” (Dyer, 1990, p. 102). Additionally, they were questioned and legally marginalized by the society. At the same time, underground cinema provided a space for gay people. Dyer suggested that gay people were given an opportunity to present themselves in underground cinema, which was different from the mainstream. Furthermore, the gay characters in the films were portrayed to be “sensitive”. This idea was acquired from the characteristics of women, which they were seen to have sensitive feelings (Dyer, 1990, p. 106). This was also grounded in the opinion that gay men were sensitive because they were like women. And, the term “sensitive” was used sarcastically with homosexual characters (Dyer, 1990, p. 106).

The label “Queer Cinema” has been used to describe films that represent queer issues. Queer films have been in existence for decades but were not defined as such (Thornham & Richardson, 2014, p. 133). B. Ruby Rich coined the phrase “Queer Cinema”, which was subsequently used to describe a “cinematic moment in the late 80s and early 90s” (Thornham & Richardson, 2014, p. 133). That moment was equivalent with an attempt to review the representation and subjectivity of queer issues.

Some characteristics for defining films as queer films have been suggested. Julett and Jones argued after Benshoff and Sean Griffin that films that contain homosexual characters,
By 1994, New Queer Cinema had become more profitable for Hollywood. This could have been the result of the stories introducing the characters who were “gender outlaws” and the concept of “third space” and generally promoting arguments against “gender conformity” (Bornstein qtd. in Julett & Jones, 2010, p. 62). After that, Julett and Jones estimated that it took ten years for a new wave of queer films to emerge again and that the purpose of these new productions was to “blur the dichotomous boundaries of gender and sex” (Julett & Jones, 2010, p. 63). This, Sarah Gamble argued, meant that gender was no longer necessary, that gender identity as well as the notion of queer gender had been redefined, and that there was no need for repeating old gay stereotypes in the cinema (Gamble qtd. in Julett & Jones, 2010, p. 63). Julett and Jones suggested that this new wave of queer films was more about
“openness and acceptance” rather than agitation or portrayals of deviant behaviour (Julett & Jones, 2010, p. 63).

As Julett and Jones observed, queer-themed films were offered to mainstream audiences. For instance *Transamerica* (Tucker, 2005) was highlighted during the Oscar Night in 2006. Newer films concentrated on mainstream audiences to increase their openness to issues concerned with the search for gender identity in film and to overcome the repression from the past, especially concerning character stereotyping. Dennis Harvey claimed that the interest in queer-themed films was recovered because the films inspired a “tolerance for” queer culture and characters in their mainstream audience (Harvey qtd. in Julett & Jones, 2010, p. 64).

When discussing the representation of transgender people in the mainstream media, we have to say that transgender people have often been portrayed stereotypically and in a negative, as well as offensive way, especially when the characters are portrayed by a cisgender person (a person whose biological sex corresponds to his/her gender identity, or in other words a person who is not transgender). However, this has changed in recent years, as seen from the increased number of transgender characters who are represented by actual transgender people.

Homosexuality was increasingly accepted by the Western society in the post war period when its representation in the media changed from “abnormal” to “ridiculous.” Later the open condemnation of homosexuality disappeared due to “political correctness” (Phillips, 2006, p.51). Therefore, the representation of homosexuality turned to cross-dressers, whose function was to create laughter by providing comic performance “as the effeminate gay” in the movies. For example, the audiences laughed at a straight male who wore female clothes, which looked absurd. The characters of male to female cross-dressers were seen as “a parody of women” with female clothes on the male body (Phillips, 2006, p.51). According to
Phillips, cross-dressers were seen as a temporary aberration, they did not need to be protected as this identity was not permanent. In contrast, the representation of effeminate homosexual was seen to be a “mockery” in which the comic portrayal was more controlled and limited (Phillips, 2006, p.52). As a result, cross-dressers were “subsumed by the dominant popular culture” due to their belonging to the “periphery” (Phillips, 2006, p.52). Cross-dressing characters were usually pleasant created for the audience’s enjoyment but a little bit of ridicule still remained.

Most representations of homosexuality or transgendersim in the media have been limited to “cross-dressers” (Phillips, 2006, p.165). Instead of being as an indication of a problematic gender identity, the portrayal of cross-dressers has tended to be a pretense of a character’s identity in which the character tries to conceal his or her real self-identity. Phillips relates to the statement by Marjorie Garber that some films that have cross-dressing characters are part of “progress narrative” of “deception” in which the characters are forced by the society to conceal or disguise their real identity in order to accomplish their goals (Phillips, 2006, p.52). Phillips gives *Mrs. Doubtfire* (dir. Chris Columbus, 1993) as an example of a movie that features the representation of “cross-dressing as a temporary disguise” (Phillips, 2006, p.165). In *Mrs. Doubtfire*, Daniel Hillard is asked for a divorce by his wife, Miranda, because she sees him as a bad role model for their three kids. By the decision of the court Daniel is allowed to see his kids only once a week, which leads him to depression. After their divorce, Miranda tries to find a housekeeper to take care of the kids. Daniel knows about this, so he pretends to be various people who are interested in the position and contacts Miranda. Daniel’s job is to dub the voices of cartoon characters. He has no trouble fooling Miranda when he calls her and asks for the job. His voice acting makes Miranda think that none of the candidates are suitable. Finally, Daniel presents Miranda with a perfect candidate. As a result, he gets hired by Miranda and disguises himself as a female
housekeeper, Mrs. Doubtfire. Daniel gets help from his gay friends to make him over a female housekeeper. Mrs. Doubtfire satisfies Miranda’s requirement and Daniel can spend time with his kids. However, the truth is revealed and Daniel has to give up his Mrs. Doubtfire persona.

In *Mrs. Doubtfire* cross-dressing is used to hide Daniel’s real identity. While Daniel disguises himself as Mrs. Doubtfire, no one notices that he is actually a man. In other words, no one realizes his real gender identity and Mrs. Doubtfire is not seen as a transgender or effeminate man. This can support Phillips’s idea that comedy genre of movies does not portray transgender characters as those who have “profound gender identity crisis” (Phillips, 2006, p.165). Furthermore, obvious eroticism is absent as it can be seen that Daniel disguises himself temporarily in order to solve a problem. This can be referred to Phillips’s observation that “cross-dressing is portrayed as a purely pragmatic act, as a temporary solution to a problem” (Phillips, 2006, p.54). In addition, the scene when the truth is revealed is when the kids see Mrs. Doubtfire standing to urinate. They get shocked because it looks strange that a woman would stand to urinate. This scene is considered to be a “toilet gag” which is one of the characteristics of the movies with cross-dressing characters. However, when the kids know that Mrs. Doubtfire is their father they feel relieved and things get better. Therefore, this also conveys no crisis of gender identity. *Mrs. Doubtfire* was the comic movie with cross-dressers produced for mainstream audience in the 1990s. However, before that in 1959, the characters of cross-dressers appeared in another movie which shares some outstanding similarities with *Mrs. Doubtfire*, that is the cross-dressing characters disguise themselves as females for a specific purpose. The movie, *Some Like It Hot* (dir. Billy Wilder, 1959) is about two musicians witness murder. In order to survive they disguise themselves as women in a female musician band.
Some Like It Hot is also an example of progress narrative. Cross-dressing in both films can be said to have no serious gender identity issue. Or perhaps, the portrayal of cross-dressing characters in Some Like It Hot reduce the tension of “gender instability” due to its comic structure” (Phillips, 2006, p.58). According to Phillips, the cross-dressing characters can be seen “as positive role models of transgender” (Phillips, 2006, p.58). It can be observed that in both films the cross-dressers temporarily disguise themselves in order to solve the problem. Moreover, the cross-dressing characters have not been portrayed as “a serious threat” (Phillips, 2006, p.59), as at the end of the film they achieve their purpose.

Marjorie Garber (1992) has observed the increased representation of cross-dressing in the media. She has pointed out that some “cross-dressing classics” were created and the episodes of cross-dressing were inserted. So this topic has become discussed in the academic studies which examined “cultural discourse” and specifically “gender and sexuality” (Garber, 1992, p. 5). Garber has given Tootsie (dir. Sydney Pollack, 1982) as an example. The film conveys the message that “women are better than men” (Garber, 1992, p. 6). The supporting idea can be seen in the film when the female character is successful as compared with Michael Dorsey who is unemployed. On the other hand, when Michael cross-dresses as a woman he can defeat a woman. This suggests that a cross-dressing male to female character is better than a character of a real woman. In conclusion, Garber mentions that the primary reason of the success of the film comes from the power of masculinity that is disguised or hidden by female dressing.

To get back to the discussion of Phillips, it has also been suggested that the representation of transgender characters that undergo “surgical reassignment” and would like to have surgery of sex reassignment has increased in “DVD and Internet portrayal” (Phillips, 2006, p.165). The reflection of this portrayal is that transgender characters in the media have achieved a “higher profile” (Phillips, 2006, p.165). This also proves that this representation
has become a form of attraction, which can cause some concern that the stereotypical ideas of transgender representation in the media from 1950s to 1990s have been strengthened by these representations (Phillips, 2006, p.165).

2.5 Thai Queer Cinema

The representation of homosexuality in the media was a significant topic discussed at the First International Conference of Asian Queer Studies in Bangkok in 2005. According to Peter A. Jackson, the main problem of homosexual representation in Thailand is the use of stereotypes. He stressed that it is crucial for the media texts and practices to be analysed and criticized in order to promote the rights of LGBT or homosexual people (Jackson, 2011, p.59).

Thai queer cinema has a historical difference with American cinema. Thai queer films have been mostly produced by the mainstream industry and only later we have seen an increasing number of independent productions in Thailand. According to Jackson, Thai queer cinema can be divided into the first wave and the second wave. The first wave of Thai queer cinema showed transgender and homosexual characters either as sensitive individuals, or in comic roles where they were stereotypically presented as “screaming clowns” (Jackson, 2011, p. 64). One example of given by Jackson here is The Last Song, the film about a male-to-female transgender character who was not successful in love and committed suicide at the end of the film. This film will be discussed later in the thesis.

The representations of queer characters in Thai films have been “dominated by transgender kathoey characters” (Jackson, 2011, p. 59). However, the “diversity” of homosexual people in Thailand can be better reflected by movie scenes that are produced based on the analysis of queer representation in Thai films in which the scenes can be
alternatively developed to show clearer image of homosexual people, which Jackson calls “queer life” (Jackson, 2011, p. 59). Moreover, it can be noticed that the image of homosexual characters in Thai films tends to be more modern. The portrayal of homosexual as well as kathoey characters reflects new perspectives on the issue. As a result, the second wave of Thai queer cinema started to “promote queer rights and identities” (Jackson, 2011, p. 65). Jackson gives an example of Iron Ladies, the film about a kathoey volleyball team. The transgender characters in the film were portrayed to live worthy lives and the film conveyed the message about the friendship of the characters. Even though, the main character was also not successful in love, she did not commit suicide, instead she started her new life.

2.5.1 Independent Gay Films

Gay-owned Media Company was established in 2001 by Vitaya Saeng-Aroon and Paul Bradley. The purpose of opening the company was to present “realistic” as well as “positive images” against “negative stereotypes of Thai gay people” (Jackson, 2011, p.71). Moreover, this was to serve the previously ignored “masculine gay” market, which was different from kathoey (Jackson, 2011, p.71). Jackson comments on the image of gay men which is different from that of the kathoey. In the Thai context this image seems to be “more problematic”, and the portrayal of “masculine gays” gains higher criticism than that of kathoey (Jackson, 2011, p.71). In contrast to popular Thai commercial films that focus on the kathoey, independent filmmakers started to portray “masculine gays” mostly in their “limited-release” films (Jackson, 2011, p.71). In addition to Thai gay films, these films were usually directly produced to DVD and mostly meant for the “gay audience” (Jackson, 2011, p.71). However, the production of independent films was aimed at local viewers. Apichatpong Weerasethakul, an independent filmmaker has gained reputation internationally as a great supporter of
independent cinema in Thailand. His films have gained sponsorship from foreign investors, so the films have been “co-funded” (Jackson, 2011, p.72). And his first international achievement was *Tropical Malady* (Weerasethakul 2004), which got the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in the same year of production (Jackson, 2011, p.72).

2.5.2 Censorship

The increased visibility and portrayal of homosexuality in the media has become a public concern in the context of the positive image of “Thainess” (Jackson, 2011, p.61). With an idea that the portrayal of homosexuality reflects the nation’s image, censorship has been utilized to deal with such representations, especially when shown to the public. As a result of that, the Ministry of Culture requested the decrease in portrayals of homosexuality among the concerns that the increased number of media portrayals of homosexuality will inevitably lead to the increase in the number of homosexual people. The Ministry suggested that homosexual behavior should only be expressed privately. Such way of thinking was indirectly connected to the ideas developed in the second half of 19th century when Thailand tried to show “an image of a modern, civilized Siam to the outside world” (Jackson, 2011, p.61). Since the media portrayal was said to reflect Thainess, the regulation of both TV and cinema was an attempt of the government to monitor homosexual representation. Therefore, “the legal framework for censorship” was set up in 1930, which was later deemed outdated and replaced in 2007 due to the pressure applied by filmmakers (Jackson, 2011, p.61).

