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ANALYSIS FEMINISM IN ALICE IN WONDERLAND FILM USING ROLAND BARTES THEORY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the 2010 film Alice in Wonderland depicts feminism. This study combines a qualitative-interpretive approach with a semiotics research methodology. Roland Barthes' analysis technique, the constructivist paradigm, and semiotic and representation theory. According to the findings of this study, Alice is a member of the radical, libertarian, and Marxist strain of feminism that can be combined to form socialist feminism. The message of this movie is that women should have the freedom to choose and take responsibility for their own lives. Equal rights are important, but feminism also promotes self-awareness and self-potential in women.

Keywords: *Semiotics, Representation, and Feminism.*

1. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The film Alice in Wonderland was worked on by a director who is famous for his gothic and creepy impressions, namely Tim Burton. Full of graphics from Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) and unique makeup. This is the main attraction of the film which won the nominations for best artistic arrangement and best costume design at the 2011 Academy Awards.

The film Alice in Wonderland is set in the Victorian Era. In that era, most women wore similar clothing, namely lace, corsets, and stockings. But in this film, it is told that Alice is against wearing a corset and stockings when going to a garden party held by Lord Ascot. This opposition makes her mother angry. Alice finds corsets and stockings as odd as "Codfish" to wear as accessories,

The problem of standardizing beauty in the film Alice occurs in the real world. Every woman wants to be beautiful. But the assessment of beauty for everyone is different. Currently, women in Indonesia

experience this. The presumption of beauty is marked by having a slim body, thick eyebrows, white rabbit teeth even with whitening, and so on. They are ready to do anything to get the predicate beautiful.

Beauty always goes hand in hand with finances. When a woman works, they also support their appearance. Some professions require women to decorate. The exploitation of women through the word beautiful occurs in the world of work. A woman who is beautiful and has a good job is judged by her beauty. If women are intellectual but are not said to be beautiful, then they tend to be ignored.

The low level of education leaves women with two choices, namely working or relying on marriage. According to the results of research conducted by the BKKBN in 2014, in 46% or the equivalent of 2.5 million marriages that occur every year, the bride is between the ages of 15-19 years. In fact, 5% of them involve brides aged in under 15 years. Early marriages that occur can cause many impacts, one of which is

domestic violence where women become victims.

Concepts and Theories of Feminism

Stevi Jackson (Contemporary Feminist Theories, 2009; 2), feminist theory is a theory that thinks for itself in which women produce knowledge about women and gender for women. The feminist theory seeks to analyze the various conditions that shape women's lives and investigate various cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman. To formulate a feminist theory, it is very common to group it in different ways and divide it into three main perspectives, namely:

First, there is Liberal Feminism which is a view to place women in full freedom. This school pays attention to individual rights and the concept of equality, justice and equal opportunity which states that freedom and equality are rooted in rationality and separation between the private and public worlds. Humans have the ability to think and act rationally, therefore women must also be given the opportunity to do so. This view tries to convey that women are oppressed. Through domestic work, women have been considered as victims of exploitation. This view, it has made women leave the house and go to work.

John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor view reason not only morally, as the capacity to make autonomous decisions, but also through careful thought, as self-fulfillment or the use of reason to get what one wants. John and Taylor claim the usual way to maximize total utility (happiness/pleasure), is to allow individuals to pursue what they want, as long as they do not limit or hinder each other in the process of achieving it. If society wants to achieve sexual equality or gender justice, then society must give women political rights and opportunities,

as well as education, which is enjoyed by men (Tong, 2006: 23).

Second, Marxist feminism has the premise that domination comes from social, economic, and political orders that focus on women's material conditions. For Marxism, the oppression of women is a product of bourgeois feminism and is contrary to class struggle. Working women tend to be paid less than men and are centered on limited work. The loss of competitiveness of women in the labor market forces women to depend on marriage. Social classes sort women into two groups, namely women who produce offspring who become heirs and women who produce offspring who become workers in the future.

Marxist feminists believe that social existence determines consciousness. By always being ready for duty, a woman forms a self-conception that she would not have if her role in the family and at work did not prevent her from being subordinate to men, both socially and economically. Because of this, Marxist feminists believe that in order to understand why women are depressed, while men are not, it is necessary to analyze the relationship between women's employment status and women's self-image. (Tong, 2006: 141).

Friedrich Engels believed that proletarian women experienced less oppression than bourgeois women. According to him, the bourgeois family consisted of a husband and wife relationship in which the husband agreed to support his wife provided she promised to be sexually faithful to him and to reproduce only a legitimate heir. Such marriage according to Engels often turns into the deepest form of prostitution, sometimes on both sides, but more generally on the part of the wife not only renting out her body, like a wage laborer, in pieces of work but selling it into slavery once and for all. forever (Tong, 2006: 153).

