

Feminisme of the Main Character in The Girl on the Train Movie

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ABSTRACT

Feminism is a women's movement in seeking equality to be equal to men in any way, including relationships. In this study, the writers' purpose of analyzing The Girl on the Train movie is to find out the kind of feminism, the causes of feminism that influence the main character, and the moral message contained in the movie. The writers use qualitative research methods in describing and analyzing this movie. The writers also do library research to find many references from books or the internet which are useful to support this paper, especially the theories. After analyzing the movie, the writers found one of four kinds of feminism which is Liberal Feminism. Liberal feminism is women's liberation about certain aspects of themselves or their lives. They claim that women have the same capacities as men, and have the same rational thinking as men. Another result, there are also two causes of feminism that influence the main character in this movie, namely betrayal, and domestic abuse. Besides that, this movie sends moral messages. This movie tells about women who are treated unfairly and experience many painful things in the relationship. The women must dare to defend themselves and fight men who are cruel to them. And every woman will help another woman in any situation, even if it threatens her.

Keywords: Movie; Feminism; The Girl on the Train

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a literary work containing the author's creation using imagination. The author uses high imagination to express ideas, creativity, and information about things around him/her through literature. According to Edgar V. Roberts (2011) explains that "We use the word 'Literature', in a broad sense, to mean compositions that tell stories, dramatize situation, express emotions, and advocate ideas." Massari and Sidek (2014), state that literature consists of a vast repertoire of human

expression carried out through the medium of language both in oral or written forms. It can be said that literature is another way for people to express their ideas, their thoughts or their feelings.

“A movie is a popular entertainment, a product produced and marketed by a large commercial studio. Regardless of the subject matter, this movie is pretty to look at— every image is well polished by an army of skilled artists and technicians” (Barsam, 2016). It can be said that every film is produced very well so that making movies as entertainment that is liked by many people. Each movie is made very interesting by artists who are skilled in their fields.

The movie is a media communication that uses audio and visuals to convey a message or information to the viewers. The message is told in various forms, according to the theme or storyline in the movie. Usually, it is in the form of entertainment, education, and information about something new. Understanding in the movie can be seen from the way the players interact, have dialogue, and the expressions of each character in there. There are many movie genres, such as horror, romance, thriller, comedy, drama, etc.

The writer is interested in analyzing a movie with the thriller genre entitled *The Girl on the Train* which was released in 2016. *The Girl on the Train* is a movie that tells the story of an incident of the main character named Rachel Watson, played by Emily Blunt. She is entangled by her toxic relationship. She has experiences pressure and actions that should not be experienced by a woman. She has a dark past that continues to traumatize her, and she doesn't have the opportunity to do what she wants. At the end of the film, Rachel managed to reveal the truth about what had happened. A woman should not be subjected to violence and unpleasant acts committed by men. The movie's plot shows violence, harassment, and always thinks of women as weak, this movie was very connected to this life. A woman is always asking to submit to a man who is called their husband or boyfriend. The courage and actions Rachel took to defend her reputation revealed that she wasn't wrong. It is an act of feminism, so she is not constantly controlled by men.

Feminism is an act to get recognition for women, that women have the same equality as men. Women also have the right to their life, in terms of education, politics, work, and relationships. The need for a feminist attitude in a relationship is very important, women must be independent and brave in doing something. This attitude is to avoid violence in a toxic relationship, and so that women dare to free themselves in the relationship. The main character in *The Girl on the Train* movie tries to defend herself and try to be free from the relationship that entangles her. For example, at this time, women are still fighting for the feminist movement to expand and develop to achieve equality. There is still a lot of discrimination against women, who always consider women weak and unable to stand alone, this is certainly unfair for women, which makes women feel insecure and not allowed to show their potential.

