

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S STRUGGLES TO FIGHT AGAINST PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN GRETA GERWIG'S BARBIE (2023)

Oleh:

Kanisdi Nur Maydita¹

Agnes Setyowati²

Erol Kurniawan³

Universitas Pakuan

Alamat: JL. Pakuan, Tegallega. Kecamatan Bogor Tengah, Kota Bogor. Jawa Barat
(16143).

Korespondensi Penulis: kanisdi.dita@email.com, agnessetyowati@unpak.ac.id,
erol.kurniawan@unpak.ac.id.

***Abstract.** The film *Barbie* (2023), directed by Greta Gerwig, represents the discourse of patriarchy that frequently emerges within social environments and often disadvantages women. This study aims to analyze how patriarchal discourse is constructed and represented through the character of Barbie, as well as to examine Barbie's forms of resistance against such discourse. The research employs a feminist approach and cultural studies framework, utilizing Stuart Hall's concept of representation to explore the power relations embedded within the patriarchal narrative presented in the film. This is a qualitative descriptive study, and the data were analyzed using Gillian Rose's visual methodology. The findings reveal that the character of Barbie embodies a woman constrained by patriarchal structures but gradually develops resistance through collective awareness alongside other female characters. This resistance illustrates a rejection of male dominance within the social and cultural structure of Barbieland. The film not only critiques patriarchal systems that are detrimental to women but also offers a portrayal of the importance of solidarity and collective consciousness in challenging structures that limit women's freedom and identity.*

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S STRUGGLES TO FIGHT AGAINST PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN GRETA GERWIG'S *BARBIE* (2023)

Keywords: *Film, Patriarchal Discourse, Popular Culture, Representation, Women.*

Abstrak. Film *Barbie* (2023), yang disutradarai oleh Greta Gerwig, menghadirkan wacana patriarki yang sering muncul dalam lingkungan sosial dan seringkali merugikan perempuan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana wacana patriarki dikonstruksi dan direpresentasikan melalui karakter Barbie, serta untuk meneliti perlawanan *Barbie* terhadap wacana tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan feminis dan *cultural studies*, serta menggunakan konsep representasi *Stuart Hall* untuk menunjukkan relasi kuasa yang ada dalam wacana patriarki pada film *Barbie* (2023). Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, dan metodologi visual *Gillian Rose*. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa karakter *Barbie* mewakili seorang perempuan di dalam wacana patriarki, namun secara perlahan melakukan perlawanan melalui *collective awareness* kepada karakter perempuan lainnya. Perlawanan ini menggambarkan penolakan terhadap dominasi laki-laki dalam struktur sosial dan budaya *Barbieland*. Film ini tidak hanya mengkritik wacana patriarki yang merugikan perempuan, tetapi juga menunjukkan pentingnya solidaritas dan *collective awareness* untuk melawan sistem yang membatasi kebebasan dan identitas perempuan.

Kata Kunci: Budaya Populer, Film, Perempuan, Representasi, Wacana Patriarki.

INTRODUCTION

Film is a form of art that combines visual elements and entertainment to effectively convey messages, ideas, and certain values to society. With technological advances, films no longer serve only as entertainment but also as a powerful communication tool for expressing various life issues. This is because films are a product of popular culture. Storey (2010) explains that popular culture is not just a form of entertainment, but also an important space where the interests of dominant and subordinate groups intersect in a process of social negotiation. He also mentions pop culture as a construct shaped and controlled by the capitalist culture industry, which pursues economic profits while spreading the dominant ideology. In societies that are constructed unequally, such as ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, and social class, popular

culture plays a strategic role as a space where identities and power relations are formed and contested.

According to Fertobhades (in Susanti et al., 2024) pop culture often appears in unique ways that reflecting the tastes, aspirations, and changing values of the developing generation, and also reflecting the social and technological dynamics of its time. Pop culture is also loved by many because it provides entertainment that is easily accessible and relevant to everyday life. Its simple, entertaining, and often follows the latest trends, which makes pop culture easy to accept and spread quickly. It makes pop culture a very effective tool in spreading messages, values, or lifestyles on a large scale. However, besides being a form of entertainment, pop culture can also be a means of expression and social resistance. Through film as one its form, many life issues that are often addressed, including the discourse of patriarchy. In addition, the concept of gender in the discourse of patriarchy in film also refers to how gender roles, identities, and relationships are constructed and represented in cinema through a lens of power that favors male domination.