With the idea that the media influence society and the social behavior of individuals, the concerns are often raised that the viewers may imitate what they see in the media without questioning. They may misinterpret certain messages from films and social media. This is how censorship has been justified by the authorities that demanded cutting the scenes that had
been seen as “harmful” to the stability of Thai society, which included the portrayals of naked body as well as the scenes that encourage “the development of a widely apolitical cinematic landscape” in order to support “hegemonic” purpose of people who are in power, which was referred to “elite” sector in Thailand (Jackson, 2011, p.61). Jackson suggested that Thailand was not ready for a “new artistic style”, that offered different plots as an alternative for entertaining the audience (Jackson, 2011, 62). This leads to the government trying to take control overproducing films, amidst fears that such “modern art” might spread, and that the new artistic style might lead to a change in attitude and a change that might challenge the elites. Therefore, it was suggested among the directors of Thai New Wave Cinema and independent films that these “power relations” had led to the promotion of “stupidity”, as quoted by Jackson, which could be seen in Thai commercial cinema today (Jackson, 2011, p.62).

Independent films that include kathoey characters have frequently been banned by the authorities. Kang mentions Insects in the Backyard (Sukkhapisit, 2010) as an example of a film that has been banned by The Ministry of Culture. The film was rejected and forbidden to be shown and even rated for 20+ age of viewers. The Ministry expressed concern that the film may be inappropriate and go against public morals but including male frontal nudity and prostitution (Kang, 2012, p. 485). However, apart from the films with the portrayals of kathoey characters, a different example can be Syndromes and a Century (Weerasethakul, 2006) as mentioned by Jackson. The film was banned and seen to include improper scenes, showing doctors who were kissing and drinking. The major purpose of banning this film, however, was to prevent the presentation of alternative art on screen, rather to support the Thai doctors’ image. Another example is The Sick Nurses (Laoyont & Siriwiwat, 2007). The film was screened in the cinema and resulted in a criticism for its representation of gay stereotypes. The critics said that “the image of doctors drinking liquor put the profession in a
bad light”, in which the patients’ opinion towards doctors’ image should be considered, how
doctors would be thought of (Jackson qtd. in Kong, 2011, p.63). However, in comparison
between Thai and international releases, Thai authorities tend to use less censorship for Thai
films which are released internationally (Jackson, 2011, p.63).

2.6 Character Development in Film

Character development is essential for making the plot more interesting. Some plot writers
create lively characters from their experienced memories because they believe this to be the
best method to create interesting characters. If the characters seem to be the same throughout
the plot without any challenge, the characters have less development; this can lead to the
audience being bored with the story. The characters tell the audience about their lives from
their very first appearance on the screen. It is because they seem not that different from real
people. The audience can learn things about their lives and even be seduced by them. The
audience can see the characters’ identity from the surfaces to the deeper layers. To Wong
Foo, Thanks for everything, Julie Newmar (Kidron, 1995) for instance, is the film about a
group of three drag queens travelling from New York to California. In the film the characters
are first introduced to the audiences as performing drag queens who are on stage. In other
words, the characters’ gender identity is revealed since they are introduced on screen, but this
is only the surface. As the film progresses the new layer of the characters is revealed. The
audience may notice that those drag queens are actually kind-hearted. There are the scenes
that support this idea, such as when one of the drag queens helps a lady who is getting abused
by her husband. Therefore, in the end of the film, villagers help to protect the drag queens
from a sheriff who wants to arrest them. The characters keep developing throughout the film.
As the example above illustrates, characterization of the characters is the first thing that the audience notices. The audiences are given a clue that the main characters are drag queens due to their external appearance. The opening of the film shows men who put make up on and dress as women. This is part of the characterization of the characters. Characterization refers to what the audiences can see and observe in the characters. According to McKee, characterization includes all noticeable features of humans, such as attitudes, personalities, as well as sex and sexuality because these aspects give a person uniqueness which makes it different from other characters and “this singular assemblage of trait is characterization” (McKee, 1997, p.101).

Deep character (or true character) conveys the message about who this person really is, which it is not related to appearance. To take To Wong Foo as an example again, it can be seen that these drag queens are kind-hearted. This is associated with deep character, which is expressed when people make choices. As it can be seen, the drag queens are revealed to have good hearts in the end of the movie, which is different from what they appear at the beginning. So, the appearance of people does not inform or tell us about which kind of people they actually are. In other words, the way people act, talk and behave does not convey or reveal their deep characters. Rather, the deep character of people is revealed “through their choices made under pressure” (McKee, 1997, p.103).

Apart from character development, character’s arc is another element of the character design, which can be compared to The Hero’s Journey of Joseph Campbell (1949). This tells us how the characters change and develop throughout the movie. The characters are usually firstly introduced to their ordinary world. So, the audience gets to know the character from the surface. This tells the audience what the characters do and how the characters live. After the character is introduced, he/she is faced with a situation that leads them to do something different in which they begin to change their lives. This can result from both internal and
external pressure and it is referred as the call to adventure. However, after the characters start to face something they are not familiar with, they may experience fear, which may lead them to run away from the situation. So they may initially refuse the call. The characters also meet helpers who can help them get through their journey. For instance, they meet the mentors that trained them in order to face the changes in their life.

When the characters overcome their fear they cross the threshold between the ordinary world and the new world. This leads them to face unfamiliar situations and they start to change. The characters make allegiances, are tested and forced to meet with enemies. This brings them to the challenge in the new world and they experience fear again which may lead to a confrontation with death. The characters go through the ordeal and if they overcome it they appear to have new lives. They are granted rewards after their survival. For example, if the characters’ goal is to find treasure their reward may be the treasure itself if they survive the experience.

The characters eventually return to their ordinary world after they have completed their adventure. They leave their special new world because they have won the challenges that were set before them but they are prepared to be tested again. This brings the characters to the resurrection. The characters are tested when they are on the way to their ordinary world. For instance, the characters may possess they reward, which is the treasure they find, so they need to protect the treasure and bring it home on their road back. At this moment the characters face with a severe test which can lead them to the death again but it is bigger than anything they faced before. So if the characters survive this severe test, it means they can come back to live in their ordinary world again. For example, if the characters bring the treasure home, this conveys that the characters have succeeded in their journeys and their journeys are meaningful. At the same time, having undergone all the trials and changes, the
characters are now different than in the beginning – they have gained wisdom and experience.
Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter introduces the process of the selection of data and the method of analysis.

3.1 Research Questions

- How are kathoey characters represented in selected Thai commercial films?
- What kind of stereotypes can be associated with the kathoey characters in the selected Thai commercial films?

3.2 Introduction of the Texts

This qualitative research is a textual analysis of three selected Thai commercial films, which are Kung Fu Tootsie (Mokjok, 2007), It Gets Better (Sukkhapisit, 2012), and The Last Song (Akaraseranee, 2006). The films have been selected for analysis because they introduce different characters of kathoey portrayed in the films. And the way the kathoey characters in the selected films are portrayed, however, are unsurprisingly full of stereotypes. Therefore, this study aims to describe and analyse the stereotypical elements presented in the films.

- **Kung Fu Tootsie (dir. Jaturong Mokjok, 2007)**

The film was produced by GMM Tai Hub (GTH) and was written and directed by Jaturong Mokjok. The film was released on July 19, 2007. The main actor is Sittichai Pabchompoo who played the double role of Tao and Tian.
"Kung Fu Tootsie" is a Thai comedy with a *kathoey* protagonist. The movie is set in Hong Kong where there are three mafia gangs. The most powerful of the three is the Golden Dragon Gang led by Ma Yong Hai and Tao (his son). One day, Tao gets injured and loses his arm. As a result of this, he becomes disabled. However, the gang cannot continue without a leader, so Tao’s twin brother, Tian, who lives with his mother needs to come back to the family. Tian was separated from his brother and father because Ma Young Hai could not accept that his son was *kathoey*. After Tian comes back to his family, he has to pretend to be his brother, Tao and take care of the gang. However, Tian expresses his identity as a *kathoey*. So apart from pretending to be his elder brother, he needs to learn how to act and behave like a straight man. In the end of the movie, Tian finally becomes a leader of the gang and leads the gang with his *kathoey* identity.


This film is Thai romantic comedy with three generations of *kathoey* who want to find true love. A group of *kathoey* picks up Tonmai, a handsome man who comes back from aboard to manage the *kathoey* bar (The Fountain) after his father passed away. Tonlew is one of the *kathoey* who picks him up and drives him home. Tonmai does not like *kathoey*, so he decides to close down his father’s business. However, the manager of the bar tries to convince him not to do it. While Tonmai is watching a *kathoey* show beside the stage, he seems to fall in love with one *kathoey* performer (Dokmai) due to her beautiful and feminine appearance. Tonmai cannot take his eyes off of her and notices that she is a *kathoey*. So he wonders if there are any real women in the bar. When other *kathoey* that they start to laugh. Dokmai suddenly says that she was born to be a man but now she is a woman. After that Tonmai hurries to go out because he finds out that the girl who he finds beautiful is a *kathoey*. One
day, Tonmai and Tonlew drink together. Both of them get drunk and unintentionally have sex with each other. When he gets up in the morning, he realizes that he has slept with Tonlew, so he asks Tonlew to get away from the room.

The second *kathoey* character is Saitarn who has had sex reassignment. She falls in love with Fai, a young man who lives in the Thai North. Saitarn accidentally meets with Fai and wants to gain Fai’s interest. She tries to do many things to be loved back by Fai, however, Fai does not care. Saitarn dies in the end because she gets shot by a robber when she comes to save her father.

Din is a young man who is discovered by his father wearing makeup and his mother’s clothes. His father takes him to the temple to get him ordained and become a novice. Din does not want to be ordained as a novice. He comes up with an excuse that he cannot wear underwear if he becomes a novice. When he sees a monk who is supposed to look after him, he suddenly changes his mind and tells his father that he will get ordained.

However, the movie is presented in the series of flashback, where the situations and scenes of Saitarn and Din switch back and forth. The end of the movie reveals that Saitarn and Din are actually the same character in which Saitarn represents a female part of Din. This fact is revealed when Saitarn gets shot. Besides, the flashback shows that Tonmai is actually Saitarn’s son. Before Din transformed to become Saitarn, he lived as a man and ended up getting married in order not to be seen as a *kathoey*. Din decided to transform into Saitarn because his wife found out about his gender identity. She could not accept him and they divorced, but at that moment, Din’s wife was pregnant with Tonmai. She decided to go abroad and never told Tonmai the truth about his father, Therefore, Tonmai never saw Din whose identity changed to Saitarn. Tonmai finally learns the truth about his father when he comes back to close down the bar business after Saitarn’s death, which is shown at the end of the movie.
This film is a tragic story. The story is the unsuccessful love story of Somying who works in a Tiffany show in Pattaya. Somying is a kathoey who strongly believes that she will not fall in love with anyone. However, her belief changes after she meets with Boontherm. Somying suggests that Boontherm should work in a Tiffany show because she sees the talent in him. He can sing well and he has to support himself for his education. Somying finally falls in love with Boontherm because he always takes care of her. After she loses her mother, Somying has no one else who can take care of her like Boontherm and her father cannot accept that she is a kathoey. Orathai is Somying’s younger sister. Both Boontherm and Orathai study in the same university and they also have a chance to see each other at the Tiffany show. Boontherm and Orathai become closer to each other. Boontherm starts not to care for Somying as before. But Somying always keeps waiting for Boontherm to come back. This situation makes everyone worried about Somying. One day, the truth is revealed when Boontherm and Orathai come to see Somying and tell her to accept that they have feelings for each other. Moreover, they decide to go aboard to study together. As a result, Boontherm leaves Somying. Somying asks Boontherm to come back to her but it does not work. Finally, Somying sends her necklace to Boontherm. Boontherm immediately knows that something is going to happen with Somying because she used to say that if the necklace is not on her neck, it means she is dead. After that Boontherm rides to Somying. At that moment, Somying is performing on the stage. She takes a gun and shoots herself in the head. Boontherm sees the situation but it is too late to help. Somying commits suicide at her last performance.
3.3 Selection of Scenes

This section lists the scenes that have been selected for analysis from each movie. The selected scenes were seen to be the most significant for the analysis, since they show clear images of the kathoey characters at different points in the narrative and allow us to see how these characters are designed and how they develop throughout the movies.

