GENDER EQUALITY IN ROBERT LUKETIC’S *LEGALLY BLONDE*: A FEMINIST APPROACH

RESEARCH PAPER

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by

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the study

*Legally Blonde* is the film directed by Robert Luketic and written by Karen McCullah, Lutz Kirsten Smith and It is based on the 2001 novel of the same name by Amanda Brown. The film was released 2 November 2001. It has 97 minutes of the duration. The genre is comedy. This film was produced in USA with filming Location University of Chicago Law School and Rose City High School in Pasadena, California. The film was produced by Rick Kidney and Marc E Platt distributed by twentieth century fox metro Goldwyn – Mayer. The film was a Golden Globe Award nominee for Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy, and Witherspoon's performance also received a nomination. It is number 29 on Bravo's "100 Funniest Movies" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legally-Blonde. (Film)).

*Legally Blonde* was acted by Reese Witherspoon as Elle Woods, Luke Wilson as Emmett Richmond, Selma Blair as Vivian Kensington, Matthew Davis as Warner Huntington III, Victor Garber as Professor Callahan, Jennifer Coolidge as Paulette Bonafonté, Holland Taylor as Professor Stromwell, Ali Larter as Brooke Taylor Windham, Jessica Cauffiel as Margot, Alanna Ubach as Serena McGuire, Oz Perkins as "Dorky" David Kidney, Linda Cardellini as
Chutney Windham, Bruce Thomas as Kyle the UPS Guy (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legally-Blonde. (Film)).

*Legally Blonde* describes a girl named Elle wood (Reese Witherspoon), when a blonde sorority queen is dumped by her boyfriend named Warner, she decides to follow him to law school to get him back and, once there, learns she has more legal savvy than she ever imagined. In the Harvard law university Elle met Emmett he is a good boy and always help Elle. Elle immerses herself in her studies and becomes a top student in her class. She still finds it hard to be taken seriously, although Emmett Richmond (Luke Wilson), the trial assistant of Callahan (Victor Garber), one of Elle's professors, is friendly to her and recognizes her potential. Elle graduate two years later at the top of her class with an offer to work at a prestigious Boston law firm. Emmett is quit from Callahan's firm to start his own practice, and he plans to propose to Elle that night. On the other hand, Warner gets no job offers or internships, loses Vivian (who becomes Elle's best friend), and graduates without honors.

In solving the case of Brooke Windham, there are some events that make Elle pressed. Callahan has a private discussion with Elle after the session. To her disgust, he reveals he finds her attractive and begins to caress her thigh. Elle angrily storms out and is met by Vivian, who witnessed Callahan touching Elle's leg and tells her she should sleep with the jury too so they can win the case. Convinced that she will never be taken seriously, Elle
decides to quit and return to California. However, after encouragement from one of her female professors and with Emmett's support, she decides to stay. Emmett informs Windham of Callahan's transgression, and she decides to fire Callahan and replace him with Elle.

*Legally Blonde* film tells story about the woman who fights to get back her boy friend that dumped her. She must make her boy friend that studies in law school back to her but she must study in law school too. Elle is a smart girl, rich girl and have so many friends in the place where he lives. A girl without experience in law but decides to study in law school and gets the best graduation from the law school. *Legally Blonde* tells that girl shows the spirit of young girl that never gives up in usual life and condition Elle really encourager every student especially girls who struggle for their dream.

The film was met with varied reception from critics, earning "fresh rating" of 67% positive ratings in the Rotten Tomatoes compilation of 130 reviews. Most reviews lauded Reese Witherspoon's lead performance even if they denigrated the overall merit of the film. Metacritic reported the film had an average score of 59 out of 100, based on 31 reviews (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legally-Blonde. (Film)).

The film was a Golden Globe Award nominee for Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy. *Legally Blonde* gets good response from public especially for the main character Elle Wood. Some people said if *Legally
Blonde is a great film. Legally Blonde can motivate the audiences and the people to reach their dreams and not to give up facing the problem.

From the above explanatory ideas, the writer turns to analyze the film because there are some reasons, they are: 1) the character and characterization of the major character, 2) the quality of this literature, and 3) the theme of this film.

Feminism literature will often reflect the cultural assumptions and attitudes of its period, and that of course includes attitudes towards women: their status, their roles and their expectation. Feminism concerns to the wide issues of gender in social and cultural contents. There are many works that dial with many topics of women, such as women’s history, labor women, women psychology, lesbian, etc. these works tried to give out a frame work, which can support the modern on order to be able to communicate their experiences, emotion and idea (http://www.poetrymagie.co.uk/feminism).

The appeal about the character of Elle is her utter guileless. She is kind and sweet and genuinely puzzled when people are sarcastic to her. Legally Blonde is interesting to be analyzed in the people actualization, cultural side and the women’s equality.

The theme of this film is interesting to be analyzed. Women have equality as men. These equalities are position, role, right and participation. In fact, women and men have equality in all fields. In getting the equality,
women must struggle through some efforts. Basically, women have potential to be equal with men even they can be better than men.