For that reason, this paper discusses feminism that occurs in toxic relationships. The movie's plot, which is related to the many cases in real life about domestic violence experienced by women, as well as harassment against women, such as physical violence that occurs in a relationship where most of the victims are women, mental violence caused by the pressure experienced by women in a relationship, and requiring women to submit and obey men in a relationship. These examples of the case make the writer more interested in analyzing this film.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feminism

Feminism has always emphasized the position of women in any field in social life. It aims to position women as equal to men. "Feminism is political in that it aims to achieve gender equity in all spheres—social life, politics, economic conditions, language, culture, and many other areas" (Mandell, 2017). The statement tells that feminism has a goal in all fields, to get the same equality as men.

Hester (2016) argued that: Feminism is essentially about the identity of women, philosophically and socially. This identity transcends gender, sex, and sexuality as women are more than a body because they are defined by a convergence of factors that consider their place in society. Feminism is also about equality, not only for women but for all marginalized groups regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, social class, or religion.

In the statement above, it can be said that feminism is a movement to equalize the identity of women in front of community groups, where people only see that everything is determined only by one's gender. Feminism wants to get that equality and to prove to all groups of society that categorizing something should not be seen from gender. Women should not be seen with one eye only, they must also get the same place they want.

The Kinds of Feminism

There are several types of feminism according to Mandell (2017) respective definitions and opinions. The writer tries analyzing each type of feminism as follows:

a. Liberal Feminism

Freedom of choice is a principle of liberal feminism. Freedom of choice is often understood as being closely related to the concept of equal opportunity, for, without the opportunity to do so, you cannot freely choose anything.

So it tells that liberal feminism is women's liberation as an individual and personal struggle, women's liberation has to do with whether women like or dislike certain aspects of themselves or their lives. In liberal feminism, women have the right and freedom to choose something according to their wishes. They claim that women

have the same capacity as men, and have the same rational thinking as men.

b. Radical Feminism

Radical feminists mean that women's oppression is based on the relations of domination and subordination between the sexes, in which women are seen as a sex class whose sexuality is directly controlled by men. Radical feminists insist that, for women to understand their inferior roles in a patriarchal society, they must look at how men have come to hold and wield power over women in all social relationships.

That means radical feminism, unlike liberal feminists who focus on the legal status of women, radical feminists theorize from women's daily lives. Radical feminists focus on the body, sexuality, and contentment which intersects with the lesbianism movement. They encourage women to be androgynous, that is, masculinity and femininity must be valued equally and exist in the same body without any notion of true woman and womanhood.

c. Marxist/Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism relates the oppression experienced by women to their economic dependence on men. One of the goals of socialist feminism is therefore to advocate for women's economic independence. In addition, socialist feminism provides a materialist analysis of gender inequality by identifying the relationship between systems of patriarchal oppression in which women are subordinated to men, and class relations in capitalist economic systems in which the working classes are subordinated to the upper classes.

d. Postmodern Feminism

Postmodern feminist theory, all identities and any "truths" are regarded as already implicated in, if not products of, a person's culture. It also means that postmodern feminism seeks to challenge sexism and gender-based oppression by questioning all dominant cultural norms and accepted truths, including taken-for-granted norms of feminist thinking and practice.

The Causes of Feminism

The occurrence of feminism at this time is based on several things that make women realize that they want to change.

a. Betrayal

Looking at the experiences and conditions experienced by most women, it is important to take into account the impact that will occur if women depend on men for their lives. Apart from violence, some women experience betrayal. When men cheat behind their partners. From this betrayal incident, women often feel traumatized, because women feel that there is no one they can trust anymore. (St. Vil et al., 2021) said, "Betrayal trauma theory refers to an individual's experience of abuse committed by a person or institution that the individual is supposed to trust".

b. Domestic Abuse

There are types of domestic abuse according to (Benedictus et al., 2006), including:

1. Physical abuse (domestic violence) is the use of physical force against another person in a way that ends up injuring the person or puts the person at risk of being injured.
2. Verbal or nonverbal abuse (psychological abuse, mental abuse, emotional abuse).
3. Sexual abuse is linked to physical abuse; they may occur together, or the sexual abuse may occur after a bout of physical abuse.
4. Stalking or cyberstalking is harassment of or threatening another person, especially in a way that haunts the person physically or emotionally in a repetitive and devious manner.
5. Economic abuse or financial abuse.
6. Spiritual abuse.

