

Adaptation Studies on Barbie and the Three Musketeers (2009): Representation and Ideology

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ABSTRACT

One of the most interesting adaptations of the famous novel *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas is the animated film *Barbie and The Three Musketeers* (2009). In this film adaptation, all musketeers are played by women, one of which is Barbie. This research aims to investigate the representation of Barbie in this adaptation work and its ideology. The qualitative method is used in collecting, interpreting, and analysing the film adaptation, *Barbie and The Three Musketeers*. The data analysis uses postfeminist perspective and the theory of adaptation studies. The data analysis started by selecting the data from the activities of watching and re-watching the work followed by, the analysis of the data using the theory of cinematography. The theory is used to find the representation of Barbie and to relate it to Barbie's femininity. The results of the analysis show that Barbie represents a new image in bringing up gender role reversal as the ideology of the work.

Keywords: *Adaptation, Barbie, Femininity, Gender Role, Representation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

As one of Alexandre Dumas' most famous works and part of *D'Artagnan's trilogy: The Three Musketeers, Twenty Years After, and Ten Years Later*, *The Three Musketeers* was originally published by the French Magazine *Le Siècle* in 1844 as a series of stories. Due to its popularity, this series of stories was later adapted into a French-language novel with the title *Les Trois Mousquetaires* in the following year. Dumas' novel was first translated into English by William Barrow in 1846 under the title *The Three Musketeers*. This novel tells the story of three French royal musketeers (Athos, Porthos, Aramis) and a young man named d'Artagnan. Until the end of 2014, *The Three Musketeers* has been repeatedly translated into films, drama shows, video games, and television series in various countries. The number of adaptations based on Dumas' novel shows that this novel is very interesting and continues to be in demand from time to time.

The Three Musketeers' popularity has also extended to animated children's films such as *Tom and Jerry: The Two Musketeers* (1952), *Mickey, Donald, Goofy: The Three Musketeers* (2004), and *Barbie and The Three Musketeers* (2009). The most interesting is *Barbie and The Three Musketeers* (2009) because, in this film

adaptation, all the musketeers are played by women. Previously, in the other film adaptations, there had never been a musketeer character played by a woman. David Coward (1991) states that *The Three Musketeers* is a very masculine novel, "The Three Musketeers is, of course, an unashamedly masculine book, full of comradeship and swordplay, a celebration of a man's world. But it is also pointedly anti-feminist. Women are helpless, emotional, and tender, the object and reward of male quests."

This animated film is very different from all other adaptations of *The Three Musketeers* which feature male musketeers, one example of which is the film adaptation directed by Peter Hyams, released in September 2001 in America under the title *The Musketeer*. This film offers a thick sword fight scene of the musketeers that combines a mixture of Western and Eastern choreography (samurai movement). The musketeers in this film are four men with the typical body of a knight, which is sturdy and large. Of course, this is in stark contrast to the figure of the musketeers in *Barbie and The Three Musketeers* who are depicted as beautiful and attractive women who have the abilities of male musketeers.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach. The data collection method used was the library-research method through close-reading techniques. The main data was *Barbie and The Three Musketeers* [1]. To support the main data, this research also used books, journals, articles or other pieces of research which are relevant to the analysis. After watching and re-watching the film, this research began by collecting data and then interpreting and analysing the data from the narration, characters' actions and exploring aspects of the film. At this stage, this research used postfeminist perspective and Heinz and Stracey's theoretical framework to analyse the representation through the language of the film, such as shots, composition, movement and mise en scène. The last step of this research was deriving a conclusion from the findings of the research.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The transfer process from the novel into the animated film opens the possibility of several problems related to contents and forms. In the Barbie adaptation film, male musketeers such as Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan are replaced by female musketeers named Corinne, Viveca, Aramina, and Renee. Since the beginning of its appearance, Barbie has been captured as girl power symbol. Barbie has achieved various types of work in her mission to accentuate and perpetuate the girl power that has been attached to her.

In *Barbie and The Three Musketeers*, the heroin protagonist, Corrine, appears as a hero through the narratives of the heroine protagonist's emergence in several phases [2]. By exploring aspects of the film such as camera motion, movement, composition, and mise en scène [3], Barbie's representation is raised by highlighting the image of Barbie with her girl power. These girl power narratives built in the film use binary oppositions when Barbie breaks the rule that only a man can be a musketeer. Barbie's process of becoming a musketeer is among the tensions that musketeer rules must be male, not female. Another binary opposition is the position of the protagonist Barbie as a female musketeer who is contrasted with the male villain. The battle of the two camps helps build the construction of the heroin Barbie. This can be observed through several film scenes such as that in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Barbie and her fellow female musketeers contrasted with male villain characters

The scene above shows Corrine and the other three musketeers: Viveca, Aramina, and Renee face off against the royal soldiers who are all male. If observed from the camera angle, the female musketeers are positioned facing the audience so that they will clearly look dominant. That way, there is no longer the impression of male dominance in the scene. This effort was also strengthened by taking pictures of the male soldiers from behind. The audience will only focus on the characters highlighted by the camera from the front position, namely Corrine and her three friends. The male soldiers will not grab the attention of the audience because they are only looked at from the back. The binary opposition between the female protagonist and male antagonists complements the construction of Barbie's girl power representation in this film.