According to Ramazanoglu (in Hollows, 2010) patriarchy is male domination that exists in all aspects of society, such as ideology, politics, economics, and sexuality. Patriarchal discourse also reinforces gender constructs by defining masculinity as dominant, strong, and rational, while femininity is associated with gentleness, emotion, and dependence. Foucault (in Purwanti, 2020) states that this power relationship is often related to the contrast between masculinity and femininity, which is reflected in male domination and female subordination. This structure was formed historically and culturally through existing gender roles. For this reason, this issue is increasingly being raised as a form of social criticism of the gender inequality that still exists in various parts of the world.

In the realm of gender issues, film has become a significant medium for critiquing and challenging patriarchal discourse. This aligns with what Pratista (2008) describes about film, which refers to moving images intended to deliver a message or story. Films are formed from cinematographic techniques, but the art of communication and photography ultimately takes the form of visual communication. This is emphasized by Alfathoni & Manesah (2020), who state that films are pieces of images that are put together, consisting of audio and visuals, and also have the ability to influence the

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S STRUGGLES TO FIGHT AGAINST PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN GRETA GERWIG'S BARBIE (2023)

audience emotionally. Societies that are still based on this discourse use gender construction as an important tool in maintaining unequal power relations between men and women. This construction is not something natural or innate, but is formed through continuous social and cultural processes.

Gender itself is a social construction used by society to organize its people (Cornell in Purwanti, 2020). Meanwhile, according to Hilary (in Yulianeta, 2021) gender is a cultural expectation directed at men and women. Gender is a grouping between men and women that arises from the need for heterosexuality in society, which systematically constructs male domination and female subordination in a sexual context (Kinnon in Yulianeta, 2021). Gauntlett (2005) asserts that communications media, including film, play a key role in shaping social reality, while gender and sexuality are central dimensions in the construction of self-identity. The constant representation of men, women, and sexuality in the media makes its influence on identity construction almost inevitable. This can be seen in various representations of female characters in films, which according to Haskell & Rosen (in Hollows, 2010), not only serve as a reflection of social constructs that have been accepted by society, but also play an active role in reinforcing certain boundaries regarding the definition of femininity.

Hall (in Aini et al., 2021) also describes representation as a process of creating meaning based on concepts formed in the human mind. Through representation, meaning is formed and exchanged among members of society. The concept of representation is flexible and constantly changing, in line with the shift in meaning itself. He divides representation into three types, namely reflective representation or reflective approach, which refers to the use of certain languages or symbols that are considered to reflect meanings that already exist in reality. Then there is intentional representation or intentional approach, which refers to how language or symbols are used to convey meaning that comes from the speaker's personal intentions or perspectives, and finally, there is constructionist representation or constructionist approach, namely that meaning is not fixed because the process of meaning formation always depends on the existing context.

Female characters are often portrayed as passive, weak individuals, or merely as complements to male characters, causing female characters to face challenges rooted in patriarchal culture. This can be seen from the social pressure that expects them to carry out traditional roles, such as being obedient wives, perfect mothers, or women who meet certain beauty standards. Storey (2010) also explains popular culture in this case, films as a construct that spreads dominant ideologies, but *Barbie* (2023) presents a different approach. Barbie is an example of how popular culture can also be used as a medium of resistance against dominant discourse.

Barbie (2023) conveys a different message, in the classic Barbie films released since the early 2000s, the stories often had short moral messages about courage, honesty, and friendship. Classic Barbie films were also often made for girls, with their characteristic pink color. Also, most classic Barbie films often featured their main characters with blonde hair and slim bodies. Clearly, it was these character designs that received a lot of criticism and continued to reinforce the assumption that the ideal woman is beautiful, elegant, and blonde, without much emotional or intellectual complexity. In a study conducted by Danyi Zhang, Siyu Wang, Nuo Xu, and Dawei Wang "*How Does Barbie Influence the Aesthetic Standards of Growing Children?*" (2023) showed the relationship between Barbie and girls' beauty standards. The results show that exposure to Barbie can lead to body dissatisfaction and decreased self-confidence as children internalize Barbie's body as an ideal beauty standard. While it makes an important contribution to understanding the impact of Barbie's representations on children's development, it does not address issues of gender, patriarchy, or women's resistance to these social constructions.