Character

In the movie, some characters play every scene with them having dialogue or behavior. Skowron et al (2016) state that "A character is a construct from the very many different signs deployed in a film, among them the behavior in dialogs". It is explaining that the characters not only show the way they speak, but also the way they act verbally dialect, and their accent. It's to show the audience about the characters they play and their backgrounds, not only focusing on the character's dialogue, but also the dialogue that other characters say about their personality, beliefs, and desires.

In every character, there is always one character who stands out more than the other characters, namely the main character. The main character is a character who is the main focus in every action in a movie scene. Kleemans et al (2017) said "The main character propels the story forward because s/he is confronted with a problem that requires a response. The character is put in a (moral) predicament, acts according to his/her specific character traits and as a result, the plot develops and the character changes". It tells that the main character is a character in the movie who brings the story more developed in every action they take.

Movie

The movie becomes a media that is more desirable and even more influential than other media. The combination of images and audio makes the audience interested and not easily bored. Definition of the movie according to (Kurniasih, Nuning, Edwin Rizal, Yunus Winoto, Sukaesih, et al., 2018) "The movie is a dynamic visual media. The movie presents a scene, event, and narration in the form of moving images".

While another definition stated, "Movie is a media to exploring someone's idea. It could be a real story or a fiction story" (Yastanti & Widhiyanto, 2018). It can be assumed that the movie contains a person's inspiration, knowledge, and experiences

to entertain the audience, including providing a moral message movie in it. The movie can influence our minds by following the plot of the film. It can increase our imagination in understanding the story in it.

George & D. Uyanga (2014) said: Moral values are essential values that determine individuals' perception of morality and moral consciousness in society. Moral values include truthfulness, patience, obedience, honesty, integrity, hard work, responsibility, respect, tolerance, loyalty, public spiritedness, freedom, respect for human life and dignity of persons. Others include justice, fairness and equality.

That means the moral values are the perceptions of each individual to assess the morality of other individuals in society. These moral values include things that often happen, and give positive things to others. In a movie, it does not only provide an interesting story for the audience. In the movie, there is also a message conveyed by the filmmaker to the audience. The message conveyed in a movie can be in the form of advice and a moral message.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This research uses the descriptive qualitative method which is content analysis as research design. The sample is The Girl on the Train movie.

Instrument and Procedure

The writers collect the data from the scene and the conversation in the movie and material with a variety of resources such as books, journals, articles, and other references. In the first step, the writers choose what movie to analyze, then watch the movie several times until the writer understands the movie's plot. Second, the writers choose what the topic is analyzing in the movie. Third, the writer collects data and theories about movies, characters, and feminism with the topic to be analyzed.

Data Analysis

The writers identify the data and find the feminism of the main character in the movie. While watching the movie, the writers look for some important details in every scene and dialogue that are connected to the theory. Then, The writers classified the data which has correlated with the topic of the research. Then the writers analyze the data based on the theory that is used to find the answer. The last, the writers make a conclusion from the finding of the analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Kind of Feminism

In *The Girl on the Train* movie, the writers analyze the feminism of the main character. According to Mandell (2017) "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression". In chapter II, several types of feminism are described. According to Mandell (2017) They are Liberal feminism, Radical feminism, Marxist/socialist feminism, and Postmodern feminism. After the writer analyzed the film *The Girl on the Train*, it just found one type of feminism which is called Liberal Feminism.

Mandell (2017) said: Liberal feminists use the core principles of liberalism to insist that women be integrated into existing social, political, religious, and economic institutions in order to achieve equality with men. Specifically, liberal feminists use liberal ideas of rationality, meritocracy, equality of opportunity, and freedom of choice as core principles on which to achieve women's equality.

