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Research Article

Decolonizing Character Representation: A Postcolonial Analysis of Race-Swapping in Disney's *The Little Mermaid* Movie (2023)

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English Literary Criticism: Postcolonialism
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"All a person's ways seem pure to them,
but motives are weighed by the Lord."
— Proverbs 16:2 (NIV)

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the implications of race-swapping character representation in the 2023 live-action adaptation of Disney's *"The Little Mermaid,"* focusing on the casting of Halle Bailey, a Black actress, as Ariel. Utilizing *postcolonial* criticism frameworks, particularly Robert J.C. Young's theories, this study explores the historical and cultural significance of this casting decision. The findings suggest that the movie's approach to race-swapping serves as a means to challenge and redefine traditional racial narratives within popular media. The research identifies three primary outcomes: **1)** Reimagining racial roles is exemplified in the movie by the casting of a Black actress in a traditionally white role disrupts conventional racial representations, prompting viewers to reconsider the historical association of race with specific characters and roles. **2)** The race-swapping encourages viewers a re-evaluation of historical narratives in the story, deepening the audience's understanding and allowing for a more inclusive perspective of the past of different racial groups. **3)** Upon promoting racial inclusivity and diversity, the movie strives to prioritize the significance of acknowledging the historical experiences of the marginalized societies in an effort not to be forgotten or eliminated. The movie approach leads to dual perspectives and biases: promoting inclusivity while also at the same time reimagining historical issues related to race. Consequently, this study highlights the importance of critically engaging with media representations to foster a more inclusive and representative cultural landscape by examining its historical biases. The movie's innovative approach to character representation encourages the need for ongoing dialogue about the intersections of race, history, and societal roles in contemporary media

Keyword: *Race-swapping, Decolonization, Colonialism, Postcolonialism, Little Mermaid*

INTRODUCTION

The discourse surrounding the substitution of a character's race with an alternative racial identity in cinematic works is an intricate and delicate matter that has incited considerable debate and analysis within the field of movie criticism. This occurrence, commonly termed race-swapping or race-bending, has provoked both criticism and support, with dialogues focusing on issues of representation, authenticity, and narrative significance. Supporters maintain that such actions enhance representation and authenticity, whereas opponents raise concerns regarding their effects on narrative coherence and the integrity of character evolution. *"Racebending as the practice of changing the race of a canonical character, in this case from white to Black Minority Ethnic, to reimagine their place in literary culture" (Ann, McClellan., 2021)* It is crucial for

moviemakers to navigate this complex terrain thoughtfully, considering the broader implications of their creative decisions. Examining the implications of such casting decisions involves considering the historical context of racial representation in media, the importance of diversity and inclusion, as well as the potential effects on audience perception and reception. This topic raises important questions about the power of representation in the movie and the responsibilities of moviemakers in portraying diverse and authentic characters on screen.

The release of *"The Little Mermaid" (2023)* has generated significant buzz among audiences worldwide. Directed by Rob Marshall, this live-action adaptation of the beloved animated classic promises to bring a fresh perspective to the timeless tale. With an extraordinarily talented cast and innovative visual effects, the cinematic feature is set to engage both passionate fans and first-time viewers alike. As the newest segment in the Disney live-action series, *"The Little Mermaid"* (2023) is prepared to engage audiences in a visually captivating marine world while examining themes of affection, personal identity, and the quest for one's dreams.

The narrative of *"The Little Mermaid"* (2023) can be correlated to the matter discussed in the preceding paragraph through the motif of representation and authenticity. In light of the ongoing discourse regarding race-swapping or race-bending within the movie, the casting choices for *"The Little Mermaid"* (2023) may be perceived as a prominent illustration. The movie's plot, which centers around themes of love, identity, and the pursuit of dreams, warrants examination in relation to the significance of authentic representation within the media. The portrayal of varied characters within the movie, especially the leading role of Ariel, offers a chance to analyze the nuances and duties of moviemakers in genuinely representing different races and cultures on screen. This link emphasizes the importance of the subject within the movie industry and its effects on storytelling and audience engagement. The live-action *"Little Mermaid"* (2023) incited discourse due to the fact that Ariel, historically represented as Caucasian, is portrayed by the Black actress Halle Bailey. While the narrative remains unchanged, the casting decision draws focus to representation and diversity in the media. Certain individuals exhibit discontent with the modification, while others praise it as a progressive evolution. Ultimately, the movie contributes to the ongoing dialogue regarding race-swapping in Hollywood.

Former critics have participated in comprehensive debates and discussions concerning the practice of race-swapping or race-bending within the movie industry. The predominant arguments articulated by past critics center around issues of representation, authenticity, and their effect on narrative construction. While critics articulate apprehensions regarding its influence on storytelling and character integrity, Ann McClellan (2012) critiqued the historical backdrop of racial representation in media, along with the potential repercussions on audience perception and reception in *A Black Sherlock Holmes (1918): A Case Study in Racebending."* Conversely, this research not only addresses the historical context but also examines the underlying motivations behind the casting choice for *"The Little Mermaid"* (2023), featuring a Black actress portraying the traditionally white character of Ariel.

Hence, the application of colonial and postcolonial criticism by Robert J.C. Through an investigative lens, Young contributes to the discourse on race swapping in *'The Little Mermaid'* (2023) by assessing the historical constructs of racial representation within media, in addition to exposing the obscured motivations influencing the race-swapped character. Postcolonial criticism accentuates the ramifications of colonialism on cultural identity and representation. Young's theoretical framework further clarifies the lasting impact of colonialism and its consequences on cultural norms and representations, thereby illustrating the ongoing effects of colonial history on the representation of race in media. The choice to appoint a Black actress in the central role provokes essential discussions regarding the historical legacy of colonialism and its consequences for the representation of diverse races and cultural narratives within the movie. This discourse highlights the necessity of recognizing the historical and cultural dimensions of race swapping in the previously mentioned cinematic work, alongside the potential of such decisions to cultivate a more inclusive and representative media landscape.

Binary Opposition

HISTORICAL ACCURACY	CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE
"To rewrite the history of black experience as if it were just the same as that of white experience is to deny the historical contexts that gave rise to that experience." (Young, 1995, p. 112) The decision to cast Halle Bailey, an black actress to be the little mermaid which originally is portrayed as white. This side argues that altering a character's race undermines the historical context and erases the lived experiences of the original person.	*"Race swapping allows us to interrogate the normative assumptions about race, ethnicity, and identity that underlie any text, fictional or nonfictional, and opens up an aesthetic space for exploring the significance of race in all its multiple and intersecting forms." (Young, 1995, p. 127)* Race swapping creates a fresh picture regarding a historical narrative, making it more relevant to modern audiences that triggers critical discussions about race and questioning the representation of the character in the movie.

METHOD

Upon analyzing the data taken from the movie, a qualitative method was used to explain the explicit and implicit messages. Besides, it described symbolisms, cinematography: camerawork, lighting, background, visual storytelling and sound effects of the movie. *"Qualitative research methods allow us to delve deep into the complexities of human behavior and traits, providing rich and nuanced insights that quantitative methods may not capture." (Smith, J., 2019)* Several critical issues found in the movie were taken as the data, then they were analyzed along with the cinematography, including the relevant dialogues as the evidence. In this research, the theory of *postcolonial* criticism by Robert J.C. Young: *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (1995) was applied to support the analysis. Meanwhile, the discussion was limited to discussing *Hybrid Identity* by deconstructing racial stereotypes, exploring cultural fusion, and delving into new possibilities. *"Hybridity...forces a reconsideration of the historical narratives through which colonial power has been legitimated..." (Young, 1996, p. 4)* Historical narratives can be re-evaluated by examining the hybridity issue.

Race swapping in fiction can prompt readers to question traditional historical perspectives and consider the experiences of those who may have been marginalized.

DISCUSSION

The movie begins with the day of the ceremony in which King Triton and his mermaid daughters are together in his palace; however, the main character, Ariel, goes missing. Ariel is infatuated with the human world and decides to go exploring the shipwreck. In this scene, the camera takes a medium wide shot to capture the three mermaids in different colors to challenge stereotypes as in traditional western media, all mermaids are depicted as caucasians that can potentially reinforce ideas of beauty standards and limited representation for people of color in fantasy. Robert J.C. Young (1996) argued that western art and media often depict white features as beauty becomes the standard, influencing local perceptions. This movie creates another perspective towards the beauty standard stereotyped to caucasian race. It argues that any race can fit the beauty standard based on their own color. The movie also adds the ambience of underwater effects and the calming sound of underwater to immerse the audience in the scene while the mermaids are questioning where Ariel is.

In this part of the scene, Ariel is reprimanded to return to the ceremony by King Triton's crab servant. In the encounter between Ariel and her dad, the camera tries to show the color contrast between their skin color, giving the idea of the existence of hybridity in the family. *"The experience of hybridity… can be particularly problematic for those who are marginalized or excluded from dominant cultural formations" (Young, 1996, p. 44).* This type of depiction challenges the audience's perception about the past when a dominant race held power and looked down on other races. Meanwhile, in the scene, it is shown that Ariel, a black mermaid, is in a royal family. The king is an overprotective type of father who does not give much freedom to his daughters. Ariel says, *"You won't even let us go to the surface"* (00:15:13). This conduct in the narrative also links to the era of colonization of which the dominant race oppressed the marginalized. *"Hybrid cultural forms can be a means for dominant groups to assert their cultural authority by reinterpreting or domesticating the cultural elements of marginalized groups" (Young, 1996, p. 147).* The scene gives a sense of *"taming"* or *"domesticating"* the other culture by diminishing the *"foreignness"* or *"otherness"* of the opposite marginalized race. It can be seen when King Triton tries to contain Ariel and force

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her to abide by his rules, portraying him as authoritarian. In addition, it hints a dominant race has the power to reimagine their negative image due to the historical occurrences, to something positive. The representation of mermaids in different colors can potentially reinforce existing stereotypes or biases due to the historical context during colonization.

In another scene, Ariel saves a drowning man at sea and brings him safely to shore. She then sings her mermaid song which awakens him. The movie takes the setting at night where a glimpse of lights shining on the characters while the camera is taking a *mise-en-scene* of the singing. In the background, strings accompany Ariel's humming in a symphony, creating a peaceful and calming atmosphere; upon doing this, it also alerts humans in the village. In order not to be seen, Ariel swiftly swims back into the ocean and meets her father, the King of all mermaids. Noticing Ariel's fascination with the human world, he argues, *"Humans?"* (00:46:37), *"You're a mermaid!" "He's a human"* (00:47:47). King Pluton has strictly prohibited any mermaids, including
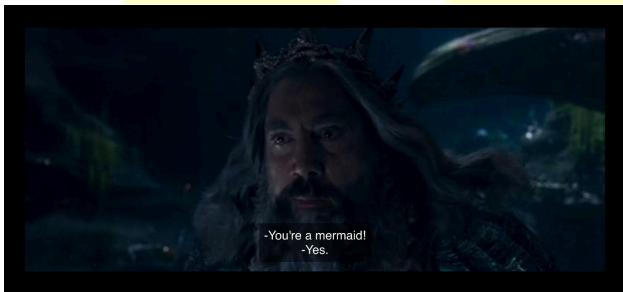
his daughters, to trespass the boundary between the two separate worlds showcasing the potential danger of being hunted by humans. Although the people of both worlds are open minded with diverse cultures, each side has their own stigma about the other race. The human race view mermaids as anomaly creatures, meanwhile the mermaids view humans as predators. It can be seen from the movie how the two races conflict with each other. The relationship between the territories of humans and mermaids in the movie illuminates the crucial misjudgments and apprehensions that both sides cling to about one another, consequently sustaining an ongoing cycle of misperception and tension. Robert J.C. Young (1995), The statement points out the common human nature to regard those who are different as 'other,' which unfortunately creates significant misconceptions, fears, and tensions among various ethnicities or social groups. In the context of the movie, the depiction of the confrontation between humans and mermaids, this quote powerfully illustrates the misunderstandings and biases implicitly that fuel the persistent conflict between these two worlds and races: human race and mermaid.

After the discussion with her father, the scene begins with Ariel, singing an upbeat music that indicates the feel of Ariel's longing to live on the other side. In this part, the camera goes along the singing to shoot in a medium shot first then swifts to a long shot, showing an island Ariel is looking from her back. The effect of this camera works is to draw attention to the boundary between
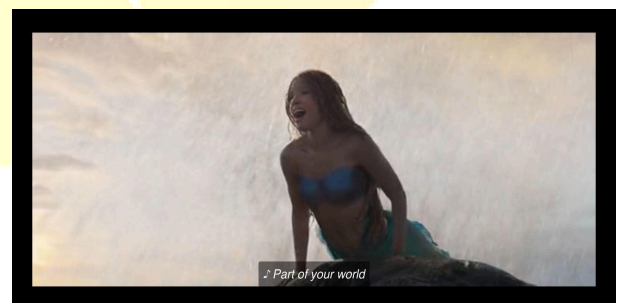
the two worlds. While singing, the lyric says, *"I want to be part of your world,"* (00:30:35) as she looks into an

island. It signifies two implicit meanings; first, she longs to live on land, and second, she misses the man she saves. *"The dream of the colonized is to become fully human, to enter history, the history from which he has been forcibly excluded."* (Young, 1995, p. 3) This is inline with the concept of hybridity in colonial desire that explores implicitly the voices, longing for inclusion and recognition within the races.

On land, the prince is excitedly trying to look for the girl who saves his life, Ariel. All he can remember is the tone of her voice; however he forgets what she looks like. The cinematography focuses on the queen (the
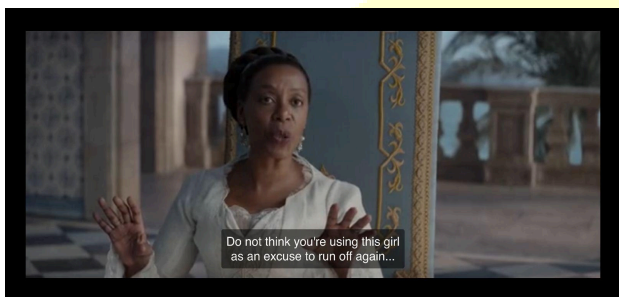
prince's mother) in the center, using soft lighting and a blurred background to highlight her expression while having a conversation with the prince. The colors are calm and elegant, and the fancy set design adds to the importance of the scene. The camera stays still, keeping the viewer's attention on the character and her serious words expressing disapproval as the prince insists on

deploying soldiers to search for Ariel. Similarly like Ariel's parents, the prince's parents are interracially married. *"The stereotype is not only a product of ignorance, fear, and racism; it is also a process of cultural translation that institutes a hierarchical difference between self and other." (p. 66)* This shows that the movie attempts to showcase diverse cultures to make it look more inclusive; nevertheless, it challenges the historical depiction and events of how the colored races were marginalized and had little to have high status. *"Hybridity makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the difference no longer simply different"* (Young, R. J. C., 1995, p. 26) It undermines the colonial power structure by mixing ethnic differences, languages, traditions to blur the paradigm of colonial history. In addition, *"Interracial marriage challenges the perceived naturalness of racial boundaries and exposes the constructed nature of race itself"* (Young, R. J. C., 1995, p. 10) This practice aims to create *'hybrid identity'*, shaping new perspectives and reimagining history by obscuring prejudice between the two sides.

Back in the sea, Ariel makes a deal with her aunt, Ursula that in exchange for Ariel's voice, she will be able to walk and breathe on land with a condition that she must get a true love kiss within three days. Failure to this will result in losing her voice for eternity. However, after the deal is made, Ursula wipes Ariel's memory of the true love kiss. The scene where Ariel sings *"Poor Unfortunate Souls"*
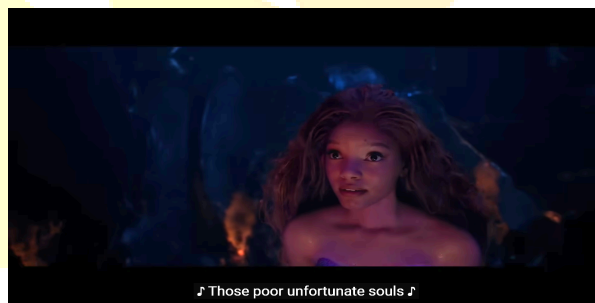
(00:54:46) masterfully combines cinematography and visual effects to enhance the narrative. As Ariel contemplates Ursula's tempting offer, the central framing and soft, warm lighting draw focus to her conflicted expression, underscoring the emotional gravity of her decision. The dark, muted color palette and subtle

highlights create a mysterious underwater ambiance that reflects the ominous nature of Ursula's proposition. Advanced CGI brings the underwater world to life, with fluid hair movements and natural light interactions heightening the realism. This blend of visual elements amplifies the tension and immerses the audience in Ariel's pivotal moment of choice, making the scene both captivating and emotionally resonant. On the other hand, when the camera focuses on Ursula, it employs dramatic cinematography and visual effects to emphasize her power and menace. Central framing and eerie lighting highlight Ursula, casting shadows that enhance her intimidating presence. The dark, rich blues and purples create a foreboding atmosphere, while the luminescent glow of her tentacles signifies her supernatural abilities. The swirling, dark waters and glowing elements add to the mystical

and dangerous aura. This convergence of visual elements portrays Ursula's dominance and Ariel's vulnerability, intensifying the emotional impact and power dynamics of the scene. This is parallel with the era setting of the movie when, *"Colonialism involved a major transformation of the cultural, social, and political structures of the colonized, as well as the imposition of the white man's superiority and dominance"* (Young, 2001, p. 23). In the movie, even though Ariel is a princess, Ursula manages to take advantage of her naivety, showing her dominance over Ariel, even exploiting her precious voice for her own use. Whether or not it is accidental, Ursula is portrayed as white and Ariel's character is race-swapped. It potentially raises a conflicting issue that mirrors the past when unfair treatment, manipulative tactics over the colonized with hidden agenda while giving a utopian hope remain in people's mind. During the singing scene, the song lyric *"Poor Unfortunate Souls"* (00:54:46) straightforwardly suggests the poor souls to wish for help at a price that they have to give. Additionally, the positioning of Ariel at the bottom while Ursula sits on her throne at the top, singing *"I admit that in the past I've been a nasty"* (00:54:09) evidently aligns with the analysis.