In contrast, *Barbie* (2023) takes a more complex approach by raising several social issues such as gender construction, patriarchal discourse, and others. Although it still presents an imaginative place, this actually makes *Barbie* (2023) touch on the social realities that exist in society. The main difference between the movies lies in the representation of the character Barbie and the world around her. Although the main character in the movie *Barbie* (2023) still has blonde hair and is charming, she is portrayed as a character experiencing an identity crisis, questioning her role in the world and searching for a deeper meaning in her life. The film consciously criticizes and

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S STRUGGLES TO FIGHT AGAINST PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN GRETA GERWIG'S *BARBIE* (2023)

deconstructs the classic image of Barbie, including the stereotype of blonde hair that has long been attached to her.

In this context, *Barbie* (2023) becomes a more complex and progressive medium of representation. This can be seen through the story of Barbie living in Barbieland, an idealistic world that seems perfect, inhabited by various Barbies with diverse professional backgrounds and characters. Therefore, the issues that arise in this study are how patriarchal discourse is constructed in the film's narrative and how the film constructs or criticizes this structure. This study focuses on how patriarchal discourse is presented and how the main characters, especially women, respond to this construction through their actions in the story. The limitations of this study are focused on one film (*Barbie* 2023), with a feminist and cultural studies approach. The analysis will reveal and analyze representations of and resistance to patriarchal discourse.

This study does not cover entire technical aspects such as cinematography or audience response, but focuses on the film as the main object of research. With these limitations, this study aims to analyze the problems in how films represent and construct patriarchal ideology, and how the main characters resist it. Based on the identification of problems and limitations described above, this study is formulated to answer questions about how patriarchal discourse is presented in *Barbie* (2023) and how the main character resists the patriarchal discourse presented in the film. Hopefully, this research can give a deeper understanding of how Barbie builds a narrative about women and patriarchy, as well as the forms of resistance represented through its main character.

METHODS

This research uses descriptive methods with a qualitative approach and visual methodologies from Gillian Rose. According to Sugiyono (2023) descriptive methods are based on postpositivism. This method requires the author to be the key to the combined data collection techniques. It aims to illustrate, describe, explain, and answer the problems to be studied in more detail by studying an individual, group, or event. The results of qualitative research emphasize meaning.

In addition, this research also uses feminist and cultural studies approaches. Where the feminist approach in film analysis is used to emphasize the importance of diverse and authentic representations of women in the media, to avoid being trapped in a restrictive single image. The feminist approach highlights that women should be equal to men and should have their own right to vote. By having these rights, women can not only express their political views, but also have the authority to change structures and systems and contribute to society, both for themselves and others (Taylor and Mill in Tong, 2010).

Meanwhile, the cultural studies approach is used to view films not just as entertainment products, but also as a field of meaning production that is laden with ideology. Hall in (Setyowati, 2019) defines cultural studies as an approach that aims to explicitly raise awareness and empower marginalized groups so that they can free themselves from the grip and domination of power that often works against them. Hall in (Varlina & Yani, 2022) also explains cultural studies as a form of discourse consisting of a series of ideas, symbols, and practices that enable the formation of certain ways of discussing and constructing knowledge related to specific themes, social activities, and institutional structures in society. This makes *Barbie* (2023) a media to show resistance to patriarchal discourse, where constructions of beauty, gender roles, and female identity are represented through narratives and characterizations.

To support this research, the author also used the visual method, which, according to Rose (in Widisanti S & Ratih, 2018), is a method for understanding forms of visualization that requires in-depth observation of images, accompanied by reflection on how these images contain certain markers related to social categories such as class, gender, race, sexuality, body, and other social aspects. Visual methods are also critical in nature because they view visual images as inseparable from their social context. Understanding images must take into account cultural meanings, social practices, and power relations that shape and influence how images are produced, disseminated, and received by audiences (Rose, 2016). This method allows researchers to view visual products from three different perspectives, which are the site of production, the site of image itself, and the site of the audiencing (Rose in Kurniawan, 2019).