Men who are physically and socially distant from their children may well have political and economic claims on them, but their claims tend to be based more on their abstract authority than on personal commitment in their absence or failure to perform as providers and symbols of status, they may lose their place in home, the men assumes the dominant role against and women lose.

In every day, women’s position is below men’s. There are beliefs and values in society that make women under men’s shadow. The condition above makes women’s role in society less than men’s. Most of people believe that women’s role is only bearing children and taking care of them. Such judgments have embodied in the people’s minds for thousand of years.

Relating to the previous description, the writer intends to analyze the film using feminism approach because this film is very strong with gender equality. In this study the writer intends to conduct a study entitled: “GENDER EQUALITY IN ROBERT LUKETIC’S LEGALLY BLONDE: A FEMINIST APPROACH”. 
B. Literature Review

*Legally Blonde* is a film representing the struggle of women to prove their ability. In the literature review the writer finds some studies from the research paper. First written by Rusiana (2007) entitled “Struggle of Women Right Barbra Streisand’s *Yentl*: Feminist Approach”. She described about women right to gets education as men in the society. The other is Argadiarini (2007) entitled “Gender Equality in Alan Parker’s *Evita*: Feminist Approach”. She focused on research the women struggle in the society that the main character is woman from the low class. It will be looked this research same with the one of previous research but it different in object of the research.

C. Limitation Of The Study

Based on the title and background, the writer focuses on analyzing the gender equality on *Legally Blonde*, viewed from the feminist approach, especially liberal feminism.

D. Problem Statement

Based on the title and background of the study, the writer formulates the problem, as follows: “How is gender equality reflected in Robert Luketic’s *Legally Blonde* viewed from Feminist Approach?”
E. Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the movie in term of its structural elements
2. To analyze the movie based on feminist approach

F. Benefit of the Study

By presenting this research paper, the writer hopes that it will give some benefits as follows:

1. Theoretical benefit
   a) To give some information which can be used by the other researchers who are interested in analyzing this literary work.
   b) To give contribution to other literary research especially in studying movie *Legally Blonde*

3. Practical benefit
   a) For getting deeper understanding about feminism issues in movie *Legally Blonde*
   b) For developing the writer’s ability in applying the feminist approach especially liberal feminist in movie *Legally Blonde*. 
G. Research Method

1. Type of the Study

Based on the problem statement and the discussion, this study can be classified as descriptive qualitative research. It is suitable with Surahmat’s opinion about descriptive method. He states that one characteristic of descriptive method is that the data are collected, described and then analyzed (1995: 3). In brief, descriptive qualitative research is research employing the method of collecting, describing, classifying, and analyzing the data and then drawing conclusion. The data can be sentences, discourse, picture, diary and memorandum. By using the descriptive method, this research is aimed to describe gender equality as reflected in the movie *Legally Blonde* through feminist approach.

2. Object of the Study

The object of the study is the original movie *Legally Blonde* directed by Robert Luketic and written by Karen McCullah. The movie was released on 2 November 2001; it has 97 minutes of the duration and produced by produced by Marc E. Platt for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios.

3. Type of the Data and the Data Source

a. Type of Data

The data in this study can be divided into primary and secondary data sources. Primary data are the main data consist of the dialogue, and the
action of the movie. Secondary data are supporting data which consist of the other data relevant to this research.

b. Data source

1) Primary Data Source

The primary data source of this research is the original film of *Legally Blonde* and the scripts of the film. The main data consist of character and characterization, dialogues, body language, visual image, behaviors, plot and all of the statement related to the problems.

2) Secondary Data Source

The secondary data sources consist of the other data, which with the study, such as essay, comment, article, internet, historical information and thesis that are related to the research.

4. Technique of the Data Collection

The method used in this study is library research which collects and records both of the secondary data. Some steps of collecting data applied in this study are as follows:

a. Watching the movie repeatedly
b. Identifying the main idea of the movie
c. Determining the major character that will be analyzed
d. Reading some related books to find out theory, data, and information required
e. Taking notes of important information in both primary and secondary data sources

5. Technique of the Data Analysis

The technique of the data analysis used is descriptive qualitative. The writer uses feminism approach and adds his structure analysis of the data work. Firstly, the data are collected by watching and observing the film as the main data carefully and repeatedly to get a deep comprehension of the issue. Secondly, the researcher will take a note from the main data of important fact. Thirdly, the researcher will analyze all of data using selected approach. And finally, a conclusion is drawn.

H. Research Paper Organization

Research paper organization is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is introduction, which consists of the background of the study, literary review, problem statement, objective of the study, benefit of the study, research method and paper organization. The second, chapter is underlying theory, which consists of notion of feminism, liberal feminism and also theoretical application. The third chapter consists of social historical background of American society in the 21th century. The fourth chapter consists of discussion of the analysis based on structural element. The fifth consists of analysis based on feminist perspective and the last chapter is the conclusion and suggestion.