Film

Based on Law Number 33 of 2009 concerning the film in Chapter I Article 1 states that film is a work of cultural art which is a social institution and mass communication media made based on cinematographic principles with or without sound and can be performed. The film is one part of the mass media, because mass media takes the form of using media, has an indirect effect, is simultaneous, and with a large number of communicants.

Oey Hong Lee (1965: 40) states that film as the second mass communication tool that appeared in the world, had its growth period at the end of the 19th century, in other words when the elements that hindered the development of newspapers had been made to disappear. This means that from the very beginning of its history film could easily have been a true means of communication, has not suffered from the technical, political, economic, social, and demographic elements that hindered the progress of the newspaper in its infancy in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

The film with its ability and strength in reaching the public which has an influence on society has led to widespread research on the film. Graeme Turner (Irawanto, 1999: 14) rejects the perspective that sees the film as a reflection of society. The meaning of the film as a representation of the reality of society for Turner is different from films that are merely a reflection of reality, films only transfer reality to the screen without changing that reality. Meanwhile, as a representation of reality, film shapes, and re-presents reality based on the codes, conventions, and ideology of their culture. As stated by Van Zoest (Van Zoest, 1993: 109), films are built with signs alone. These signs include

various sign systems that work well together to achieve the desired effect. In films, iconic signs are used, namely signs that describe something.

Representation Theory

Representation is the use of signs. Marcel Danesi said that. the process of recording an idea, knowledge, or message in some physical way is called representation. This can be defined more precisely as the use of signs, namely to connect, describe, and imitate something that is felt, understood, imagined, or felt in some physical form (Wibowo, 2011: 122).

Representation is one way to produce meaning. Representation works through a system consisting of two important components, namely the concept of mind and language. The two are correlated. The concept of something that is owned and in the mind, makes humans know a certain meaning. However, the meaning will not be conveyed if someone cannot express it in a language that other people can understand (Surahman, 2015:25).

Representation can be conveyed if the communicant and communicator have the same understanding of the concept. Everyone's interpretation may be different from one another, especially if you have a different cultural background. Society constructs a meaning with its thought system. This makes people in a group that has the same name and understanding.

In addition to cultural differences, meaning can be different if it contains stereotypes. Stereotypes are formed through him based on incomplete and subjective information. Stereotypes can be formed through prejudice even though those who are prejudiced are not familiar with those they are prejudiced against. Therefore, prejudice is often trapped within itself and confines it to take action.

Understanding representation is able to create a frame and provide a significant influence on society in assessing a phenomenon. It forms audience priming which then presents back and leads individuals to a certain opinion. Thus, representation is not just the power of the media in determining alternatives. However, it is also able to turn back the audience's understanding in accordance with the priming that was restated (Surahman, 2017: 174).

2. ANALYSIS METHOD

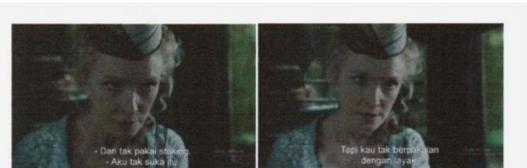
This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method. According to Roland Barthes, the relationship between the signified and the signified is not formed naturally but is arbitrary, that is, a relationship formed based on convention. Therefore, through the constructivist paradigm, the researcher interprets the representation of the feminist values of Alice in the film *Alice in Wonderland* which is the result of the construction of reality built through connotative and denotative symbols and signs. The signifier basically opens various opportunities for the signified or the meaning so that it is subjective.

1. Signifiers
2. Signified (sign)
3. Denotative sign (denotative sign)
4. Signifier (connotative marker)
5. Connotative signified (connotative sign)
6. Connotative sign (connotative sign)

Denotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship between the signifier and the signified, or between the sign and its reference to reality, which produces an explicit, direct, and definite meaning. Meanwhile, the connotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship between the signifier and the signified, in which the meaning operates which is not explicit,

indirect, and uncertain. Barthes also sees a deeper level of meaning but is more conventional in nature, namely meanings related to myth. Myth in the understanding of Barthes' semiotics is the coding of meaning and social values (which are usually connotative) as something that is considered natural.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



Scene 3 is a scene where Alice's character argues with Mrs. Kingsleigh about the clothes he was wearing. Mrs. Kingsleigh said, "but you are not properly dressed" indicating that what Alice was wearing, namely not wearing a corset and stockings, was embarrassing because it was not in accordance with the culture of that time. The characteristic tight and binding nature of corsets and stockings can be interpreted as a form of regulation. Alice felt that her decision not to wear a corset and stockings indicated that she was going against a rule. Alice felt that there was no obligation to agree with the rule if it went against her thinking. How to dress is considered by Alice as a private domain that does not require anyone's approval seen in the sentence, "who decides what is appropriate? What if 'appropriate' means wearing Cod on the head? Would you like to wear it?". The setting in Alice's life made her feel depressed marked by her pale



make-up and portraying an unhealthy impression.