This research will only focus on the site image of itself, which the author will use to analyze data using the note-taking method and reduce data. According to Rose (Salsabil, 2019) the author will act independently in interpreting and understanding the

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S STRUGGLES TO FIGHT AGAINST PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN GRETA GERWIG'S *BARBIE* (2023)

objects being studied. Then the next thing the author does is observe the research object which according to Sudaryanto (in Sulastri & Rochmansyah, 2024) the observation method is a method that places the researcher as a passive observer who only observes the research object without intervening or interacting directly, either in the form of conversation or dialogue, with the observed subject. After that, the author will reduce the data according to Sugiyono (in Pratiwi, 2017) is the process of summarizing and filtering information to highlight the main points and focus on aspects that are considered important.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the author will show an analysis of the patriarchal discourse presented in *Barbie* (2023) and how the main character resists the patriarchal discourse. This research focuses on how the concept of gender in the patriarchal discourse between men and women is formed and reproduced through narratives, visuals, and dynamics between characters in the film.

Representation of Patriarchal Ideology

Barbie (2023) shows the construction of patriarchal discourse in various aspects, it shows the relationship between men and women. This imbalance in social structure becomes evident when Barbie and Ken make their journey to the real world, for example, one scene that shows the representation of patriarchal discourse in *Barbie* (2023) is the scene that shows how men view women in different ways. In this scene, Barbie sees a construction site and thinks she will find many women working there, just as women always do in Barbieland, but she is wrong because the workers turn out to be men, which is very different from what they have known so far. As soon as Barbie and Ken approach the construction workers, they verbally harass Barbie. This reaffirms the experience that women's bodies are often depicted as objects of gaze and sexual consumption in public spaces. This can be seen in the dialogue below, which contains various forms of demeaning and objectifying sexual comments.

Construction worker 1: *"Do fries come with that shake?"*

Construction worker 2: *“If I said you had a hot body, would you hold it against me?”*

Construction worker 3: *“Have I died and gone to heaven because you’re an angel.”*

Construction worker 4: *“Is that a mirror in your pocket? Because I can see myself in your Short!”* (Gerwig, 2023, 28:36 - 28:43)

From the dialogue above, it can be seen that Barbie experienced verbal abuse, not only by one person but by four people at the same time. This shows how violence against women can be collectively perpetrated within social structures. The author has found that women's bodies are often viewed as objects of entertainment and erotic jokes. These expressions are not meant to be funny, but rather reflect patterns of interaction that have become institutionalized in unequal gender relations. The stares and comments of the construction workers are also a form of power that reinforces the dominant position of men in social and economic spaces.

This scene is in line with the reflective approach stated by Hall, who states that interpretation is based on the existing reality, where men often see women only as sexual objects. This illustrates the subjectivities experienced by Barbie. Accustomed to living in a world that values her as a woman, she must now face the reality that in the public sphere of the real world, her body is not seen as an equal subject, but rather as an object to be commented on, judged, and used for entertainment. Furthermore, this scene takes place in a construction site, a workplace often associated with masculinity, reinforcing how women are perceived by the dominant discourse in popular culture. This scene also shows that the absence of women in this space emphasizes how the representation of women in the public sector is still very limited, and when they are present, their presence is often not valued professionally, but rather exploited in a sexualized manner.

The next scene that represents the patriarchy discourse is when Ken experiences a real-world social environment that explicitly places men in positions of authority, productivity, and dominance. Men are respected and revered here. He realizes that in this world, men do not simply exist, but are given power, respect, and control over strategic areas such as the economy, politics, the military, and science. The jobs that are usually done by women in Barbieland do not apply in the real world. It is men who dominate these sectors. This can be seen in the image below.