In the scene at 01:30:01 – 01:30:19, Rachel comes and tries to corner her ex-husband, Tom, to be honest. Rachel tells Anna to believe her, that Tom is a liar person and has cheated on Anna. Rachel is also a woman who supports other women, by telling Anna the truth, and Rachel unwittingly wants to open Anna's eyes if Tom has betrayed their relationship. Mandell (2017) said "Liberal feminists emphasize women's capacity for rational thought and thus their shared humanity with men. Early feminist thinkers argued strenuously that women's capacity for reason was the same as that of men."

The writer assumes that women can think and act rationally. What Rachel did was a precaution to avoid Anna's oppression of what Tom did. For that, women must be able to think and act with what will happen to them. Rachel's act of immediately cornering Tom to sue for what he had done to Anna is an example of liberal feminism.

In the scene at 01:28:34 – 01:29:43, Rachel tries to convince Anna of the truth that Tom has done. Rachel asks Anna to leave the house and goes with her leaving Tom. Rachel tries to help Anna to stay away from Tom. Rachel says Tom is a dangerous person. Anna must dare to leave him. Even though, Anna had been Tom's mistress. However, Rachel didn't want Anna to get the same treatment as her. Rachel cared about Anna's feelings more than her own. The writer believes that every courage that Rachel does is a struggle to promote women's rights. So that they are not treated as they deserve. In a relationship not only do men always take the role and women-only obey men. Women also have the right to be fair in a relationship. Women can arrange, do, and act as they want without demands from a partner (man). It takes resistance for women if they experience things that are not desirable.

In this scene At 01:41:06 – 01:42:51, Rachel dares to fight back against Tom's treatment of her. Rachel struggles alone to defend herself, who is subjected to

violence from Tom. At first, Anna didn't dare to help Rachel. But Anna felt that if she didn't fight Tom, she and her child would be in danger. Rachel and Anna didn't mean to kill Tom. But at that time, Tom intended to kill Rachel. They chose to kill him in self-defense. They don't want to end up like Megan. She was killed by Tom because she had no chance to fight back. The writer argues that as a woman under any circumstances, they must be able to protect herself. Women must have independent and dare to make decisions for every action that will be taken. Women have the right to fight if they do not have freedom. Women are not weak; they have the same courage as men if given the chance.

The Causes of Feminism

Gender inequality is triggered by the narrow thinking of society. They consider women to be weak and not equal to men. It makes women experience personal struggles within themselves. As a result, the feminist movement emerged. This movement is a rejection that women are always under men. Women have the right to freedom to express their wishes and hopes. Feminist behavior influences Rachel to defend herself, Anna, and Megan, who are treating unfairly by Tom. It made Rachel muster up the courage to fight for what herself, Anna, and Megan shouldn't feel. The existence of betrayal and domestic abuse is the cause of feminism affecting Rachel. The writer provides an analysis of the causes of feminism that influence the main character in *The Girl on the Train* movie, as follows:

Betrayal

According to Freyd, J Jennifer, Bridget Klest (2005) "The phrase "betrayal trauma" refers to those traumas in which individuals or institutions that people depend on for survival harm or violate them in some way". Betrayal is a process and action that violates a contract, agreement, trust, or belief that causes conflict and moral or psychological harm in a relationship.

The scene at 00:20:33 – 00:20:43 shows when Rachel opens Tom's laptop and finds evidence that she has been betrayed by Tom. Just then, Rachel discovers an email she thought was spam, which turned out to be an affair between Tom and Anna. Rachel threw the laptop against the wall. She felt that her trust in her husband had been crushed just like that.

The scene at 00:20:30 – 00:20:33, shows evidence of the contents of the email affair between Anna and Tom. The contents of the email are conversations between Tom and Anna. Tom seduces Anna with sweet words and invites her to meet. Tom stated that he loved Anna very much.

