

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Stories are created to communicate ideas, experiences, and messages to the audience. To make a story meaningful, its events need to be connected through a clear narrative structure, while its ideas are developed through themes. Narrative structure helps organize the sequence of events from the beginning to the end of the story, allowing the audience to understand the characters' goals, conflicts, and resolutions. At the same time, themes give meaning to these events by expressing the main ideas or messages that the story wants to convey. Therefore, narrative and thematic structures are important because they work together to create a complete and meaningful story.

One way to develop narrative and themes is through songs, especially in musical films. Unlike ordinary background music, songs in musical films often become part of the storytelling. They introduce characters, express emotions, reveal conflicts, develop relationships, and communicate important ideas that support the story through the lyrics of the songs. As a result, song lyrics can function not only as entertainment but also as narrative tools that help audiences understand the plot and the themes more clearly. This storytelling technique can also be found in popular musical animated films, such as Disney's animated films which have often been analyzed because their songs function as important narrative and thematic elements. In contrast, Barbie musical animated films have received relatively less

scholarly attention. One of these films is *Barbie as The Princess and the Pauper*. Since its songs also play an important role in developing the narrative and themes, the film offers a valuable opportunity for further study.

Barbie was first introduced by Ruth Handler in 1959 as a simple fashion doll designed to inspire girls' imagination. Over time, Barbie evolved beyond her original purpose and became a reflection of popular culture. Barbie continues to adapt to and represent changing social values and ideals (Tulinski, 2017). Mattel, the American toy company co-founded by Ruth Handler, has released countless versions of Barbie that mirror famous characters and public figures, such as Barbie as Catwoman (2004), Barbie as Jeannie (2003), Barbie as Marilyn Monroe, and Barbie as Elle from *Legally Blonde* (2003). Barbie also collaborated with brands like Coca-Cola, Avon, and McDonald's, showing how her image reflects different cultural moments and trends.

Through this transformation, Barbie is no longer just a fashion icon or a children's toy, but also a cultural figure who embodies ideas, values, and even social change. This expansion reached a new level when Barbie began to appear in animated films, starting with *Barbie in the Nutcracker* (2001) and followed by *Barbie as Rapunzel* (2002), *Barbie of Swan Lake* (2003), *Barbie as The Princess and the Pauper* (2004), *Barbie Fairytopia* (2005), and many more. Among these films, *Barbie as The Princess and the Pauper* stands out as the first musical Barbie film, which makes it interesting to examine how music and storytelling work together in shaping the film's plot and theme.

Directed by William Lau and voiced by Kelly Sheridan, *Barbie as The Princess and the Pauper* adapts Mark Twain's 1881 novel *The Prince and the Pauper*. The film is about two girls who look alike, Princess Anneliese and a poor village girl, Erika. When Anneliese is kidnapped by Preminger, Erika is asked by Julian, Anneliese's tutor and close friend, to pretend to be the princess while he tries to rescue her. King Dominick, who does not know the truth, falls in love with Erika when preparing for his arranged marriage to Princess Anneliese. The film explores themes of freedom, identity, and love, combined with issues of social class. The songs in the film play a vital role in this storytelling process. Not only entertaining, but also expressing the characters' emotions, building the narrative, and highlighting important ideas.

Songs can affect how the audience is emotionally attached to the story and help them follow the film more easily, instead of thinking about it (Gorbman, 1987, pp. 5–6 as cited in Akkerman's 2022 thesis). Especially in musical films, song is used as one of the most powerful ways to communicate emotion and guide the story. Songs help shape the audience's understanding of time, make a scene feel faster or slower, or help connect different scenes so the story feels smooth (Goldmark, 2016, pp. 95–100). It also works together with visuals and other storytelling tools to create a full experience for the audience and help them understand the meaning of the story more clearly. (Wingstedt et al., 2010, pp. 208 as cited in Akkerman's 2022 thesis).