- **Kung Fu Tootsie (dir. Jaturong Mokjok, 2007)**

  Scene 1: “I want to be a kathoey.” Tian asks his friends to teach him to be a perfect kathoey. 05:48-08:18

  Scene 2: “Back to the family.” Tian is back to help the family to continue the mafia gang. 09:42-10:37

  Scene 3: “Being my brother.” Tian practices pretending to be his brother who is a straight man. 10:37-11:28

  Scene 4: “The beginning of being my brother.” Tian officially pretends to be his brother and meets with subordinates as well as Tao’s girlfriend. 11:30-13:00

  Scene 5: “Tian and Tao’s girlfriend.” Tian meets with his brother’s girlfriend for the first time and has a date with her. 24:10-25:14

  Scene 6: “It’s time to fight.” Tian fights with the enemy by using his special martial arts (Muay Naree). 27:40-31:13

  Scene 7: “Beauty time.” Tian takes care of his beauty and dances. 36:55-37:25

  Scene 8: “Kathoey chat.” Tian talks about his life in the mafia and cosmetics. 49:35-51:03
Scene 9: “I have to fight.” Tian fights with the opponents, when he almost loses he thinks of what his mother taught him about being a woman. 77:16-83:00

Scene 10: “I am a leader.” Tian becomes a leader of the gang with his kathoey identity. 85:26-87:55

**It Gets Better (dir. Tanwarin Sukkhapisit, 2012)**

**Clip 1**

Scene 1: “Din’s dance.” Din crosses dress as a woman and dances while his father is not at home. 06:56-07:50

Scene 2: “At the temple.” Din is taken to the temple because his father wants him to be ordained. 12:30-13:35

Scene 3: “Appearance checking.” Saitarn stands in front of the mirror and checks her appearance. She is also satisfied with her sex reassignment. 14:58-16:20

Scene 4: “Tonlew gets angry.” She is angry when she knows that Tonmai cannot accept kathoey. So she complains to him. 41:50-42:50

**Clip 2**

Scene 5: “Saitarn and Fai.” Saitarn and Fai sleep together. 01:33-03:30

Scene 6: “Saitarn’s date.” Saitarn asks Fai about his opinion towards kathoey. 09:00-10:05

Scene 7: “Giving money.” Saitarn gives money to the grocery store seller. 06:47:07:01

Scene 8: “Tonlew’s performance.” She is singing on the stage and other kathoey are joining her song. 20:00-23:40
Scene 9: “Saitarn gets shot.” Saitarn gets shop by a robber when she comes to save her father. 33:14-34:30

- The Last Song (dir. Pisan Akaraseranee, 2006)

Clip 1

Scene 1: “Somying’s show.” Somying is performing on the stage as a tiffany show performer. 02:15-03:17

Scene 2: “Quarrel.” Somying and friends quarrel with men who look down on them. 04:20-5:25

Scene 3: “Somying’s first meeting with Boontherm.” Somying first meets with Boontherm at the garage for fixing his car. 08:10-09:27

Clip 2

Scene 4: “Pratuang gets hurt.” Pratuang is abandoned by his boyfriend. 04:12-08:17

Clip 3

Scene 5: “I want to go the bathroom.” One of the kathoey goes to the bathroom and pretends to be a straight man. He wants to use the same bathroom with two men. 04:15-04:53

Clip 4

Scene 6: “Somying chats with friends.” Somying talks with his friend about his opinion about love and what happens to Pratuang. 02:48-03:10
Clip 5

Scene 7: “Somying helps Boontherm.” Somying allows Boontherm to stay with him after Boontherm is dismissed from his job. 04:48-06:30

Scene 8: “Somying argues with his father.” Her father cannot accept that she is a

*katheoy* who was born in a wrong sex. 07:30-09:35

Clip 7

Scene 9: “Somying and Boontherm’s conversation.” Somying expresses his emotion to Boontherm. Somying expresses his emotion to Boontherm. 03:35-06:10

Clip 8

Scene 10: “Somying talks with Pratuang.” Somying and Pratuang talk with each other about Boontherm that he take a leave several times and Somying tries to protect him. 02:30-03:08.

Clip 9

Scene 11: “Somying knows the truth.” Somying is told by Boontherm and his younger sister about their relationship. 03:20-07:35
3.4 Method of Analysis

The researcher selected three films and each film has different scenes to be analysed to highlight three elements of character design, the discussion of which will lead to the answering of the research questions. The selected scenes are analysed to discuss the following elements of character design.

1. Characterization of the *kathoey* characters.
2. Deep character of the *kathoey* characters.
3. Character’s arc of the *kathoey* characters.

All the above criteria reflect how *kathoey* are represented in the films. They show how the media create stereotypes without showing a more balanced image of *kathoey* based on reality. First of all, characterization reflects how fashionable *kathoey* from different social classes are considered to be. The analysis will be based on the *kathoey* character’s external appearance and “persona” created through make-up and costume. In addition, the characterization also includes the analysis of *kathoey* characters’ body language, as well as their acting. It can also be analysed in terms of the signs of masculinity and femininity, since *kathoey* are supposed to have feminine signs. Secondly, the concept of deep character will be used to analyse the desires of the *kathoey* characters to see who they are and what they want by analysing their decision shown in films, which are expressed through the choices that the *kathoey* characters make. The scenes will also be analysed to examine the character’s arc of the *kathoey* characters in order to highlight how they are shaped in the narrative through internal and external conflict.
The selected scenes are important in analysing the representation of kathoey because they can convey the stereotypical portrayals of kathoey characters. By comparing the selected scenes of each movie, it can be seen that kathoey characters are represented repetitively. For example, kathoey characters are usually portrayed to be loud mouthed in many scenes of each film. Moreover, a Tiffany show is usually a place where the kathoey are, which can be part of their characterization because it is a place where kathoey characters work. Another important point to be analysed is the main points of the stories. Some of the selected scenes suggest both internal and external conflict of the kathoey characters. For instance, in The Last Song, Somying’s external conflict is visible when she quarrels with her father regarding her gender identity and she is told that she is of a wrong sex. Another scene is when she commits suicide because she was not successful in love. It Gets Better suggests that the kathoey will not find true love because Tonlew ends up not having any relationship with Tonmai. Furthermore, Saitarn, another kathoey character of the movie, who was loved back by a man is killed in the end. In terms of internal conflict, the scene from Kung Fu Tootsie is an example. Tian has to pretend to be his straight brother which is contrast with his gender identity as well as personality. Therefore, these examples can express the stereotypically repetitive portrayal of kathoey characters and how the characters are developed throughout the films.
The following tables show the detailed plan of the selected scenes and criteria.

### 3.5.1 Kung Fu Tootsie

Table 1: Selected scenes from *Kung Fu Tootsie*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Scene No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Synopsis</th>
<th>Running Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characterization</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Beauty time.</td>
<td>Tian takes care of his beauty and dances.</td>
<td>36:55-37:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Kathoey</em> chat.</td>
<td>Tian talks about his life in the mafia and cosmetics</td>
<td>49:35-51:03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep character</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>I want to be a <em>kathoey</em>.</td>
<td>Tian asks his friends to teach him to be a perfect <em>kathoey</em>.</td>
<td>05:48-08:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Back to the family.</td>
<td>Tian is back to help the family to continue the mafia gang.</td>
<td>09:42-10:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tian and Tao’s girlfriend.</td>
<td>Tian meets with his brother’s girlfriend for the first time and has a date with her.</td>
<td>24:10-25:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>It’s time to fight.</td>
<td>Tian fights the enemy by using his special martial arts (Muay Naree).</td>
<td>27:40-31:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Kathoey</em> chat.</td>
<td>Tian talks about his life in the mafia and cosmetics</td>
<td>49:35-51:03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>I have to fight.</td>
<td>Tian fights with the opponents, when he almost loses he thinks of what his mother taught him about being a woman.</td>
<td>77:16-83:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am a leader.</td>
<td>Tian becomes a leader of the gang with his <em>kathoey</em> identity.</td>
<td>85:26-87:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character’s arc</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Back to the family.</td>
<td>Tian is back to help the family to continue the mafia gang.</td>
<td>09:42-10:37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5.2 It Gets Better

Table 2: Selected scenes from *It Gets Better*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Scene No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Synopsis</th>
<th>Running Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characterization</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Appearance checking.</td>
<td>Saitarn stands in front of the mirror and checks her appearance. She is also satisfied with her sex reassignment.</td>
<td>14:58-16:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Din’s dance.</td>
<td>Din crosses dress as a woman and dances while his father is not at home.</td>
<td>06:56-07:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>At the temple.</td>
<td>Din is taken to the temple because his father wants him to be ordained.</td>
<td>12:30-13:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Appearance checking.</td>
<td>Saitarn stands in front of the mirror and checks her appearance. She is also satisfied with her sex reassignment.</td>
<td>14:58-16:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep character</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Giving money.</td>
<td>Saitarn gives money to the grocery store seller.</td>
<td>06:47:07:01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tonlew gets angry.</td>
<td>She is angry when she knows that Tonmai cannot accept <em>kathoeyp</em>. So she complains to him.</td>
<td>41:50-42:50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5.3 The Last Song

Table 3: Selected scenes from *The Last Song*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Scene No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Synopsis</th>
<th>Running Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characterization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Somying’s show.</td>
<td>Somying is performing on the stage as a tiffany show performer.</td>
<td>02:15-03:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep character</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Quarrel.</td>
<td>Somying and friends quarrel with men who look down on them.</td>
<td>04:20-5:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I want to go the bathroom.</td>
<td>One of the <em>kathoey</em> goes to the bathroom and pretends to be a straight man. He wants to use the same bathroom with two men.</td>
<td>04:15-04:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pratuang gets hurt</td>
<td>Pratuang is abandoned by his boyfriend.</td>
<td>04:12-08:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Somying chats with friends.</td>
<td>Somying talks with his friend about his opinion about love and what happens to Pratuang.</td>
<td>02:48-03:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Somying argues with his father.</td>
<td>Her father cannot accept that she is a <em>kathoey</em> who was born in a wrong sex.</td>
<td>07:30-09:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Somying and Boontherm’s</td>
<td>Somying expresses his emotion to Boontherm.</td>
<td>03:35-06:10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Character’s arc

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clip</th>
<th>Scene Description</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Somying’s show.</td>
<td>02:15-03:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Somying’s first meeting with Boontherm.</td>
<td>08:10-09:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Somying helps Boontherm.</td>
<td>04:48-06:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Somying talks with Pratuang</td>
<td>02:30-03:08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Somying knows the truth.</td>
<td>03:20-07:35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.6 Sample of Analysis

The sample provided in this section refers to the characterization of *kathoey* characters in *Kung Fu Tootsie*.

**Scene 1: “I want to be a kathoey.”**

Tian asks his friends to teach him to be a perfect *kathoey*. 05:48-08.18

This scene starts with Tian performing Lion Dance. He is blamed by his *kathoey* friends that he is a hairy *kathoey* who has an old face. His friends also complain that this kind of dance is for a man. So, Tian asks his friends how he can become a perfect *kathoey* and they give him...
instructions. One of his friends says that being able to curse and scold people in strong and violent language is very important for being a kathoey.

In terms of characterization, first of all, the costumes of the characters can be noticed. Tian is said to be transgender but the way he dresses does not look really feminine. In comparison with his kathoey friends, their costumes seem to be more feminine even though they look extraordinary, since they wear colourful clothes. Secondly, Tian’s job is to perform Lion Dance. So it can be seen as an association of gender stereotype in which Tian is told by his friends that this job is for men. Moreover, although Tian does not dress in a very obviously feminine way, it can be noticed that he is a kathoey due to the effeminate behaviour and acting presented in the film.

In the scene where Tian asks his friends how to be a perfect kathoey, he drops to his knees to beg them; this suggests that Tian’s deep character wants to see himself as a perfect kathoey. It can also be because his friends scold him and keep being negative about his personality as well as appearance. This puts pressure on Tian, so he decides to ask help from his friends. Furthermore, this suggests that to Tian kathoey is a different category than a woman because he does not tell his friends that he wants to be a perfect woman. Another part of Tian’s identity is revealed when he is asked to perform a form of martial arts called Muay Naree. At first Tian refuses to do so but once his friends scold him again, he starts to show his ability in martial arts. Therefore, this scene supports the idea that that true identity is revealed when the character needs to make decision under pressure.
Chapter 4
Finding and Analysis

The analysis of the three selected Thai commercial movies is presented in this chapter. The researcher has chosen the *kathoey* characters from each of the selected movie to be analysed according to the criteria. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part is characterization of the selected *kathoey* characters as seen based on their behaviour and appearance. The second part is deep character, which is seen through the personality and motivation of the characters. And the last part is the character’s arc, which is analysed to trace the development of the characters.

4.1 Characterization

In order to analyse the characterization of the *kathoey* characters in this movie, the research looks at the characters’ appearance, the look of the characters, how they dress and what kind of costumes they wear. This also includes the make-up they put on their faces. Moreover, characters’ behaviour is discussed to understand their characterization as well, such as gestures and acting.

4.1.1 Kung Fu Tootsie (dir. Jaturong Mokjok, 2007)

The analysis focused on the characters of Tian and his *kathoey* friends in discussing their characterization. The comparison between Tian and his friends was also considered to present the similarities and differences in terms of their costumes, as well as behavior. Moreover, the
researcher analysed how the characterization of Tian is developed throughout the movie and how his look and behavior changes from the beginning to the end.

There are four kathoey characters in this film: Tian and three of his kathoey friends. Tian is the main kathoey character who at the beginning of the movie looks less fashionable than his friends. His costume is initially modest. He wears a white T-shirt, brown cardigan, and black pants. The color of his outfit looks dark. He has a brown chiffon scarf around his neck and a similar shade of brown on his cardigan. His shoulder-length hair seems a little fluffy like it has not been groomed properly. He does not wear any make-up on his face. The way Tian walks looks timid since he does not use a lot of body movements, instead he uses his right hand to grab his left wrist while walking. From his described movements, he seems to be shy and lacking confidence.