As soon as Ariel acquires her legs and lungs, she quickly swims upwards to the surface of the sea. Fortunately, she gets caught in the net of a fisherman who later takes her to the castle to search for further help and hospitality. The cinematography uses soft, warm lighting and close-up shots to emphasize Ariel's vulnerability and isolation after losing her voice to Ursula. The visual focus

on Ariel's expressive eyes and gestures stresses her inability to communicate verbally. The presence of white maids serving Ariel, a Black mermaid, adds a layer of social and historical reversal, challenging traditional narratives and prompting reflections on race and historical events. *"The history of slavery is a history of violence*

and resistance, in which the resistance of the slaves is always contained within the context of their continued subjugation" (Young, 2001, p. 72). The casting of Halle Bailey as Ariel, amid the race-swapping controversy, brings additional depth to this dynamic, highlighting themes of racial representation and shifting power dynamics, thereby enhancing the scene's emotional and social impact. This can serve as a mechanism for redefining the image and reputation of white individual representation in the characters. As evidence, Ariel is treated almost like a royalty even though they do not know her background particularly in this scene. In this case, previously Ursula contains Ariel's voice to show her power dominance. *"Within the discourse of colonial production, the subaltern has no voice." (p. 271)* In contrast, the maids give Ariel a luxurious bath, stunning new clothes, and delicious meals; all for free at the cost of nothing, depicting the purity and the kind heart of the Caucasian maids, meanwhile Ariel is casted mute or better be silenced.

On another occasion, the prince tells the queen (his mother) that he finds the girl who saves him from drowning and that he wants to marry her. Unbeknownst to him, the girl is Ursula under disguise as she tricks him using Ariel's voice. At this scene, she tries to seduce him. while the camera shoots both characters in medium shots. The cinematography in this scene utilizes natural lighting, a warm color palette, and shallow depth of field to create an intimate and emotionally charged atmosphere. The medium close-up framing and eye-level angle emphasize the characters' expressions and dialogue, highlighting the woman's confident demeanor and the man's contemplative state. The serene outdoor setting provides a picturesque backdrop, enhancing the moment's
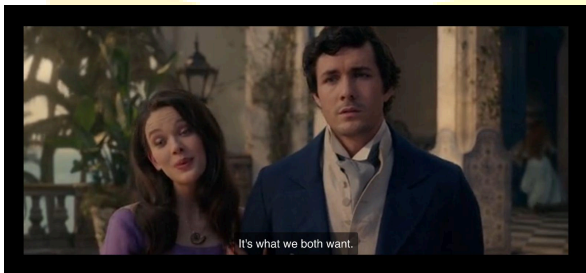
significance as the characters discuss a mutual decision, highlighted by the subtitle *"It's what we both want,"* (01:39:06) indicating her deceiving act This approach effectively draws the audience into the characters' emotional dynamics and the narrative's pivotal moment. In the scene, Ursula is depicted as Caucasian actress whether or not it is a coincidence, the portrayal shows a race dominance, making light of the interracial true lovers. *"Domination is not a failed totality; it is a successful production of a set of ruling ideas, a hegemony, that becomes for a great many people the accepted wisdom."* (Said, 1993) The depiction of the disguised Ursula in line with how the dominance of a higher hierarchy race shows hegemony in the movie's timeline to legitimate their power. In the context of colonialism and post-colonialism, Young argued how interracial relationships are often seen through the lens of *"hybridity,"* a concept that highlights *"the blending and merging of different cultures and races when the relationships can challenge and disrupt traditional notions of racial purity and cultural identity."* (Young, 1995) This often becomes the symbol of resistance against colonial ideologies of segregation and superiority. When the prince prefers Ursula to Ariel, the characters' portrayal projects against the notion of hybridity or resistance. Additionally, Ursula takes Ariel's precious voice and manipulates it and disrupts the relationship that has been built.

Shortly, watching from a far in jealousy, Ariel snatches the necklace in which her voice is being kept from Ursula. In an instant, their identities are revealed. The spectators react in shock and disgust and moreover when the queen says, *"Oh my God, It's a sea creature,"* (01:46:23) mirrors the act of racial dispute in the past when black africans were not seen as human. *"Colonialism's use of race to produce its own form of social and political order depended on the categorical differentiation and hierarchization of humanity"* (Young, 2001). He examines how colonial powers systematically dehumanized Black Africans to justify their exploitation and maintain control. In this context, the treatment of the mermaid recalls clearly the memory of the past. *"Settler colonialism depends on a logic of elimination, where removal is not simply a consequence but a constitutive element of the logic itself." (p. 388)* The mimicry of the historical racial issue arises when the race of a black mermaid is frowned upon and alienated from the so-called ordinary. In a fit of anger, Ursula dives into the sea, transforming into a giant octopus to take revenge. In order to save everybody, Ariel dives in to stop her. Unlike everybody else, the prince is shocked at first, but then realizes that his true savior is Ariel and quickly dives to save her too. This depiction suggests that he is the only savior of her life, signifying dependency. *"The patriarchal system thrives on the subjugation of women, positioning them as dependent entities under the control of men."* (Smith, 1995, p. 72). The prince is trying to help Ariel as soon as the identity gets revealed, showcasing a heroic action of the Caucasian man. The quote supports the setting of the movie in the medieval era when the ideology of patriarchy was still dominant; similarly, in the colonial era. It reveals the power dominance of both race and gender.

In the end of the story, the two defeat Ursula and get the blessing of parents from both sides. Setting on a sunny beach with a wedding-like ceremony, the camera employs a shallow depth of field to draw the viewer's attention to the three main characters, particularly the one facing away from the camera. This technique, along with the natural daylight, emphasizes the significance of their interaction and the emotional weight of the moment, which is highlighted by the statement *"Your marriage marks a new beginning for us,"* (02:01:40) signifying the beginning of a hybrid era. The visual storytelling here is intimate and poignant, reflecting themes of new beginnings and personal journeys, inviting the audience to engage deeply with the characters' experiences during this transformative event. Ariel decides to live on land, while her father grants her human feet and the interracial marriage happens. Mermaids and humans now hold no prejudice against each other and live harmoniously.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the movie shows different races living together harmoniously, promoting the idea of an inclusive society. However, the movie also engages in a deeper dialogue about race and history by recontextualizing racial roles, particularly reflecting the historical treatment of Black Africans. By inserting a character of a different race into historical scenarios traditionally dominated by another race, the narrative disrupts conventional expectations and compels viewers to reconsider the intrinsic link between race and specific historical roles. This approach encourages a more complex understanding of the past and the varied experiences of racial groups.

The practice of race swapping in the movie serves a dual purpose: it not only reimagines the dominant racial hierarchy reminiscent of the colonial era but also subtly influences the audience's biases regarding historical and future interpretations. While this method can be a potent instrument for challenging and reshaping perceptions, it necessitates a careful equilibrium with historical authenticity. The movie is expected not to erase the historical experiences of marginalized groups but to foster a re-evaluation of historical narratives that honors the complexities and contributions of all racial groups. Thus, the movie ultimately invites viewers to engage in a critical reflection on the intersections of race, history, and societal roles, promoting a more accurate understanding of the past. Therefore, the race swapping in the movie not only can be a powerful tool to promote racial inclusivity, but also to eradicate the historical issue of particular marginalized groups.

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Anthropocentrism and Environmental Crisis in *Hujan* Novel by Tere Liye:
An Ecocritical Study of Human-Induced Environmental Damage

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> *"The Lord God took the man and put him in*
> *the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."*
> ***Genesis 2:15 (NIV)***

ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal how human actions impact environmental damage as depicted in the novel *Hujan* by Tere Liye. The research design used a qualitative method, equipped with an *ecocriticism* theory of *Anthropocentrism* by Greg Garrard to explore the anthropocentrism in the novel. The results show; **1)** The environmental damage: different kinds of environmental harm, including *pollution, apocalypse, dwelling, and earth,* with humans as the main cause and the impact that causes the ecosystem damage which eventually leads to extinction; **2)** The environmental abuse: the role of humans in the destruction of the environment is reflected in the actions of destroying nature carried out by humans on the basis of the *anthropocentrism* paradigm; **3)** The ecological ethics: the novel highlights the critical need for adhering to environmental wisdom, which includes maintaining harmony with nature, adopting sustainable practices, and considering long-term consequences of human actions.environmental values are embodied in the novel following the principles of environmental ethics.

Keywords: *Greg Garrard, Ecocriticism, Environmental Damage, Ecological Ethics, Anthropocentrism*

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between nature and humans is inextricable. Nature has become part of human's life where one needs the other to survive and vice versa, signifying that humans are very much tied to nature because almost all parts of their lives are provided by nature. The food consumed, the clothes worn, the shelter lived in, even the development of science is the result of human efforts in processing nature. The awareness of the importance of nature has been realized since the first time nature became a place of dependence for humans.

Dependence on nature is a manifestation of human helplessness in fulfilling their own needs. It is also the basis of human consumptive nature towards mother nature, with the view that nature was created as a tool in fulfilling human needs. In a reasonable portion, the relationship between humans and nature will bring a harmonious life between the two, but what happens is not always in accordance with what is expected. In some cases, humans tend to act arbitrarily towards nature, exploiting it for personal interests and destroying it without thinking about the consequences that will arise from their own actions. Consequently, nature is only limited to being a place to fulfill human greed, instead of a guardian of the balance of life on earth.

The destruction of nature due to human actions has long been a topic that seems to have no end in sight. Burning forests to clear land, hunting wild animals, using energy that is not environmentally friendly, the greenhouse effect, and littering are some examples of the many destructive behaviors committed by humans.

Lack of awareness in protecting nature and the surrounding environment is the biggest loss for humans because in the end, the consequences of the damage caused will return to humans themselves. Quoted from kompas.com, the number of people with *Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI)* due to forest and land fires *(Karhutla: Forest and Land Fires)* until September 2019 reached 919,516 people (Hakim, 2019). Forest fires are the result of illegal land clearing and often occur in Indonesia, especially in Sumatra and Kalimantan. This becomes a problem when the smoke caused by fires penetrates into residential areas so that community activities and mobility are disrupted. Not only that, but public health is also affected. In Sumedang, a landslide disaster occurred on January 9, 2021 in Cihanjuang Village, Cimanggung District and killed 36 people while 1020 were displaced (Hakim, 2021). In Kalimantan, based on the *BNPB (National Disaster Management Agency)* Operation Control Center report on Saturday, January 16, 2021 at 02.00 WIB, 3571 houses in *Balangan* were flooded. Meanwhile, floods and landslides in *Manado*, North Sulawesi on Saturday, January 16, 2021 at 15:09 WITA *(CIT: Central Indonesia Time)* were caused by high-intensity rain and unstable soil structures and caused 500 people to be displaced and five people died (Hakim, 2021). Some of these cases are the result of human destruction of nature.

Reflecting on the many natural disasters that have occurred, humans should begin to improve their relationship with nature and the environment. Nature can no longer be seen as a place to seek profit, but as one of the pillars in maintaining the balance of life on earth. Therefore, awareness in respecting nature is needed for the sustainability of human life.

In literature, one of the most important elements in creating a work is nature. In building the atmosphere in the story, nature is often used as inspiration and a medium of imagination by the author. This is because literary works are products of the author's imagination so that they become a reflection of human life. The neglect of nature that has occurred so far has attracted the attention and concern of writers. Through the green literature movement, writers have begun to proclaim the importance of nature in human life and become one of the pioneers in encouraging people to start loving nature and protecting the surrounding environment through their works.

Previous research entitled, *"Apocalyptic Narrative in Hujan Novel By Tere Liye: An Ecocritical Study,"* by Triastuti, A., & Saguni, S. S. (2021) focuses limitedly on the *apocalyptic elements, hero figures, and visionary efforts* to save humanity in Tere Liye's *'Hujan,'* using an ecocritical approach to examine the narrative of universal extinction, heroic actions, and the vision of creating a new habitat. In contrast, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of various forms of environmental damage and ethical values in the same novel, examining *pollution, apocalypse, dwelling, and earth crises* caused by *anthropocentric* behaviors. Future research could bridge this gap by exploring how these specific apocalyptic narratives intersect with broader environmental crises and ethical considerations, offering a more holistic understanding of environmental discourse in literature.

One form of awareness of the importance of protecting nature and the environment is depicted in a novel entitled *Hujan* by Tere Liye. The novel *'Hujan'* tells the story of humanity's struggle to deal with extreme and holistic natural disasters. World progress and technological sophistication are still unable to deal with the wrath

of nature that occurs as a result of human actions that are arbitrary towards nature. The novel *Hujan* is a picture of human life that is not in harmony with nature, which only sees nature as a place to fulfill human interests and greed. This novel also makes us realize that humans are weak creatures and should maintain good relations with other living things on earth.

Based on the novel *Hujan*, it can be seen that any form of relationship between humans and nature has a major impact on the survival of both, especially humans. A good relationship can create a good impact, and vice versa. For this reason, environmental etiquette or the value of environmental wisdom in dealing with nature needs to be cultivated in everyone's mind in order to establish a harmonious life between the two. *"Environmental wisdom is an awareness to be part of nature so as to create a harmonious unity."* (Amrih, 2008: 33). The value of environmental wisdom is considered necessary to grow as a form of awareness in appreciating nature which is the source of human life. Environmental wisdom is important in fostering a harmonious relationship between humans and nature and becomes a bridge for humans to understand the condition of the surrounding environment.

Environmental wisdom is the knowledge, perspective, and actions of humans towards nature based on their past experiences that create a system of values and principles that can be used and useful in solving environmental problems. Conflicts that occur between humans and nature are the biggest factor in causing environmental problems. The conflict is present due to the lack of human awareness in maintaining and appreciating nature as part of life.

Therefore, in an effort to realize the importance of a harmonious relationship with nature and to realize the values of environmental wisdom, the author of this research gives the title "Ecocriticism in Tere Liye's Rain Novel". The author will analyze the form of environmental damage and the role of humans who are the main factor in the environmental damage that occurs in the novel using Greg Garrard's ecocritical approach. *Ecocriticism* is one of the literary theories that focuses on environmental issues. The study in ecocriticism deals with the mutual relationship between literary works and the environment so that ecocriticism is an assessment of the mutual relationship between humans and nature in a literary work. Greg Garrard's ecocritical approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the needs of this research analysis which refers to the depiction of human relationships and roles regarding the issue of environmental problems that occur against the concept of literary ecocriticism, including: (1) *pollution*, (2) *wilderness,* (3) *apocalypse,* (4) *dwelling,* (5) *animals,* and (6) *earth*.

With the background that has been explained, the author tries to examine the forms of damage and describe the values of environmental wisdom described in the novel Hujan by Tere Liye. The author sees that the novel Rain by Tere Liye contains many misuses of environmental wisdom values by humans, causing an ecological crisis. The impact of the crisis is fatal and even affects the continuity of life on earth. Therefore, according to the author, this research is important as an understanding and learning to avoid similar crises, because it is not impossible that the environmental crisis that occurs in the novel Hujan by Tere Liye also occurs in this life. This research is also expected to be a bridge in order to create a harmonious and harmonious life with nature in order to avoid environmental crises that occur as a result of human actions that are arbitrary towards nature.

METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative research that describes the phenomenon of environmental damage that occurs, done by humans in the novel '*Hujan*' by Tere Liye with Greg Garrard's ecocriticism approach. The data in this research are a collection of excerpts from the main data source, namely the novel '*Hujan*' by Tere Liye which was identified as critical issues regarding environmental problems.

According to Garrard, the focus of literary eco-criticism is to explore ways of imagining and describing the relationship between humans and the environment in all fields as a result of culture. In this case, it traces the development of the movement and explores the following related concepts of literary ecocriticism: (1) *pollution*, (2) *wilderness*, (3) *apocalypse*, (4) *dwelling*, (5) *animals*, and (6) *earth*. Thus, the focus of literary criticism remains on nature and the environment.

The data collection technique in this research utilized a content analysis with a close-reading approach: a detailed examination of the text to identify how environmental themes, issues, and perspectives are presented.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research in the novel '*Hujan*' by Tere Liye, it is found that the form of relations between humans and nature and the impact of these relations as a cause and effect of human behavior in interacting with nature and the environment based on ecocritical studies.

> *"Indeed, the widest definition of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself" (Garrard, 2024, p. 5).*

As Garrard asserts, the relationship between humans and non-humans, including biotic and abiotic components, with various forms of interaction is closely related to ecocritical studies and both have their respective roles. In this novel, the collective view that humans have towards nature and the description of its position as the foundation or foothold of the story.

1. **Representation and Impact of Environmental Damage in the Novel Rain**

    The novel Rain is a novel that discusses the relationship between humans and nature. Nature in this novel is depicted as being affected by several factors, one of which is humans. At the beginning of the story, nature and the environment in Rain looks fine. Environmental damage has been seen, but it is still at a stage that must be watched out for. But slowly, the damage to the environment is getting worse and even threatens human life. The damage is largely influenced by human actions and becomes an ecological crisis. Based on what Greg Garrard said, the concept of ecocriticism includes: (1) *pollution*, (2) *wilderness*, (3) *apocalypse*, (4) *dwelling*, (5) *animals*, and (6) *earth*. However, in the novel Hujan there are only four ecological crises, namely: (1) *pollution*, (2) *apocalypse*, (3) *dwelling*, and (4) *earth*.

    a. *Pollution*

    In the novel Hujan, the causes of environmental pollution occur due to two factors, namely nature and humans. The quotations that describe the form of environmental pollution due to natural factors are as follows.

"Stok makanan berkurang. Distribusi dari sentra pertanian terhambat. Hampir sembilan puluh persen gagal panen, dan petani kesulitan mengolah lahan karena tumpukan abu, berubahnya cuaca, serta hujan asam. Hewan-hewan ternak juga banyak yang mati" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 66).

"Food stocks are reduced. Distribution from agricultural centers is hampered. Nearly ninety percent of crops failed, and farmers had difficulty cultivating land because of the ash piles, changing weather, and acid rain. Many farm animals also died" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 66).

In the excerpt, volcanic ash and acid rain caused by ancient volcanic eruptions caused various kinds of environmental pollution including water, air and soil pollution. As a result of acid rain and volcanic ash, groundwater is polluted and can no longer be consumed, air quality deteriorates, and even the soil can no longer be planted. As a result of the pollution, food supplies became scarce as farmers experienced crop failure and livestock died due to exposure to volcanic ash and acid rain. Not only that, the pollution also claimed many lives due to asphyxiation and starvation. The pollution that humans do is based on the interests of humans themselves. In a bid to turn temperatures warmer, a coalition of subtropical countries is intervening in the stratosphere by shooting sulfur dioxide gas into space. This is done to get rid of billions of tons of sulfur dioxide emissions in the sky due to ancient volcanic eruptions that caused the temperature on earth to drop dramatically. This kind of temperature manipulation is a form of environmental pollution. Garrard (2004) said "*any modification of the environment is a form of contamination*" (p. 70). Garrard said any modification of the environment is a form of pollution. The implementation of the intervention is environmental pollution because it changes the temperature by adding chemical compounds, which should not be done because it can have a negative impact on the environment.

b. *Apocalypse*

A disaster is an extreme condition that threatens and disrupts human life. There are several factors that cause disasters, including natural and human factors. Disasters caused by nature are called natural disasters. Natural disasters occur due to natural activities that are volatile and uncharacteristic. The impact of natural disasters is serious enough to cause an environmental crisis. In rainy novels, there are various natural disasters that cause environmental crises and social crises. The natural disaster was caused by an ancient volcanic eruption that had a huge impact on all life on earth. Not only did it destroy two continents, but it also eliminated ninety percent of the human population as in the following quote.

