

CHAPTER 1

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, including in mass media. As a case of point, mass media, particularly films, often presents an uneven picture of women's and men's roles in society that implies incorrectly, as males represent cultural norms, but women are irrelevant or invisible. Thus, women are commonly depicted as objects for men's gaze. According to Tuchman (1975: 51) women often presented in the media, but cannot be separated from being viewed by men as sexual object.

The term male gaze was first emerged by Laura Mulvey in her essay Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema which was later included in the 1975 edition of the film theory magazine screen. It's embarked the notion of heterosexual males that observe women in the media through their eyes and portray them as passive object of desire. In recent years, feminist film theory then discusses the call for positive images of women in cinema. Feminist critic has emerged into the essence of female character as a counterpoint, challenging traditional representations, and offering alternative viewpoints that prioritize female experiences and subjectivities with feelings as well as intelligence.

Supporting on the feminist film theory and the notion of female subjectivity, one prominent media narrative that is worth researching through the lens of this theory

is *Barbie* (2023) movie. It is a fantasy comedy film based on Mattel's Barbie-doll, that was directed by Greta Gerwig and Noah Baumbach, starring Margot Robbie as the title character and Ryan Gosling as Ken. Unlike the previous stigma of Barbie that promoting unrealistic beauty standards and reinforcing gender stereotypes through the lens of male gaze, this film can be said to be different and bring fresh air for the former stigma. According to Lissa Orr (2019) "*Barbie* (2023) serving as a symbol of empowerment and creates special typical case for both cultural and philosophical showcase, that challenging the traditional roles towards women in society". Over decade, Barbie has been both a controversial and iconic figure, that represent beauty standards, and accustomed to being a traditional feminine icon, but with this film, its developed as a one topic rather than an object, by promoting a strong message of the female characters as independent, aspirational, and represent gender equality.

The release of *Barbie* (2023) film sparks discussion on feminist representation in media and its potential to reshape cultural narratives. Greta Gerwig takes a bold step forward by embracing the femininity as a central narrative lens, with multifaceted character with agency and depth, embracing the qualities or attributes regarded as characteristic of women. The storyline unfolds with Barbie navigating challenges that resonates with modern audiences. The film touches the journey of each female character as Barbie. Set in bustling metropolis, "Beyond the Dream house", Barbie is depicted not just a fashion icon, but as a resilient entrepreneur who owns a thriving art studio and community center. The film explores Barbie's relationships with friends and

allies, highlighting supportive and egalitarian dynamics that emphasize collaboration over competition.

This study will analyse the cinematography and narrative structure in *Barbie* (2023) to explore how they subvert traditional norms associated with the male gaze. This study will examine scenes that present Barbie as an active protagonist who shapes her own destiny. Additionally, the study will investigate how the visual aesthetic celebrating the female inclusivity, portraying Barbie and her community in ways that reflect female subjectivity. Therefore, this study will contribute to ongoing discussions in feminist media studies, focusing on the main character, stereotypical Barbie in representing and transforming the potential of the gender representation and the potential of storytelling.

1.2 Research Problem

Drawing from the study's background, the research problems will be categorized into three main analyses. The followings are the research problems:

1. How does *Barbie* (2023) depict the intrinsic aspect of the film?
2. How does the concept of female subjectivity manifest in the portrayal of *Barbie* (2023) film?
3. How does the female subjectivity in *Barbie* (2023) challenge the principles of the male gaze?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

1. To examine the movie's intrinsic elements, including its visual appearance, narrative aspect of the movie *Barbie* (2023).
2. To analyze the representations of female subjectivity in the portrayal of female character in *Barbie* (2023) movie.
3. To analyse how the female subjectivity in *Barbie* (2023) challenges the principles of the male gaze.