On the other hand, the extraordinary and prominent look of Tian’s kathoey friends can attract the audiences’ attention easily, since they wear very bright and colorful clothes (see Figure 1). In discussing their appearance and behavior, it can be seen that the first friend wears a blue strapless dress with yellow inserts on the first layer of the dress. Moreover, his accessories are outstanding as he has two big blue and yellow flowers on the left side of his head and a hairpin on another side. The colours of flowers on his head match his dress in the shade of the color. Other observable accessories are a big beaded necklace decorated with a big blue flower pendant, long earrings in blue decoration, and a beaded bracelet on his right wrist. His hair is permed and parted in the middle. The make-up he wears is strong and obvious due to his prominent blue eye shadow on his eyelids. As he is talking with Tian, he holds a yellow feather fan and spreads it out. To begin his instruction of how to be a perfect kathoey, he shows Tian how to walk, he walks to one side and turns his face back and forth. At the same time he uses his two hands to grasp the fan when walking. Finally, his physical body looks actually short and chubby.
Tian’s second *kathoey* friend wears a brightly pink cheongsam. He has two very large pink and purple flowers fastened with a hair pin to his head. He has short hair and his bang is parted to the left side. The pink accessories, a beaded necklace, a bracelet, and big pendant earrings are on his body as he is walking the earrings keep swaying. The total look of the second friend is either light or dark pink including his high-heel shoes and make-up, which looks very prominent. The pink tone make-up can be observed from the eye shadow that he wears, and another outstanding make-up element is an abundant use of eyeliner. In terms of his body movements, he walks wiggling his behind and frowns to express his disappointment with Tian’s Lion Dance performance. When Tian asks him to wait, he immediately turns his body to Tian and suddenly uses his right hand to grasp his left hand’s fingers while lifting his frowning face upwards a little. After that, the frown disappears when Tian asks him for instruction but the gestures remain the same. When he teaches Tian how to walk, he demonstrates it by confidently walking with his arms akimbo and moving his head back and forth.

The last *kathoey* friend of Tian is thin and tall. He wears a long sleeves cheongsam in a combination of green shades when he is first shown on screen. He has his hair up, which looks a little bit fluffy. The full option of his accessories can be seen from his green butterfly hair pin, a beaded necklace, bracelet, and large bunch earrings. When he is walking, the earrings keep jingling. His high-heel shoes come in cream colour. It can be seen that all Tian’s *kathoey* friends use repeated gestures in which they similarly grasp their hands in the same pose and position. This third *kathoey* friend as well holds his two hands together and places them in the middle part of his body. This may convey the message of femininity. In the scene where Tian tells him something he dislikes, he raises his right hand as if he is about to slap Tian. At the same time, his facial expression looks angry since he widens his eyes and scolds Tian. When he shows Tian how to walk, he straightens his right leg and he bends his
left knee a little bit. He does this and spreads both of his hands to the right while his body leans to the left. Additionally, his mouth is wide open. When he starts to walk, heavily moves his left leg forward while lowering his behind and at the same time he keeps his arms at his waist. Then he lifts his bum up when he takes another step forward and he starts to spreads his two arms moving them back and forth according to the steps. Furthermore, he strikes a seductive pose in which he stands on the left side and steps to his right. His toes touch the floor, while his heels are in the air. He starts to roll up his skirt and moves his face upward. From this description, his body movements and gestures seem to contribute to an exaggerated portrayal of his character.

Figure 1: Tian and his kathoey friends in outrageous costumes

“Beauty Time” (36:55-37:25) is one of the significant scenes that can show Tian’s characterization. It presents Tian using a white towel to cover his head together with wearing a white bathrobe so it can be assumed that he has just finished taking a shower. The starting moment of this scene is when Tian squeezes a pimple on his face and then he begins shaving
his eyebrows. After that, he does his facial mask. He looks at the mirror and uses the tips of his middle fingers to apply the mask on his face. Noticeably, Tian looks happy as he smiles when he is taking care of his physical appearance. He picks up male underwear by using only the tips of his thumb and middle fingers and releases it. At the same time, he sneers so it seems like he wants to throw the underwear away. The following part shows Tian covered with a white towel dancing in front of the mirror. During his dance, he swings his arms to the left and right as well as up and down. Besides, the tips of his thumb and middle fingers on both hands touch each other. After that he slowly releases the towel covering his body and lets it fall down on the floor. He turns to become topless and wears only his underwear and has a towel on his head left. He then spreads his arms like a bird spreads its wings and continues to dance.

Another significant scene is “Kathoey Chat” (49:35-51:03). This scene shows Tian and his three kathoey friends talking with each other. The repetitive representation is that Tian’s kathoey friends dress in outrageous and colorful clothes. His first friend dresses in pink with a big pink flower on his head and a pearl necklace. His second friend comes in black and green cheongsam with a big green flower on his head together and a pearl necklace. Finally, his third kathoey friend comes in a sleeveless dress in red, white, and black color. He also wears as a big red flower on his head, flower earrings and red necklace, and he has another red flower on his left shoulder. All of them wear strong make-up. Suddenly, the third kathoey picks up his red lipstick and applies it on his lips. At that moment Tian looks at his friend, frowns and raises his right hand using his index and middle fingers to touch his chin and lower lip. He compresses his upper and lower lips together while he is seeing his friend applying the lipstick but the friend ignores him. This expression shows that Tian also wants to use the lipstick like his friend. After that, the first friend grabs the lipstick and applies it on his lips instead. Eventually, Tian makes a verbal request and says that he wants
to use the lipstick as well. However, Tian’s desire cannot be fulfilled since he is disguising himself as his elder brother and he has to look like a straight man, so he cannot use the lipstick. Then the *kathoeys* start their conversation, they giggle and laugh during their talk to express that they agree and are satisfied with what they are chatting.

At the end of the movie, it can be observed that Tian’s characterization changes to reveal his true identity. He appears in a red Chinese style outer suit including his pants with a white shirt inside. He wears a red hat and carries a feather fan. His make-up becomes strong as he puts on red lipstick and his eye make-up is prominent due to the obvious color of eye shadow (see Figure 2). When he walks his left hand touches his waist and his right hand uses a fan. In looking at his standing posture, he stands with his right knee bent and keeps using a fan. To compare this with the beginning of the movie, instead of being timid Tian becomes more confident after he gains acceptance from people around him and can openly be himself.

![Figure 2: Tian in red costume after his becoming the leader of the gang](image)

From this analysis and observation it can be seen that the character of Tian has developed throughout the movie from shy to extremely confident. In contrast, the characters
of Tian’s *kathoey* friends look outstanding from the first scene and do not change much. They remain stereotypes, even though it shows in the end of the movie that the three *kathoey* friends appear in male costume, we know that they do it on purpose as mentioned they want to benefit from being Tian’s subordinates to get close to the handsome men. However, all the *kathoey* characters accept and refer to their identities as *kathoey*. To compare with the non-*kathoey* characters, the characterization of Tian and his friends can be seen as *kathoey* instead of women due to their exaggeration of appearance and behaviour.

### 4.1.2 It Gets Better (dir. Tanwarin Sukkhapisit, 2012)

Since three generations of *kathoey* characters are presented in this movie, the main three characters were analysed because they represent different ages of *kathoey*. The characterization of each character was shown, which means their external appearance and their behaviour was revealed.

The *kathoey* characters, Saitarn, Tonlew, and Din represent the first, second, and third generation of *kathoey* characters respectively. Since Saitarn is the only character mentioned in the thesis who has had sex reassignment surgery, the researcher used the female pronoun to refer to her to mark that difference (she is also portrayed by a woman in the movie); in the Thai context, however, she is still recognized as *kathoey*. The beginning scene of this movie portrays Saitarn, a good looking older *kathoey*. She is thin and has a nice body. In terms of her costume, she wears a yellow chiffon dress and red shoes with high heels. She covers her head with a piece of chiffon fabric in earth tone, which looks like a scarf. She is wearing large sunglasses covering her eyes and she has permed hair. The make-up she wears looks strong but it does not seem exaggerated because this make-up tone can be seen in daily life. She stands against her red car and uses her left arm to lean on the car and holds a cigarette in
her right hand. She bends her left knee a little bit and her toes touch the ground. Her right leg is straightened up (see Figure 3). After she has finished smoking, she throws the cigarette butt away. She then looks around making sure nobody sees her and pulls up the back side of her dress. After that, she slowly squats down and begins to urinate like a woman.

The second main kathoey character is Tonlew. He is first shown on screen when a group of kathoey picks up Tonmai at the airport. Tonlew wears a Tartan shirt, short pants and a white cap. He has a pony tail and his make-up is not obvious compared with other people who are with him. In contrast to Tonlew’s appearance, the other kathoey characters have strong make-up and their dresses seem exaggerate. All of them wear black and the style of their dresses is more appropriate for a party or a stage performance than daily life. They even wear lace gloves, big hats, as well as the full option of accessories, such as pearl or diamond necklaces. All these components can make them look prominent and easily catch the audience’s eye. To get back to the discussion of Tonlew, the way he dresses seems normal.
without any exaggeration. When Tonlew tries to talk to Tonmai while driving, he speaks with a soft woman’s voice and his facial expression looks sweeter. He is teased about this by Tonmai and he stops smiling and continues speaking with his own voice.

The last main kathoey character is Din. The introduction of this character starts with Din’s dance. Din wears a leopard pattern chiffon skirt with a black T-shirt as his top together with a black leather belt on his waist. He covers his head with a black fabric and uses a leopard pattern fabric as a prop when he is dancing. Moreover, he wears his T-shirt slightly twisted to show the right side of his shoulder. He dances by walking back and forth, swinging his arms, holding leopard fabric in his hands, and turning his body around. He wears make-up which is light but it can still be noticed. When he gets caught by his father, he immediately takes his head dress off.

The example of a scene that shows a prominent portrayal of kathoey characters is “Appearance Checking” (14:58-16:20). This scene starts with Saitarn standing in front of the mirror to check her appearance. She wears spaghetti strap pajamas and her cleavage is shown. She starts looking at her eyes first. She uses her hands to smoothen out her eye wrinkles and then moves to the cheek wrinkles. She uses only the tips of her middle and index fingers to touch her cheeks. After that, she turns her face to the left side and uses the tip of her right index finger to touch her nose tip to examine a nose job she has had before, and possibly suggesting that she wants to undergo another nose surgery and fix her nose again. Then she uses both hands to touch her jaw. At the same time, she keeps looking at the mirror and moving her face. The angle of the camera moves to her breasts. She touches her breasts thinking about having breast surgery. When the angle of the camera moves down to the lower part, she mentions her sex reassignment and that she is satisfied with it. She changes her posture touching her waist with a grinning smile on her face. Suddenly, she abandons her smile because she notices a moustache growing next to the corner of her mouth. She touches
it and uses tweezers to pluck it out while sitting on the bed. She sits with her left knee up and her right leg bent down on the bed (see Figure 4).

![Figure 4: Saitarn in appearance checking scene](image)

At the end of the movie we realize that the kathoey characters do not change throughout the movie. It can be seen from the way they dress and their costumes. In *Kung Fu Tootsie*, Tian changes his characterization to reveal his kathoey identity openly. He starts to look extraordinary due to his outrageous dress. He also reveals his effeminacy through his clothes and his body language. On the other hand, the kathoey characters in *It Gets Better* remain the same. The costumes they wear can be easily seen in real life, so the movie seems more realistic when compared with *Kung Fu Tootsie*. But the repetitive representation still exists, as shown by the costumes of the group of supporting kathoey characters who look unnatural. This can suggest that the director may want to emphasize the career of these characters as stage performers through their costumes and that they are different and exaggerated even in the scene when they are out of work.
4.1.3 The Last Song (dir. Pisan Akaraseranee, 2006)

In this movie, the analysis focused on Somying as the main character. However, Somying’s kathoey friends were also described to see how similar or different they are in comparison with Somying.

The introduction of this movie starts with a man sitting at a dressing table. He is dressed in a white shirt and a black suit, and he has got short hair. He initially looks like a straight man he then starts to put make-up on his face by drawing his eye brows, applying blush to his cheeks, and putting the lipstick on his lips. Besides, he puts on ornate crystal earrings. After that his costume is changed to a white sequin dress and his hair style turns to be curly and long when a wig is put on. He also wears lace gloves and a big crystal necklace. We recognize that he is a Tiffany show performer. During his performance, he reaches out with his left hand in order to introduce another performer who is Somying. He can be assumed to be a kathoey character who plays a supporting role in the movie.

Somying looks extraordinary when he is on the stage. His costume looks like a bikini fully decorated with feathers. A large diamond necklace is on his neck and long earrings in his ears. He wears strong make-up which does not look appropriate for daily life. However, it is understandable since he is performing on the stage. While he is performing, he lip-syncs songs and moves his arms as well as his body back and forth according to the rhythm. On the other hand, when Somying is off stage he looks normal, i.e. the exaggeration of his costume is absent. He wears just a singlet dress and sunglasses. His make-up is not as obvious as when he is performing. And the only accessory he wears is earrings.