"Kota indah mereka telah hancur oleh gempa bumi berkekuatan 10 skala Richter. Sedikit sekali dalam catatan sejarah, ada gempa sekuat itu, yang tenaganya mampu menghancurkan benua. Gedung-gedung bertumbangan, jalan raya rebah, penduduk kota berteriak-teriak, berlarian menyelamatkan diri. Suara sirine terdengar memekakkan telinga. Kepul asap—sepertinya telah terjadi kebakaran menyusul gempa barusan—terlihat di mana-mana. Nyaris 90 persen bangunan hancur lebur" (Liye.T, 2016, pp. 29-30).

"Their beautiful city has been destroyed by a magnitude 10 earthquake. Very few times in recorded history has there been an earthquake of such magnitude, the force of which could destroy a continent. Buildings fell, highways collapsed, townspeople screamed, running for their lives. The sound of sirens was deafening. Plumes of smoke - as if there had been a fire following the earthquake - were everywhere. Almost 90 percent of the buildings were destroyed" (Liye.T, 2016, pp. 29-30).

In the excerpt, the earthquake that occurred was a chain effect of ancient volcanic eruptions. The earthquake destroyed entire cities and their contents, claimed many lives, and paralyzed transportation, communication, and accommodation. The earthquake not only disrupts and threatens life but can also wipe out an ecosystem. Not only did the volcanic eruptions cause earthquakes, they also spewed billions of volcanic ash and covered the earth's stratosphere as in the following quote.

"Menyusul letusan gunung kemarin pagi, miliaran emisi gas sulfur dioksida yang sama juga memenuhi lapisan stratosfer. Gas itu sepertinya mulai bekerja, membuat penduduk kota tidur meringkuk kedinginan. Penghuni tenda pengungsian amat beruntung. Tidak semua penduduk bumi punya tempat bermalam yang baik setelah gunung meletus. Jutaan penduduk meninggal karena suhu dingin" (Liye.T, 2016, pp. 29-30).

"Following yesterday morning's mountain eruption, billions of emissions of the same sulfur dioxide gas also filled the stratosphere. The gas seems to have started working, making the city dwellers sleep huddled in the cold. The residents of the refugee camps are very lucky. Not everyone on Earth has a good place to spend the night after a volcano erupts. Millions died from the cold" (Liye.T, 2016, pp. 29-30).

Based on the quote, the volcanic ash that spreads and covers the entire stratospheric layer of the earth causes various problems for humans and the environment. For humans, the ash causes water pollution, damages air quality, decreases the earth's temperature, disrupts food availability, and takes lives due to respiratory problems, cold, and hunger due to food scarcity. As for the environment, the effects of volcanic ash cause a decline in biodiversity and destroy ecosystems. The effect of billions of volcanic ash in the sky also causes the rain that falls to be disastrous and harmful to life as in the following quote.

"Ini bukan hujan biasa, Lail. Ini hujan asam. Dengan besarnya letusan gunung kemarin, kadar asamnya sangat pekat. Tanaman meranggas, semen terkelupas, bebatuan retak. Ini hujan mematikan. Kamu bisa menderita penyakit serius jika terkena air hujannya. Wajah melepuh, rambut rontok" (Liye.T, 2016, pp. 29-54-55).

"This is no ordinary rain, Lail. This is acid rain. With the magnitude of yesterday's mountain eruption, the acid content is very concentrated. Plants are deciduous, cement is chipped, rocks are cracked. This is deadly rain. You can suffer serious illnesses if you are exposed to the rainwater. The face blisters, the hair falls out" (Liye.T, 2016, pp. 29-54-55).

The impact of acid rain is very harmful to life as described in the quote. Acid rain causes corrosion that can not only destroy buildings and the environment but also adversely affect humans. High levels of acid can cause serious health problems for humans. For plants, acid rain not only decimates crops, the rainwater that seeps into the soil can dissolve essential nutrients needed for plant growth and development, making the soil so infertile that it can no longer be planted. Water contaminated by acid rain is no longer drinkable because it is polluted with harmful substances and at the same time kills all life in the water. The various impacts of acid rain not only cause environmental damage, but also destroy the ecosystem of a region.

The chain effect of ancient volcanic eruptions also affects the temperature on the earth's surface. The volcanic ash that covers the stratosphere blocks the sunlight that falls on the earth, causing the temperature to drop dramatically. In some parts of the world, temperatures were even below zero degrees Celsius as the following excerpt illustrates.

"Negara-negara subtropis sudah tiga tahun mengalami musim dingin ekstrem. Suhu di tempat kita hanya berkisar delapan hingga sepuluh derajat Celcius. Itu masih terhitung hangat. Di negara mereka, suhu jatuh

hingga minus lima derajat. Sepanjang tahun, sepanjang bulan, setiap hari 24 jam nonstop. Tiga tahun terakhir mereka mengalami krisis pangan yang serius. Tidak ada gandum atau jagung yang tumbuh di atas salju. Tidak ada hewan ternak yang bisa dipelihara. Produksi susu, keju, semua terhenti total. Penduduk mereka kelaparan" (Liye.T, 2016, pp. 121-122).

"Subtropical countries have had three years of extreme winter. The temperature in our place is only around eight to ten degrees Celsius. That's still relatively warm. In their countries, the temperature drops to minus five degrees. All year long, all month long, every day 24 hours non-stop. The last three years they have had a serious food crisis. No wheat or corn can grow on the snow. No livestock could be raised. Production of milk, cheese, all came to a complete halt. Their people are starving" (Liye.T, 2016, pp. 121-122).

Based on this quote, extreme climate change also causes various environmental damages. Too cold temperatures cause some animal species to perish because they are unable to survive the cold weather. Plants freeze, can no longer photosynthesize due to lack of sunlight and eventually die. The food chain is broken, plant-eating animals die as food sources are depleted and predators follow. In the end, mass extinctions occur, triggering ecosystem damage.

c. Dwelling

Housing is related to settlements, settlements are part of the living environment inhabited by a group of people. This crisis can occur as a result of disharmonious relationships between humans in utilizing nature.

"Sepuluh tahun terakhir kita sudah mengalami krisis air bersih. Catat, enam puluh persen penduduk kesulitan mendapatkan air bersih. Itu berarti enam miliar orang, dan terus bertambah. Di negara tertentu, air bersih memicu perang saudara. Catat, kita juga mengalami krisis energi sejak sumber energi fosil habis. Tambahkan krisis pangan, jutaan hektar gandum, padi, jagung harus ditanam untuk memenuhi kebutuhan sepuluh miliar mulut manusia. Ini kabar buruk. Bumi memiliki daya tampung. Jika manusia terus berkembang biak, kita akan punya masalah serius" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 15).

"In the last ten years, we have experienced a clean water crisis. Take note, sixty percent of the population has difficulty getting clean water. That's six billion people, and counting. In certain countries, clean water has triggered civil war. Note that we are also experiencing an energy crisis since fossil energy sources are running out. Add a food crisis, millions of hectares of wheat, rice, corn must be planted to meet the needs of ten billion human mouths. This is bad news. The earth has a capacity. If humans continue to multiply, we will have serious problems" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 15).

Based on the quote, it is explained that the environmental crisis occurs due to uncontrolled human growth. All of this is because the more people who live on earth, the more resources are needed to fulfill their needs. Human growth that is not accompanied by environmental growth is a serious problem and triggers various environmental crises that will affect human life.

d. Earth

The Earth is part of the solar system and home to all living things. Damage to the earth will affect all life so it is important to protect and preserve it. The environmental crisis caused by damage to the earth not only threatens and disrupts life, but can even lead to extinction for biodiversity and humans. The destruction of the earth in the novel Rain is depicted in the following excerpt.

"Pengumuman resmi akhirnya dilakukan oleh pemerintah di berbagai belahan dunia. Para peneliti telah mengkonfirmasi, intervensi atas emisi gas sulfur dioksida telah mengubah lapisan troposfer dan stratosfer bumi. Awan tidak bisa terbentuk secara alami. Senyawa gas sulfur dioksida dan anti gas yang dilepaskan telah mencegah proses pembentukan awan. Kabar buruknya, bukan hanya hujan tidak akan turun, suhu udara diproyeksikan akan meningkat signifikan beberapa tahun ke depan, musim panas ekstrem mulai

terjadi di negara-negara subtropis, kekeringan bukan satu-satunya masalah serius, melainkan cuaca panas, yang dengan cepat akan menyebar ke negara-negara tropis. Tidak ada yang bisa memastikan hingga kapan kondisi tersebut akan berakhir" (Liye.T, 2016, pp. 268-269).

"Official announcements are finally being made by governments around the world. Researchers have confirmed that the intervention of sulfur dioxide gas emissions has changed the earth's troposphere and stratosphere. Clouds cannot form naturally. The sulfur dioxide and anti-gas compounds released have prevented the cloud formation process. The bad news is that not only will it not rain, air temperatures are projected to rise significantly in the next few years, extreme summer starts to occur in subtropical countries, drought is not the only serious problem, but hot weather, which will quickly spread to tropical countries. No one can be sure how long it will last" (Liye.T, 2016, pp. 268-269).

Based on the quote, the damage experienced by the earth is caused by humans intervening in the stratosphere layer by shooting sulfur dioxide anti-gas into space in order to remove volcanic ash covering the stratosphere layer and restore the temperature to its original state. In the end, this intervention has an impact on the destruction of the troposphere and stratosphere layers, which allows clouds to no longer form because the cloud formation cycle is disrupted by chemical compounds fired into space. Not only that, the Earth's temperature is projected to rise dramatically in the next few years and cause massive global warming that will threaten all life on earth.

"Kita mungkin masih punya kesempatan bertahan hidup di permukaan bumi jika sebelumnya membiarkan musim dingin berlalu secara alami. Tapi, dengan intervensi lapisan stratosfer, kemungkinan itu semakin kecil. Tidak akan ada manusia yang bisa bertahan dalam musim panas ekstrem" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 278).

"We might still have a chance of surviving on the Earth's surface if we had previously let winter pass naturally. But, with the intervention of the stratospheric layer, that possibility is getting smaller. No human will be able to survive the extreme summer" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 278).

The impact of human-caused destruction of the earth in Rain is very serious. In the quote, the global warming that occurs due to the destruction of the troposphere and stratosphere layers due to intervention is the beginning of human extinction. This quote also illustrates that extreme climate change and global warming is one of the signs of serious damage to the earth.

2. The Role of Humans in the Destruction of the Environment in the Novel Rain

It is undeniable that humans are the biggest factor in the destruction of the environment. This is based on the nature of humans as the most perfect creatures among other creatures. As creatures that are said to be perfect, humans feel superior and superior, thus obscuring the value of other existence. Humans feel that they are the ones who determine the order of the ecosystem, either directly or indirectly, making nature as an object, tool, and mere means in fulfilling human needs and interests. In the end, nature only becomes a place to fulfill human lust and greed, no longer seen as one of the most important aspects that must be maintained and preserved for the balance of life on earth.

This misconception is the result of anthropocentrism ethics that views humans as the center of the universe, only humans have value while others are tools in meeting the needs of human life. Keraf asserted (2010:47) that anthropocentrism is a theory of environmental ethics that views humans as the center of the universe system. Humans and their interests are considered the most decisive in the order of the ecosystem and

in the policies taken in relation to nature, either directly or indirectly. Referring to this understanding, it can be emphasized that anthropocentrism is a perspective that only gives value to humans and ignores others so that this perspective is the source of all forms of destructive and arbitrary human attitudes towards other living things, especially the environment. In fulfilling their needs, humans feel that they have full power over others so that all forms of actions can be justified, even though these actions have a negative impact on the surrounding environment.

Anthropocentrism that causes environmental damage is also found in the novel Hujan by Tere Liye. The novel is told that on May 21, 2042, the earth is celebrating the birth of the ten billionth baby. This event was in the spotlight and received different responses from various parties. Some rejoice, some criticize, not a few are apathetic. A strong criticism came from a professor in the middle of his interview on the topic. The professor thought that the event was not worth celebrating because all humans should pay more attention to the impact on the environment and the earth. The more people there are, the more resources are needed to fulfill their needs. All resources come from nature, so if the need significantly increases, it will clearly cause serious damage. In the quote, the anthropocentrism paradigm is reflected in the uncontrollable biological needs of humans, namely reproduction, which causes serious problems for the environment. Such an attitude is a manifestation of anthropocentrism values which view that humans have the highest value and others are only tools and means in fulfilling their lives. Humans are only concerned with their own interests without thinking about the sustainable impact on the surrounding environment.

"My Friend, dengan segala respek.... Umat manusia sejatinya sama seperti virus. Mereka berkembang biak cepat menyedot sumber daya hingga habis, kemudian tidak ada lagi yang tersisa. Saya tidak bicara soal perang, atau epidemi penyakit, itu tidak pernah berhasil menghentikan umat manusia. Puluhan perang berlalu, belasan wabah penyakit mematikan muncul, umat manusia justru tumbuh berlipat ganda. Saya bicara tentang obat paling keras" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 16).

"My Friend, with all due respect.... The human race is like a virus. They multiply rapidly, sucking up resources until they run out, then there's nothing left. I'm not talking about wars, or disease epidemics, those have never managed to stop humanity. Dozens of wars go by, dozens of deadly disease epidemics appear, and humanity just multiplies. I'm talking about the harshest medicine" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 16).

In the next quote, the professor analogizes humans to a virus that can multiply rapidly and consume the resources around it. As we know, a virus is a parasite that can only live by depending on the body of its host. The virus will absorb all the nutrients of its host's body until the host is damaged, even dead. The analogy of humans as a virus is based on the greedy nature of humans. Humans are the virus, and the earth is the host. In fulfilling their needs, humans always suck up natural resources, even destroying them, making the earth suffer because nature is one of the supports of life on earth. The destruction of nature is a sign of the destruction of the earth and if this continues it is not impossible that the earth will die. Human gluttony and greed are influenced by anthropocentrism. This is emphasized by Keraf (2010: 49) who argued that the anthropocentrism perspective causes humans to exploit and deplete nature in order to fulfill their interests and needs, without paying enough attention to the preservation of nature.

"Konferensi Tingkat Tinggi mengenai perubahan iklim baru saja mengalami deadlock. Delegasi dari negara-negara subtropis memilih meninggalkan ruangan konferensi. Mereka tetap pada rencana awal.

Melakukan intervensi pada lapisan stratosfer yang ditentang mati-matian oleh negara-negara tropis" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 121).

"The High Level Conference on climate change has just reached a deadlock. *Delegates from subtropical countries chose to leave the conference room. They stuck to their original plan. Intervening in the stratosphere, which tropical countries desperately opposed" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 121).*

Based on this quote, the anthropocentrism paradigm plays a role in influencing humans to take actions that can be bad for the environment, the debate between heads of state from subtropical countries and heads of state from tropical countries was triggered by a difference of opinion regarding the implementation of stratospheric interventions to improve the climate that is getting worse. Heads of state from subtropical countries are adamant that the intervention must be done and accuse heads of state from tropical countries of refusal because their region is not experiencing the worst impacts of climate change rather than that the intervention itself is likely to have a negative impact on the earth. The decision taken by heads of subtropical countries to intervene to improve the climate without caring about the future impact on the earth is one part of the anthropocentrism perspective. Human interests must be prioritized above all else without regard to other conditions. This is also a manifestation of human superiority over nature, which assumes that humans are superior to nature and have the right to control everything at their own will. This superiority is inseparable from the view of anthropocentrism which states that the position of humans is higher and more honorable than other created beings because humans are the only free and rational *being* (Keraf, 2010, p. 53).

"Koalisi negara-negara subtropis secara resmi menerbangkan belakang pesawat ulang alik ke angkasa, melepas anti gas sulfur dioksida di lapisan stratosfer" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 142).

"The coalition of subtropical countries officially flew the back of the space shuttle into space, releasing anti-gas sulfur dioxide in the stratosphere" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 142).

In the quote, the *anthropocentrism* paradigm has become the collective view of the people in Tere Liye's Rain novel, as seen when the intervention was finally carried out as in the quote. The heads of state of the coalition of subtropical countries no longer think about the impact that will arise from the intervention. The indifference to each other as described in the quote makes environmental conditions worsen. In the end, heads of state only care about the interests of their respective countries.

"Cepat atau lambat, semua negara hanya peduli dengan penduduknya masing-masing. Itu berarti, semua negara pada akhirnya meluncurkan pesawat ulang-alik. Intervensi itu akan dilakukan di seluruh dunia. Saat itu terjadi, baru kita akan tahu dampaknya. Apakah bumi kembali pulih seperti sebelum gunung meletus, atau dampak buruknya yang terjadi, iklim dunia menjadi tidak terkendali" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 181).

"Sooner or later, all countries only care about their own population. That means all countries will eventually launch the space shuttle. The intervention will take place all over the world. When that happens, we will know the impact. Will the earth recover to the way it was before the volcano erupted, or will it have a devastating impact, with the world's climate becoming uncontrollable" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 181).

As a paradigm that views human interests above all else, anthropocentrism is clearly selfish because it only prioritizes human interests. The interests of other living beings, as well as the universe as a whole, are not a moral consideration for humans. *"Even if moral considerations are given, humans are egocentric: for the sake*

of human interests." (Keraf, 2010, p. 49). Human behavior influenced by selfishness in the anthropocentrism paradigm is also illustrated in the following quote.

> *"Lail hanya diam, memperhatikan. Dalam suasana paceklik yang semakin mengenaskan, jumlah penduduk yang meminta agar pesawat ulang-alik berisi anti gas sulfur dioksida dikirim ke angkasa semakin banyak. Mereka tidak lagi peduli soal akibat jangka panjang dari intervensi itu Mereka hanya peduli, besok mereka makan apa?" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 217).*

> *"Lail was silent, watching. In an increasingly desperate famine, the number of people requesting that a shuttle filled with anti-gas sulfur dioxide be sent into space is increasing. They no longer care about the long-term consequences of the intervention. They only care, what will they eat tomorrow?" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 217).*

The relentless snowfall in tropical countries over the past few months has caused crops to fail, livestock to die and food stocks to dwindle. Many people have died from cold and hunger. This food crisis has prompted people to force the government to intervene as subtropical countries have done. For them, their stomachs were more important than the adverse environmental impacts of the interventions. It is clear that the actions that people take against the environment by forcing the government to intervene so that the climate returns to normal are based on selfishness, which is only concerned with their own interests.

The anthropocentric paradigm is also based on the chain of life system (*the great chain of being*), Keraf (2010, p. 52-53) stated that humans are at the top of the chain of creation, so they are considered superior to other creations. Every lower creation is intended for the benefit of a higher creation, as in the following quote.

