

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

Mass media, particularly films, presents an uneven picture of women's and men's roles in society because it incorrectly implies that males represent cultural norms and that women are irrelevant or invisible. Furthermore, women are commonly depicted as objects of both the audience's and men's gaze. Besides female sexuality is often used as a symbol of female savagery, female bodies are also often presented as sexual objects based on male gazes, such as what Mulvey calls visual pleasure. The position of women in a film is not a new discourse to be discussed. Tuchman (1979:51) says that women are viewed by men as sexual objects. Women are presented in the media, but cannot be separated from only being sexual objects for men. Lauretis (1987:13) explains how women become objects of desire for the audience (voyeurist gaze).

The term "female gaze" was developed by feminists in response to Mulvey's assertions that the rules established by classic Hollywood movies demanded that all viewers, regardless of sex, identify with the male protagonist and adopt the domineering male gaze that such movies were thought to be organized around. In essence, the female gaze refers to how women are portrayed as seen through a woman's eyes as opposed to a man's. Women are perceived as beings with feelings and intelligence from the perspective of a woman. The concept of a "male gaze" has been prevalent since the late 1800s. The "male gaze" was a term introduced by

British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey in her 1973 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," which was later included in the 1975 edition of the film theory magazine *Screen*. According to Mulvey's notion of the "Male Gaze," heterosexual males observe women in the media through their eyes and portray them as passive objects of their desire. The male gaze encompasses both how males perceive and portray women in their works of fiction. According to Mulvey, this leads to an unbalanced relationship between subjectivity and objectification in visual media.

This study focuses on the female gaze in the film directed by Greta Gerwig, namely *Little Women* (2019). There is a well-known aspect of cinema in which males objectify women in films, whether through the camera, the male character in the film, or the audience. The goal of this research is to examine how the film industry has changed since Laura Mulvey first used the term male gaze in 1975, looking for what a female gaze might be, how this term has been used in other feminist film studies, and how the process of making movies has affected the presence of those gazes. This study aims to compare Laura Mulvey's theories of female and male gaze using phenomena from the *Little Women* novel, which narrates the lives of five young women during their adolescent years. The portrayal of women in *Little Women* is one of a topic rather than an object; the female actors portray independent, aspirational, and ambitious women. Mulvey's idea of the patriarchal world was disproven by *Little Women* as being temporary and optional.

Greta Gerwig, whose full name is Greta Celeste Gerwig, was born in Sacramento, California, on August 4, 1983. Before beginning a successful career as a director, she gained recognition for the bright artlessness of her performances

in modest indie films. The semi-autobiographical *Lady Bird* (2017), a coming-of-age tale that focuses on the connection between the titular character (Saoirse Ronan) and her mother, marked Gerwig's much awaited debut as a solo writer and director (Laurie Metcalf). The film was nominated for best picture and Gerwig won nods for both her script and directing. The classic book *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott was next tackled by Gerwig.

*Little Women* is one of the most frequently adapted novels into a feature film. The most recent one is the work of Greta Gerwig which was released in the United States at the end of 2019 and in Indonesia in 2020. As a story that has often been brought up, the latest version of *Little Women* presents a different storytelling style from the previous six films. The film, starring Saoirse Ronan, uses non-linear in its storytelling. Not only that, the ending of the story can be said to be different and bring fresh air from the previous series.

*Little Women* is a film that follows the story of the sisterhood of four sisters, told from the point of view of Jo (Saoirse Ronan). Opening with a contemporary story, Joe works as a writer in New York, Amy (Florence Pugh) lives life in Paris as an artist who is soon to be married, Meg (Emma Watson) becomes a housewife, and Beth (Eliza Scanlen) who is sick in her youth. Using a non-linear storyline, the story of Jo's journey back to his hometown after hearing that Beth was terminally ill is also intertwined with Jo's past memories of the four of them as teenagers and their meeting with their neighbor, Laurie (Timothée Chalamet). The focus of the story is Jo (Saoirse Ronan), the March family's second daughter who aspired to become a well-known author.

In the 1880s, especially in literature, the subject of feminism and women's emancipation was frequently disregarded. "*Little Women*" was but one illustration of how a woman's perspective and thought process may shape a whole story. Women become the focus of the problem and the motivation behind everything that is happening behind the scenes. Jo's point of view wasn't the only one to passionately advocate feminism; another character also actively avoided it, which made the whole dynamic of the film much more compelling. The use of various color tones to link the past and present was beautiful and seamless throughout. The current was shown in a frigid tone, whereas the past was shown in a warmer one. Apart from the storyline, there are other interesting things that will certainly be the main discussion, namely the female gaze in the film *Little Women*. Female gaze is a term that has begun to trend in recent decades, as a reaction to strengthen Laura Mulvey's criticism of the dominant patriarchal culture in 1975. Mulvey uses the term male gaze to dismantle the modes of cultural and media production at that time.