On the contrary, Somying’s kathoey friends seem to show more exaggeration. While they are in Somying’s car, one of his friends sees pictures of a male in a magazine (pornographic magazine) and expresses his interest. He makes a lewd gesture by using his
finger tips to touch the pictures of the male body in the magazine. At that moment, he argues with another two *kathoey* friends who want to see the magazine as well. He says that he bought the magazine so that he does not have to share it. This representation suggests that *kathoey* or homosexual characters are interested in men and it is expressed in the movie openly. In terms of the *kathoey* characters’ costumes, they do not look extremely extraordinary like the ones they wear when they are on stage but they dress in bright colors such as pink. One of them wears a pink halter top and another one wear a sleeveless crop top even though he is the chubbiest among them. So, it seems that he does not care about his physical body or perhaps some comic portrayal is inserted through the costume. Moreover, he also wears a leopard pattern hat. During their talk about men and sex, they scream with excitement as if they have interest in the topic and their gestures also support their acting, especially hand movements (see Figure 5). However, when another *kathoey* scolds them for their exaggeration, they frown and some of them touch their chests to express shock.

![Figure 5: Somying and his kathoey friends on his car](image-url)
Another discussed kathoey character is Pratuang who is the president of the Tiffany show. He is a kathoey who does not cross-dress as a woman. Instead he dresses in a male costume but his leather jacket has a python pattern and he wears a silver necklace. In other words, he seems more like a gay man than a kathoey. His effeminacy can also be observed through his voice and his speaking style.

According to the discussion mentioned previously, The Last Song shows some similarity in characterization to It Gets Better. The characters do not change towards the movie and remain the same as far as their costumes, make-up, and body language are concerned. Moreover, the characters’ job is to perform on the stage. All the kathoey characters in The Last Song apart from Somying look exaggerates and they always talk about men, which is similar to It Gets Better where the kathoey characters scream when they see a handsome man. This can contribute to the stereotype of the kathoey characters presented in the movies. The way these characters react to the topic of men seems exaggerated because they overact and express their interest openly in public, for instance at the airport or on the road.

Nevertheless, the differences between the two mentioned movies are found as well. First of all, the kathoey characters in The Last Song do not dress like they are performing when they are off stage. Rather they wear clothes that can be found in daily life. On the other hand, It Gets Better portrays some characters exaggeratedly because their costumes are unnatural and they would not normally be seen in daily life. In other words, those costumes (worn when they are at the airport) are suitable for the performers on stage but not at the airport. It is because we rarely see people wearing lace gloves and big hats in public. One noticeable point is that the exaggeration in costumes is used for those who play supporting roles instead of the main characters.
In comparison with *Kung Fu Tootsie*, the characterization of the main character in *The Last Song* is different and Somying looks like a real woman. If we only take a quick look at him, he just looks like an ordinary woman due to his behavior, costume, and make-up. In contrast, Tian in *Kung Fu Tootsie* looks more like a *kathoey*. At the beginning of the movie, Tian cross-dresses as a woman but he does not express himself as a *kathoey* straightforwardly because he does not have confidence even though he accepts his identity. Or perhaps he expresses his identity straightforwardly but it is not very obviously shown due to his timid movements. However, at the end of the movie, Tian changes his characterization. He puts on the red lipstick and he acts like an effeminate man, while Somying does not. Instead, Somying seems to look like a woman. To sum up Tian’s *kathoey* friends’ appearance, they look like performers on stage because they wear outfits that other people may not wear in real life. If we take a look at all the supporting characters from *Kung Fu Tootsie* we can see that only the three *kathoey* characters look prominent, while others look normal. This suggests that the director wanted to emphasize their role by putting exaggerated costumes on the *kathoey* characters.

The overall characterization of these three movies can be that the *kathoey* characters in *It Gets Better* and *The Last Song* seem to be more realistic. On the other hand, the *kathoey* characters in *Kung Fu Tootsie* seem to be hard to find in daily life. However, if we look at the genre of the movies, *Kung Fu Tootsie* is definitely a comedy. This means that the characters are portrayed more exaggeratedly in which they look colorful by the way they dress and their acting conveys their being *kathoey* and not women.
4.2 Deep Character

In this part, the researcher looked at the deep character of the characters in each of the selected movies. Deep character could be found throughout the whole movie when the characters’ motivation as well as personality were analysed. These could be revealed especially through the conflicts and behaviour of the characters. However, in order to analyse the deep character, the researcher chose some scenes that could be seen as the most significant to discuss the personality of the characters.

4.2.1 Kung Fu Tootsie (dir. Jaturong Mokjok, 2007)

Tian’s deep character is initially shown in the scene of “I want to be a kathoey” (05:48-08:18). This scene starts when Tian is scolded for being a kathoey with an old face and criticized for his rough movements and hairy appearance. Apart from this, his kathoey friends tell him that Lion Dance is for men and not kathoey. From this situation, Tian begs his friends for help to become a perfect kathoey. This suggests that Tian starts to compare himself to his kathoey friends and that scolding does not discourage him but rather encourages him to improve. It can be assumed that Tian sees his friends as role models and wants to learn from them but also that he feels pressure to do so. Whatever the reason, Tian can be seen as a determined person in this scene.

We get another glimpse of Tian’s deep character in this scene when his friends ask him to perform Muay Naree, his martial art, since his friends realise that he talks about the martial art a lot but he has never shown it to them. Tian refuses to do so but when he gets scolded again he decides to perform it to his friends. This suggests that Tian is given pressure again. On the other hand, he is also proud of his martial arts skill which can be seen from the
fact that he talks with pride about it. Although Tian may actually be proud of his martial art and wants to show it to his friends, he is also afraid that he will be judged. Another noticeable thing is that when Tian is being scolded by his friends, he does not argue back. Instead he listens and follows what his friends ask him to do, even though it seems to be hard to do so at first.

Additionally, the same scene reflects Tian’s kathoey friends as well. They can be seen as people who have a good heart due to the observation that they are willing to help Tian after they see his determination. But, Tian’s motivation comes from their scolding which is not considered good behaviour, this leads to the representation of kathoey characters as the characters whose one of noticeable behaviours is to scold others and that they are possibly portrayed as loudmouth. However, if we look at their scolding behaviour in this movie, these kathoey characters only scold Tian. So in this situation, scolding can be interpreted in another direction in which kathoey characters are close with each other enough, due to their portrayal as Tian’s friends, to express their intimacy through such behaviour. In other words, scolding seems to be normal when it is expressed among friends. Even though, it is not a good behaviour, scolding is not always and intentionally used to look down on others. It can also show the relationship between friends that is they can express whatever they want with each other and that they say things to each other directly including scolding. This representation can be seen in non-kathoey characters as well, if loudmouth is used to describe Tian’s kathoey friends, it can also be used with other characters whose behaviour is similar.

As mentioned in the previous discussion, this characteristic of scolding seems more prominent than being good hearted. This leads their deep character to be observed through two different aspects, or having both a positive and negative side. Even though, the negative representation seems to be more easily noticed and observed, a hidden message from this behaviour telling us that they are willing to help their friends while they are behaving and
talking negatively. In addition, while we can see Tian’s friends’ scolding as a way to look down on Tian, or part of their bad behavior, we can also suggest that they do so because they want to change Tian’s personality. That is why when Tian asks them for instruction they do not hesitate to help.

“Back to the family” (09:42-10:37) is the scene showing that Tian needs to come back to help the family and face his father, who cannot accept him as a kathoey. Even though Tian’s father does not want him, he still comes back in order to help his father, as well as his elder brother, Tao, to run the mafia gang after his brother’s injury in which he lost his arm. To do so Tian has to pretend to be his elder brother who is a straight man and this contrasts with Tian’s identity. This scene conveys that Tian has a good heart because he is willing to help his family even though this denies his identity. The scene shows the moment when Tian is practicing how to be his elder brother. Tian has to work hard to overcome his kathoey identity and effeminacy and this shows his patience because he has to put up with the situation that he has never faced before. However, this scene also conveys some gender stereotypes when Tian’s uncle says that he does not believe that Tian can pretend to be Tao and lead the gang unless he stops being a kathoey. This means that only if Tian is a straight man, he will be able to do well in his duty.

Nevertheless, to get back to Tian’s deep character, Tian’s mother supports him and encourages him to get back to the family and help them. Tian follows his mother advice, which suggests that he is as an obedient person. Similarly, when Tian learns how to be Tao he obeys and follows whatever his uncle tells him to do. On the one hand, joining the mafia gang does not seem to be a good thing and it is in contrast with Tian’s deep character as a good person. However, if the genre of the movie is considered, the gangsters in the movie are not portrayed as very tough or evil due to the comic elements.
“Tian and Tao’s girlfriend” (24:10-25:14) is the scene showing Tian and Tao’s girlfriend, Pei Pei having a date together for the first time. Since Tian is a kathoey he is interested in men but he has to date Pei Pei as Tao and he cannot let her know his real identity. Again, Tian can be said to be patient due to the situation that he has to face. In fact, Tian is actually unwilling to date Tao’s girlfriend because his facial expression conveys that he finds it unpleasant to date a lady, especially when he has to give her a hug, he frowns. This can be observed in the movie during the running time between 13:07-13:10. This moment expresses Tian’s deep character since he decides to hug her even though he does not want to and is not interested in women. However, this scene starts with Tian and Pei Pei talking with each other in a car. Pei Pei keeps telling Tian what happened with her and Tao the month before. This moment of this scene confirms that Tian is interested in men. Pei Pei additionally tells Tian about the fight between Tao and a group of men. Tian seems interested in the topic of conversation, especially when Pei Pei describes what those men looked like and that they had big muscles. Tian’s interest is expressed through his facial expression (see Figure 6). Another part of the deep character of Tian that he likes men is conveyed here. In addition, this is also associated with the stereotypical representation in which kathoey characters are portrayed to be obsessed with men.
Furthermore, being brave is another part of Tian’s deep character, which can be observed in the scene of “It’s Time to Fight” (27:20-31:13). This scene starts with a group of men abusing one male seller. Tian sees the situation and decides to stop his car in order to help the man. Once the situation becomes non-negotiable, Tian starts to fight with the thugs. This shows that Tian is brave enough to fight with the opponent without any hesitation. Although kathoey characters are typically represented to be sensitive, which it is associated with the idea of being a woman, Tian is portrayed to have an opposite role of a fighter. The same scene presents Tian as a generous person as after the fight Tian tells the man to keep the money he was supposed to pay his gang for protection in order to make him feel better, even though this does not benefit the mafia gang. Another moment that supports this idea is when Tian decides not to collect money from those who do not have much and he distributes the money to other people, which leads to the decrease in his gang’s revenue. However, Tian is actually praised by his subordinates for his behaviour.

In the scene of “Kathoey Chat” (49:35-51:03) Tian can be seen as a beauty-lover due to his interest in cosmetics. Tian expresses his interest in beauty and is inspired by his friends
after he sees them applying lipstick. Apart from reflecting Tian’s deep character, this scene reflects his kathoey friends’ interest in cosmetics based on their topic of conversation. When Tian’s friends are talking about make-up Tian keeps listening and expresses his feelings by saying that he is depressed because he has to pretend to be his straight brother and cannot express his real identity to others. It is revealed that Tian wants to be like his friends who can express their identity directly and they do not feel any pressure to hide it. On the other hand, Tian’s kathoey friends are motivated by Tian as well. Their motivation comes from the realization that Tian gets to work with a lot of handsome men. Therefore, they want to become Tian’s subordinates to benefit from this situation. This presents a repetitive stereotype in which kathoey characters are portrayed to be obsessed with men.

In “I Have to Fight” (77:16-83:00), Tian is brave to fight with the opponent again. But in contrast, Tian is also shown as selfish. When his brother comes to help him, in their conversation, Tian asks Tao to fight with four opponents when he himself fights with only one person. In response to this, Tao says that this is not fair to him. Tian claims that he cannot fight more men because he is a kathoey while Tao retorts that he is disabled since he has lost one arm. The representation expressed in this scene is that the kathoey characters are represented similarly to women in that they seem to be weaker than men. When Tian is severely hurt from fighting, he thinks of what his mother has told him, that women have more patience than men and that they can perform extremely well in difficult situations. This suggests that either Tian’s mother sees him as a woman not a kathoey or that kathoey characters are seen as similar to women. After that, Tian gains more power and energy to fight and he wins eventually.

The last scene is “I Am a Leader” (85:26-87:55) presents Tian as a leader of the mafia gang. At this moment, Tian is confident and proud of being a kathoey. He reveals his kathoey identity openly. It means that Tian is accepted by the members of the gang and he accepts his
real identity. He expresses what he feels and does what he wants to do, such as wearing strong make-up on his face. Tian also forces other people including his uncle to dress and make-up like women. This conveys that Tian starts to act as a leader and is able to give commands to other to do what he wants them to do. He is confident, although we may wonder whether he has begun to turn into a dictator.

To sum up, Tian can be seen as a *kathoey* who is not very confident at the beginning but his character develops to be more confident, especially when he gains acceptance from the people around him. However, *Kung Fu Tootsie* is a comedy movie. So, the character of Tian is slipping and his personality can be seen both in negative and positive ways. For example, Tian has a good heart and is generous but at the same time he is also selfish. In contrast to Tian, his *kathoey* friends seem extremely extraordinary. They are full of confidence in their identity, as well as appearance. And the significant observation is that they are portrayed as loudmouth, which is a stereotypical representation. But if their relationship as friends is considered, such behaviour does not seem to be a serious threat.