> *"Dalam skala tertentu, keputusan itu lebih karena alasan politis Menghentikan kerusuhan, mogok total. Yang jika dibiarkan, itu akan lebih dulu menghancurkan kita sebelum salju melakukannya. Sekali keputusan telah dibuat, maka tidak ada lagi yang bisa dilakukan untuk mencegahnya. Saya menghimbau agar penduduk tetap tertib, menunggu di rumah masing-masing, semoga pesawat ulang-alik itu membawa kabar baik. Kita tidak akan memperbaiki apa pun dengan keributan" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 221).*

> *"To a certain extent, the decision was more for political reasons to stop the riots, the general strike. Which, if left unchecked, will destroy us before the snow does. Once the decision has been made, then nothing else can be done to prevent it. I urge the population to remain orderly, wait in their homes, hopefully the shuttle will bring good news. We won't fix anything with noise" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 221).*

In the quote, the decision to intervene was solely for political gain. The government ultimately took the decision to stop the riots committed by the people which had an impact on the stability of the country. Although it was rejected, the decision was final and could no longer be prevented. In the end, the environment, which is below humans in the chain of life, was sacrificed for the benefit of a higher creation, namely humans. In the same way, sulfur dioxide intervention caused by humans, it is projected that the temperature will continue to rise and trigger human extinction. The earth will no longer be habitable as the rise in temperature causes fatal damage to the ecosystem. No more life will be able to survive the extreme heat.

In the end, the role of humans in the destruction of the environment in the novel Hujan by Tere Liye is based on the anthropocentrism paradigm which views that humans are the center of the universe and have a great influence in their decisions and actions in damaging the environment and even leading to extinction on earth.

3. Values of Environmental Ethics in the Novel Rain

Environmental ethics is a manifestation of human concern for the increasingly alarming environmental conditions. Environmental ethics contains the moral relationship between humans and the environment in maintaining a balance between the two. Humans must realize that the environment has an equally important position, not lower than one another, so that they can behave better in dealing with the environment. Environmental ethics demands that the same ethics and morality that apply to human social communities also apply to biotic or ecological communities.

Respect for nature is a basic principle that must be carried out as a moral obligation towards the universe. Humans are part of nature so it is appropriate that nature has the right to be respected. Keraf argued (2010:168-169) that humans have the obligation to respect the rights of all living things to exist, live, grow, and develop naturally in accordance with the purpose of their creation. So, as a concrete manifestation of that respect, humans need to maintain, care for, guard, protect and preserve them. In the novel Hujan, the manifestation of respect for nature, love and care for nature, and cosmic solidarity is illustrated in the following quotation.

"Universitasku menolak secara resmi rencana itu. Secara sederhana intervensi itu sama seperti seember air diberi tawas, airnya menjadi jernih, bisa digunakan. Tapi ini bukan seember air, melainkan lapisan udara seluruh bumi. Tidak bisa dikontrol, apalagi diminimalisasi dampaknya" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 132).

"My university officially rejected the plan. In simple terms, the intervention is like a bucket of water given alum, the water becomes clear, usable. But this is not a bucket of water, but the entire earth's air layer. It cannot be controlled, let alone minimized the impact" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 132).

In this excerpt, Esok explains that he and his entire university openly reject stratospheric interventions decided by anyone. Esok argued that such intervention could have a negative impact on the environment. According to him, manipulating the climate by intervening is very risky, the worst possibility is that the climate becomes uncontrollable and destroys the order of ecosystems on earth. Esok's firmness in rejecting the intervention reflects the principle of *respect for nature*. For Esok, even though the intervention has never been done and we do not know the consequences, if there is a possibility of adverse effects on nature, it is not worth it. Nature should be preserved and protected in order to maintain the balance of the ecosystem, and any action that could damage nature should be avoided.

Humans as moral actors who have the freedom to act morally, have obligations and responsibilities towards the condition of the universe, its integrity, existence, and sustainability. *"The principle of moral responsibility requires humans to take initiatives, efforts, virtues, and real joint actions to protect the universe with everything in it."* (Keraf, 2010: 169). With this responsibility, humans should be able to act more morally towards nature and avoid all forms of actions, either directly or indirectly, that can harm nature. Humans are also expected to play an active role in maintaining and preserving the surrounding nature. The real form of human responsibility towards nature in maintaining and preserving nature in the novel Hujan by Tere Liye is found in the following quotation.

"Berbagai konferensi tingkat tinggi telah dilakukan. Tapi itu tidak efektif. Tiongkok, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, dan Bangladesh, empat puluh tahun terakhir tumbuh sangat cepat. Manusia tidak seperti

populasi hewan yang bisa dikontrol—yeah, dengan segala respek. Tiongkok misalnya, rezim kuat itu bahkan terpaksa mengubah kebijakan satu bayi untuk setiap keluarga" (Liye.T, 2016. p. 16).

"Various high-level conferences have been held. But they are not effective. China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the last forty years have grown very fast. Humans are not like animal populations that can be controlled-well, with all due respect. China, for example, the powerful regime was even forced to change its policy of one baby per family" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 16).

In the excerpt, the regulation of one baby for each family by the Chinese government was carried out in order to suppress massive population growth. An uncontrolled increase in human population can cause environmental crises in various sectors. The policy or regulation is a form of responsibility of the Chinese government in controlling the population growth of its nation. They realize that uncontrolled population growth can be bad not only for the sovereignty of the country but also for the sustainability of the ecosystem. Massive population growth can lead to pollution, loss of green open spaces and even biodiversity extinction. All of this is of course very detrimental to nature.

The principle of living simply and in harmony with nature emphasizes the value, quality, and way of living well with nature. This principle is considered important in preserving nature because humans are required to live by utilizing nature as needed. Nature is not an object of exploitation and satisfying the interests of human life. In the novel Rain by Tere Liye, living simply and in harmony with nature is depicted in various ways, such as in the following quotation.

"Dua tahun setelah bencana itu, pabrik manufaktur sempurna pulih. Mereka berlomba-lomba menggiringkan tablet setipis kertas HVS, layar hologram, kulkas yang bisa berpikir, perangkat listrik nirkabel, mesin pembersih ruang otomatis, dan berbagai peralatan dengan teknologi maju" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 96).

"Two years after the disaster, manufacturing plants were perfectly recovered. They raced to shepherd tablets as thin as HVS paper, holographic screens, thinking refrigerators, wireless electrical devices, automatic room cleaning machines, and various appliances with advanced technology" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 96).

The quote illustrates that technology has developed rapidly. This allows the substitution of raw materials that are environmentally friendly as in the aforementioned. The use of holographic tablets in writing can minimize the use of paper which allows the act of cutting down trees to be reduced and the use of electric fuel can reduce air pollution. Both of these are forms of the principle of living simply and in harmony with nature, by minimizing dependence and utilizing the needs of resources from nature in order to preserve the surrounding environment.

The principle of democracy and the principle of moral integrity are interconnected. The principle of democracy refers to the public policies issued while the principle of moral integrity relates to the attitudes and moral behavior of public officials. Public officials who have moral integrity in themselves will not abuse power for personal interests and will have an impact with policies that refer to the public interest. In relation to the environment, the policy guarantees that the government must be accountable for being environmentally friendly and not harming the environment. The principle of democracy and the principle of moral integrity are illustrated in the following quote.

"Sejak deadlock pertama KTT perubahan iklim dunia, pemimpin dunia yang masih mempercayai ilmuwan dibanding insting politik, atau kepentingan jangka pendek, secara diam-diam telah berkumpul, membentuk konsorsium rahasia beberapa tahun lalu. Mereka memutuskan mendanai proyek pembuatan kapal. Mereka bersiap atas skenario terburuk tersebut" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 278).

"Since the first deadlock of the world climate change summit, world leaders who still trust scientists over political instincts, or short-term interests, have secretly gathered, forming a secret consortium several years ago. They decided to fund a shipbuilding project. They prepared for the worst-case scenario" (Liye.T, 2016, p. 278).

Heads of state who still believe that nature is an important part of life decided to create a consortium to find solutions to solve problems without doing anything that could damage the environment. By putting aside the political interests of their countries, they strongly reject interventions that only bring temporary benefits but will have worse consequences afterwards. The attitude of these heads of state is a manifestation of the principles of democracy and the principle of moral integrity by determining policies that favor the environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research related to ecological criticism of this study, it can be concluded that the environmental damage that occurs in the novel Hujan by Tere Liye is mostly influenced by humans who act arbitrarily towards nature. Based on Greg Garrard's concept of ecocriticism, the representation of environmental damage in the novel Rain is divided into four ecological critiques, namely: (1) *pollution*, (2) *apocalypse,* (3) *dwelling*, and (4) *earth*. The impact that occurs from environmental damage causes damage to ecosystems and even leads to extinction.

In the novel Hujan, humans play a key role in harming the environment through decisions and actions that reflect the belief that humans are the most important beings, and their needs must always come first. This mindset, known as anthropocentrism, is central to the environmental damage in the story. The novel highlights important ethical values, illustrating how people should treat nature with respect, take responsibility for its preservation, live in balance with it, and act with honesty. Unfortunately, many of these values are neglected in the story.

This research is to enhance the field of literary critique, especially within ecocriticism, by enlightening readers about ecological concerns. It underscores the significance of comprehending and safeguarding our natural world, while advocating for a symbiotic and harmonious interaction between humanity and the environment The research also aims to inspire scholars, students, and readers to reflect more deeply on these important issues.

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Deconstructing Power Relation in An Illustrated Children's Storybook
How Turtle Got His Shell, Why Tiger Can't Climb Trees

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"Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees,
to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people."
— Isaiah 10:1-2 (NIV)

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the power relations present in the children's narrative *"How Turtle Got His Shell, Why Tigers Can't Climb Trees"* through the framework of Michel Foucault's concepts regarding power, discipline, and resistance. The research utilized a qualitative approach, encompassing meticulous textual analysis and content examination, to discern and evaluate occurrences of power-related issues portrayed within the tale. Additionally, the illustrative components pertinent to these critical themes were subjected to scrutiny. By categorizing elements of power and resistance in a binary framework, the study affords a nuanced comprehension of the interplay between these factors within the narrative. The findings reveal: **1)** Both narratives exemplify the manner in which power is manifested through hierarchical systems and regulatory practices, while simultaneously highlighting the intrinsic resistance that emerges within these power structures. **2)** The selective distribution of knowledge in *"How Turtle Got His Shell, Why Tiger Can't Climb Trees"* exemplifies Foucault's assertion that knowledge is intertwined with power, whereby those in positions of authority utilize it to uphold control alongside resistance. **3)** The narratives reflect the dynamics of power relations in multicultural contexts, where dominant and subordinate groups interact, often leading to both subtle and overt forms of resistance. The findings emphasize the importance of critical engagement with children's stories to understand power dynamics and their impact on young readers. This illustrated children's storybook serves as a poignant example of how children's literature can reflect real-life power struggles and societal issues. This research highlights the need for literature that nurtures a child's development and fosters a healthy sense of responsibility and respect within their communities.

Keyword: *Children's literature, Foucauldian, Power dynamics, Resistance, Multicultural Society*

INTRODUCTION

Every aspect of humans is shaped by the idea of power, which also influences the dynamics of individual communities, society, culture and the global community. In terms of literature, it has the power to share ideas that may affect someone's way of thinking to behave in a constructive manner or otherwise. One of the literary works: children's storybooks, have the power to mold and shape children's minds, behaviors and character as children

frequently imitate their surroundings, including what they see, hear, and experience without a clear normative framework. Many subjects pertaining to conflict in society might be included in a presentation meant for young audiences as a way to prevent youngsters from becoming overly shocked by changes in society. Nevertheless, according to Sahin (2012), in her research titled, *"Reflections of Violence on Children's Books,"* explores how children's literature often incorporates themes of violence and aggressive behavior, raising concerns about its educational value. It emphasizes the importance of presenting such themes in a balanced way to ensure that children learn tolerance, humility, and social awareness. The study employs a documentary screening method to analyze various children's books, highlighting that violent acts are sometimes depicted as effective solutions to conflicts, which could negatively impact a child's moral and emotional development. The paper argues for a collaborative approach among authors, educators, psychologists, and designers to create literature that nurtures a child's growth, supports their mental health, and fosters a healthy sense of responsibility and respect within their communities

 "How a Turtle Got His Shell and Why Tigers Can't Climb Trees" is an example of how the real life human condition is reflected in children's literature, showing the struggle in society between the rulers and the ruled. There is a struggle between the common turtles and the kingly birds in it. In the previous literary research conducted by Nazeer, et al. (2023) titled, *"Power Abuse In The Kite Runner: The Foucauldian Perspective,"* examines how power works using Foucauldian ideas of control and discipline in a contemporary novel. However, it focuses only on this modern novel and does not look at how these concepts appear in traditional stories or folklore. However, in this research, power and resistance in the illustrated children's storybook, *"How Turtle Got Its Shell" and "Why Tigers Can't Climb Trees"* are examined from the perspective of children's literature. Exploring these traditional stories could reveal ways power and resistance are depicted in a multicultural society across this narrative. The analysis of *The Kite Runner* shows how personal relationships and social roles can be forms of power, but it does not explore how power dynamics work in traditional tales. For example, looking at how stories like *"How Turtle Got Its Shell"* use knowledge to influence behavior, could provide new insights. Additionally, there is a gap in studying how Foucauldian ideas of power control, resistance apply to children's literature: fables, in which the portrayal of the characters mimic the real human condition. Addressing this gap could help us understand different types of narratives and how power and resistance are reflected through the storytelling.

 "How Turtle Got His Shell and Why Tiger Can't Climb Trees" is an illustrated children's storybook that was illustrated by Jeff Ebbeler, published by the Shared Reading company and the range of suitable age is between 3-5 years old. *"How Turtle Got His Shell"* is a tale adopted from Papua New Guinea, meanwhile *"Why Tiger Can't Climb Trees"* is from India; however, the story is written in western perspective. Applying Foucault's theory of power to the story reveals the various ways in which power operates within the narrative. The story provides a rich

ground for exploring concepts of *surveillance, discipline, resistance,* and the use of *knowledge* as a form of power. These elements highlight the broader theme: power vs resistance as described by Foucault.

In *"How Turtle Got His Shell and Why Tiger Can't Climb Trees,"* Turtle and Kangaroo steal from King Hornbill's royal garden. Kangaroo escapes, but Turtle is caught and tied up by the guards. Using his wit, Turtle convinces young birds to free him by promising to teach them a wonderful dance. Once free, he slips into the ocean, adopting a gourd as a protective shell, which becomes his permanent feature. Meanwhile, Tiger's attempt to climb trees fails due to his heavy body, adding a humorous twist to the narrative. The story critically explores the abuse of power by King Hornbill, who punishes Turtle harshly for stealing. However, it also highlights resistance against this abuse. Turtle uses his intelligence to outwit his captors and gain freedom, showcasing how cleverness and resilience can triumph over oppressive authority. This dynamic illustrates Michel Foucault's theory that power is always accompanied by resistance.

In the first story of how turtle got its shell, the critical issue lies in the abuse of power by King Hornbill and the subsequent resistance by Turtle which can be analyzed through Michel Foucault's concepts of power, surveillance, punishment, and resistance. Meanwhile, in the why tigers can't climb trees, lies the theme of limitations and adaptation. Tiger's attempts to climb trees highlight the natural limitations that individuals might face despite their strengths in other areas. Unlike other animals that can climb effortlessly, Tiger's body structure doesn't support tree climbing. This aspect can be analyzed through Foucault's concept of power and resistance by considering how individuals must adapt to their limitations and find their unique strengths.

Power and surveillance are deeply connected in how society controls people. *Power* means the ability to influence others, while *surveillance* is closely watching people to make sure they follow rules. This control often involves *punitive measures*, like punishment, to keep order. Surveillance helps maintain hierarchical power structures, where those at the top have more control. Foucault's idea of *disciplinary power* shows how this control works through both surveillance and punishment. People become *"docile bodies,"* meaning they are trained to follow rules because they know they are being watched. *Knowledge* and *power* are interconnected when knowledge is used to control and shape behavior.

On the flip side, people can resist and act independently, showing their ability to make their own choices despite these controls. Resistance involves challenging *authority*, and *agency* is the power to act freely. Even though surveillance and *hierarchical structures* try to make people conform, their ability to resist and act independently provides a counterbalance. The idea of *panopticism*, where people are always aware they might be watched, shows how constant observation can make people behave differently. Overall, while surveillance and power structures aim to control individuals, the capacity for resistance highlights the ongoing struggle between personal freedom and societal control.

Binary Opposition

POWER	RESISTANCE
The hierarchical power structure with Hornbill as the king and other animals being subjected to his authority. *"Power is something exercised, put into action, in relationships – an active relation rather than a possession or static state of affairs"* **(Foucault, 79, 1980)** It aligns with the action done by the eagle and the kangaroo upon showing their superior relationship to belittle the turtle.	The turtle was tied to a tree because he was not old enough to take part in the party. So the storks helped open the turtle's rope to play together.*"Where there is power, there is resistance"* **(Foucault, 95, 1978)** The actions that the Storks did to the Turtle was one of the ways to protest the policy that was set to take part or join the party.

METHOD

Having the issue found in the object of analysis, the study utilized a qualitative method to describe, explain, and argue about the behaviors related to the power issue in the children's storybook, *"How Turtle Got His Shell, Why Tigers Can't Climb Trees."* Prior to collecting the data, close reading was conducted: identifying and annotating instances of the depicted power issue. In addition, content and textual analysis were occupied to analyze the significant issue related illustrations and the selected narrative descriptions in the story. Furthermore, the aspects of *Power* and *Resistance* were organized in binary opposition to be compared and analyzed by using Mitchel Foucault's (1995) theory of Power, "*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison."* Furthermore, the scope of the study is literature by using the approach of power criticism, but it was limited to *surveillance, discipline, resistance,* and the use of *knowledge* to explore the forms of power portrayed in the story. The data were gathered through a series of steps. First, power dynamics were identified, categorized and selected based on the aspects of the limitation. Next, these elements were analyzed within Foucault's theoretical framework. Then they were combined to get the findings to understand how power operates within the narrative. The results of this study enhances the discussion of power in children's literature, providing insights useful for both academic research and educational practice.

DISCUSSION

1. The Power Dynamics in *'How The Turtle Got His Shell'*

The story describes that the birds rule over the land where other animals live together and Hornbill is the king of the land and decides to throw a party when summer starts. He declares, *"We shall feast on foods from my garden. We'll eat pawpaws, plums, plantains, pineapples, and other pleasing foods."* The illustration shows how the Hornbill bird represents authority and dominance, symbolizing strength and control in the animal kingdom, with its towering presence over the turtle and squirrel highlighting the power imbalance between the two characters. Conversely, the turtle and the squirrel symbolize vulnerability and subservience, its small size and

Kangaroo jumped on a watermelon to crack it open.
He climbed up to knock mangoes off a tree.
Turtle opened his mouth, ready to bite into a sweet, juicy mango.