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S STRUGGLES TO FIGHT AGAINST PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN GRETA GERWIG'S *BARBIE* (2023)

Picture 1. Where Ken sees men at work and tells a female employee not to speak yet



Source: *Barbie* (2023) minutes (31:11)

From this scene, the author discovered that this inequality is not only present in formal institutions, but also implied in the way men treat women, and how solidarity among men is upheld through the reinforcement of masculinity. In contrast to Barbieland, women in the real world are positioned as subordinate, both symbolically in visual representations (such as advertisements and currency) and structurally in the division of labor and social relations. This difference makes Ken feel fascinated because real-world men consider women as subordinate. This experience becomes a turning point for Ken in understanding the real world and the position of men in it. If before he always felt like a “complement” in the Barbieland system, where Barbie held a central role in various areas of social life, but in the real world Ken found a legitimacy that he had never had before. This shows that the discourse of patriarchy in the real world plays a very big role in how they construct women.

Ken also feels admiration for the patriarchal structure because this view makes him feel recognized and honored as a man. This shows how the patriarchal system is attractive to those who benefit materially and in terms of power in society. In this scene, the author finds that Ken feels that the things that arise from the patriarchal discourse in society represent men as figures who deserve respect. It is also part of a representation mechanism that is subtle yet effective in constructing society's perception of who deserves to be in control and who is merely a complement in the dominant discourse that is disseminated. Ken is fascinated not only by the dominant position of men, but also by the

consistency of the representation system that affirms masculine superiority and feminine inferiority.

The next scene that represents patriarchy in this film is the meeting between Barbie and Mattel executives, where Barbie explains the problems she is facing. However, their answers are unsatisfactory to Barbie. After receiving their answers, Barbie enters a box that has been provided for her. From the image below, it can be seen that women are only viewed as predictable, limited, and unable to resist the existing patriarchal discourse.

Picture 1. Where Barbie is in the box



Source: *Barbie* (2023) minutes (47:53)

From this scene, Barbie's packaging box is not just a physical container, but also a symbol of the social and cultural constraints that have framed women's identities, where they must look perfect, be controllable, and conform to predetermined normative expectations. This shows that the solution they offer is not to understand or validate the problems Barbie is experiencing, but rather to return her to the image they have created. Their attempt to return Barbie to her box is aligned with Hall's concept of representation, which is an intentional approach which symbolizes the director's attempt to create a meaning by presenting the desires of the patriarchal ideology believers, in this context the Mattel executives, to control the potential rebellion of women who are beginning to question their position and meaning. Barbie, who has been a symbol of conventional beauty with her blonde hair, suddenly shows that she is capable of thinking, feeling anxiety, and wanting meaning beyond her appearance. The box also serves as a metaphor for ensuring that the image of women in popular culture can continue to be enjoyed and does not shake the dominant order.

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S STRUGGLES TO FIGHT AGAINST PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN GRETA GERWIG'S *BARBIE* (2023)

The main character's resistance against patriarchal ideology

Based on several scenes above that represent how patriarchal discourse is presented in *Barbie* (2023), it can be seen that Barbie is not merely a victim of patriarchal discourse but also resists it. But before discussing the resistance by Barbie, the author intends to show that in *Barbie* (2023) the director aims to show that the concept of beauty is not centered on an ideal form such as slim, fair-skinned, and blonde as it has been presented by classic Barbie.

Picture 3. Variety of Barbie



Source: *Barbie* (2023) minutes (01:36:56)

From the picture above, it can be seen that *Barbie* (2023) is a form of resistance to patriarchal discourse. By portraying different kinds of beauty, the film emphasizes that beauty is not determined by men's views or social standards, but how women can accept and express themselves freely. One of the scenes that shows Barbie's resistance to patriarchal discourse is when Barbie, Gloria, and Sasha gather with the discontinued Barbies at Weird Barbie's house. Seeing Barbie looking depressed, Gloria delivers a monologue, revealing how women are required to always appear perfect, strong, gentle, not too ambitious but not passive, and so on, a paradox that is almost impossible to fulfill. Something unexpected happens, Gloria's monologue has a huge impact. *Author* Barbie, who had been brainwashed by Ken, suddenly awakens, and this awakening revives her memories and original identity, which had been eroded by the dominant system. Barbie, who sees this, immediately realizes that Gloria's monologue can save Barbieland. In this scene, Barbie orders Gloria to say the same thing to the other Barbies. She and the others immediately devise a strategy to save the other Barbies. This can be seen in the dialogue below.