4.2.2 It Gets Better (dir. Tanwarin Sukkhapisit, 2012)

In the movie, Din and Saitarn are actually the same person, so they are considered as one character. The other selected *kathoey* character, Tonlew was analysed briefly as a contrast character to Din and Saitarn. So that, the analysis of this movie focuses mostly on the two main *kathoey* characters of the same person due to the reason that Din and Saitarn represent double personality of the character’s childhood and adult moments.

The first selected scene showing deep character is “Din’s Dance” (06:56-07:50). In this scene, Din wears his mother’s clothes and is dancing when his father is not at home (see Figure 7). He eventually gets caught by his father who asks him what he is doing. Din is
shocked and hurries to turn the music off. Then he tries to change the topic asking his father if he is supposed to go to the market. This suggests that Din actually does not express his real identity as a *kathoey* to his father. This leads to an assumption that Din’s father possibly cannot accept his son as a *kathoey* even though he does not directly mention that. This scene reveals Din’s deep character as a person who cannot express his identity openly because of his father. However, another part of Din’s deep character reflected in this scene is his obedience. Observably, when the father asks Din to put away his mother’s clothes and remove all the make-up on his face, Din does what he is told to. He even abandons his effeminacy which is different than in the moment when he is dancing.

Figure 7: Din when he is dancing

The continuation of this motif is the scene of “At the temple” (12:30-13:35). Din’s father takes him to the temple in order to get ordained but Din refuses to do so. Din’s father says that men have to ordain. This may support the idea that Din’s father does not want him to be a *kathoey* and thinks that religion will help him resist the temptation. He asks Din to
ordain for 3-4 years which Din thinks is too long, since he is supposed to be a monk only during the school break time. Din’s father asks him to think of this ordination as for his mother who passed away. However, Din still refuses and insists that it is because as a monk he cannot wear underwear, which makes him embarrassed. Soon after, however, Din notices a monk and changes his mind. In the previous scene Din was seen as an obedient person. Again in this scene, we can say Din decides to ordain because he obeys his father and wants to make his father happy. At the same time, his action can also be explained differently.

When Din notices the monk who is supposed to look after him he cannot take his eyes off him. This suggests a very different reading, as the main motivation here seems to be the fact that the senior monk is handsome. As a result Din’s deep character may be portrayed to be shallow. However, another scene supports a more positive outlook on Din’s personality is presented during the running time between 31:00-31:40 in which Din has already become a novice. He shares his food with the senior monk by using his spoon to put the food on the senior monk’s plate. People at the temple see this and giggle. In response the senior monk explains this is inappropriate but Din does not know what he means by that. He explains that when he finds delicious food, he wants to share the food with others and that this is what he does with his father.

In “Appearance Checking” (14:58-16:20) Saitarn replaces Din in the adult period, after undergoing sex reassignment. As mentioned before, this scene presents Saitarn checking her appearance. It suggests that Saitarn is beauty-loving. The motivation of Saitarn in this scene is to remain beautiful. It can be observed that Saitarn wants to fix her face by doing Botox injections. This conveys that she may want to be attractive. Even though, the role of Saitarn is portrayed by a female actress, Saitarn herself is a kathoey in the movie. So, her personality is supposed to be as a kathoey who wants to keep her good looks. On the other
hand, this scene also presents that Saitarn is worried about her appearance. She is interested in beauty which can be seen from her characterization.

Saitarn’s deep character also shows in the scene of “Giving money” (06:47-07:01). This scene presents Saitarn buying something at the grocery store. She gives one thousand Baht note to the seller but the seller does not have any change to give her because what she buys costs only ninety nine Baht. In response Saitarn gives all the money to the seller without asking for change. It tells us that Saitarn has a kind heart. She is willing to give this amount of money to the seller but she does not say that directly, she just lets the seller take the money and she leaves the store, even though the seller tells her she can pay him later. In fact, the seller is her father but she pretends not to know him as a father. Perhaps she does not want her father to know that she is actually Din. Apart from this, the way she dresses in this scene emphasizes that she wants to disguise herself. She wears a short blonde wig, sunglasses, and a black gown, which means her behaviour can be observed from her characterization as well.

An additional scene that shows Saitarn as a kind-hearted person is seen during the running time of 29:40-31:52, Saitarn goes to the temple to pray and make merit. This shows us that Saitarn wants to feel peaceful and comfort her mind. Based on her behaviour, she seems neat and quiet in the temple. However, another reflection of this scene is when Saitarn pretends not to know her father. She probably feels shy and does not want her father to know that Din has changed into a woman. And she may think that her father does not recognize her due to her appearance. In fact, the seller knows that Saitarn is Din. And it can be seen at the end of the movie when Saitarn gets shot and he calls her Din.

To contrast Saitarn with another kathoey character we can look at Tonlew. Tonlew’s deep character is revealed in the scene of “Tonlew Gets Angry” (41:50-42:50). It presents Tonlew and Tonmai talking with each other. Their conversation tells us that Tonmai is attracted to one kathoey performer called Dokmai but he cannot accept her because Dokmai
is a kathoey. Tonlew gets angry and tells Tonmai that Dokmai should be treated as a woman because her appearance, as well as her sexual organs are female. This means that Tonlew is unsatisfied with what Tonmai’s opinion which motivates him to get angry. This situation leads to a misunderstanding that Tonmai hates and is irritated by the kathoey. Tonmai does not know how to make Tonlew understand his thinking, but Tonlew refuses to listen. Instead, Tonlew says that Tonmai never sees the kathoey as human beings. This may suggest that Tonlew wants to be understood and be accepted by others as a human being.

The quarrel between Tonlew and Tonmai leads to the annoyance of a group of men sitting beside their table. These men express their feelings and say that they are annoyed by the kathoey. In response Tonlew starts to quarrel with them. Because of his anger he decides to go against those men without hesitation and fear. However, it is not clear whether Tonlew is aggressive or whether he is simply angry and drunk together. When Tonlew is drunk, he may not be aware of his behaviour. Due to this reason, it is also not clear whether Tonlew is a person who dares to fight in real life or only under the influence of alcohol.

The last scene that reveals deep character in this movie is “Tonlew’s Performance” (19:25-23:40). This scene presents Tonlew singing on the stage. Throughout the movie Tonlew is not portrayed as a performer on the stage. Rather he seems to be the staff working in the bar as he drives a car for the kathoey performers and he also works at the back stage. This scene is the only scene showing Tonlew’s performance. Tonlew is shown as skillful in terms of singing, apart from tending the bar. However, the reason that he decides to give a performance can possibly be motivated by the fact that it is the last day and the last performance at The Fountain Bar before it is closed. This may inspire Tonlew to show his ability on the stage. While Tonlew is singing, he is admired by the audience and his co-workers. They give him a big round of applause, which reveals him as a confident person. Because, if Tonlew were not confident, he may not be able to perform on the stage and make
other people enjoy his song. Additionally, another reading of this scene can be that Tonlew may want to convey some message to Tonmai through the song. Tonlew likes Tonmai and he wants Tonmai to understand him by expressing his deep feelings through his singing. And, the angle of the camera that captures both Tonlew and Tonmai may also support the idea that Tonlew wants to convey his feelings through the song.

To conclude the discussion of the deep character of the selected kathoey characters from It Gets Better, even though Din and Saitarn represent the same person, the character is doubly portrayed to have two faces. That is, Din is shallow and his behaviour seems to be immature due to his representation. In the scene where Din gets ordained, he is represented to be obedient to his father but maybe more so because he wants to get closer to the senior monk. If it is the latter, this may convey that kathoey characters are stereotypically and repeatedly portrayed to be obsessed with men. Moreover, Din is a young male who wants to be a woman, so that he is considered as kathoey. He seems to be pure and innocent since he does not know what is appropriate and what is not. On the other hand, Saitarn represents more mature kathoey due to her age and behaviour. Additionally, it is noticed that she wants to keep her good looks. Besides, Saitarn is kind and has a good heart as shown through her visiting to the temple and giving money to her father. Finally, Tonlew is portrayed as a kathoey who wants to gain understanding and be accepted by others as a human being.
4.2.3 The Last Song (dir. Pisan Akaraseranee, 2006)

In order to analyse Somying’s deep character, the comparison between him and his friends were considered to see how the characters are portrayed in different ways. However, the main focus of the analysis was still the characters’ motivation and personality.

The first scene that can be analysed in terms of deep character is “Quarrel” (4:20-5:25). This scene starts when Somying is driving with her four kathoey friends on the road. They meet with a group of men whose car stops beside Somying’s car. Those men look down on them by saying that they were born as men but they want to be women. This situation leads Somying and her kathoey friends to anger. So, the four kathoey friends of Somying argue and quarrel with the men, while Somying keeps quiet even if her facial expression conveys her dissatisfaction with what she and her friends are told. This suggests that the four kathoey friends want to get back at those men and overcome them by arguing. They also possibly have less patience and they cannot put up with criticism or negative reaction. Despite the fact that the kathoey were looked down on by the men first, this leads to the portrayal of the four kathoey as people who are impatient and careless with words. Since they cannot control their emotions, they decide to argue with the men. While they are arguing back and forth, they seem to be loudmouth. Similarly, the men who started the argument are loudmouth as well, since they use their words to look down on others. On the other hand, Somying seems to be calm, even though he is also angry. Somying does not express his anger directly or talk back. Instead, he expresses his feeling by driving a car aggressively due to the angle of the camera that shows Somying stepping on the accelerator of the car. Somying’s personality seems to be more patient than his friends because he keeps his mouth shut and controls his feelings better than his friends.
The scene “I Want to go the Bathroom” (04:15-04:53) presents one kathoey friend of Somying pretending to be a straight man and following two men to the bathroom. It is actually shown that this character does not really need to go to the bathroom but after seeing two men go there he follows them. It may convey that this kathoey character is motivated by two men whom he finds interesting. Moreover, this scene also conveys the stereotype that kathoey characters are portrayed to be crazy for men and it is a repetitive stereotype that can be observed from the previous scenes in another two movies.

Besides, this scene presents the “toilet gag” which can be seen in many movies that portray cross-dressers. Even though, this character does not cross-dress in this scene, his identity in the movie is kathoey. As usual, this kathoey character is portrayed exaggeratedly looking excited when the two men stand beside him and he is in the middle between them at the urinal (see Figure 8). His deep character is obsessed with men even though he tries to hide this in this scene. This means he expresses his deep character secretly.

Figure 8: One kathoey follows two men to the bathroom and how he shows his facial expression
“Pratuang Gets Hurt” (04:12-08:17) is another scene that was analysed in terms of deep character. The scene is about Pratuang who is abandoned by a man. In order to make his lover satisfied and make him stay, Pratuang has given him everything, including cars and land and allowed this man to sleep with other girls. It seems that Pratuang is willing to serve the man he loves. Eventually, he is still abandoned. This part conveys that the character is portrayed as a giver who is taken advantage of by others. And in this scene, Pratuang is taken advantage of by the man he loves even though Pratuang always gives things to the man, he is still betrayed, which leads to the stereotypical representation that *kathoey* characters are portrayed not to find true love. Pratuang can be seen festinated with the man because he gives so much. He ends up with nothing but a broken heart. However, this situation also reflects another part of Somying’s deep character that is he has a good heart. Because, Somying and his friends come to Pratuang’s house in order to comfort him. This portrayal suggests that the *kathoey* characters are represented like other human beings, which means they have both strengths and weakness.

By seeing what Pratuang has faced, Somying does not want to be like him, which motivates his actions. The scene “Somying Chats with Friends” (02:48-03:10) conveys that Somying does not want to fall in love with a man because he is afraid of getting hurt and possibly believes that *kathoey* cannot find true love. Somying can be considered as a person who is determined not to fall in love. The situation that happened to Pratuang motivates Somying not to give his heart to men. His motivation is strengthened when his gay friend is cheated by his boyfriend. As a result the gay friend kills his boyfriend and his lover. Somying comes visit his friend in jail. His friend tells him that he gave everything to his lover but he was betrayed. He also warns Somying to be prepared because love can never be fulfilled.

The scene “Somying Argues with his Father” (07:30-9:35) shows Somying pays his mother a visit when she is sick. Somying’s younger sister is worried that their father may see
Somying at home because Somying’s father cannot accept him as a *kathoey*, which has some similarity with *Kung Fu Tootsie* where Tian’s father cannot accept his son as a *kathoey*. Similarly, Somying also does not live with his family just like Tian. By looking at Somying’s action, he can be seen as a person who has a good and grateful heart, even though he knows that his father does not like him, he still comes to visit his mother at home.

Additionally, the same scene reflects another part of deep character of Somying as he is brave enough to face his father. Because, he has the motivation that he wants to see his mother. Eventually, Somying and his father face each other. They start to quarrel. Somying’s father tells him to get out of the house and says that he is not his father because his first son was born as a boy but now this son is dead. Somying then is not supposed to admit that he is his father’s son. Somying is also told by his father that he is the wrong sex which makes the father embarrassed. Somying retorts that he did not want to be born as *kathoey*, he cries and leaves the house. On the one hand, another reflection of Somying in this scene is he seems aggressive to his father as he raises his voice as if he were shouting at his father during their arguing. However, it can be noticed that Somying is hurt by what he is told by his father. So, his feelings explode aggressively. As a result, Somying’s anger and behaviour are driven by his father’s words and emotion.