In the scene at 00:21:03 – 00:21:28, Rachel tells in detail how she felt betrayed by her ex-husband. At that time, Rachel was talking to a woman she did not know at a bar. Rachel was drunk, and she couldn't control herself as she said

these hurtful things. Rachel feels traumatized by Tom's actions.

The writers argue that every betrayal committed by a person against another person in the relationship will affect that person. Someone who feels hurt and harmed by the actions taken by the perpetrator will have the trauma. They do not dare to start a new life with other people or feel pain if they see someone going through the same thing. It will lead to resentment and feelings of injustice that they feel. From Rachel's story, when she experienced this betrayal, Rachel turned into a messy woman. She became an alcoholic and could not control her emotions if she recalled the events that hurt her. People who can be trusted and very close to us. They who can destroy the life of that person the most. That's how Rachel felt when she trusted her husband, Tom. She had to accept the fact that Tom had completely ruined her life.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse often occurs against women. The existence of a patriarchal culture influences the idea that the position of men is above women. This thinking is often a benchmark for men to be rude and violence occurs in a relationship. According to Benedictus et al. (2006) "The abuse may occur during a relationship, while the couple is breaking up, or after the relationship has ended. Domestic abuse often escalates from threats and verbal abuse to physical violence. Domestic violence may even end up in murder". The domestic abuse experienced by Rachel is a form of violence that occurs to certain women in a relationship. The cause of this violence is discrimination against women because of the notion of gender differences.

Physical Abuse (Domestic Violence)

Various kinds of acts of domestic violence, one of which is physical violence. Benedictus et al. (2006) state "Physical abuse ranges from physical restraint to murder. When someone talks of domestic violence, they are often referring to physical abuse of a spouse or intimate partner". Physical violence is violence in the form of acts of attack, such as hitting, strangling, slapping, pinching, and others.

Rachel was constantly physically abused by Tom, from the time they were married until they divorced. Tom often treats Rachel rudely. Rachel realized what Tom was doing was an act she shouldn't have gotten from someone who was close to her. Tom strangled Rachel, hit Rachel in the head with a glass, pushed Rachel into the street, and then left her. That's an example of some of the things Tom did to Rachel.

Verbal or Non-verbal Abuse

Verbal or non-verbal violence is very common in a relationship. Domestic abuse always begins with verbal abuse first and then progresses to physical abuse. This violence refers to a person's psychology and has a more severe impact on the victim.

In the scene at 01:39:05 – 01:40:06, Tom blamed Rachel for everything that happened. As for the truth, Rachel didn't do anything wrong. Tom still puts Rachel in a position of guilt for what Rachel didn't do.

In the scene at 01:20:56 – 01:21:10, Tom yells at Rachel with harsh words. Tom didn't care if his words hurt Rachel or not. Tom just wanted to vent his frustration on Rachel. In that situation, Rachel didn't know what was wrong with her. She just knew that she was sick, and Tom had to take her home, so she apologized for bothering Tom. But from Tom's actions, Rachel seemed to have made a big mistake. Tom screamed, yelled, cursed, and even left Rachel on the street alone.

In the scene at 01:21:23 – 01:21:42, Tom has just been fired from his office. Tom vented his anger as if it was all Rachel's fault. Tom hit the mirror and shouted at Rachel with harsh words. Rachel was frightened and confused by what had happened. At that moment, Rachel wasn't feeling well, and she just stared at Tom's treatment of her.

The Moral Message

The moral message in a movie is a message for the audience to make a lesson and can inspire those who watch it. The writer analyzes the moral message conveyed by *The Girl on the Train* movie. This movie tells the story of Rachel's struggle to defend herself, and find the truth about what happened. In this movie, Rachel becomes an independent woman, who seeks the truth in her way without involving others. Rachel's independence is an act that women should also do the same thing, where women must be able to do things in their way. After Rachel realized that she had been trapped by Tom's toxic relationship. She bravely cornered Tom and asked for honesty about what Tom had done. Women must act and think rationally and must be willing to take risks with the actions they take. Women must have the same way of the act and think as men. So as not to get caught up in the violence perpetrated by men.