Just then, Hornbill's guards flew by.
"Stop, thieves!"
they shouted.

fearful expression emphasizing this disparity. The interaction between the bird and the turtle and squirrel also reflects the hierarchical structure within the animal kingdom, offering insights into themes of leadership, respect, and the potential for mutual benefit. One morning during the celebration, Turtle and Kangaroo decide to sneak into the party, despite being uninvited, they insist on joining the party. The Hornbill who wants to have a meal with other birds. Fresh fruits are being harvested from his garden, so he decides to have the celebration. He cannot wait to share a ton of delectable, fresh fruits with his buddies later. But in the morning, the tortoise and the kangaroo slip out of sight and into the garden. They have slipped into the orchard before, but they probably do not realize that this will be their final chance to pluck and eat the fruits. *"In multicultural societies, there is a persistent challenge in addressing inequalities that stem from both historical legacies and contemporary discrimination against certain cultural groups."* (Kymlicka, 2001) Will Kymlicka identifies the issue of enduring inequalities in multicultural societies. These inequalities often have deep roots in historical injustices and are perpetuated by ongoing discrimination. This ongoing discrimination can manifest in various forms, such as biased policies, social exclusion, or prejudiced attitudes. As a result, certain cultural groups may continue to face barriers to equality which is similar to the narrative in the story. At this time, flocks of Hornbill birds up above them, *"Just then, Hornbill's guards flew by. 'Stop, thieves!' they shouted" (p. 6).* This action conducted by the birds depicts the form of power which is exercised by the use of surveillance to maintain control and discipline. *"The major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power."* (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). Foucault argues that this creates a state of *"conscious and permanent visibility"* for the ruled. They are constantly aware that they could be watched, leading them to regulate their own behavior automatically. This self-regulation ensures that power is maintained effectively without the need for constant, direct intervention by authorities. Essentially, the Panopticon operates as a mechanism of power that disciplines and controls through the psychological effect of continuous surveillance.

Kangaroo climbed over the fence and got away, but Turtle's legs were as small as plums. He was unable to run fast. The guards pecked him with their beaks. This hurt a lot because, at that time, Turtle had no shell.

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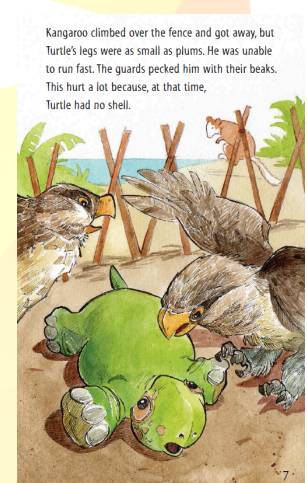
Knowing he gets caught, the turtle falls down in an upside down position. Those who hear this immediately panic and run away. Kangaroo jumps quickly and makes it through the garden fence just fine, but because the turtle has short legs, he cannot run and is kicked by one of the Hornbills. The kick is quite painful as the turtle has no shell to protect it. *"'Tie up the rascal until the feast is over,' (p. 7)* orders Hornbill. The illustration shows a distressed green turtle being pecked by three bird-like guards on a sandy beach with palm trees in the background. The turtle, without its protective shell, is vulnerable and unable to escape due to its small legs. This page aligns with Foucault's theory of punitive power by illustrating how disciplinary measures are imposed on

those who are vulnerable and unable to escape. The birds represent agents of power exerting control and punishment over the defenseless turtle. The absence of the shell signifies the lack of protection, making the turtle susceptible to the punitive actions of the guards. Furthermore, *"Multiculturalism can sometimes lead to cultural clashes where different groups' values and practices come into conflict, creating social tensions that are difficult to resolve."* (Huntington, 1996) In a multicultural society, there is a risk of cultural conflicts that may go up to the surface when the values and practices of different cultural groups do not suit each other. It may lead to tensions that can be challenging to mediate, such clashes can threaten the harmony of the society if not effectively managed.

Similarly, the depiction of the next illustration shows a turtle being dragged by two bird-like guards before a kingly bird perched on a branch in a forest setting. The kingly bird, resembling a hornbill, orders the guards to tie up the turtle until the feast is over, *'That will give me time to decide how to punish him,'"* (p. 8) says the guards. indicating a pending punishment. This page depicts how authority figures *(the kingly bird)* exercise control and discipline over those deemed subordinate *(the turtle)*. *"He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection."* (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). The guards act as the task enforcers of the king's power, demonstrating the hierarchical structure and the use of punishment to maintain order. The turtle's vulnerability and inability to escape highlight the dynamics of power and control within disciplinary systems. Meanwhile, in another page, *"The guards bound Turtle with vines to a tree in the orchard. Then they left to join the party" (p. 9)* shows how the act of bringing someone under control or domination is to ensure obedience and regulate behavior. The illustration shows a turtle bound with vines to a tree trunk in a grassy area with two trees in the background. Three birds are on the ground, chatting to each other, while another bird is perched observing on a branch. The turtle's binding signifies the restriction of freedom and the imposition of power. Foucault argues that the interconnectedness of these instruments creates a pervasive and effective system of disciplinary power. *"The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination."* (Foucault, 1977, p. 170). The constant surveillance *(hierarchical observation)* ensures that individuals are always aware of being watched, leading to self-regulation. The establishment of norms *(normalizing judgment)* provides a standard against which behavior is measured, and the examination process ensures continuous evaluation and accountability. Together, these instruments create a comprehensive disciplinary mechanism that maintains control, regulates behavior, and ensures
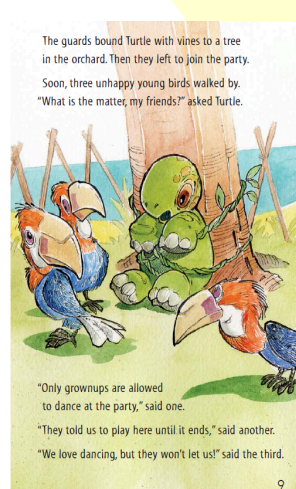
obedience; making it both subtle and powerful in its ability to shape and control individuals' actions and behaviors.

Meanwhile, in the multicultural context, *"Addressing inequalities in multicultural societies requires not just a focus on cultural rights, but also a commitment to redistributive justice to ensure that all groups have equal opportunities and outcomes"* (Phillips, 2007) In achieving equality in multicultural societies involves more than just protecting cultural rights, but also it must focus on redistributive justice, which ensures that resources and opportunities are distributed fairly among all cultural groups. Without this commitment, cultural recognition alone is insufficient to address the deep-rooted disparities that exist in such societies. The tortoise bounces off and is soon tied to a tree. They actually wanted to report this to the king, but for some reason the king always frees the turtle when they drag the turtle before the king. Then for that time, the king orders the turtle to be tied up temporarily so that he can decide on a punishment for the turtle. Finally, all the birds and the king go and enjoy the feast.

In the next page, the illustration shows a turtle in the center with various birds around it. One bird is holding a string tied to a broken gourd on the turtle's back. The turtle asks to be untied and promises to teach the birds a dance. *"The youngsters decided the king was unlikely to find out. They pecked at the vines until Turtle was free." (p. 10).* Turtle's clever plan to escape his punishment by convincing the young birds to free him represents resistance against the oppressive power of Hornbill. Turtle's act of teaching the young birds a dance to gain his freedom represents resistance to the power imposed by Hornbill. *"Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power"* (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). Foucault emphasizes that resistance is an inherent part of power relations and can take various forms, from subtle defiance to open rebellion. It shows how power and resistance always go together; whenever power is exercised, there will always be a pushback or resistance. However, this resistance does not exist outside the power structure; it is part of it. This means that resistance is shaped by and exists within the same system as the power it opposes. So, power and resistance are deeply connected and influence each other. At the same time, negotiation towards the oppression happens, *"I know a dance as wonderful as fried yams,"* said Turtle. *"I can teach it to you, if you'll untie me." (p. 10), "Turtle tricked us!" the young birds squawked." (p. 11).* Turtle's clever use of knowledge to gain his shell and the way he tricks the young birds reflect Foucault's idea that knowledge can be a tool of power. The conversation between the turtle and the young birds results in ideas or knowledge of understanding the situation and condition among them: the knowledge of negotiation and compromise *(trick vs being tricked)*. *"We should admit rather that power produces knowledge... power and knowledge directly imply one another" (Foucault, 1978, p. 27).* It means that power and knowledge are closely connected. Power does not just control or influence people; it also helps create knowledge. In other words, knowledge is not just a neutral or independent idea; it's affected by the power
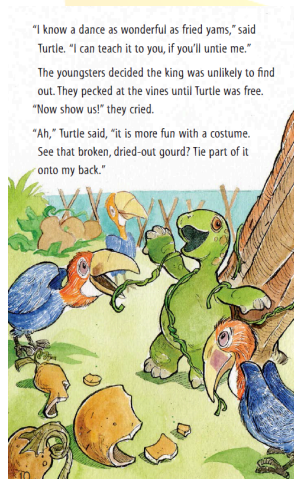
structures in society. At the same time, the knowledge individuals have, also helps maintain those power structures, so, power and knowledge are linked and influence each other.

2. **The Power Dynamics in *'Why Tiger Can't Climb Trees'***

In the other part of the story, *'Why Tiger Can't Climb Trees'* shows how power operates in a society in which one culture is dominating the other. *"Resistance to multicultural policies is frequently based on the assumption that cultural differences are inherently divisive, leading to the marginalization of minority communities"* (Parekh, 2006) It highlights a common assumption that cultural differences are inherently divisive and that multiculturalism could lead to social fragmentation. This belief often results in resistance to multicultural policies and the marginalization of minority communities, as these groups are seen as threats to social unity rather than contributors to the existing society. The illustration shows a tiger and a cat moving stealthily through a green environment with plants and trees in the background. The tiger, with its orange fur and black stripes, is following the gray cat. The text indicates that the cat is teaching the tiger how to watch and follow an enemy quietly. *"Cat showed Tiger how to fix his eyes on an enemy and then follow him as quietly as a falling leaf. After hours of practice, Tiger knew how to watch." (p. 15)* This illustration supports Michel Foucault's theory of punitive power by illustrating the dynamics of surveillance and control. The cat, representing a mentor or authority figure, teaches the tiger the skills of observation and stealth, which are essential for maintaining power and control. The tiger's learning process symbolizes the internalization of disciplinary techniques, highlighting how power is exercised through training and surveillance. The green environment with plants and trees adds to the sense of secrecy and the hidden nature of surveillance, emphasizing the subtle and pervasive ways in which power operates. *"The gaze is alert everywhere: 'You must be watched, you must be known, you must be kept under surveillance.'"* (Foucault, 1977, p. 195) In Foucault's idea, the *"gaze"* means that people are always being watched and monitored. It is like being under continuous monitoring, where someone is always keeping an e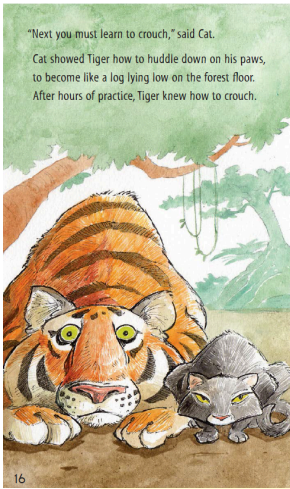ye on you. This concept can be related to the way Cat taught Tiger to observe his enemy closely and silently, just like a leaf falling without making a sound. After lots of practice, Tiger learned how to watch carefully and unobtrusively. Both ideas emphasize the importance of careful and constant observation, whether it's in a society where everyone is being watched or in a situation where being unnoticed while observing is crucial.
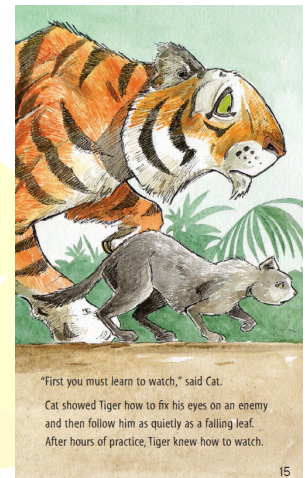
The next illustration portrays a tiger lying down with its head up, looking forward, and a cat in a crouching position next to the tiger. Both animals are facing the viewer, and the background consists of green foliage. The text shows the cat teaching the tiger how to crouch and huddle down on its paws. *"Cat showed Tiger how to huddle down on his paws, to become like a log lying low on the forest floor. After hours of practice, Tiger knew how to crouch." (p. 16)* This scene supports Michel Foucault's theory of punitive power by illustrating the dynamics of

surveillance and control. The cat, representing a mentor or authority figure, teaches the tiger the skills of crouching and stealth, which are essential for maintaining power and control. The tiger's learning process symbolizes the internalization of disciplinary techniques, highlighting how power is exercised through training and surveillance. In cultural context, *"Resistance is not only about rejecting the dominant culture but also about reclaiming the spaces where marginalized voices can speak and be heard, creating new forms of cultural expression"* (Hall, 1997) It emphasizes that resistance by marginalized groups goes beyond simply rejecting the dominant culture. It involves reclaiming spaces where these groups can express themselves freely and create new cultural forms that reflect their experiences and identities. This process of reclamation is vital for amplifying marginalized voices and ensuring they are heard in a society dominated by the dominant culture. The green foliage adds to the sense of secrecy and the hidden nature of surveillance, emphasizing the subtle and pervasive ways in which power operates. *"Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise."* (Foucault, 1977, p. 170) Foucault's idea about discipline is that it shapes people into specific roles, treating them as both subjects being controlled and tools for enforcing control. This is similar to how Cat taught Tiger to crouch down and blend in with the forest floor, making him almost invisible. After much practice, Tiger mastered this skill, showing how discipline can transform one's behavior to fit particular needs. Both concepts highlight how discipline not only changes how individuals act but also how they are perceived by others, making them fit into certain roles or expectations.

The illustration shows a tiger and a cat by a stream in a forest setting. The tiger is in the background, watching the cat, which is drinking water from the stream. The text indicates that the cat, after teaching the tiger, feels tired and ready for a nap, while the tiger has grown hungry and is watching the cat with potential predatory interest. This scene depicts the dynamics of surveillance and control. The cat, representing a mentor or authority figure, has taught the tiger essential skills, but now the tiger's hunger symbolizes the potential for power reversal. The tiger's attentive gaze towards the cat highlights the constant surveillance and the underlying threat of power dynamics. The forest setting adds to the sense of secrecy and the hidden nature of surveillance, emphasizing the subtle and pervasive ways in which power operates. *"Tiger watched Cat, until Cat stopped to sip water at a stream. Then Tiger crouched. Then . . . Tiger sprang!" (p. 18)* Foucault's idea that *"where there is power, there is resistance"* suggests that resistance is always connected to the power it opposes, never separate from it. *"Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power."* (Foucault, 1990, p.
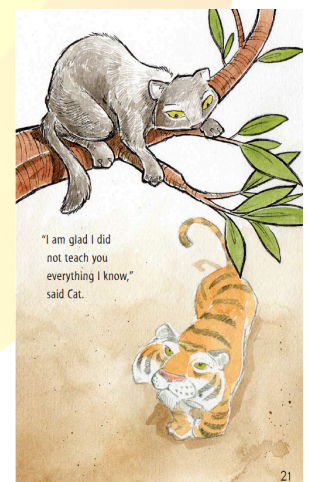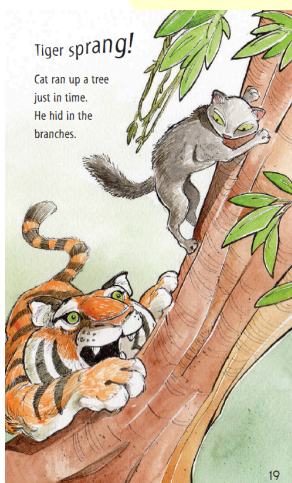
95) This can be seen in the story where Tiger watches Cat closely and, once Cat pauses for a drink, Tiger crouches and then springs into action. Tiger's response to Cat's presence and actions demonstrates how resistance or response is directly tied to the source of power or control. In both cases, Tiger's actions are a direct reaction to Cat's behavior, showing how resistance is not independent but rather a part of the ongoing interaction with power.

The illustration shows a cat perched on a tree branch looking down at a tiger on the ground. The tiger is gazing up at the cat. "*I am glad I did not teach you everything I know,' said Cat," (p. 21)* said Cat. The portrayal of the dynamics of knowledge and control can be seen through The cat, representing an authority figure, retains certain knowledge, maintaining power over the tiger. The tiger's position on the ground, looking up at the cat, symbolizes subordination and the hierarchical nature of power. The cat's decision to withhold information highlights the strategic use of knowledge to exert control and maintain dominance. The forest setting adds to the sense of secrecy and the hidden nature of power dynamics, emphasizing how control is maintained through selective dissemination of knowledge. *"Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to make itself true."* (Foucault, 1980, p. 27) Foucault's idea that *"knowledge linked to power... has the power to make itself true"* means that knowledge is not just about facts but also about how it is used to establish and reinforce power. In the story, Cat's comment, *"I am glad I did not teach you everything I know,"* reflects this notion. Cat's selective sharing of knowledge shows how controlling the flow of information can influence power dynamics. By holding back some knowledge, Cat maintains a position of authority and control, illustrating how power can shape what is considered true or important.

In the end of the story, the illustration shows a tiger leaping up the trunk of a tree towards a grey cat that has climbed higher into the branches to avoid being caught by the Tiger. *"Tiger sprang! Cat ran up a tree just in time. He hid in the branches,"* (p. 19) *"Cat ran up a tree just in time. He hid in the branches. 'It is impossible for me to reach you!' said Tiger. 'Come down!'"* (p. 20) The tiger, representing a figure of authority or power, attempts

to capture the cat, which symbolizes a subordinate or subject. The cat's quick escape into the tree branches highlights the potential for resistance and evasion within power structures. *"The acts of everyday resistance by marginalized groups, from subtle non-compliance to overt defiance, are crucial in challenging and destabilizing the dominant cultural hegemony"* (Scott, 1985) It shows how marginalized groups often engage in "everyday resistance," which includes a range of actions from subtle non-compliance to open defiance. These subtle acts of resistance hold significant power because they continuously challenge the authority of the dominant culture in a manner that is enduring and hard to suppress. Over time, they can destabilize the cultural hegemony that seeks to control and assimilate these groups.The tiger's leap signifies the exertion of power, while the cat's successful evasion emphasizes the limits and challenges of maintaining control. The forest setting adds to the sense of secrecy and the hidden nature of power

dynamics, emphasizing how control is constantly negotiated and contested. *"The art of punishing, in the regime of disciplinary power, is aimed neither at expiation, nor even precisely at repression. It tries to mark the body of the convict with the signs of power."* (Foucault, 1977, p. 182) Foucault's idea about the art of punishing in disciplinary power is that it is not just about punishment or control but about making a visible mark of power on the individual. This is reflected in the story where Cat climbs a tree to escape Tiger, who is frustrated and demands he come down. Cat's action of hiding and Tiger's inability to reach him symbolize how power can create visible boundaries and barriers. By hiding in the tree, Cat demonstrates a way of marking his position of control, while Tiger's challenge represents the struggle against the established power, showing how disciplinary power operates through creating and maintaining these power dynamics.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the stories *"How The Turtle Got His Shell"* and *"Why Tiger Can't Climb Trees"* through the lens of Michel Foucault's theories on power dynamics reveals the complex ways in which authority, discipline, and resistance manifest in both narratives. In *"How The Turtle Got His Shell,"* the Hornbill's use of surveillance and punishment to control and discipline the turtle illustrates the exercise of power through hierarchical structures. The turtle's vulnerability and subsequent resistance by tricking the young birds into freeing him underscore the interplay between power and resistance, a central theme in Foucault's work. Similarly, in *"Why Tiger Can't Climb Trees,"* the relationship between the cat and the tiger reflects the dynamics of knowledge and control. The cat's selective dissemination of knowledge and the tiger's eventual realization of the limits of his power emphasize Foucault's notion that power is closely tied to knowledge and that resistance is an inherent part of any power structure. Both stories show that power is not just imposed from above; it is continuously shaped and challenged through various forms of resistance, ranging from subtle defiance to open opposition. These narratives highlight the complexities of power relations, particularly in multicultural contexts where dominant and subordinate cultures interact. In the end, the stories reveal that power and resistance are inherently linked, and both are essential for fully grasping the complexities of social dynamics.