1.4 Scope of Study

In this study, the writer examines both intrinsic and extrinsic elements in *Barbie* (2023). Intrinsically, the analysis focuses on key features of the film, including *Barbie* (2023)'s themes, plot, characters, and setting. The writer uses these elements, particularly the character's dialogues, to support findings on how *Barbie* (2023) resisting Laura Mulvey's concept of male gaze. To investigate more how this film challenge Laura Mulvey's male gaze, the writer specifically applies feminist film theory as articulated by Anneke Smelik, analysing the ways in which Barbie's character defies traditional portrayals of femininity and agency. To support this research, the writer draws on three relevant studies, which will be provided on the following paragraph.

I.5 Previous Studies

The writer uses three research journals with the same subject matter or that discuss the work. First previous study analysis written by Emily Riebe entitled *The Feminine Gaze: The Re-imagination of Cinematic Female Sexuality* (2020). This study focuses on how contemporary filmmakers employ the female gaze to subvert traditional representations and empower female characters, and how the feminine gaze challenges the male gaze by offering a different perception of female sexuality and agency in film.

The second previous research examines the differences between the male and female gaze in cinema, focusing on how the female gaze opposes and challenges the male gaze, written by Ma'Idah Sheikh entitled *The Male and Female Gaze in Film Theory* (2022). This research discusses controversies around the existence and effectiveness of the female gaze in reversing traditional cinematic narratives.

The third research paper is written by Ann E. Kaplan entitled *Unmasking the Gaze: Some Thoughts on New Feminist Film Theory and History* (2001). In this research, Kaplan delves into how women have been portrayed in cinema and analyzes the ways in which the male gaze has traditionally dominated film narratives. Kaplan also likely examines the evolution of feminist film theory, its key concepts, and its impact on understanding gender dynamics within the cinematic medium.

While these studies contribute significantly to the discourse on gender representation in film, this research offering a comprehensive analysis of how the film resist the male gaze by redefining female subjectivity in a contemporary context.

1.6 Method of Study

1.6.1 Data and Resources Data

The primary data of this thesis is a *Barbie* (2023) movie which is directed by Greta Gerwig. The writer uses a theory by Anneke Smelik from her influential work *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory*. In addition to the references, the secondary data consist of elements chosen from many sources such as textbooks, the internet, articles, papers, or noteworthy sources.

1.6.2 Method of Data Collection

For this study, the writer utilized library research to collect data. According to Mary W. George, library research is a method of data collection that encompasses various sources relevant to the study topic (2018:6). This method incorporates both primary and secondary data. George defines primary data as original research or firsthand accounts of events or experiences (2018:73). The primary data of this thesis is a *Barbie* (2023) film which is directed by Greta Gerwig. The writer uses a theory by Anneke Smelik from her book ‘*And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory*’. In addition to the references, the secondary data consist of elements chosen from many sources such as textbooks, the internet, articles, papers, or other noteworthy sources.

1.6.3 Method of Approach

The approach can be a tool to explain and critic a literary work, primarily refer to the work, to the outside world, and the reader. In analyzing how film reflects the social constructions of gender in refuting male gaze stereotypes in *Barbie* (2023), the writer uses sociological literature approach, refers to Mayer, J. P. in *Sociology of film: Studies and documents* to provide insights how films can be analysed sociologically, emphasizing cultural context and social representation. To support this research in analyzing how the meaning produced in film, this writer uses the reference to the book *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory* by Anneke Smelik. Focuses in female subjectivity, grounded in Feminist Film Theory, to help the writer in analyze how this notion could challenge the stereotypes of Male Gaze by Laura Mulvey, in her work entitled *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, in *Barbie* (2023) movie. This study was taken data from previous journal and several thematic book that consist of Feminist Film Theory as well.

1.7 Organization of The Writing

The writer divides this discussion into several sections:

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter has seven sub chapters which consist of background of the study, research problems, scope of the study, objective of the study, previous studies, research methods, and writing organization.

CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the writer mentions about all the theories that are used in order to analyzes the subject. It includes the two sub chapters which consist of Intrinsic and Extrinsic elements of *Barbie* (2023) movie.

CHAPTER 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter contains discussion covering intrinsic, extrinsic and cinematic aspects of the film *Barbie* (2023) movie.

CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the final results of the discussion of this research.

REFERENCES