Somying is the character that feels isolated and hopeless, it is shown in scene of “Somying and Boonthrems’ Conversation” (03:35-06:10). In this scene, Somying and Boontherm talk with each other after Somying gets home (see Figure 9). Somying expresses his sadness to Boontherm by saying that he has no supporters because the people who he truly loves have left him, since his mother has already passed away and his friend is in jail. Moreover, when he went to his mother’s funeral, his father asked him to leave as soon as possible because his father did not want the guests who attended the funeral to see him. At that moment Somying became speechless. And he looked different than in the scene when he
quarreled with his father, he did not act aggressively but he found something to do such as shooting, working, and swimming as if he wanted to keep himself busy. Judging by whatever Somying was doing, he is seen as a person who feels is lonely. Nevertheless, to get back to the scene, after Somying tells Boontherm that he has no one left, Boontherm responds that Somying still has his younger sister, Pratuang, as well as Boontherm himself. He tells Somying, he loves him. Then, they start to hug each other. However, Somying says, what Boontherm feels is sympathy, which conveys that Somying takes Boontherm’s declaration as a sign of pity and he does not want it.

In the end of the movie, the deep character of Somying reveals him as hopeless and unable to find the way out, so he commits suicide. It is in the scene of “Somying Knows the Truth” (03:20-07:35). Somying stays close and is treated nicely by Boontherm, he slowly opens up and gives his heart to him. But finally Somying is cheated by Boontherm and his younger sister. Boontherm and Somying’s sister fall in love with each other. And Boontherm
decides to leave Somying because he is going to study abroad with Somying’s sister. So, they
tell the truth to Somying. This leads Somying to anger and sadness as he says that they both
are cruel to him. To express his feeling, he says, his life is in the darkness and his love comes
together with disappointment and there are only the female and the male in the world, the
_kathoey_ like him seems to be unnecessary. Then, Somying lets the couple go and wishes them
success. However, it seems that Somying cannot move on since he asks Boontherm for the
last meeting and unsuccessfully tries to get back together. While Somying is on the way back
home, he is raped by two men while walking in the rain at night. Those two men find out that
Somying is not a real woman. This can support the idea that _kathoey_ characters are portrayed
as unsuccessful in this movie. Eventually Somying commits suicide and this decision is led
by his hopeless feeling.

From this analysis, it appears that the deep character of _kathoey_ characters in *The Last
Song* is portrayed as being unhappy and cheated by the ones they love, as the characters are
portrayed similarly. However, different portrayal appears when Somying and his friends are
portrayed to have different behaviour. Observably, Somying looks more like a woman and
his character is not represented to be loudmouth but other _kathoey_ characters are.

4.3 Character’s Arc

In this section the researcher analysed the main characters of each movie, Tian, Din and
Saitarn, and Somying, in terms of the character’s arc. The analysis follows the elements of
The Hero’s Journey proposed by Joseph Campbell in order to see how the selected characters
develop towards the movies.
4.3.1 Kung Fu Tootsie (dir. Jaturong Mokjok, 2007)

Tian is first seen and introduced in the movie as a Lion Dance performer. The introduction of his life starts with Tian living with his mother because his father does not accept his kathoey identity. After Tian finishes performing he seems satisfied with himself. This quickly disappears when he is confronted with his extraordinary friends. Tian’s life starts to change when he has a chance to pretend to be his elder brother. This leads to his call to adventure in the scene of “Back to the Family” (09:42-10:37). In this scene, Tian meets with his family members and his uncle mentions that no one in the family knows about Tao’s injury. Tian asks his uncle why this is a secret. His uncle says that if Tian stops being a kathoey, he will tell others about the situation. Tian wonders how this is related to his being a kathoey, he asks his uncle back. What Tian is told is that he needs to become the leader of the family mafia gang, Golden Dragon instead of Tao. Tian’s mother also supports his uncle. As a result, this situation becomes an opportunity for Tian to become the leader of the gang. However, the same scene suggests the stereotypical idea that being a kathoey is not suitable for having a masculine profession, such as being the leader of the gang. And, it can be assumed that other people may also disagree and not accept it if Tian were to become the leader of the gang instead of Tao. This is the uncle does not want to tell anyone about the situation.

After Tian agrees to come back to the family he is being trained by his uncle in the scene of “Being my Brother” (10:37-11:28). The scene starts with Tian being is given a haircut by his uncle in order to make him look more like his brother. Tian screams when he has to lose his hair. When Tian has to wear his brother’s clothes, he picks up the clothes like he hates them. When it comes to his training, Tian is taught by his uncle how to be like his elder brother. The uncle starts to train Tian to express his gestures in a masculine and show him how to do it by acting in a strong way and Tian has to repeat after him. Nevertheless,
Tian repeats his uncle’s gestures in a softer way by bending his hand just a little bit and uses his left hand to touch his waist. In response the uncle beats him on his hand. After that, Tian tries to do it again. This time he can do it better and he looks more like a man, so his uncle says that he has done a good job. Tian expresses his happiness by uttering a high pitched sound and waving his hands up and down for which he gets punished by his uncle.

The suggestion of this scene is that Tian’s uncle trains him in order to get rid of his effeminacy. Even though Tian is biologically a man, he expresses his gender identity as a kathoey which is in the middle between men and women. In doing so, he shows his desire that he wants to be a kathoey as previously mentioned. That is why he has effeminacy when he acts, talks, and uses his gesture. So that the training to be like a straight man is necessary for him and this is to help him to get through his journey of being his brother in order to help the gang and Tian himself to remain and gain trust as well as confidence of the subordinates. Apart from training Tian how to abandon his effeminacy, Tian’s uncle also instructs him how to deal with his subordinates and with Tao’s girlfriend. As a result, Tian’s uncle can be seen as a mentor who helps and gives Tian advice for his becoming more like his brother to take care of the gang. Moreover, Tian’s mother can be seen as his mentor who trains him in martial arts at the beginning of the movie.

“The Beginning of Being my Brother” (11:30-13:00) is the scene that shows Tian crossing the threshold. This scene presents Tian’s first meeting with the subordinates of the gang and Tao’s girlfriend, so Tian has to officially pretend to be his elder brother. In other words, Tian starts to change the way he lives his life because he is now entering the new environment and situation that he has never faced before. Moreover, this situation seems to be unfamiliar to him and he has to leave his ordinary world. It leads Tian to the limitation in which he has to hide his real identity, and he feels unfamiliar and awkward in what he has to do. It can be observed in the scene where he starts to act aggressive in order to convey his
leadership to other people. To compare Tian’s characterization and deep character with this scene, Tian’s real personality is timid and unconfident but Tian now turns to be different in which he starts to change his personality by pretending to be harsh, brave, and aggressive, even though in doing so, he seems to be forced by the situation that he is facing.

After Tian starts to change his personality, he has a chance to fight with the opponent. This enhances Tian’s new personality which requires that he has to be brave in order to overcome the challenges. And the scene that shows Tian’s tests, allies and enemies is “It’s Time to Fight” (27:20-31:13). This is associated with Tian’s meeting with the mentor. Tian can succeed because he can use his skills learnt through training. First thing that is clearly seen in this scene is Tian fighting. Tian uses the martial art that his mother taught him to fight the enemy. Similarly, he has to use what his uncle taught him in this situation as well. That is he has to express his masculinity when he is fighting. Although Tian does not completely abandon his effeminacy he develops to be more masculine. For example, when Tian is fighting, he shows some sexually seductive behavior, like for instance when he rolls up the shirt of one opponent and uses his hand to fondle and caress the man’s chest. This suggests effeminate behaviour and the repetitive stereotype that kathoey character is portrayed to be obsessed with men and this is due to the comedy genre of the movie. This is why the comic element is inserted. On the other hand, apart from showing his effeminacy, Tian shows his masculinity through his facial expression and behaviour.

Another significant scene is “I Have to Fight.” In the comparison with the previous scene, Tian is more strongly and severely beaten. It seems that Tian almost loses his energy and loses to the opponent. In addition to this, Tian is shown to confront his fear, when he asks his brother to fight with two opponents. Another confrontation is the fear of death, which is his biggest challenge. However, Tian eventually overcomes it and the opponents. From this moment, Tian is led to the important part of his life.
As it is mentioned in the deep character part, Tian is accepted and becomes a leader of the mafia gang in the scene of “I am a Leader”. This conveys that the acceptance of Tian being a *kathoey* may result from his overcoming the opponent. As a result, this may be considered as a reward for Tian to be allowed to express his identity openly and lead the gang with his *kathoey* identity. In expressing his real identity to everyone, Tian seems to be on the road back to his ordinary world. But at the same time while being himself, he also shows and expresses his new personality that is being confident. On the other hand, Tian is still in the special world in which he becomes a leader of the gang with his *kathoey* identity. He does not completely get back to his ordinary world, or perhaps it is his ordinary world that has changed.

To conclude the character’s arc of Tian is expressed through changes in his characterization and deep character. From timid behaviour and inconspicuous costume Tian’s behaviour becomes extraordinary and his costume becomes colorful and prominent, and it can be easily noticed that he is a *kathoey*. Tian learns to expresses his *kathoey* identity without fear and gains confidence to express himself.

**4.3.2 It Gets Better (dir. Tanwarin Sukkhapisit, 2012)**

The analysis of the character’s arc in this movie focuses on Din and Saitarn since the development of this character can be obviously seen. However, the researcher did not follow the time sequence of the movie. Rather, the discussion followed the aging process of the character. Since Din represents Saitarn’s childhood, the discussion started with Din first, even though he is not introduced at the beginning of the movie. And then the next discussion followed by Saitarn.
Din is seen in the movie as a young *kathoey* due to his portrayal as a boy who cross-dresses as a woman and dances. However, it is not clear whether Din wants to be a *kathoey* because he does not say directly in the movie. It can be assumed that he wants to be like a woman due to his character development into Saitarn, which will be discussed later. Din’s characterization indicates that he is a *kathoey* and his effeminacy is clearly expressed. In the scene where he dances, he smiles as if he were satisfied and happy about it. After that he turns to panic when he is caught by his father.

Din’s call to adventure comes when he has a chance to be ordained, even though he refuses at the beginning. However, from this situation, it suggests that Din’s call to adventure and refusal to the call come together as shown in the scene “At the Temple”. In this scene, Din’s father asks him to ordain possibly hoping that Din can abandon his effeminacy after becoming a novice. Another reason can be that the father sees him as a man and getting ordained is important for men. Din refuses to do what he is asked to and he comes up with a reason to support his refusal.

The same scene can be seen in terms of meeting the mentor. After Din becomes a novice, he gets instruction from his senior monk who can be considered as his mentor. During Din’s time as a novice, he is given instruction how to behave properly and how to tell right from wrong. For example, Din is scared of ghosts so he asks the senior monk to allow him to stay with him. The monk tells him that he has to be able to stay alone, which can be the way that the monk teaches and trains Din to be mature. Furthermore, the he explains to Din why his father wants him to be ordained. Din claims that his father wants him to be ordained because his father hates him. In response to Din, the senior monk explains that ordainment can help Din abandon his defilement and passion because no one can get everything that they desire.
After the scene of Din’s ordainment, the scene at the running time between 46:05-47:00 shows Din as a gay man playing in the sea with another man. Their behaviour seems to indicate they are more than friends because of the way they both keep looking at each other. This conveys that Din starts to go beyond being a young kathoeyp who may not express the interest in men straightforwardly. At this moment, it seems that Din expresses his interest in men more openly. In other words, the character of Din develops to be more open in terms of love and the scene conveys his homosexuality. Compared with the beginning, Din started as a boy who wanted to be like a woman but in this scene he is presented as showing his feelings towards another man. It seems that this character goes one step further and starts to become more like a gay man. The word “gay” is used here instead of kathoeyp because the external appearance of Din in this scene is like a man. By looking at his costume and appearance in detail, he wears a white shirt and a vest inside. His masculine hair style gives him a male look and his face has no make-up on. In other words, he does not cross-dress, which is different from the first scene in which he was shown (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Din playing in the sea with a man
In contrast to Din’s appearance, Saitarn represents the female form of Din. She looks like a real woman from the first scene when she is shown as Saitarn. It suggests that Din has fully developed as well as transformed to become like a real woman as it is shown in the scene of “Appearance Checking” that was previously mentioned. At first it is also impossible to tell that Saitarn is actually Din. However, it can be assumed that Saitarn who was biologically born as a male wanted to be like a female and underwent sex reassignment. However, Saitarn accepts that she is a kathoey because she mentions that she is satisfied with her sex reassignment. In terms of her life and career, she seems to be a successful and perfect kathoey due to the fact that the bar, The Fountain belongs to her.

Saitarn is a beautiful kathoey and she falls in love with a young man. The scene of “Saitarn and Fai” shows them sleeping together (01:33-03:30). The beginning of the scene shows Saitarn and Fai sleeping on the bed. Saitarn wakes up and looks at Fai who is still asleep. After that, she gets up from the bed and goes to the bathroom in order to brush her teeth and wash her face. When she comes out, she gets herself ready by managing her hair and she seems happy because she smiles. But Fai has disappeared from the bed. This makes Saitarn feel disappointed as her facial expression changes. She stops smiling when she does not see Fai. Her disappointment is supported by the background song. After that, the scene shows Saitarn standing and smoking beside the swimming pool. By judging her facial expression at the moment, she does not look happy. Probably, Saitarn thinks that since she is a kathoey she may not find true love. A moment later Saitarn is happy again when she finds out that Fai did not actually disappear but rather went to buy something and the smile returns to her face. This can be seen in the second clip (04:09-04:38).