Conducting a qualitative approach, including close reading: content analysis and illustration, the study effectively captures the nuances of power dynamics in a multicultural society context. By examining the aspects of power *(the dominance)* and resistance *(the marginalized)* in binary opposition, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how these power issues interact and influence each other.

The findings of this study contribute to the broader discussion of power in children's literature, offering valuable insights for academic research and educational practice. The paper advocates for a collaborative approach among authors, educators, psychologists, and designers to create literature that supports children's growth as well as the support of the role of parenting for children's mental health, and sense of responsibility within their communities.

In conclusion, *"How Turtle Got His Shell, Why Tigers Can't Climb Trees"* serves as a poignant example of how children's literature can reflect real-life power struggles and societal issues. By examining the power structures, the study emphasizes the importance of critical engagement with children's stories to foster a deeper understanding of power dynamics and their impact on young readers as children tend to mimic their surroundings.

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Research Article

Cultural Identity in Contemporary Children's Literature:
A Jungian Archetypal Analysis of *A Lucky Chinese New Year*

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> *"Start children off on the way they should go, and*
> *even when they are old they will not turn from it"*
> — **Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)**

ABSTRACT

This research investigates how archetypes within children's literature not only reinforce cultural traditions and values in collective unconsciousness of individuals, but also emphasize the role of family unity and generational continuity in maintaining cultural heritage in a modern, globalized context in the preservation of cultural identity within the children's book *"A Lucky Chinese New Year."* By analyzing the Hero, Child, and Caregiver archetypes as embodied by the characters, the primary Jungian theory used in the analysis is Carl Jung's *Archetypal* Theory (1959), particularly focusing on the *collective unconscious* and *universal archetypes*. Meanwhile, *Confucianism* theory by Tu Weiming (1985) was used as the secondary theory to discuss cultural context. The study reveals how these archetypes support the themes of cultural preservation, renewal, and family unity. As the results: **1)** Lily's actions embody the *Hero's journey*, demonstrating how even small actions by young individuals can significantly contribute to maintaining cultural traditions; This reinforces the idea that cultural preservation is a collective effort that transcends age. **2)** The *Child archetype* in Lily symbolizes new beginnings and the continuity of cultural practices across generations, emphasizing the role of the younger generation in sustaining and revitalizing traditions and reflecting a cyclical pattern of cultural renewal. **3)** The *Caregiver archetype*, embodied by Lily's family, highlights the importance of family support in upholding and transmitting cultural heritage. Together, these archetypes illustrate the interconnectedness of individual and collective efforts in creating narratives with similar themes to ensure the cultural traditions are preserved and passed down to future generations; this demonstrates the powerful role of children's literature in cultural preservation.

Keyword: *Children's Literature, Archetype, Jungian, Carl Gustav Jung, Cultural Identity*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural traditions are pivotal in defining the identity and belief systems of communities globally. In China where Chinese New Year was first initiated is a deeply embedded cultural celebration, rich in traditions, taboos, and symbols that represent the values and aspirations of the people. Chinese New Year, also known as Lunar New Year, celebrated all around the world beyond borders with the wish of a good harvest to begin the

spring, has evolved in the modern era with other meanings, symbolizing luck, health and prosperity. Unlike other New Year's celebrations, the Chinese New Year involves a unique set of rituals, such as refraining from cleaning the house, cutting hair, or breaking objects, as these actions are believed to drive away good fortune. *"The unconscious is not merely a repository of repressed memories but a dynamic entity, housing archetypes that influence our thoughts, emotions, and actions in profound and often unnoticed ways."* (Jung, 1960, p. 62) According to Jung, the collective unconscious brings forth archetypal patterns that have been passed down through generations; even though individuals are explicitly unaware of the symbolic significance of their actions, they are nonetheless participating in the celebration that is deeply rooted in the unconscious mind, providing shared cultural values and beliefs. This connection to the unconscious ensures that these traditions are not only maintained but also deeply felt and meaningful, as they resonate with universal human experiences stored in the psyche.

Children's literature, which includes stories, books, magazines, and poems often acts as a medium, designed for passing cultural narratives to future generations, specifically young readers . *"A Lucky Chinese New Year,"* a children's book written by Susan Markowitz Meredith and illustrated by Julie Kim, offers a vivid portrayal of these cultural traditions through the eyes of a young girl named Lily. Although the book is concise, consisting of only 10 pages and 170 words, it covers the essence of Chinese New Year traditions and the importance of family in preserving cultural practices. The critical issue of preserving cultural identity and traditions, as depicted in the story, closely mirrors real-life experiences in many families and communities around the world. In today's rapid globalization era, many cultures face the challenge of maintaining their unique traditions while adapting to modern influences. Just as Lily and her family work together to uphold the customs of Chinese New Year, families in various cultures strive to pass down their heritage to younger generations, ensuring that their cultural practices and values are not lost.

Similarly to the story, how Lily repairs the lion costume to ensure the parade continues, families often make efforts to adapt and sustain cultural traditions, even when facing challenges or changes in their environment. This narrative highlights the universal significance of family roles in cultural preservation, reflecting the real-world condition of families who work to keep their cultural heritage alive, despite the pressures of modern life. The story revolves around Lily's anticipation and celebration of the Chinese New Year. She partakes in customary practices such as wearing red, a color symbolizing luck, and receiving a red packet of coins, believed to bring prosperity. The narrative reaches a crucial moment when Lily and her mother repair a torn lion costume, ensuring the success of the traditional lion dance during the New Year parade. This act of mending the costume symbolizes not just a physical repair but also the preservation of cultural continuity and good fortune.

In recent research by Smith and Patel's (2023) titled, *"Cultural Preservation and Identity Formation in Children's Literature: A Jungian Analysis of Archetypes in Global Folk Tales"* provides a comprehensive analysis

of global folk tales through a Jungian lens, it primarily focuses on traditional folk narratives without considering contemporary children's literature that deals with cultural celebrations in modern settings. This leaves a gap in understanding how current children's books, which reflect both traditional and modern cultural elements, utilize archetypes to influence cultural identity and preservation. Meanwhile, this research aims at filling that gap by analyzing how archetypes in contemporary children's literature, specifically in the context of Chinese New Year celebrations, contribute to cultural continuity and identity formation in today's rapidly changing world. By focusing on a specific cultural celebration and its representation in modern children's literature, this study expands the scope of Jungian analysis and offers new insights into the evolving role of archetypes in cultural preservation.

Through the lens of Carl Gustav Jung's Archetypal theory, *"A Lucky Chinese New Year"* can be analyzed to reveal the deeper psychological and cultural significance embedded within the story. The archetypes of the *Hero*, represented by Lily, the *Child*, and the *Caregiver*, portrayed by her family, highlight the universal themes of tradition, renewal, and the supportive role of family. This analysis highlights the book's importance in children's literature while also reflecting real-world cultural dynamics, making it a valuable resource for both educational and literary study.

One of the most fundamental terms is the archetype itself, which Carl Jung (1959) defined as universal, primordial symbols embedded in the collective unconscious that shape the way individuals perceive and interact with the world. Served as the building blocks of the human psyche, archetypes manifest in various forms, such as characters, symbols, and motifs in literature and myths. For example, in narratives like *"A Lucky Chinese New Year,"* the *Hero, Child*, and *Caregiver* are archetypal figures that represent essential aspects of the human experience, guiding characters through their journeys and reflecting broader cultural values. Jung (1969) described it as a shared part of the unconscious mind that contains the memories, instincts, and experiences common to all humanity. These components are essential because it explains how certain symbols and themes recur across different cultures and time periods. The Hero archetype plays an important role in the collective unconscious that influences storytelling across cultures, featuring a character who experiences a transformative journey. Additionally, cultural symbolism refers to the use of specific symbols within a culture to convey deeper meanings. In Chinese New Year celebrations, the color red is a powerful symbol of luck and prosperity, deeply rooted in the collective unconscious and reflecting the community's shared values. By examining these archetypes, collective unconscious, Hero's Journey, and cultural symbolism; archetypal analysis reveals how literature and cultural practices are interconnected, providing insights into the universal patterns that shape human experience.

In this article, the issues presented in *"A Lucky Chinese New Year,"* are explored on how the narrative aligns with Jungian archetypes and the broader implications for cultural preservation. This analysis seeks to show

how children's literature serves as an effective means for preserving cultural heritage and nurturing a sense of identity in young readers.

Binary Opposition

TRADITION	MODERNITY
The use of the color red, the lion dance, and the giving of red packets symbolize luck and prosperity, reflecting the traditional practices of Chinese New Year. *"It represents the deep-rooted cultural practices, symbols, and archetypes passed down through generations, emphasizing the continuity of cultural identity."* (Jung, 1959)	The challenge of repairing the torn lion costume represents modern disruptions to tradition, requiring adaptation while still striving to maintain cultural continuity, *"symbolizes the changes and challenges brought about by contemporary influences, which can lead to the adaptation or erosion of traditional practices."* (Smith & Patel, 2023)

METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative research design to analyze the children's book *"A Lucky Chinese New Year"* by Susan Markowitz Meredith, guided by Carl Jung's Archetypal theory. The analysis focuses on identifying key archetypes, such as the *Hero, Child*, and *Caregiver* and *cultural symbols* like the color red and the lion dance, to explore how these elements convey cultural values and contribute to the preservation of cultural identity. Data collection involves closely examining the book's narrative and consulting secondary sources on Jungian theory and cultural preservation in children's literature. The analysis will proceed by identifying and interpreting the archetypes and symbols within the story, considering their role in cultural transmission and how they resonate with the collective unconscious. The findings will be compared with existing literature to situate the study within broader academic discussions. The study focuses on a published literary work that is presented in an ensured respectful representation of cultural traditions. The study's scope is limited to the *archetypes* and *cultural symbols*, suggesting avenues for future research with multiple texts or alternative theoretical frameworks. Ultimately, this approach aims at highlighting how children's literature can be a powerful device for cultural preservation and identity formation in a globalizing world.

DISCUSSION

1. **Hero Archetype and Cultural Preservation**

The illustration of Lily admiring her reflection in a mirror while wearing a bright red New Year's outfit subtly introduces the beginning of a hero's journey. The bright red, a color often associated with good luck, also symbolizes energy, power, and courage: qualities essential to a hero. The mirror serves as a symbolic threshold, representing a boundary between Lily's current self and her future self, where she glimpses the hero she is about to become. Her innocent appearance and youthful demeanor suggest that she is at the start of her journey, embodying the archetypal *"innocent hero"* who begins with little experience but has the potential for significant
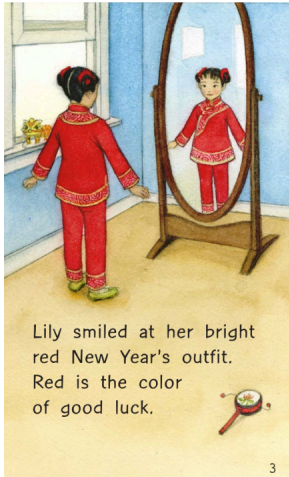
Lily smiled at her bright
red New Year's outfit.
Red is the color
of good luck.

3

growth. The setting, with its warm and comforting colors, represents the *"ordinary world"* she will soon leave behind as she begins an adventure that will require courage, luck, and self-discovery. The Hero archetype in Lily significantly influences the preservation of cultural traditions in the narrative, particularly highlighted in the quote, *"Lily smiled at her bright red New Year's outfit. Red is the color of good luck"* (Meredith, n.d., p. 3). In this instance, Lily's embodiment of the Hero archetype is evident as she actively participates in the cultural rituals of the Chinese New Year. By choosing to wear the traditional red outfit, Lily not only honors the cultural symbolism of red as a color associated with luck and prosperity but also reinforces the importance of maintaining these traditions within her family and community.

Lily's role as the Hero is further underscored by her deliberate engagement with this cultural practice. In Jungian terms, *the Hero archetype often involves a journey or a set of challenges that lead to personal or communal growth* (Jung, 1968, p. 38). By embracing the cultural significance of her red outfit and smiling at her reflection, Lily is not merely following tradition passively; she is actively involved in the perpetuation of cultural values, ensuring that these traditions continue to be meaningful in the modern context. This action symbolizes her contribution to the collective effort necessary to preserve cultural identity, a crucial aspect of the Hero archetype.

Moreover, the Hero archetype in Lily exemplifies the idea that cultural preservation is a dynamic and ongoing process. As a young individual, Lily represents the future of her culture, and her actions in the narrative metaphorically illustrate the role that each new generation plays in sustaining cultural heritage. By embodying the Hero archetype, Lily becomes a conduit through which cultural traditions are not only preserved but also revitalized, guaranteeing their relevance for future generations.

The illustration portrays Lily actively engaging in the process of repairing a colorful lion dance head, a key symbol in many Asian cultural celebrations, while her mother offers guidance. This scene emphasizes Lily's emerging role in the hero archetype, as she takes on a responsibility crucial to the success of a communal event, demonstrating initiative and problem-solving: a hallmark of a hero's journey. The act of gathering materials to fix the lion head, a cultural artifact, signifies her contribution to cultural preservation, ensuring that the traditions and symbols of her heritage are maintained and passed on. The presence of other children in the background, practicing for what is likely a performance, highlights the collective effort in preserving and celebrating cultural traditions. Lily's involvement in the repair process indicates her growing sense of duty and connection to her cultural roots, reflecting a hero's commitment to a cause greater than themselves. This scene captures both the personal growth of the young hero and the importance of cultural preservation through active participation and responsibility.

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The Hero archetype in Lily significantly influences the preservation of cultural traditions in the narrative, particularly through her proactive and problem-solving nature, as highlighted in, *"Quickly, Lily gathered some glue, paper, and paint"* (Meredith, n.d., p. 8). In this moment, Lily embodies the Hero archetype by taking immediate action to solve a problem that threatens the success of an important cultural event: the Chinese New Year parade. *"At the parade, the dancers did a special lion dance to thank Lily and her family."* (Meredith, p. 10) The torn lion costume, which Lily quickly repairs, symbolizes a potential disruption in the continuity of the cultural tradition. By stepping in to fix the costume, Lily ensures that the parade can proceed, thereby preserving a key element of the cultural celebration. In Jungian terms, *"the Hero archetype is often associated with overcoming obstacles and challenges to achieve a greater good."* (Jung, 1968, p. 38) Lily's quick response to the problem reflects the Hero's journey, where she takes on the responsibility of safeguarding her community's cultural traditions. Her actions are not just about fixing a physical object; they represent her role in maintaining the integrity and continuity of the cultural practice. This act of repair is a metaphor for the broader process of cultural preservation, where each generation must address and overcome challenges to keep traditions alive.
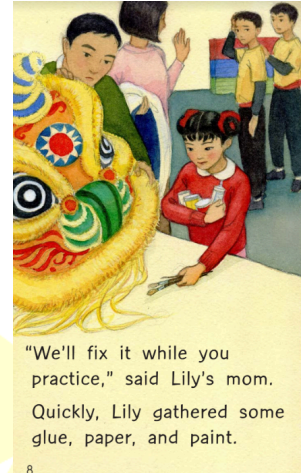
The psyche conflict that arises when Lily discovers that the red color, believed to bring luck, fails to prevent an unexpected negative event, such as the tearing of the lion costume, marks a pivotal moment in her psychological development. This conflict highlights the tension between her conscious belief in the protective power of cultural symbols and the unpredictable realities of life. According to Jung, *"such moments occur when unconscious elements, represented by the unforeseen event, disrupt conscious attitudes and beliefs, forcing an individual to confront deeper truths"* (Jung, 1959, p. 88). The tearing of the costume, despite the symbolic protection of red, can be interpreted as an encounter with the shadow aspect of Lily's psyche: those repressed fears and insecurities that challenge her reliance on luck alone. This confrontation serves as a catalyst for Lily's individuation process, where she begins to integrate the complexities of life into her understanding, moving beyond a simplistic reliance on cultural symbols. Through this experience, Lily learns that (Jung, 1968:238) true resilience lies not in the infallibility of symbols, but in her ability to creatively and resiliently respond to challenges, deepening her connection to her cultural heritage in a more mature and dynamic way.

Furthermore, Lily's role as the Hero in this context emphasizes the collective effort required to sustain cultural traditions. Her initiative to gather materials and repair the costume highlights the importance of active participation and responsibility in cultural preservation. This reinforces the idea that cultural traditions are not passively inherited but require ongoing effort and commitment from individuals, particularly from those who, like Lily, take on the role of the Hero in their communities.

2. Child Archetype and Cultural Renewal

This illustration depicts Lily engaged in a special family dinner, a key cultural ritual that symbolizes the transition from the old year to the new. The scene, with family members gathered around a table filled with traditional foods, highlights the significance of familial bonds and shared celebrations in maintaining cultural heritage. Lily's prominent position in the gathering suggests her emerging role within her family and community, reflecting the hero archetype as she actively participates in these meaningful traditions. Sharing a meal in Chinese tradition at new year's eve context represents unity, continuity, and the passing of cultural values from one generation to the next, with the presence of an elder family member serving as a bridge to the past. The festive decorations and atmosphere further emphasize the celebration of cultural identity, with Lily's involvement indicating her growing

She joined her family for a special dinner. They said goodbye to the old year.

龍馬精神

responsibility as a custodian of these traditions. Through this act, she not only connects with her heritage but also plays a pivotal role in preserving and continuing her culture, which is a primary element of the hero's journey: honoring the past while preparing to carry it into the future. The red banner hanging on the wall with the writing 龍馬精神 is a Chinese idiom that embodies the spirited energy (精神) along with red color that has similar meaning. and ambition of a dragon (龍) and a horse (馬). It symbolizes a dynamic and enterprising spirit, characterized by vigor, aspiration, courage, and determination. This powerful combination of qualities represents the archetypal hero's journey: the drive to overcome challenges, pursue one's goals with unwavering resolve, and embrace innovation and creativity. Inherently, it captures the essence of a strong-willed individual or group striving for greatness.