Jo March's lines in the film became one of the reasons I chose this film for research, "Women, they have minds, and they have souls, as well as just hearts. And they've got ambition, and they've got talent, as well as just beauty. I'm so sick of people saying that love is all a woman is fit for." Quotation from this film is a hard slap for people who still see women as objects. Jo, the main character, makes an effort to uphold her right as a woman to question the patriarchal culture that is seen as normal. The female gaze director's portrayal of women upholds their rights to freedom of choice, equality, and the opportunity to work outside the home. This

is because women are the only ones who work as mothers and raise their children at home. The researcher was interested in examining the female gaze in the "*Little Women*" film based on the setting described above.

## **1.2 Statements of Problem**

The main problem that will be discussed by the researcher is the female gaze that is shown in portraying female characters in the film *Little Women*. Based on the background of study, the researcher will discuss how the female gaze is in the film *Little Women*. It is divided into the following two research questions:

1. How is the female gaze in *Little Women* (2019) film?
2. How does the female gaze in *Little Women* (2019) refute Laura Mulvey's 'male gaze' theory?

## **1.3 Research Purposes**

The following are the purposes of this research, which are based on the problem description above:

1. To analyze how is the female gaze in *Little Women* (2019) film.
2. To refute Laura Mulvey 'Male Gaze' theory with the new theory of 'Female Gaze' in *Little Women* (2019) film..

## **1.4 Research Significance**

1. Theoretically significance



The purpose of this study is to employ analytical techniques, new references, and new information on the female gaze theory in the *Little Women* movie.

## 2. Practically significance

The findings of this study have a number of significant implications for achieving a number of goals. The first importance is for the audience's practicality so that they can learn about the female gaze depicted in the female characters in the movie *Little Women* (2019). The second significance is that the researcher hopes that the finding of this research will contribute to the dissemination of information on this subject to upcoming researchers as well as to those who only wish to increase their understanding of language and gender. Similar to that, so that this research and other research can enhance literary research in the English literature department.

All of the previous studies raised the same topic which is the depiction of female characters in the film through the eyes of a female director. The researcher is among the female characters who emphasize their various sides. When discussing the conversation, acting, facial expressions, and body language of the characters in the film *Little Women*, the researcher will bring up the topic of female gaze.

### 1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Female Gaze is a term first introduced by Laura Mulvey in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). The term is to

name phenomena in which women are portrayed through the eyes or the perspective of a woman instead of a man.

*Little Women*

is Greta Gerwig's coming-of-age period drama film written and directed by her. The film premiered on December 9, 2019 at the Rio de Janeiro International Film Festival and was distributed in the United States on December 25, 2019.

*Little Women* is based on Louisa May Alcott's novel of the same name, published in 1868 and 1869, and is the first sequel before *Little Men* 1871 and *Jo's Boys* 1886.

## 1.6 Organization of Writings

This thesis is subdivided into the following chapters:

Chapter I Introduction. The chapter presents the background of the study, where the researcher described a rising phenomenon and the reason for the study. The theories-based hypotheses were created together with research rationale. This chapter contains research background, problem statements, research objectives, and research significance.

Chapter II Theoretical framework. The chapter discussed a number of theories pertinent to the study, including female gaze, feminism and its categories, personality and characterisation, popular literature, film etc. The main theory of the study were based on Laura Mulvey's female gaze theory.

Chapter III Research Method. In this chapter, the researcher explains the research approach used as well as how to address the problem statements and offer results in a pertinent and sustainable manner. This chapter includes the research design, data, source of data, technique of collecting data, and technique of analyzing data.

Chapter IV Research findings and discussion.

This chapter focuses on the evaluation of all information discovered in connection with the hypotheses the researcher selected in chapter III. This section was talking about the female gaze in the movie and why it refutes Laura Mulvey theory.

Chapter V

Conclusion and suggestions. This chapter provides a brief summary of the research, along with the conclusions and discussion from chapter IV.



### 1.7 Previous Studies

A number of theses and journals with the same subject matter or that discuss the work will be attached by the researcher to support in analysis. To support in the analysis process, these theses and journals have been read and studied.

The first previous study analysis entitled is "*Cara Perempuan Memandang: Female Gaze dan Seksualitas Perempuan dalam Perspektif Sutradara Perempuan Nia Dinata*" written by Ulmi Marsya & Fitria Mayasari is one of the articles with a comparable theme to the researcher's discussion. In this paper, Ulmi and Fitria

explain how female directors describe female characters and sexuality through dialogue and also the scenes in the film by Nia Dinata. By taking the dialogue snippet, Ulmi and Fitria understand women's sexuality in the eyes of Nia Dinata as a female director (Female Gaze). Using the theory of Female Gaze, Ekawaty explains about female characters and sexuality through the eyes of a female director.

The second previous study analysis is "*Female Gaze pada Film "Lady Bird"*" by Fathin Hanifah Langga. In this analysis, also discuss the female gaze in Greta Gerwig's film *Lady Bird* (2017). Analyze the phenomenon seen in the *Lady Bird* film, which depicts the life of a young girl in general, by contrasting Laura Mulvey's theory of female gaze with male gaze.