Barbie: *“By giving voice to the cognitive dissonance required to be a woman under the patriarchy, you robbed it of its power!”* (01:16:35-01:16:40)

Barbie: *“We have to stop the Kens. You need to say all of those things to the other Barbies. That’s the key.”* (Gerwig, 2023, 01:16:50 - 01:16:55)

The dialogues above show that Barbie, who previously felt sad and hopeless because she didn't know what to do, gained enlightenment, not only because of Gloria's logical words, but also because of the emotional connection with the real experiences she had in the real world. She fought back without actually fighting, but by making changes that began with a movement that raised awareness among the other Barbies. In this scene, Barbie takes the initiative to devise steps to free her friends who are still trapped. She decides not to fight back in the same way as the patriarchal system which tends to be domineering and confrontational but instead devises a plan that is gentle yet will still shake the Kens. The author found that what Barbie did was a turning point in the entire film because Barbie realized that she could not return to the old system full of idealization and false perfection, but she also rejected the new order formed by Ken's dominance and patriarchal discourse, so she decided to fight against it.

After seeing the success of their efforts in rescuing *Author* Barbie and witnessing the real impact of Gloria's words, Barbie and her friends did not remain silent. The scene continues as Barbie and the others devise a plan to free the other Barbies from the brainwashing they are experiencing. In this scene, Barbie suggests them to kidnap the other Barbies and make them listen to Gloria's words. This can be seen in the dialogue below.

Barbie: *“Here’s the deal, it’s not just about how they see us, it’s about how they see themselves.”* (Gerwig, 2023, 01:17:09)

“First we have to get the Barbies away from their Kens. We can use a decoy Barbie who pretends to be brainwashed.” (Gerwig, 2023, 01:17:17)

“And then we’ll recruit the now unbrainwashed Barbies to our cause. They can be the new decoys.” (Gerwig, 2023, 01:18:39)

“We’ll do it until every single one Barbie is diprogrammed and ready to take back Barbieland.” (Gerwig, 2023, 01:20:19)

From this dialogues, we can see that their first plan is to sneak in quietly, then one by one will kidnap and bring the Barbies who have been doctinated out of the system

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S STRUGGLES TO FIGHT AGAINST PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN GRETA GERWIG'S BARBIE (2023)

that imprisons them. Then they would bring the Barbies back to a safe room and introduce them to Gloria, so she could awaken them. In a simple and quiet room, Gloria once again delivered a monologue about the complexity of being a woman, about the constant pressure coming from two directions, and about the exhaustion of always having to be perfect. These words are not mere statements, but catalysts for awareness. Barbie and her friends repeatedly devise this plan, ensuring that every brainwashed Barbie can regain the same reflective moment an emotional experience that reopens the cracks in their manipulated identities.

The plan goes on, and the Barbies who've come back to their senses also distract the Kens so they don't realize that the other Barbies are awake. This way, they pretend they can't do anything and ask the Kens to teach them. Barbie and her friends ask in a sweet tone, full of fake curiosity, as if they need guidance and explanations. Of course, the Kens, now accustomed to feeling dominant, happily answered and explained at length, feeling that their presence was valued and considered important. The author found that with this secret plan, the Barbies gave Ken's ego room to grow uncontrollably, not to destroy it, but to make Kens sink into the power structure that they thought they controlled. By feeding their ego, the Barbies were actually controlling the situation behind the scenes. They made Kens let their guard down and continued to carry out their strategy for liberation.

The story continues, at nearly the end of the film, Barbies and Kens forgive each other. But suddenly, the Mattel executives who came from the real world come out from their hiding place. One of them, the CEO of Mattel, appears and thanks the Barbies for fighting the Kens. He also requests that Barbieland be returned to its original state, to its old form of control, to a sterile, neat, and "perfect" version of Barbieland, where roles are predetermined from the start. However, the President of Barbie firmly refuses. She does not want the system to return, where things appear to be neutral but actually remain unequal. In her refusal, she also emphasized that neither Barbie nor Ken should live in each other's shadows, or in a false and rigid social construct. Even the Kens, who previously had no place in the Barbieland government structure, are now recognized,

albeit gradually. This step is not only about rearranging power, but also a recognition of the existence of individuals outside the framework of domination.

