

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

In the realm of literary criticism, the intersection of feminism and literature has been a subject of profound study. As a case of point, Ryan Murphy's *Eat Pray and Love* can be considered to be a good object of this undergraduate thesis. Elizabeth Gilbert, the leading character in the movie, has embarked on a transformative journey to embrace the role of a feminist. Her endeavour encompasses the study of feminism in a movie. By engaging with literary feminist theory, Gilbert is seen to contribute significantly to the study on literature and feminism.

The writer is interested in writing about the movie because it presents cinematic entertainment as well as experience learning. She enjoys watching scenes in the movie, and they seem real to her. She also learns a valuable lesson from Gilbert's experience, and she feels the experience as real to her learning, too. In addition, the writer is interested in writing about the movie because it contains academic elements which are substantially relevant to her majoring at the Department of English, Diponegoro. The writer thinks that the movie contains an intersection of feminist film theory and feminist literary theory.

The writer intends to describe the portrayal of Gilbert in *Eat Pray Love* regarding her characterisation as an emancipatory feminist. First, the writer will

describe how Gilbert is characterised in a feminist movie view. Considering Gilbert's characterisation, the writer classifies the movie as feminist. Later, the writer will describe how Gilbert endeavours so as to become a feminist. The writer considers that what Gilbert does after failure in her marriage make a feminist.

In order to describe the portrayal, the writer adopts Kevin McDonald's concept of feminist film theory to encompass how Gilbert is characterised in the movie, and this concept denotes the writer's intrinsic study of the movie. Besides that, the writer adopts Elaine Showalter's concept of feminist poetics to encompass how Gilbert endeavours so as to discover herself as a feminist, and this concept denotes the writer's extrinsic study of the movie. In her study of the movie, the writer applies Mary W George's concept of library research, and the concept denotes the writer's library research process, from defining research questions to developing a research plan. The writer's research questions are listed below, and her research plan comes into three steps: one, watching the movie; two, discussing the portrayal of Elizabeth Gilbert; and three, writing up the discussion.

The writer's discussion comprises three geographic settings, namely Italy, India, and Indonesia. First, Gilbert travels to Italy to learn Italian, and she discovers her love for food in this country. Second, she seeks spiritual peace at an ashram in India, where she immerses herself in yoga and meditation. Third, she travels to Bali, Indonesia. The writer believes that the lush island serves as the ultimate backdrop for Gilbert's quest for balance between worldly enjoyment and divine transcendence. The movie seems to weave together these three geographic settings,

allowing Gilbert to explore pleasure, devotion, and balance across cultures and landscapes, and, in her striving travel, she becomes an emancipatory feminist herself in the end.

## **1.2. Research Problems**

The following research questions guide this research:

1. How is Liz Gilbert characterised?
2. How does Liz endeavour so as to become an emancipatory feminist?

## **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

This research strives to reach several objectives. They are:

1. It describes how Gilbert is characterised.
2. It also describes how Gilbert endeavours so as to become an emancipatory feminist.

## **1.4. Previous Studies**

The writer would like to categorise references from which this undergraduate thesis is written into two: academic journal articles and university or college repository. The first category belongs to the academic journal articles. There are five journal articles which the writer chose because of their relevance to the topic of this thesis. To begin with, Andrievskikh involves personal endeavours. Gilbert's travel is transformative: in it she empowers herself to find her identity (149). Then, Chandra writes about the impact of Gilbert's failure in marriage:

“Female hurt drives the interest in India; the white woman twins herself with the United States’ characterization of itself as wounded and innocent (488)”.

Furthermore, Gilmore writes about Gilbert’s memoirs which are focused on wrenching human trauma, and the memoirs obligate her to witness injustice for which remedies must be crafted: “Self-help speech differs from survivor speech in that it does not cry out for justice; instead, it offers the end of crying out, and asks, who could not want that? (670)”. Next, Subramanian and Lagerwey write about Gilbert’s feminist perspective: "I don't have to love you to prove I love myself! (1)". She declares this to her love interest Felipe when he proposes that she build a life with him between her home in New York and his in Bali. Besides that, Voeltz writes about Gilbert, a successful thirty-two-year-old writer in New York who, after deciding that she no longer wishes to be married, endures a long and drawn-out divorce, with one passionate—yet ultimately doomed—affair along the way: “Consumed by guilt and indecision, she decides to take a year off to explore the world (56)”.

From the journal articles, it can be inferred that the aforementioned authors write about Gilbert’s travel: her travel is a transformative journey because it is empowering her self-discovery. Andrievskikh explores Gilbert’s personal endeavours. Chandra discusses the impact of Gilbert’s failure in marriage, linking it to female hurt and India. Gilmore focuses on Gilbert’s memoirs, which delve into wrenching human trauma and the obligation to address injustice. Subramanian and Lagerwey highlight Gilbert’s feminist perspective, expressed as “I don’t have to love you to prove I love myself!” during a proposal from her love interest, Felipe.

Voeltz chronicles Gilbert's decision to explore the world after a long, guilt-ridden divorce and a passionate yet doomed affair.

The second category belongs with the university or college repository. There are five texts from the repository which the writer chose because of their relevance to the topic of this thesis. One, Rahma writes about Gilbert's feminism using Sara Mills' theory of feminist stylistics (1). She writes that Gilbert shows various aspects of feminism, such as challenging gender stereotypes, seeking self-identity, and expressing agency and autonomy. Two, Syafrul and Jati conclude that *Eat Pray Love* "provides a real-life problem with its extraordinary survival (8)". Three, Qamariyah concludes that the spiritual instructions practised represent Gilbert's "willingness and effort to challenge herself, including her thought, passion, and character, in order to experience the new spiritual realm as the way to get the better life quality" (97).

Four, Robithoh concludes that Gilbert is "the representation of how people undergo the process of need evolution as Abraham Maslow's theory tells" (10). Five, Giyatmi and Arumi conclude that the endearment functioning to show respect occurs when Elizabeth responds to Ketut Liyer: "He addressed her with alligator and she addressed him back with crocodile, despite the fact that she has never met Ketut" (11).

From the university or college repository it can be inferred that the aforementioned authors delve into feminist aspects within the context of Gilbert's journey in *Eat Pray Love*. Rahma analyses Gilbert's feminism using Sara Mills' theory of feminist stylistics. Gilbert's portrayal encompasses challenging gender

stereotypes, seeking self-identity, and expressing agency and autonomy. Syafrul and Jati emphasise that the movie presents a real-life problem through extraordinary survival experiences. Qamariyah highlights Gilbert's willingness to challenge herself, explore spirituality, and enhance her life quality through spiritual practices. Robithoh views Gilbert as a representation of how people evolve based on Abraham Maslow's theory of needs. Giyatmi and Arumi note that endearment is used to show respect. For instance, when Elizabeth responds to Ketut Liyer, she playfully addresses him as "crocodile," despite never having met him before. Overall, *Eat Pray Love* serves as a powerful narrative of self-discovery, healing, and personal growth, reflecting feminist themes and resilience.

### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

The study in this undergraduate thesis limits its discussions to the intersection of feminist film theory and feminist literary theory. The feminist film theory, serving as the intrinsic aspect of the study, portrays how Gilbert is characterised. In the study the writer adopts Kevin McDonald's concept of feminist film theory. The feminist literary theory, serving as the extrinsic aspect of the study, portrays how Gilbert endeavours so as to become an emancipatory feminist. In the study, the writer adopts Elaine Showalter's concept of an emancipatory feminist. This concept is part of the feminist literary theory which is contained in K.M Newton's twentieth-century literary theory.