Summary of The Girl on the Train Movie

The Girl on the Train tells the story of a woman named Rachel. She is the wife of a man named Tom, they decide to do IVF (In Vitro Fertilization), but their program fails. At first, they were fine, until finally, Rachel found emails with the initials "X", which turned out to be a property agent named Anna Boyd. Tom had an affair with Anna before they started the IVF. Their household eventually fell apart, and they divorced. Rachel, who at that time began to be depressed due to a failed IVF program, coupled with the discovery of Tom having an affair with Anna, made Rachel an alcoholic, and her career in public relations ended. Unable to accept all the facts about her, Rachel becomes someone who is in denial.

Rachel, who keeps her routine of taking the train to New York, always observes housing on the outskirts of the railroad tracks, and she is obsessed with one partner Megan, and Scott. In Rachel's view, they were the perfect match, in contrast to her broken and messy relationship. One day Rachel saw Megan hugging another man. It made Rachel remember her past and feel hurt. Rachel plans to seek revenge by injuring Megan, but the news is hearing that Megan disappeared and her body found in the forest. In this case, Rachel was suspected by many people even the police that she had killed Megan. With evidence that when Megan was last seen, that's where Rachel was. Rachel didn't remember anything at the time, because she was drunk. Rachel had no evidence to disprove that she wasn't Megan's killer. Until finally she found out about what happened then, and to defend herself that she was innocent.

Rachel's story is very dark. She is a depressed widow who finds courage. To the peak, she dared to reveal the truth about her, Anna, and Megan. Rachel is transforming into a victim of infidelity and domestic violence who dared to sue for what she was accused of. Not through conventional legal channels but through her way. It was unexpected that this courage and confidence inspire another woman at the end of the story. In the end, Rachel returned to a better person and made her story a meaningful lesson for her.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the writer's analysis, *The Girl on the Train* movie tells the story of Rachel's struggle in finding the truth and demanding fair rights for herself and the other two women, Anna and Megan. Rachel, who has experienced various violence by Tom, made herself a more courageous woman. She dares to stand up to Tom, who had hurt her. And she defends herself against the accusations Tom always made. Rachel struggles not only for herself but for Anna and Megan so that they get their fair rights as women.

After being analyzed, the writer argues that the kind of feminism found in *The Girl on the Train* movie is only Liberal Feminism. Liberal feminism is women's liberation about certain aspects of themselves or their lives. They claim that women have the same capacities as men, and have the same rational thinking as men. They also have the freedom to act as they want. Rachel's actions show that women do not deserve to be oppressed; she is free to reject the accusations leveled against her that the accusations are untrue. Rachel also persuades Anna to let her realize that women don't deserve to be betrayed and that she can move on with her life the way she wants. Rachel also dares to fight back when she's under pressure. These scenes show that the kind of feminism found in *The Girl on the Train* movie is Liberal Feminism.

The cause of feminism that affects the main character in *The Girl on the Train* movie is due to the betrayal and abuse suffered by the main character. This betrayal can lead to betrayal trauma. It is the trauma caused by the shattering of

the trust the victim gave to someone very close and trustworthy. In addition, domestic abuse is another factor that causes feminism that affects the main character. Domestic abuse can occur when one person starts to control the other, and it has an impact both physically and mentally.

In *The Girl on the Train* movie, several moral messages can be taken and learned by the audience, especially women. Because this movie tells about women who are treated unfairly and experience many painful things in the relationship they are running. So women must have a role in the relationship, women must have an independent attitude, so they don't depend on their partners. Women must also have the courage to decide something so as not to harm themselves. They should be more sensitive about the meaning of violence. If in a relationship, they experience violence in any form continuously, they must dare to take action to free themselves from their toxic relationship.

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