As the atmosphere began to calm down, they asked how Barbie's story ended. Mattel's CEO replied that Barbie ended up falling in love with Ken. Sasha, who heard the answer, clearly rejected it because it was not a fair ending for Barbie. At the same time, Barbie felt that she didn't know where she belonged and also felt that her life had no end. Unexpectedly, Ruth, Barbie's creator, replied that she created Barbie to have no end in her life. After hearing Ruth's explanation, Barbie said that she might no longer be a Barbie. This can be seen in the dialogue below.

Barbie: *"I don't really feel like Barbie anymore."* (Gerwig, 2023, 01:41:06)

This dialogue shows that Barbie does not want to be limited by the word "perfect" that has been attached to her. In this dialogue, the author also found that her identity has been nothing more than a construct of popular culture that is laden with demands for perfection, idealization, and narrow representations of what it means to be a woman. Barbie does not reject her existence; she only rejects the limitations that have accompanied her. Her choice to become human, with all her limitations and vulnerabilities, is the most sincere form of liberation from a system that demands perfection. This is also emphasized by the ending of the film, which shows Barbie leaving Barbieland and deciding to become human. The scene where Barbie goes to the hospital to meet with a gynecologist. This can be seen from the dialogue below.

Barbie: *"Oh, umm Handler comma Barbara."*

Receptionist: *"And what do you here for today Barbara?"*

Barbie: *"I'm here to see my gynecologist."* (Gerwig, 2023, 01:47:09 - 01:47:18)

This dialogue shows and also emphasizes that Barbie does not want to continue living in the confines of "perfection" as is often depicted in the dominant discourse in popular culture. The author found that Barbie explicitly wants to be herself, an imperfect human being with one end, namely death. This scene also emphasizes that she now has her own body, experiences, and life. She is no longer just a plastic doll that reflects other people's dreams. Now she is a figure who wants to understand herself from within, not just be seen from the outside. Her visit to the hospital is not merely for medical reasons, but also represents reconciliation with her own body, something that has never been

THE MAIN CHARACTER’S STRUGGLES TO FIGHT AGAINST PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN GRETA GERWIG’S BARBIE (2023)

granted to the “ideal” version of Barbie. Ultimately, she leaves the stage of patriarchy, industry, and idealized fiction to embark on a journey as a whole and free human being.

From the findings, the author found that Barbie's efforts to fight against patriarchal discourse were a form of her attempt to escape the stigma that had been holding her down. By raising collective awareness among other Barbie characters to escape the brainwashing that Kens had done to them, Barbie's resistance unconsciously defeated Ken by pitting them against each other. Although she did not resort to extreme measures such as fighting or violence, her efforts effectively eliminated the patriarchal discourse attached to her and Barbieland. Also Barbie's decision to leave Barbieland and live in the real world shows that she wants to live with all her flaws and break free from the patriarchal discourse that has always demanded perfection from her.

CONCLUSION

Barbie (2023) shows how patriarchy is represented through various scenes that depict gender inequality and the subordinate position of women in social structures. This representation is seen in the scene where the verbal abuse Barbie experiences in public spaces, Ken's experiences in the real world, Barbie meets with Mattel executives, and also through the symbol of the packaging box in this film, it shows how women are constructed within social and cultural boundaries that demand perfection, obedience, and conformity to patriarchal norms that are deeply rooted in society.

However, the film also shows Barbie's awareness and resistance to patriarchal discourse through collective action with other female characters. This resistance is not manifested through violence or direct confrontation, but through a process of awareness and reflection on oppressive social realities. This shows that women's liberation can begin with efforts to build self-awareness and solidarity among women to reject patriarchal domination and change unjust systems. Beside that, the director aims to show that the concept of beauty is not centered on an ideal form but how women can accept and express themselves freely.

This research shows that representations in popular culture are closely tied to social constructions and dominant discourses. It is important to critically examine how

popular culture reflects or reproduces these realities. Since this study focuses on the representation of patriarchal discourse and Barbie's resistance to it, aspects such as her identity crisis are not explored in depth. Future studies may further investigate Barbie's identity crisis as an existential reflection of women in popular culture.