The Child archetype in Lily significantly reflects the theme of renewal and continuity in *"A Lucky Chinese New Year,"* as evidenced by the quote, *"Lily joined her family for a special dinner. They said goodbye to the old year"* (Meredith, n.d., p. 4). The Child archetype, *"represents new beginnings, potential, and the cyclical nature of life, which is closely tied to the concepts of renewal and continuity"* (Jung, 1969, p. 315). In this context, Lily, as the Child, symbolizes the future of her family's cultural traditions and the ongoing cycle of life that the New Year represents. By participating in the special dinner with her family, where they collectively say goodbye to the old year, Lily embodies the role of the Child who bridges the past with the future. This moment of passing knowledge and tradition from the old year to the new is a symbolic act of renewal, where the family acknowledges the past and prepares to embrace the new opportunities and challenges that the coming year will bring. The Child archetype in Lily reinforces the idea that each new generation plays a crucial role in sustaining and revitalizing cultural practices, ensuring that they are carried forward into the future. Moreover, the act of this celebration signifies saying goodby to the old year and welcoming the new one is a ritual that underscores the

continuity of cultural traditions. As the Child, Lily represents the hope and potential that come with each new beginning, reflecting the cyclical nature of cultural renewal. Her presence at the dinner and participation in this ritual highlight the importance of involving younger generations in cultural practices to ensure that these traditions remain vibrant and relevant across time.

In this illustration, Lily is seen receiving a red envelope filled with coins, a traditional symbol of good luck during the New Year celebration. This act reflects the child archetype, representing innocence, openness, and receptiveness to the blessings and wisdom passed down from older generations. The red envelope, often given to children as a token of prosperity, highlights the themes of renewal and continuity. It signifies the beginning of a new cycle, with Lily embodying the future generation who will carry forward these traditions. Her joyful expression and the gesture of receiving the envelope indicate the passing of cultural values and the hope for a prosperous future. The exchange symbolizes the continuity of cultural practices, as each new year provides an opportunity to renew and reinforce these traditions. Lily's role as the recipient of this gift emphasizes the importance of the younger generation in maintaining and preserving cultural heritage, ensuring that the cycle of renewal continues unbroken.

The Child archetype in Lily vividly reflects the themes of renewal and continuity, particularly in *"The next morning, everyone shouted, 'Happy New Year!' This was the start of many days of fun" and "Lily received a small packet of coins. It was a gift of good luck"* (Meredith, n.d., p. 5). The Child archetype, as defined by Jung, symbolizes *"new beginnings, potential, and the cyclical nature of life"* (Jung, 1969, p. 315). Lily, embodying this archetype, represents the continuity of cultural traditions and the hope for the future that each New Year brings. In the first quote, the joyful exclamation of *"Happy New Year!"* marks the renewal that comes with the

The next morning, everyone shouted, **"Happy New Year!"** This was the start of many days of fun.

Lily received a small packet of coins. It was a gift of good luck.

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start of the New Year. Lily's excitement and participation in this moment highlight her role as a carrier of these traditions into the future. The collective joy and anticipation of "many days of fun" reflect the cyclical nature of life and cultural practices, where each year brings new opportunities to celebrate and reinforce cultural identity. As the Child, Lily's involvement ensures that these traditions are not just remembered but actively lived and renewed with each passing year. The second quote, where Lily receives a small packet of coins as a gift of good luck, further reinforces the theme of continuity. *"The act of giving in Confucian tradition symbolizes the transfer of values and blessings from one generation to the next. It is through these symbolic acts that cultural continuity is maintained and reinforced"* (Tu, 1985, p. 64). The giving of red packets, or *"hongbao,"* (红包) is a traditional Chinese practice that symbolizes the transfer of good fortune from one generation to the next. By receiving this packet, Lily is not only participating in a ritual of good fortune but is also being positioned as the future bearer of these traditions. The act of giving and receiving, especially within the context of the Child archetype, emphasizes the role of the younger
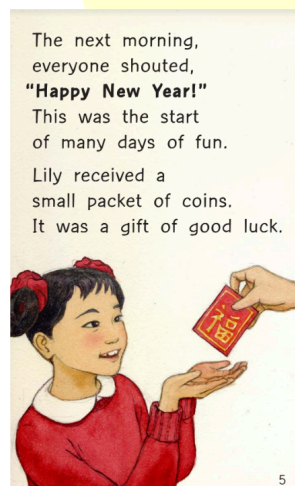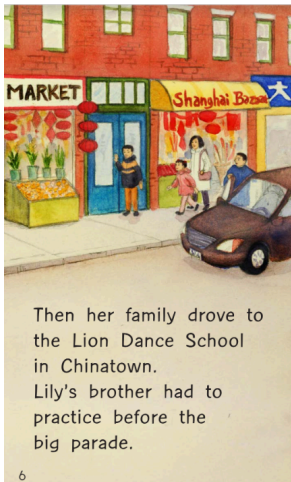
generation in sustaining and revitalizing cultural practices, ensuring that these traditions continue to thrive. These quotes collectively illustrate how the Child archetype in Lily reflects both renewal and continuity in the narrative. Her actions and experiences symbolize the ongoing cycle of cultural tradition, where each New Year offers a chance to renew commitments to cultural values and to pass these values on to the next generation.

The Child archetype in Lily, as depicted in *"Lily's brother rushed to put on his costume, but he stopped suddenly. His lion head was torn"* (Meredith, n.d., p. 7). This moment in the narrative, where the lion head is torn, presents a challenge that threatens the continuity of the traditional lion dance: a crucial element of the Chinese New Year celebration. The torn lion head symbolizes a break or disruption in the cultural tradition. The Child archetype *"embodies new beginnings, the potential for growth, and the capacity for renewal"* (Jung, 1969, p. 315). Lily's presence as the Child archetype is essential in this context. Her role in addressing and overcoming this disruption: by helping to repair the costume: illustrates the Child's connection to renewal. The act of fixing the torn lion head is not merely a physical repair; it represents the restoration and preservation of cultural continuity. As the younger generation, Lily and her brother are positioned as the future bearers of tradition. Moreover, the Child archetype's capacity for renewal is evident in how Lily and her brother handle the crisis. Their quick response and initiative reflect the resilience and adaptability required to sustain cultural practices in the face of challenges. This scenario underscores the idea that each generation must actively engage in the process of renewal to keep traditions alive, emphasizing the cyclical nature of cultural continuity where the old is continuously renewed through the actions of the young.

3. Caregiver Archetype and Family Unity

This illustration shows Lily's family arriving at the Lion Dance School in Chinatown, a scene that reflects the caregiver archetype and the theme of family unity. The family's collective journey to support Lily's brother in his lion dance practice highlights the importance of mutual care and support within the family unit. The parents, who have driven the children to the school, embody the caregiver role, ensuring that their children are not only participating in cultural traditions but are also being nurtured and guided along the way. The presence of the entire family, including Lily and her brother, highlights the idea that these activities are a shared experience, reinforcing the bonds between them. The vibrant setting of Chinatown, with its culturally significant shops and decorations, further anchors the family within their cultural community, emphasizing that their unity is intertwined with their cultural heritage. The act of the family coming together to prepare for an important event, such as the parade, illustrates how the caregiver archetype operates within the family, fostering a sense of belonging, cultural continuity, and mutual support.

The Caregiver archetype plays a vital role in supporting the Hero's journey and reinforcing the theme of family unity in *"A Lucky Chinese New Year,"* particularly in *"Her family said goodbye to the old year"* (Meredith, n.d., p. 4) and *"Lily's family drove to the Lion Dance School in Chinatown"* (Meredith, n.d., p. 5) is the Caregiver
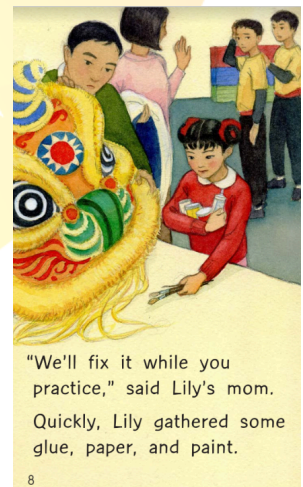
archetype, *"characterized by nurturing, support, and protection, often helping to create a safe environment that enables the Hero to fulfill their journey"* (Jung, 1959, p. 20). The collective act of saying farewell to the old year is a ritualistic expression of family unity. It emphasizes the supportive role of the family, as they come together to honor and uphold cultural traditions. This unity and shared experience provide the emotional and psychological foundation that supports Lily, the Hero, in her role of preserving and engaging with these traditions. The family's involvement in this ritual highlights their role as Caregivers, ensuring that Lily is not alone in her journey but is surrounded by the collective strength and continuity of her family. Meanwhile in *"Lily's family drove to the Lion Dance School in Chinatown,"* further emphasizes the Caregiver archetype by showing how the family physically and emotionally supports

Then her family drove to the Lion Dance School in Chinatown. Lily's brother had to practice before the big parade.

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Lily's participation in the cultural celebration. By driving together to the Lion Dance School, the family's actions demonstrate their commitment to not only uphold the tradition but also to assist Lily in her role in the upcoming parade. This support is crucial for the Hero's journey, as it provides the necessary resources and encouragement for Lily to succeed in her task of repairing the lion costume and ensuring the continuity of the celebration Together, these illustrate how the Caregiver archetype within the family creates a supportive environment that is essential for the Hero's journey. The family's unity and collective participation in cultural traditions reinforce the idea that the preservation of these traditions is a shared responsibility, and that the strength of the Hero is deeply rooted in the support and unity of the family as it shows how each family member contributes to the overall success of the cultural celebration. The mother's supportive role is vital for maintaining the harmony and continuity of the family's participation in the New Year festivities, ultimately allowing Lily to succeed in her journey as the Hero.

The Caregiver archetype in *"A Lucky Chinese New Year"* plays a crucial role in supporting the Hero's journey and emphasizing the theme of family unity, particularly when Lily's mom said, *"We'll fix it while you practice."* (Meredith, n.d., p. 7). In this moment, Lily's mother embodies the Caregiver archetype by offering both practical help and emotional support. By taking on the task of repairing the torn lion costume, Lily's mother alleviates the burden on Lily, allowing her to focus on her practice for the parade. This support is vital for Lily's Hero journey, where she is expected to overcome challenges to contribute to the community's cultural celebration. The Caregiver's intervention in this scenario ensures that Lily can continue her preparation without being overwhelmed by the additional challenge of fixing the costume. This act of caregiving not only facilitates Lily's success in her role as the

"We'll fix it while you practice," said Lily's mom. Quickly, Lily gathered some glue, paper, and paint.

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Hero but also highlights the strength of family bonds and the importance of unity. *"The family is the cradle of*

humanity and the core of moral education. In Confucian thought, the family serves as the primary environment where virtues such as diligence, respect, and responsibility are cultivated" (Tu, 1985, p. 42). The mother's willingness to step in underscores how family members work together to uphold traditions, reinforcing the idea that the preservation of cultural practices is a collective effort supported by the nurturing and protective roles within the family.

The tearing of the lion costume, despite the protective symbolism of red, can be seen as a manifestation of the shadow aspect of Lily's psyche. The shadow represents the parts of the psyche that are repressed or denied, often containing fears, insecurities, or unacknowledged truths. In this case, the shadow might symbolize Lily's latent anxiety or fear that luck alone is not enough to prevent bad things from happening. This confrontation with the shadow forces Lily to integrate this realization into her understanding of the world, acknowledging that even cherished symbols like red cannot control all outcomes (Jung, 1969, p. 21). The experience of encountering this conflict where a trusted symbol fails to protect, can serve as a catalyst for Lily's individuation process. Individuation involves integrating all aspects of the psyche, including the conscious and unconscious, and accepting that life is complex and not always governed by symbolic or cultural expectations. By facing this conflict, Lily is compelled to grow and adapt, learning that her strength lies not just in adhering to cultural symbols but in her ability to respond creatively and resiliently to challenges. This realization leads to a more mature and nuanced understanding of her cultural traditions and her role within them (Jung, 1968, p. 238).

The Caregiver archetype is central to supporting the Hero's journey and reinforcing the theme of family unity in *"A Lucky Chinese New Year,"* as illustrated by in, *"The dancers did a special lion dance to thank Lily and her family"* (Meredith, n.d., p. 10). In this instance, the Caregiver role is not limited to just one individual but extends to the entire family, who collectively support Lily in her efforts to repair the torn lion costume, ensuring the success of the parade. This archetype is embodied by Lily's family as they contribute to the cultural celebration, not only by helping her with the practical task of fixing the costume but also by creating an environment in which she can succeed in her Hero journey. The family's collective effort highlights the importance of unity in overcoming challenges and maintaining cultural traditions. The special lion dance performed in gratitude to Lily and her family symbolizes the recognition of their collective role as Caregivers. *"In Confucian culture, rituals are not just forms but are expressions of communal values that bring harmony and coherence to society. The act of participating in rituals reinforces the bonds of community and the transmission of cultural heritage"* (Tu, 1993, p. 56).This gesture reinforces the idea that the preservation of cultural practices is a shared responsibility, supported by the strong bonds within the family. It also shows how the Hero's journey is not undertaken alone; it is bolstered by the care and support of loved ones who help ensure that the cultural heritage is passed down and celebrated by the community. In essence, the Caregiver archetype, as manifested through Lily's family, highlights the theme of family unity. Their support enables Lily to fulfill her role as the

Hero, demonstrating that cultural traditions are preserved not just through individual efforts but through the collective strength and unity of the family.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of *"A Lucky Chinese New Year"* through the lens of Carl Jung's Archetypal theory reveals how the Hero, Child, and Caregiver archetypes work together to support the preservation of cultural traditions, emphasizing the crucial role of family unity in this process. The Hero archetype, embodied by Lily, illustrates how cultural traditions are not merely inherited but require active participation and responsibility from the younger generation. Lily's journey, from admiring her reflection in her traditional red outfit to taking proactive steps to repair the torn lion costume, symbolizes the ongoing and dynamic process of cultural preservation. Her actions demonstrate that the Hero's role is not only about overcoming personal challenges but also about contributing to the continuity of communal and cultural practices. The Child archetype in Lily reinforces the themes of renewal and continuity, crucial to sustaining cultural traditions. Her involvement in key rituals, such as the special family dinner and the receipt of the red packet, signifies the passing of cultural values and traditions from one generation to the next. These moments highlight how each new generation plays a vital role in revitalizing cultural practices, ensuring their relevance and vibrancy for the future. The Caregiver archetype, represented by Lily's family, plays a fundamental role in supporting the Hero's journey and maintaining family unity. The family's collective efforts, from helping Lily prepare for the parade to ensuring that cultural rituals are honored, demonstrate the strength of familial bonds in upholding and transmitting cultural heritage. The Caregiver's support enables Lily to fulfill her responsibilities as the Hero, underscoring the idea that cultural preservation is a collective effort, deeply rooted in the unity and cooperation of the family.

Overall, "A Lucky Chinese New Year" serves as a compelling narrative that showcases how archetypes function to preserve cultural identity, with each family member contributing to the collective effort. The analysis unveils the importance of active participation, renewal, and family unity in ensuring that cultural traditions are not only maintained but also preserved and passed down to future generations.

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Research Article

Navigating Hybridity and Female Empowerment in *Anca's Journey*:
A Feminist and Cultural Analysis of Migration and Identity

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"For I know the plans I have for you, 'declares the Lord,'
plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future."
— **Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**

ABSTRACT

This research examines Ruth Siburt's '*Anca's Journey*' through the lenses of *Liberal Feminism* and *Cultural Hybridity*, focusing on how the story addresses traditional gender roles and the complexities of migration. Using Betty Friedan's *Liberal Feminism* (1963) to explore themes of female empowerment through education and Homi K. Bhabha's *Cultural Hybridity* (1994) to analyze identity negotiation as a secondary theory, As the results: **1)** Anca's Journey subverts traditional gender roles by portraying Anca's intellectual growth as a central form of empowerment. Her education allows her to transcend societal expectations typically placed on young girls, aligning with Friedan's feminist ideals. **2)** The story highlights the resilience and agency of its female characters, particularly Anca and her mother, as they navigate societal pressures in a patriarchal, migration-focused narrative. Anca's refusal to accept labels like *"lame"* demonstrates her resistance to restrictive social judgments, while her mother's protective role illustrates maternal agency. **3)** Anca's intellectual growth is a key factor in her ability to navigate her cultural environment, as she balances the expectations of her Romanian heritage with her new life in America. This reflects both feminist and hybrid identity formation theories. These findings illustrate how Anca's Journey not only challenges traditional gender expectations but also reflects the broader social realities of migration, using education as a means of empowerment and identity negotiation.

Keyword: *Children's literature, Liberal Feminism, Cultural Hybridity, Female Empowerment, Cultural Identity*

INTRODUCTION

Migration and identity formation are themes deeply intertwined with the human experience, particularly in literary works that explore the journeys of individuals or families navigating cultural transitions. Children's literature often plays a crucial role in shaping young minds by providing not only the excitement of reading and exploring imagination through text and illustration but also opportunities for learning about complex social issues. *"Children's literature serves as a powerful tool for shaping identity, often reflecting and reinforcing societal norms and cultural values."* (Nikolajeva, 2009, p. 26). In Anca's Journey, the focus on cultural

hybridity and the challenges of migration provides young readers with a narrative that mirrors the experiences of many children today, helping them navigate their own feelings of identity and belonging. Anca's Journey, a children's illustrated storybook by Ruth Siburt, presents a narrative of a young girl and her family's migration from Romania to America in the early 20th century. Through the lens of feminist theory and cultural hybridity, the story offers rich material for critical analysis, highlighting both the gendered dynamics of empowerment and the complex negotiation of cultural identities.

Anca's Journey, authored by Ruth Siburt and illustrated by Gabhor Utomo, was published by Learning A-Z. The narrative centers on Anca, an estimated 8-year-old girl from Romania, alongside her mother as they start the journey of migration to America in 1907, aiming to reunite with Anca's brother, Eugene. Drawing inspiration from historical themes surrounding immigration, the story intricately weaves a narrative that emphasizes resilience and adaptability during an era of significant migration. Gabhor Utomo's illustrations effectively capture the emotional landscape of Anca and her fellow immigrants aboard the steamship. The storyline highlights Anca's endeavor to conceal an ankle injury during the medical examination at Ellis Island, where the uncertainty of being returned due to health concerns casts a shadow over her journey. Aimed at young readers between the ages of 6 to 10, the book familiarizes them with the intricacies of immigration through Anca's courageous voyage, underscoring themes of familial bonds, determination, and optimism. With its historical backdrop and relatable protagonist, the narrative offers both an informative and captivating reading experience for children. The book has garnered acclaim for its ability to connect with audiences and foster dialogues regarding immigration and the assimilation into new cultural environments.