Thus, the construction of the protagonist heroin in the film is closely related to the representation of Barbie as a girl who has power. However, explored further, Barbie does not completely perpetuate the ideology of girl power. She did show herself as a strong, independent, and free to determine her dreams and steps, but on her journey, she did not deny her existence as a woman. Articulations of femininity such as lipstick, high heels, glamorous makeup are not the opposite of women's power and gender equality that has been pursued by Barbie. Embracing her feminine body is not a barrier to being a hero who is able to play swords and is agile on horseback. Barbie's articulation of femininity embraces the ubiquitous reality in a popular media culture that makes the body as an obsession.



Figure 2 Barbie saves the Prince and fight the criminal

From the scene above (Figure 2), we can observe that Barbie is not replicating Alexander Dumas' male musketeer who is identified as a very masculine wearing costume with a large cape and hat. This is in stark contrast to the depiction of the masculine costumes of the musketeers in the Dumas' novel.

D'Artagnan, a little recovered from his first surprise, had now time to study the dresses and countenances of those around him. In the midst of the most animated group was a musketeer of great height, of a haughty countenance, and so fantastical a costume as to attract general attention. He did not wear his uniform tunic, which was not absolutely indispensable at that period of less liberty, yet greater independence, but a close coat of celestial blue, slightly faded and worn, and on this coat a magnificent border of gold embroidery, which glittered like scales upon a sunlit stream; a long mantle or cloak of crimson velvet hung gracefully from his shoulders, discovering the front alone of his splendid belt, from which depended his enormous rapier ... every one much admired the embroidered belt, and d'Artagnan more than anyone else [4].

Instead of wearing a musketeer-style costume with masculine pants and robes, Barbie in the scene above is seen to wear a beautiful pink dress and still using a sword against criminals. This is shown to emphasize that the heroic figure in the scene is a woman, not a man. Women's body and typical female gestures are also deliberately highlighted to promote the heroic actions of women, not men. From the screenshot above, it is also clear how Barbie is placed between two male figures. On the one hand, she plays a role in saving a man, Prince Louis. On the other hand, she is also ready to fight against a man, Phelippe, the villain. This position emphasizes Barbie's more dominant role than the two men.

Prince Louis who stands behind Barbie, signals the attitude of seeking protection from her who is in front of him. She takes over the masculine role of the prince who generally saves women. This is reinforced by the

camera angle that puts pressure on her position from the front. This way, the audience can clearly see Barbie as the hero in the story. On the other hand, the male opponent, Phelippe, has his back on the camera and this automatically makes his position less prominent in the eyes of the audience. Efforts to highlight Barbie's distinctive femininity show that the female characters in this film tends to be superior.

Barbie's resistance or we can say negotiation to female stereotypes as a feminine and weak characters appears not only once in the fighting scenes as we've noted earlier but also several times in the dialogues. When she first came to Paris, she saw a crowd of people watching the royal musketeers practice their swords. Intrigued by what the musketeers were doing, she volunteered when one of the musketeers offered to challenge anyone who dared to a sword duel with him.

(00:09:57)

Musketeer : *Is there anyone brave enough to challenge me?*

(00:10:01)

Corrine : *I, sir. I am going to be a musketeer, too!*

(00:10:06)

Musketeer : *he little girl wants to be a musketeer (laughing).*

The binary opposition in the novel where the hero is a masculine male musketeer and the victim or weak character is a woman is suddenly reversed by the film adaptation. In the film adaptation, Barbie messes up the binary opposition concept of a hero and touches into femininity to clash it with Barbie's girl power representations. Barbie not only shows the representation of women who are independent and free to choose but simultaneously represents the image of women who are in a double entanglement. In the television mass media industry, the problem of women with double entanglements brings women in a new dilemma, between the conservative values and the success of feminism which makes women independent and free to choose. Conservative values such as having children or appearing good looking, do not disappear along with women's awareness and ability to choose consciously and freely [5]. Barbie shows it by transforming into a musketeer figure who is reliable in eradicating crimes while consciously looking attractive in skirts and makeup. From the very beginning, Barbie has received many attacks on her representation of femininity, sexuality, and consumption. But she, especially in this adaptation film, proudly plays around with her femininity while she also represents girl power as she successfully is a female musketeer.

4. CONCLUSION

Postfeminist Barbie projects that achieving women's rights in politics, property, and law is not the end of the

journey. Embracing Barbie's femininity through her body is one of her ways of negotiating how to talk about girlhood/womanhood. Instead of denying her womanhood, she is on the contrary embracing her womanhood and showed symbolic femininity as her agency. At this point, Barbie is attacking back those who have criticized her and her gendered symbolism.

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