The third previous study analysis is an analysis written by Gusti Toyadha Tagya Brantakesuma, Iis Kurnia Nurhayati, SS, M.Hum, Arie Prasetio, S.Sos, M.Si entitled *Representasi Perempuan dalam Film Laut Bercermin, Sendiri Diana Sendiri, dan Memoria*. This research is conducted to determine the representation of women in the three films. This study focuses on the representation of women in the film by Kamila Andini. The significance of this research is that film as a medium of mass communication is often used as a medium for conveying the ideas of its creators. More specifically, the idea or idea does not only appear on the representation of a character in one film, but also manifests as a consistency in the form of the film made.

The fourth previous study analysis is an analysis written by Nessrine Salem Mirete entitled "*Men Written by Women*": *Masculinity and the Female Gaze in*

*Pride and Prejudice*, *Little Women* And *Good Wives*. This research is conducted to determine about male characters written through the female gaze. "Men written by women" to describe real and fictional men who are respectful, courteous, and unintimidated by femininity, i.e. The significance of this research is concentrating on these two well-known characters in both movies, their characterization, and their representation in film on the issue of what characteristics define this modern "canon" of male characters written by women writers as well as the factors that contribute to its popularity on social media and, accordingly, among women readers.

The fifth previous study analysis is an analysis written by Jessica Taylor entitled “*Romance and the Female Gaze Obscuring Gendered Violence in the Twilight Saga*”. This research is conducted to determine how the violence in the well-known series *The Twilight Saga* can be recoded as comforting by using the tropes of the romance genre. It then takes this analysis a step further by analyzing the series through the lens of the female gaze. The importance of this study is in introducing the idea of the female gaze, taking into account how a female gaze could affect how the potentially unsettling male body might be seen as attractive, and how culturally dictated notions of what the ideal male body is evolving.

	Previous Studies	Virgiena’s work
Ulmi Marsya & Fitria Mayasari work	This research is conducted to describe female characters and sexuality through	1. To analyze how is the female gaze in <i>Little Women</i> (2019) film.

	<p>dialogue and also the scenes in the film by Nia Dinata. By taking the dialogue snippet, Ulmi and Fitria understand women's sexuality in the eyes of Nia Dinata as a female director (Female Gaze). Using the theory of Female Gaze, Ekawaty explains about female characters and sexuality through the eyes of a female director</p>	<p>2. To refute Laura Mulvey 'Male Gaze' theory with the new theory of 'Female Gaze' in <i>Little Women</i> (2019) film.</p>
<p>Fathin Hanifah Langga's work</p>	<p>This research is conducted to discuss the female gaze in Greta Gerwig's film <i>Lady Bird</i> (2017). Analyze the phenomenon seen in the <i>Lady Bird</i> film, which depicts the life of a young girl in general, by</p>	<p>1. To analyze how is the female gaze in <i>Little Women</i> (2019) film. 2. To refute Laura Mulvey 'Male Gaze' theory with the new theory of 'Female Gaze' in <i>Little Women</i> (2019) film.</p>

	<p>contrasting Laura Mulvey's theory of female gaze with male gaze.</p>	.
<p>Gusti Toyadha Tagya Brantakesuma, Iis Kurnia Nurhayati, SS, M.Hum, Arie Prasetyo, S.Sos, M.Si</p>	<p>This research is conducted to determine the representation of women in the three films. This study focuses on the representation of women in the film by Kamila Andini. The significance of this research is that film as a medium of mass communication is often used as a medium for conveying the ideas of its creators. More specifically, the idea or idea does not only appear on the representation of a</p>	<p>1. To analyze how is the female gaze in <i>Little Women</i> (2019) film. 2. To refute Laura Mulvey 'Male Gaze' theory with the new theory of 'Female Gaze' in <i>Little Women</i> (2019) film.</p>

	<p>character in one film, but also manifests as a consistency in the form of the film made.</p>	
<p>Nessrine Salem Mirete's work</p>	<p>This research is conducted to determine about male characters written through the female gaze. "Men written by women" to describe real and fictional men who are respectful, courteous, and unintimidated by femininity, i.e. The significance of this research is concentrating on these two well-known characters in both movies, their characterization, and their representation in film on the issue of what</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To analyze how is the female gaze in <i>Little Women</i> (2019) film.</li> <li>2. To refute Laura Mulvey 'Male Gaze' theory with the new theory of 'Female Gaze' in <i>Little Women</i> (2019) film.</li> </ol>

	<p>characteristics define this modern "canon" of male characters written by women writers as well as the factors that contribute to its popularity on social media and, accordingly, among women readers.</p>	
<p>Jessica Taylor's work</p>	<p>This research is conducted to determine how the violence in the well-known series <i>The Twilight Saga</i> can be recoded as comforting by using the tropes of the romance genre. It then takes this analysis a step further by analyzing the series through the lens of the female gaze. The importance of this study is in introducing the idea</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To analyze how is the female gaze in <i>Little Women</i> (2019) film.</li> <li>2. To refute Laura Mulvey 'Male Gaze' theory with the new theory of 'Female Gaze' in <i>Little Women</i> (2019) film.</li> </ol>

	<p>of the female gaze, taking into account how a female gaze could affect how the potentially unsettling male body might be seen as attractive, and how culturally dictated notions of what the ideal male body is evolving.</p>	
--	--	--