“Saitarn’s Date,” (9:00-10:05) in the second clip is another scene that was analysed. In this scene, Saitarn asks Fai whether he hates kathoey. In answering her question, Fai says
that if he hated kathoey he would not be dating Saitarn. After hearing what Fai said, Saitarn explains that some people cannot accept kathoey. Fai answers that this is because people do not understand them. This conversation may convey Saitarn’s anxiety that as a kathoey she may not be able to find true love and her opinion about people’s lack of acceptance towards kathoey.

Saitarn’s anxiety about ending up loveless is confirmed when she is left by Fai (14:45-16:45). This scene shows Saitarn and Fai in the car. While Fai is driving, he accidentally sees his ex-girlfriend. He stops the car and goes to talk with her leaving Saitarn waiting in the car. Fai comes back after a while and tells Saitarn to go back home first. Then he leaves with his ex-girlfriend. Saitarn becomes disappointed again, so she takes a cigarette out and smokes. This scene suggests the stereotypical portrayal of kathoey characters as disappointed in love, even though, Saitarn seems to be a perfect kathoey who has everything.

Finally, we need to mention that this character reaches the point when Saitarn is shot dead. This means that after Saitarn has faced her ordeal, she does not gain anything for her life. It the scene of “Saitarn Gets Shot” (33:14-34:30) we learn that Saitarn is actually Din and the seller that she gave the money to is her father. Saitarn secretly goes to her father’s house and she sees a robber trying to intimidate her father to get money. When she comes to save her father she gets shot and dies. This suggests that this kathoey character has reached the end of her journey and the character eventually dies in the end.

In order to compare Din and Saitarn character, the first thing that can be noticed is appearance. Din has a male form and he does not cross-dress as woman every day in his daily life. But Saitarn dresses as a woman because she has female look and she is a transsexual. Another difference between the two is personality: Din can be seen as immature and naïve while Saitarn is an adult, so she is more mature than Din due to the age difference. Her personality is calm as well that is she knows how to behave and act properly as observed
from the scene when she goes to the temple, she becomes neat and quiet. But, Din needs to get some instruction. Moreover, while we can see some development in the character of Din, Saitarn seems to be perfect without room for change. Finally, the character is portrayed to meet with a tragic fate, since Saitarn dies. Saitarn is introduced as successful and happy and briefly portrayed as sad but the character develops to the moment where Saitarn dies. Because of her death, her success seems meaningless. Or perhaps, it can be said that her success turns to be failure.

4.3.3 The Last Song (dir. Pisan Akaraseranee, 2006)

Somying is first seen as a Tiffany show performer in the scene “Somying’s Show” (02:15-03:17) in the first clip. Although, Somying looks confident when he is on stage he turns out to be calm as he chooses not to express his anger directly to the men who look down on him (in the scene “Quarrel”). This suggests two different sides of Somying’s personality for his performance and his real life. Nevertheless, Somying’s performance seems to be an illusion because he has to perform according to the script and his duties. On the other hand, the moments when Somying is off stage seem to be more realistic in terms of the reflection of his life in the movie, which shows how the character feels and expresses his feelings.

After Somying’s drives his car away from the men, something goes wrong with the car and it cannot be stopped so the car crashes and Somying has to take it to the garage. This accident leads to the first meeting with Boontherm who is a mechanic in the scene of “Somying’s First Meeting with Boontherm” (08:10-09:27). In this scene, Somying and Boontherm do not get along well. It can be observed from their conversation and behaviour. Boontherm talks to Somying aggressively and they both raise their voices and seem to be arguing with each other. However, after their first meeting, Somying has to go back to the
garage and they have a chance to meet again. Somying accidentally catches Boontherm singing. This leads to Boontherm and Somying working together at the Tiffany show because one of the performers got fired and Boontherm becomes his replacement. As a result, this scene may be seen as Somying’s call to adventure, since it gives him a chance to see and meet Boontherm.

From this moment, Somying and Boontherm become closer with each other. However, as mentioned before, Somying does not want to be in a relationship with anyone. This means Somying does not have a lover. Boontherm as well, he is single. In addition, Somying treats Boontherm nicely by showing his support to him. The scene that can illustrate this is “Somying Helps Boontherm” (04:48-06:30) in the clip number five. Somying allows Boontherm to come to his place because Boontherm is dismissed by the owner of the garage after he has become a singer. Somying also helps Boontherm by taking him shopping, which makes Boontherm feel that he likes Somying and at the same time, Somying starts to fall for him too. This conveys that Somying is crossing the threshold, from having no feelings towards Boontherm he begins to fall in love with him.

The scene that shows Somying’s love towards Boontherm is “Somying Talks with Pratuang” in the clip number eight (02:30-03:08). This scene shows Somying protecting Boontherm when Pratuang complains about him. Pratuang advises Somying that he should only give half of his heart to Boontherm. After Pratuang’s warning, Somying is tested when he is told by Boontherm and his younger sister about their relationship in the scene of “Somying Knows the Truth”. As mentioned before, Somying is cheated by his loved ones. This causes him sadness and grievance. It also tests his strength to see whether he can handle the situation. As seen in the scene, Somying is not patient and cannot put up with his sadness because he contacts Boontherm in order to ask for the last meeting in the scene “Somying’s Last Meeting” in the clip number ten (00:01-03:42). The scene shows Somying getting
rejected and subsequently raped on the way home. This suggests that Somying is truly abandoned by the one he loves. Moreover, it seems that Somying gets punished when he is raped by two men.

This situation causes Somying to commit suicide (see Figure 11). It suggests that the character again develops to the moment where the character dies. Due to the death, the character of Somying is unsuccessful. In fact, it can be observed that this character’s development is not very obvious. Instead, it is portrayed stereotypically. The first stereotype is that this character is portrayed as cheated by his lover, and even worse, his lover betrays him with his younger sister. Nevertheless, on top of being cheated on, this character additionally gets extra punishment when Somying is raped. This can be seen in terms of the ordeal of the character, when the character faces death.

![Figure 11: Somying commits suicide in his last performance](image)

The character of Somying does not have clear development. If we want to compare it with the first two movies, it is obvious that the character of Tian from Kung Fu Tootsie develops most clearly. The character of Saitarn from It Gets Better shows some development...
until the character ends up in failure when the character is portrayed to die in the end. In contrast, the character of Somying from *The Last Song* is not well developed throughout the movie and additionally he dies in the end, which is similar with *It Gets Better*. However, if we compare the death of characters from *It Gets Better* and *The Last Song*, we can see that Saitarn dies because she gets shot. It seems that she dies sacrificing herself in saving her father’s life. But Somying dies committing suicide after facing unhappy life. These two characters develop to the same moment in which they face death. But their portrayal of death can be interpreted differently in which Saitarn’s death seems more meaningful, while Somying’s death is led by the unhappy life and disappointment.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

This chapter discusses the findings and answers the two research questions. After that, the limitations of the study are discussed as well. And the final part of the discussion is the suggestions for the further research.

5.1 Findings of the Study

The first research question was how the kathoey characters are represented in selected Thai commercial films. The analysis of the three selected Thai commercial films showed the representation of the kathoey characters analysed based on the three elements of character design. First of all in terms of their characterization, kathoey characters are represented to be very visible, which can be observed from their costumes and make-up and this representation existed in all the selected movies. For instance, in Kung Fu Tootsie, Tian’s kathoey friends wear colorful clothes and strong make-up on their faces. Tian also changes the way he dresses to stand out from the scene where he officially becomes the leader of the gang. The kathoey characters in It Gets Better and The Last Song also wear prominent costumes and make-up, especially when the characters work as performers. Another common representation that can be found is that the kathoey characters are portrayed to be unaware of how they talk, which leads their representation to be as loudmouth characters. The kathoey characters talk about sensitive topics in public without consideration and scold others, which might suggest their impatience. This can be seen in Kung Fu Tootsie when Tian is scolded by his friends, but it is also present in the other two movies. In contrast to this representation,
*kathoey* characters are represented to have a good heart and be generous. And it could be found in all the selected movies. Tian is generous in distributing money to those who do not have much and Saitarn also gave money to her father. Finally, Somying and his friends comforted their boss after being betrayed by his lover.

In addition *kathoey* characters are represented as *kathoey* or male-to-female transgender, which means that they identify themselves as *kathoey* rather than women. In other words, they identify themselves as another category than male or female. It is very clear in the motivation of Tian who wants to be a perfect *kathoey* rather than be a woman. This also corresponds which their costumes and their behaviour. Those who identify themselves as *kathoey* seem to be effeminate, which means the *kathoey* characters who identify themselves as *kathoey* could be distinguished from those who identify themselves as women through their effeminacy. On the other hand, there are also *kathoey* characters who are represented to be more like real women without effeminacy present in their characters. For example, Saitarn from *It Gets Better* looks like a real woman which is similar with Somying from *The Last Song*. Even though, these characters look more feminine, they still accept their identity as *kathoey*. It also has to be added that while in Saitarn has undergone full sex reassignment surgery, while Somying has only had his breast done, in Thai both these characters are seen as *kathoey*.

Another common representation of the *kathoey* character is their portrayals as people who are not accepted by their families. This representation could be obviously seen in all the selected movies, for instance, Tian from *Kung Fu Tootsie* is not accepted by his father and he has to live alone apart from his family. Secondly, Din from *It Gets Better* seems not to be accepted by his father as well, and he is asked to get ordained in order to remove him from the house. Finally, Somying from *The Last Song* is not accepted by his father, which can be clearly seen when the two of them argue. In contrast, most of the *kathoey* characters seem to
be understood and accepted by their mothers. For example, Tian stays with his mother after he is dismissed from the family and Somying pays his mother a visit when he knows that she is sick.

The second research question was which kind of stereotypes can be associated with the *kathoey* characters in the selected Thai commercial films? The first finding was that *kathoey* characters were stereotyped as being obsessed with and crazy about men, especially in *Kung Fu Tootsie* in which all the *kathoey* characters exhibit seductive behaviour and express their interest in men in a straightforward manner. Similar behaviour could be seen in *It Gets Better* and *The Last Song* as well. Coincidentally, such behavior would be seen inappropriate in most Thai heterosexual movies. Another stereotype is that *kathoey* characters in the movies cannot find true love. It is very obvious in *The Last Song* where all the *kathoey* and homosexual characters are cheated on and betrayed by their lovers. In other words, these characters cannot be successful in love. Even the characters who full transform into women, like Saitarn, are not successful in love, which we seen through her death. Therefore, this leads to another stereotype that the *kathoey* characters have unhappy life. *Kung Fu Tootsie* seems to be a little different in this respect, as Tian is not portrayed to have a lover and he lives a happy life and expresses his identity freely. This, however, can result from the fact that the film is a comedy and is bound by different generic conventions than drama.

Even though, the *kathoey* characters do not find true love in the movies, it seems that they have true friends. First of all, Tian’s *kathoey* friends are willing to help him to achieve his dream. Similarly, Somying’s friends express their concern about him when they find that Somying loves Boontherm and is subsequently betrayed by him. The final stereotype is that of being a loudmouth. It can be seen that the *kathoey* character are often shown scolding others. Especially in *Kung Fu Tootsie*, the characters even emphasize that being a *kathoey* means being good at scolding. This stereotype can also be seen in *The Last Song*. 
5.2 Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on three films only, which is obviously a limitation. It would be useful if more films were chosen for the analysis, perhaps films that were made at different points in time, or films representing other genres. Therefore, the main limitation seems to be about the number of texts being analysed. Unfortunately as it is difficult to find copies of Thai kathoey films that were made very long time ago, the researcher was unable to do so in the time provided.

Another limitation of is the fact that the researcher did not have a chance to conduct interviews to find out more about the opinions of Thai audience about kathoey characters in the movies, or about kathoey in real life. Given the time constraint, the researcher was concerned that distributing questionnaires and conducting brief interviews would not prove enough to collect meaningful and accurate data.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

After finishing this thesis on Thai commercial films, it is clear that the next step should focus on the differences between commercial films or mainstream films and the films that are independent or experimental films to see how transgender characters are represented by different filmmakers. For example, the research may focus on only one genre of films produced by mainstream and independent filmmakers in order to discuss differences and similarities in transgender characters portrayed in these films.

Further research can also focus on the comparison between Thai transgender films and Western transgender films, for instance films that were made at the same point in time, or
in the same period. For example, the study may be focused on Thai and Western transgender films produced in the 1990s in order to see the differences and similarities among them. This may be interesting because the films would represent different societies and cultures.

Lastly, further research can also be done to find out Thai people’s opinion about transgender characters in the movies and to discover various kinds of associations between transgender characters in the films and in Thai society. This means the research can analyse how Thai transgender films influence the perception of Thai people towards transgender people in Thai society and the other way round. Since, this reflection seems to be circular in which they both can reflect each other.
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