THE MAIN CHARACTER'S STRUGGLES TO FIGHT AGAINST PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN GRETA GERWIG'S *BARBIE* (2023)

REFERENCES

- Aini, A. P. N., Syawaly, D., & Putra, D. (2021). Sebuah Kisah Tentang May: Representasi Trauma Coping dalam Film *27 Steps of May*. *Tuturlogi*, 2(2), 155–167. <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.tuturlogi.2021.002.02.5>
- Alfathoni, M. A. M., & Manesah, D. (2020). *Pengantar Teori Film*. Sleman: Deepublish.
- Gauntlett, D. (2005). *Media, Gender and Identity* by David Gauntlett. In *Taylor & Francis e-Library*.
- Gerwig, G. (2023). *Barbie*. United States: Warner Bros. Pictures.
- Hollows, J. (2010). *Feminisme, Feminitas, dan Budaya Populer* (S. Jamilah, Ed.). Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Kurniawan, R. A. (2019). Kemunculan Komik Adipahlawan Indonesia Dan Faktor Yang Mempengaruhinya. *Texture: Art and Culture Journal*, 2(1), 29–39. <https://doi.org/10.33153/texture.v2i1.2628>
- Pratista, H. (2008). *Memahami Film*. Yogyakarta: Homerian Pustaka.
- Pratiwi, Nuning. (2017). Penggunaan Media Video Call dalam Teknologi Komunikasi. *Jurnal Ilmiah Dinamika Sosial*, 1, 213–214.
- Purwanti, A. (2020). *Kekerasan Berbasis Gender* (Pertama; D. Kusumaningsih & A. In'am, Eds.). Yogyakarta: BILDUNG.
- Rose, G. (2016). *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* (4th ed.; R. Rojek, Ed.). London: SAGE Publications.
- Salsabil, R. (2019). Superhero Perempuan dalam Komik di Indonesia (Kajian Feminis-Marxis). *UPT Perpustakaan ISI Yogyakarta*.
- Setyowati H., M. Hum, D. A. (2019). *Cultural Studies: Sebuah Pengantar, Teori, dan Konsep* (Pertama; E. Widisanti, Ni Made & Kurniawan, Ed.). Jakarta: Mitra Wacana Media.
- Storey, J. (2010). Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture. *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748641666>
- Sugiyono, P. D. (2023). *Metode Penelitian Studi Kasus*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Sulastris, A., & Rochmansyah, B. N. (2024). Eksploitasi Perempuan pada Puisi Bersatulah Pelacur-Pelacur Kota Jakarta Karya WS Rendra dengan Pendekatan Feminisme

- Marxis. *Literature Research Journal E-ISSN*, 2(1), 96–109.
<https://doi.org/10.51817/lrj.v2i1.793>
- Susanti, E., Mu'min, M., Mausili, D. R., Sajidin, M., & Hafid, A. (2024). Pengaruh Budaya Populer Di Kalangan Pemuda Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Ketahanan Budaya Komunitas Etnik (Studi Tentang Korean Wave Di Komunitas Suku Mandar, Provinsi Sulawesi Barat). *Jurnal Ketahanan Nasional*, 29(3), 291–312.
<https://doi.org/10.22146/jkn.88415>
- Tong, R. P. (2010). *Feminist Thought: Pengantar Paling Komprehensif kepada Aliran Utama Pemikiran Feminis* (2nd ed.; Kurniasih, Ed.). Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Varlina, V., & Yani, N. L. M. (2022). Representasi Visual Dan Relasi Kuasa Budaya Tato Pada Masyarakat Bali. *Wacadesain*, 3(2), 57–69.
<https://doi.org/10.51977/wacadesain.v3i2.884>
- Widisanti S, N. M., & Ratih, S. D. (2018). Breaking The Spell: Hilangnya Superioritas Laki-laki dalam Dua Film Produksi Walt Disney Pictures Frozen (2013) dan Maleficent (2014). *Media Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya Wahana*, 24(2), 14–21.
<https://doi.org/10.33751/wahana.v24i2.944>
- Yulianeta. (2021). *Ideologi Gender dalam Novel Indonesia Era Reformasi*. Jawa Timur: Beranda dan Kelomopok Intrans Publishing.
- Zhang, D., Wang, S., Xu, N., & Wang, D. (2023). *How Does Barbie Influence the Aesthetic Standards of Growing Children?* 0, 593–598.
<https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/4/2022224>