Scene 43 scene when Alice wants to save the Hatter is prevented by Bayard who feels that Alice will deviate from her destiny that has been determined by the oracle scroll. Once again Alice felt no need to be regulated in her life. Even though he feels that this is not real life, he has the right to arrange his dreams. Alice had grown tired of being managed from the moment Alice arrived in Underland in her words, "from the moment I fell down that rabbit hole I was told what to do and who to be. I shrunk, grew, clawed, and was forced into a teapot. I was accused so Alice and not Alice but this is my dream. I decide what happens next". The sentence illustrates that what happens is caused by the rules of society. Every individual has the right to decide what will happen in his life. A person's fate will not change if he is not the one who has the will to change. It is also described in the sentence, "I determine my destiny!". Despite being opposed by Bayard, Alice showed her seriousness in making a decision. Alice's seriousness can be seen in the medium close-up and zoom-in shots. With Alice's persistence, Bayard succumbed to being depicted as looking down and letting Alice sit on it.

In scenes 3 and 43, Alice is represented as liberal feminist whose value views reason as the capacity to make decisions autonomously through careful thought as self-fulfillment or the use of reason to get what one wants. Alice sees that in her life only she understands and has full rights over all decisions that occur.

2. Individual Rights and the Concept of Justice, Equality.

Scene 7 tells about Alice's ignorance of her engagement plan with Hamish. Alice's ignorance meant that Alice's

opinion was of little importance in such a grand scheme as the engagement. Even



though Alice had told Margaret that she was not sure about marrying Hamish, Margaret still thought that Alice should listen to her opinion which she felt had to experience in marriage by saying, "So who? You will not get better than royalty. You are approaching 20 years old, Alice. That pretty face won't last. You don't want to end up like Aunt Imogene, do you? And you don't want to be a burden to Mother, do you?". Although it was told that Margareth's husband had an affair without her knowledge. Hamish's stability as a noble is considered to provide financial security in Alice's life. Even though Hamish is described as a silly man who cleans his nose carelessly in the middle of a party. Standardization of beauty and youth is enforced in marriage. If you don't marry soon then your chance to get royalty will be missed and you will end up living alone and aging like Aunt Imogene. Aunt Imogene is depicted as a lonely old woman who has lost her mind waiting for the prince to come. Being an old single woman gives off a frightening impression and is a disaster in life. Scene 7 represents liberal feminism in that Alice has the individual right to express her opinion and the right to dream. Even though Hamish is described as a silly man who cleans his nose carelessly in the middle of a party. Standardization of beauty and youth is enforced in marriage. If you don't marry soon then your chance to get royalty will be missed and you will end up living alone

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3. Exploitation of Women from the Capitalism System



In scene 8 it is told that Lady Ascott is afraid of something. Alice thought that Lady Ascott was afraid of the aristocracy's collapse. For Lady Ascott who is a nobleman, maybe this is quite scary, but it turns out that she is more afraid of getting an ugly grandson or heir. An ugly heir is considered a sign that he will inherit a disgraceful lineage. The nobility, of course, did not want their lineage to become the proletariat. Therefore, Lady Ascott asked Alice to look after her offspring. Lady Ascott, who asked Alice to produce beautiful offspring, described Alice as a 'reproductive machine that must be ready to rent out its body if it ever happens to marry Hamish.

Lady Ascott's distaste for her gardener's wrong planting of roses and also for rabbits could indicate her distaste for the lower classes. Meanwhile, dogs that are considered to have higher loyalty to humans are preferred by Lady Ascott who illustrates that she likes to rule over other creatures that are loyal to her.

Scene 8 represents Marxist feminism where the oppression of women is a product of bourgeois feminism. Women

are considered as private property which is required to produce a legal heir. This is contrary to the principle of social class where a woman's body looks like a 'rental'. Wives will rent their bodies for life in a legal occupation, which is called marriage.

4. Social discrimination stems from gender



Alice's fantasy about changing clothes between male dancers and female dancers interprets that women can do things that are done by men, and vice versa. It is indicated in the sentence, "I imagine all the women wear pants, and the men wear dresses", indicating that pants are not necessarily worn only by men. Anything can happen without being tied to gender identity and sex. Agus justified this by saying that this meant he wanted to design his clothes like men's clothes which symbolized that women are just like men, and can act like men.