In *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, Tyson (2006) explains that all forms of art, including books, film, and music express human feelings, desires, and problems (p. 2). Therefore, a song can be a form of storytelling through its

lyrics. She also states that a good literary work has organic unity, meaning all its parts work together to show one main theme (p. 138). In the same way, a song can also unite its lyrics and melody to express themes. In the chapter of structuralist criticism, Tyson (2006) explains Greimas' view that stories are structured like language, following a subject–verb–object pattern in which characters act to achieve certain goals. Tyson (2006) also discusses Greimas' actantial model, which consists of the subject, object, sender, receiver, helper, and opponent. Additionally, she presents Greimas' three narrative structures: contractual (agreements or commitments), performative (actions or struggles), and disjunctive (movement or journeys).

Tyson (2006) also discusses Todorov's view that narratives function like language, where characters can be seen as nouns, actions as verbs, character qualities as adjectives, and changes in events can affect a character's state or condition. Based on this idea, she presents Todorov's five stages of narrative development: equilibrium, disruption, recognition, attempt to repair, and new equilibrium. These stages help explain how a story develops from beginning to end.

In addition, Tyson (2006) discusses Culler's idea that readers understand a story by looking for its thematic unity. According to Tyson (2006), Culler suggests that themes can be identified through binary oppositions, the resolution of binary oppositions, and the displacement of binary oppositions (pp. 232–233). In Tyson's discussion of semiotics, she explains that meaning is not created only through words but also through signs such as objects, gestures, actions, sounds, and images (p. 217). These views make it possible to read songs not just as music, but as texts that

carry meaning through its lyrics. Therefore, the song lyrics in *Barbie as The Princess and the Pauper* can be read as literary texts because their repeated lyrics and symbols help build both the story and the main themes, such as freedom, identity, and love.

Cinematography can also be a storytelling tool, using visual elements like point of view, camera angles, color, and movement to convey meaning, emotion, and ideas. Different points of view guide how viewers experience the story and connect with characters. Camera angles, such as low or high shots emphasize importance and the use of color and lighting shape mood. Movement, including motion within the frame and cuts guide attention and tension. These techniques allow cinematography to communicate story, character, and emotion effectively, making the film visually and emotionally engaging.

Although Barbie films have been studied from many perspectives, such as gender representation and meaning behind its figures of speech that will be explained further in Chapter II, there has been little discussion of how the songs themselves tell the story. Therefore, this research will offer a new perspective by analyzing how song lyrics in *Barbie as The Princess and the Pauper* function as narrative tools that shape the plot and reinforce the film's themes.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How do the song lyrics in *Barbie as The Princess and the Pauper* function as narrative tools that build the story?
2. How do the song lyrics in *Barbie as The Princess and the Pauper* contribute to the development of the film's main themes?

1.3 Purpose of the Research

1. To analyze the narrative functions of song lyrics in *Barbie as The Princess and the Pauper*.
2. To analyze how the song lyrics contribute to the development of the film's main theme.

1.4 Limitation of the Research

This research only focuses on how song lyrics function as narrative tools and support themes using the lyrics of seven songs from *Barbie as The Princess and the Pauper: Free, How Can I Refuse?, I Am A Girl Like You, To Be A Princess, The Cat's Meow, If You Love Me For Me, and Written In Your Heart*. The conclusions of this research are only applicable to *Barbie as The Princess and The Pauper* and cannot be generalised to other films' songs.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research focuses on analyzing how songs in *Barbie as The Princess and the Pauper* function to build the story and express its main themes. This research has both theoretical and practical significance, as described below:

1. Theoretical Significance

- a) This research adds a contribution to the field of English literature, especially in analyzing how song lyrics can serve as literary texts that support film narratives.
- b) This research shows how song lyrics create meaning that reflects the central ideas within a film.

2. Practical Significance

- a) This research is useful for students and future researchers who are interested in analyzing song lyrics through a literary approach.
- b) This research provides insights for lecturers and educators of English literature to show how song lyrics can be studied as part of film narrative and thematic analysis.
- c) This research encourages audiences to appreciate the literary value of song lyrics in films, especially those that use songs as a tool for storytelling.

1.6 State of the Art

Unlike many previous research that focus on cultural references or linguistic style in Barbie film or song lyrics, this research focuses on the narrative and thematic functions of song lyrics within a film. By analyzing song lyrics as narrative tools that contribute to plot development and thematic unity, this research provides an alternative approach to the study of literature and film, especially animated musical films.

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