Scene 85 tells that the depiction of the White Queen who cannot harm living things represents the feminine side that women should have. However, this is like being a comparison to Alice who is not shown as feminine. Alice's feminist side is highlighted through her masculinity. The

White Queen who looks feminine describes women in general. The dialogue between the White Queen and the hope that Alice will emerge as champion in the fight with the Jabberwocky illustrates that the White Queen needs a revolutionary figure in the world who can liberate women. Meanwhile, Alice believes that the White Queen has the power to defeat the Jabberwocky even though the White



Queen is a feminine figure. Based on these,

Scene 102 illustrates that Alice does not need to display her femininity to gain physical strength. Alice is actually shown as a masculine figure in her knight suit. Alice looked much stronger than before through her fresh-looking skin tone. Alice had doubted her strength and potential. However, Hatter is able to convince Alice by saying, "only if you believe". It shows that Alice has to believe in herself who has potential and doesn't need to worry about anything else. Just focus on the abilities you have. Nothing is impossible as long as you believe in yourself. Alice's self-confidence finally emerged and Alice steadily advanced into the battle arena. Although Alice's characteristics were more masculine, Tim Burton as the director still wants to convey that the nature that has been determined cannot be changed, unlike the gender construction determined by society. This is illustrated by Alice, who, even though she is wearing her knight's clothes, but Alice's long hair is left loose without a head protector to indicate that Alice is a woman. In other words, a woman can be a brave leader without being bound by gender. Alice's success in fighting the

Jabberwocky can illustrate that she can fight those who have power, which can mean men. This was confirmed by Agus Hiplunudin who said that in the film *Alice* the image is depicted of Alice who managed to behead a dragon (symbolizing a man's virility). Scenes 5, 85, and 102 represent radical-libertarian feminism shown through Alice with her masculine side. Alice is described as being able to face her problems by focusing on her own potential without being limited by gender identity.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Feminism is still a hot issue to be discussed. Even now, feminism is a common problem. Concept of feminism itself sometimes not all people can accept it. Different experiences give different meanings to feminism. However, the struggle for the emancipation of women cannot be abandoned. Educating women itself is included in the goals of feminism. Basically, feminism is the concept of self for women and correctly understanding what they need.

Fantasy films generally tell that the main character is a man. If there is a main female character in a film, usually Disney as an entertainment giant presents her as a princess who is weak, has the right to be helped, and has the dream of being married to a prince who can elevate her social status. But this time Disney presents Alice, a teenage girl who has a strong and courageous character in the film *Alice in Wonderland*.

At the beginning of the story, Alice is described as a woman who is difficult to manage and stubborn. However, this unwillingness to be regulated is not merely a form of defiance. The defiance committed by Alice was caused by the things that happened to her that contradicted her

logic. Alice feels that no one has the right to control her life. Her personal life is a responsibility that must be faced alone. Besides having strong principles in her life, Alice is told to always dream of the impossible. But nothing is impossible if you believe you can make it happen.

In another scene, it is also told that Alice experienced a form of oppression through Lady Ascott who was afraid of having bad offspring and asked Alice to pay special attention to Hamish. The depiction of this form of oppression represents Marxist feminists who have the concept that the exploitation of women stems from the social, economic and political system. Lady Ascott's oppression of Alice which demands her to have beautiful offspring depicts Alice as Lady Ascott's personal property. This is of course contrary to class struggle

At first, Alice was described as a woman in general who looks feminine by wearing a lace dress but seems pale and unhealthy. However, after Alice fell into *Underland*, the color on her face began to show. Even more so when Alice confidently decided to participate in the battlefield. Alice transformed into a more masculine figure in her armor. Alice did not reveal her feminine side to gain physical strength. This represents radical-libertarian feminist values. Alice can decide what to do without depending on her gender identity and gender. Based on the explanation that has been described, at the beginning of the story Alice is dominantly representing liberal feminist values. However, after going through various experiences and other things that changed Alice to represent Marxist and radical-libertarian feminism which can be combined to become a socialist feminist, a responsibility that must be faced alone. Besides having strong principles in her life, Alice is told to always dream of the impossible. But nothing is impossible if

you believe you can make it happen. Characteristics of Alice who has strong principles to uphold her rights and always thinks rationally before deciding something represents liberal feminism which views reason not only morally as the capacity to make decisions autonomously, but also through careful thought, as fulfillment of self or the use of reason to get what one wants.

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