Written in the character's perspective as a child, *'Anca's Journey'* is a touching illustrated children's story that adopts a young girl's name, Anca and her family as they move as diaspora to a new country. Faced with the challenges of adjusting to a different culture, language, and environment, Anca struggles to fit in while holding on to her cultural roots. Through her journey, Anca learns the importance of embracing her identity and discovers that it's possible to blend her old and new worlds. The story highlights themes of cultural hybridity, resilience, and the emotional experience of migration, making it a touching narrative for children experiencing similar life transitions.

In the recent study Cultural Hybridity and Identity in *"Contemporary Children's Literature: Analyzing the Migrant Experience"* by Sharma (2022), examines the portrayal of migrant children's experiences in modern literature. Both Sharma's (2022) and this study explore cultural hybridity and how migrant children navigate the challenges of adapting to a new culture while maintaining their original identity. They share the theme of using literature to foster empathy and understanding of cultural diversity among young readers. However, Sharma's research provides a comparative analysis across multiple texts and age ranges, whereas Anca's Journey offers a more focused, narrative-driven approach that emphasizes the experiences of one child, primarily targeting readers aged 6 to 10. The research gap lies in the need for further exploration of how singular, character-focused stories like Anca's Journey can uniquely impact young migrant children's emotional resilience and

self-perception in the face of cultural displacement, as Sharma's (2022) work, the psychological development of individual characters in this context has not yet been discussed.

In this research, employing Liberal Feminism in *'The Feminine Mystique'* (1963) by Betty Friedan and *'Cultural Hybridity'* in *'The Location of Culture'* (1994) by Homi K. Bhabha explores the intersection of how Anca's Journey challenges traditional gender roles while simultaneously navigating the cultural complexities of migration. *Liberal Feminism* emphasizes equal opportunities and rights for women, focusing on education, agency, and empowerment. Friedan (1963) argues that women's fulfillment should also encompass intellectual and professional growth to intellectual and professional development, as *"the feminine mystique permits, even encourages, women to ignore the question of their identity by over-investing in physical appearance and the approval of others"* (p. 49). Anca's intellectual capacity and her mother's resilience in facing societal constraints highlight how Anca's Journey reflects feminist struggles for gender equality in various forms. Meanwhile, *Cultural Hybridity* provides a lens to understand the migratory journey of Anca and her family. Bhabha (1994) explains that cultural hybridity emerges in the *"in-between spaces,"* where individuals and groups negotiate new identities through cultural exchanges, creating spaces of both conflict and innovation (p. 2).

By examining Anca's Journey through the dual lenses of Liberal Feminism and Cultural Hybridity, this research seeks to uncover how the story not only represents the challenges of migration and gender but also how it redefines female roles and cultural identity within the context of a migratory experience. This integrated approach offers a nuanced perspective on the intersection of gender and cultural identity in children's migration narratives. The analysis contributes to the broader discourse on migration, identity, and gender in children's literature, ultimately enriching our understanding of how these themes intersect and evolve in the context of modern feminist and cultural studies.

Binary Opposition

PHYSICAL DISABILITY	PERCEPTION OF HEALTH
Anca's physical injury, specifically her ankle, symbolizes the personal challenges she faces as an immigrant child in a foreign land. Her injury forces her to question her ability to assimilate into the new culture while confronting the limitations placed upon her by society. *"Women have been conditioned to accept, and even perpetuate, a standard that defines them primarily by physical fitness and appearance"* (Friedan 1963, p. 49).	The societal perception of immigrants' health as a prerequisite for their acceptance into America is a critical theme. Immigrants are expected to conform to a specific standard of health, without regard for personal circumstances, highlighting the rigidity of cultural expectations. This standard symbolizes the barriers to entry that migrants face, particularly when perceived as physically unfit. *"Cultural hybridity is the moment of transition where identity and power relations are redefined"* (Bhabha, 1994, p. 5).

METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative research design to analyze the children's illustrated storybook *Anca's Journey* by Ruth Siburt, guided by Betty Friedan's Liberal Feminism, *The Feminine Mystique'* (1963) and Homi K. Bhabha's theory of *Cultural Hybridity* (1994). The analysis focuses on exploring how the characters, particularly the protagonist Anca, navigate issues of gender empowerment and cultural identity within the context of migration. *Liberal Feminism* will be employed to examine how the story challenges traditional gender roles, particularly in terms of female empowerment, intellectual growth, and the agency of female characters. *Cultural Hybridity* will be used to analyze how Anca and her family negotiate their Romanian heritage while assimilating into American society.

Data collection involves a close examination of the book's narrative, focusing on key themes of *health, migration, and gender roles* and the related illustrations. When exploring the theories of *Liberal Feminism* and *Cultural Hybridity*, both frameworks employ terms that emphasize individual agency, identity formation, and societal structures. *Liberal Feminism,* grounded in the work of Betty Friedan and others, frequently uses terms like *"equality," "rights,"* and *"individual autonomy,"* stressing the need for women's equal access to opportunities in society, particularly in education, employment, and politics. It focuses on deconstructing legal and social barriers that prevent women from achieving parity with men. In contrast, *Cultural Hybridity,* as conceptualized by Homi K. Bhabha, introduces terms like *"hybrid identity," "third space,"* and *"in-betweenness,"* which reflect the fluid and evolving nature of cultural identity in postcolonial and migratory contexts.

The findings will be compared with existing literature on feminist theory and migration to situate this study within broader academic discussions. The analysis aims to investigate how children's literature can serve as a medium for exploring issues of *identity formation, gender,* and *cultural adaptation* in the migratory experience. The study's scope is limited to gender empowerment and cultural hybridity using the binary opposition of physical *disability vs. perception of health* as a reflection of gender and cultural norms. Ultimately, this approach seeks to demonstrate how Anca's Journey not only reflects the cultural tensions and gender challenges faced by migrant children but also serves as a literary device for understanding how children negotiate their identities in the context of migration and gender expectations.

DISCUSSION

1. **Challenging Traditional Gender Roles in *Anca's Journey***

The story opens with Anca on a steamship with her mother and other immigrants, traveling to America. Her mother insists on hearing a letter from Anca's brother, Eugene, once again, even though they have read it many times. This scene establishes the family's close bond and anticipation of reuniting with Eugene, who had moved to New York earlier. Anca is depicted as a smart, young girl with strong reading skills, and her mother's

pride in her is evident. The illustration on this page likely shows Anca in a position of intellectual authority or confidence, symbolizing her capability and subversion of traditional female roles. The illustration from Anca's Journey features warm, soft tones that create a cozy domestic scene where Ilsa, holding a toy monkey, sits beside her grandmother, Mrs. Becker, both engaged in conversation about Anca's impressive reading skills. The setting is intimate, with Ilsa's excitement and wide smile drawing attention to the familial bond and shared admiration for Anca.

Mama turned to Mrs. Becker. "Only eight years old, and my Anca reads like a professor!" Mama bragged. "Now, Eugene—he's only twenty and a big New York City success."

"So we've heard . . . every day," Mrs. Becker muttered. "Lucky we arrive tomorrow."

"Grandmother," Ilsa said to Mrs. Becker, "I like it when Anca reads, and so does Monkey."

Mrs. Becker sighed. "Okay, make it a thousand and one."

"Hooray!" Ilsa shouted.

The gentle expressions on Mrs. Becker and Ilsa's faces highlight affection and encouragement, highlighting the supportive role of the older female figure saying, *"Only eight years old, and my Anca reads like a professor!"* (Siburt, p. 5), *"Mama helped Anca put on her shoes. Her foot felt like an overblown balloon."* (Siburt, p. 14) These statements, made by Anca's mother, immediately signals a departure from traditional gender expectations for young girls. The fact that Anca is celebrated for her intellect challenges the conventional portrayal of female characters, especially in historical contexts where girls were primarily expected to adhere to domestic responsibilities or remain passive. *"denial of women's education perpetuates gender inequality"* (Friedan, 1963, p. 57). Here, Anca's intellectual growth and capabilities are a source of pride and empowerment, positioning her as a figure of intellectual prowess. By emphasizing Anca's academic ability at such a young age, the story not only elevates her character but also challenges the societal limits typically imposed on girls in similar settings. the nurturing role of women, yet also demonstrates maternal strength. Friedan criticizes *"how traditional roles like motherhood often overshadow women's potential for greater societal participation" (Friedan, 1963, p. 234).* This directly challenges the idea that women, or in this case, girls, should be confined to roles that de-emphasize their mental capabilities in favor of physical or domestic expectations. By portraying Anca as an intelligent, capable character but at the same time gaining support from her mother. The story aligns with the idea that women and girls can break free from restrictive gender roles through education.

In the context of migration, where survival and adaptation often overshadow intellectual development. Bhabha's theory suggests that hybridity occurs when cultural identities are renegotiated and redefined through encounters with societal norms. He explains that *"Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects"* (Bhabha, 1994, p. 112). As a migrant child navigating the cultural pressures of adapting to a new society, her ability to thrive intellectually represents a form of hybrid identity. She is neither bound by the limitations of her Romanian heritage, which may have prescribed certain gender roles, nor completely assimilated into the American cultural expectations of health and physical prowess. *"The third space becomes a site of struggle and negotiation, where identities are constantly being formed and re-formed in response to cultural pressures."* (Soja, 1996, p. 139). Instead, Anca's

identity is formed through a negotiation of these cultural spaces, where her intellect allows her to redefine herself in ways that break traditional gender norms.

The quote, *"Anca, you were a toddler when I left. I know from your letters you are smart. I hope you have grown strong too"* (Siburt, p. 9), highlights the dual expectations placed on Anca, celebrating her intellect while emphasizing physical strength. This reflects the common societal pressure on women to excel both intellectually and physically. In liberal feminism, as discussed by Friedan (1963), critiques these unrealistic standards, noting that expecting women to balance intellectual achievement with physical perfection is harmful: *"Societal expectations for women to be both intelligent and physically idealized are unrealistic and ultimately damaging to their development"* (p. 128). In the case of Anca, while her intellect is acknowledged through her letters, there remains an implicit expectation that she must also prove herself physically capable, especially in the context of migration. *"Migration narratives in children's literature provide young readers with frameworks to understand displacement, identity, and the concept of home."* (Smith, 2017, p. 98).This dual standard, which ties her success to both her mind and body, mirrors the broader societal issue of placing undue burdens on women to meet impossible standards across multiple areas of their lives.

Through Cultural Hybridity, Bhabha's concept of the *"third space"* frames Anca's growth as part of her identity negotiation within the context of migration. In this hybrid space, she must reconcile both intellectual and physical expectations as she navigates her new environment. Bhabha (1994) explains that the third space is where new structures of identity emerge: *"The 'third space' displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority"* (p. 209). Anca's journey, therefore, symbolizes both the intellectual and physical demands placed on women, showing how she must succeed in both realms to adapt to her new life. Anca's Journey illustrates the dual standard for women's intellectual and physical abilities. While her intellect is praised, she is also expected to be physically strong, reflecting broader societal pressures as part of her identity negotiation.

The quote *"Eugene—he's only twenty and a big New York City success"* (Siburt, p. 5) emphasizes the typical success narrative expected of men. While Eugene's achievements are framed in terms of public success and economic mobility, Anca's intellectual accomplishments remain confined to the domestic sphere. Friedan (1963:42) argues that this dynamic is part of the *"feminine mystique,"* where women are limited to roles within the home, unable to pursue their individual potential: *"Women are defined by their roles within the home rather than as individuals in their own right."* In the hybrid culture perspective, Bhabha's concept of liminality highlights the negotiation of identity in a migrant context. Eugene's success reflects the tension between old-world traditions and new-world opportunities, demonstrating how migrants exist in a space where identities are continually redefined. *"Hybridity is a form of liminality that resists closure and allows for a continual negotiation of identity"* (Bhabha 1994, p. 252). Eugene's story, therefore, emphasizes the expectations for men to succeed in public, while women, like Anca, remain in a limited space of negotiation.

2. Female Agency and Resilience in the Context of Migration

This illustration from Anca's Journey depicts a tense moment where Anca, visibly distressed, faces the possibility of being labeled *"lame"* and sent back to Romania, as quoted *"America wants healthy people — even children,"* (Siburt, p. 12). She sits hunched over, highlighting her vulnerability, with a sad expression reflecting her internal struggle. Next, as Mrs. Becker interrupts, *"but they could chalk an L on Anca's coat for Lame"* (Siburt, p. 12). Her red coat, standing out against the muted background, symbolizes her emotional intensity and strength. Next to her, her mother kneels, offering comfort, *"Surely we can explain—"* Mama says. (Siburt, p. 12) visually reinforcing her role as a protector trying to explain their situation. The soft light around the mother contrasts with the cooler tones of the setting, representing hope amidst uncertainty. In the background, Mrs. Becker's statement about America wanting healthy people embodies the societal pressure Anca faces. *"No!" Anca cried.* (Siburt, p. 12) The overall illustration emphasizes Anca's vulnerability and the support from her mother as they confront societal expectations.
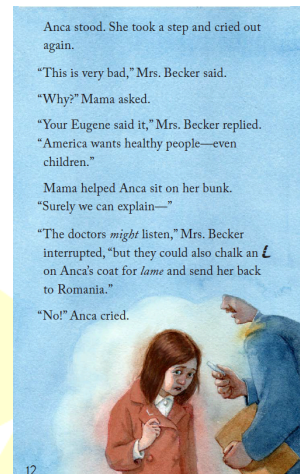
In Anca's Journey, female agency and resilience are explored within the constraints of a patriarchal and migration-focused narrative, particularly through the actions of Anca and her mother as they face societal pressures. The line *"America wants healthy people—even children"* (Siburt, p. 12) reflects the rigid expectations placed on immigrants, where physical health becomes a decisive factor in their acceptance. The threat of being labeled *"lame" ("but they could chalk an L on Anca's coat for Lame," Siburt, p. 12)* exemplifies how easily immigrants, especially women and children, can be reduced to physical judgments, ignoring their other abilities.

When Anca defiantly cries, *"No!"* (Siburt, p. 12), *"'Stand,' Mrs. Becker commanded. 'Practice walking'"* (Siburt, p. 14). This instruction reflects societal pressure on women to conform to physical ideals, even in difficult circumstances. Friedan critiques *"the obsession with female appearance as a means to restrict women's potential"* (Friedan, 1963, p. 143). Hence, it marks a moment of personal agency, as she rejects the societal label of *"lame"* based on her injury, and even gets solidarity assistance from Mrs. Becker. Breaking the traditional norms, the characters show resilience and empowerment. This page is critical as it introduces the conflict surrounding Anca's injury and the societal expectation that immigrants, even children, must be physically fit. The visual likely portrays Anca struggling with her physical condition but remaining determined. The tension between her physical limitations and her inner resilience is significant, as it reflects her agency in a world that places rigid expectations on her. Therefore, this resistance aligns with Liberal Feminism as outlined by Betty Friedan. Friedan (1963:152) asserts that women must reject limiting labels and assert their independence, *"Women must assert their own identities, rejecting societal labels that restrict them."* In this

scene, Anca's refusal to accept the *"lame"* label represents her resilience against a system that seeks to limit her potential based on physical judgments. This is an example of how women, even young girls, can push back against patriarchal systems that define them by superficial traits like appearance or physical capability.

Simultaneously, Anca's mother demonstrates maternal agency when she says, *"Surely we can explain—"* (Siburt, p. 12), attempting to negotiate for her daughter. "*Women in migration stories often experience dual marginalization due to both gender and cultural displacement.*" (Mahler & Pessar, 2006, p. 28). Although women in patriarchal societies are often subject to domestic roles, they can still assert power within those constraints. Friedan (1963) argues how women have historically used their roles as caregivers to exert limited power, while advocating for more direct forms of empowerment: *"Women have often used their roles as caregivers to exert influence, but direct empowerment is crucia*l" (p. 176). Mama's attempt to protect Anca highlights her strength in a system that restricts women's autonomy, illustrating how maternal roles can also serve as a form of resistance within patriarchal structures.

In Cultural Hybridity, these moments can be seen as part of the negotiation of identity within the *"third space"* that immigrants inhabit. Bhabha (1994:209) explains that cultural hybridity occurs in this liminal space where new identities and meanings are constantly being negotiated: *"The 'third space' displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives."* Anca and her mother, as migrants, are caught between their old-world identity and the new-world expectations imposed on them. Anca's refusal to accept the *"lame"* label is a negotiation of her identity, where she asserts her worth despite the physical standards imposed on her. Her mother, likewise, navigates this third space by using her limited authority as a caregiver to advocate for Anca, blending traditional maternal roles with an assertive stance in the new cultural context.

Thus, Anca's Journey portrays female agency and resilience through both a feminist and cultural hybridity framework. Anca's personal agency in rejecting the societal label of *"lame"* and her mother's maternal advocacy reflect the resilience women exhibit, even within restrictive environments. *"Feminism in children's literature has evolved to challenge traditional narratives, giving young female characters agency and complexity."* (Clark & Foster, 2005, p. 41). It shows how both characters navigate the limited space between their old-world cultural identity and the new societal norms they must confront, allowing them to redefine their roles within the migration-focused narrative.

3. **Intellectual Growth and Cultural Hybridity in *Anca's Journey***

In this illustration from Anca's Journey, the visual elements reflect the themes of female agency, resilience, and societal expectations regarding physical ability. Anca is at the center, visibly struggling with her injured ankle, yet determined to meet the demand placed on her by Mrs. Becker, who commands her to *"Stand"* and *"Practice walking."* This pressure to conform to societal standards of health, despite Anca's pain, illustrates the rigid expectations placed on individuals, particularly immigrants, to demonstrate physical fitness. Anca's

tight-laced boots and strained posture symbolize both her resilience and the physical constraints she faces. Next to her, Ilsa holds her hand, offering support and emphasizing female solidarity in the face of adversity. This act of mutual care between the girls highlights how female characters support one another to navigate the challenges imposed by patriarchal and migration-focused systems. The presence of an older woman in the background suggests a multi-generational experience of women dealing with societal pressures. The illustration captures Anca's physical and emotional struggle while demonstrating her resilience and the importance of female support in confronting societal expectations.
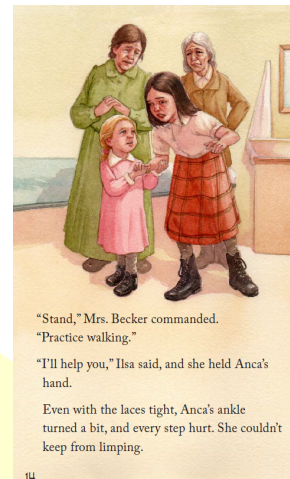
"Stand," Mrs. Becker commanded. "Practice walking."

"I'll help you," Ilsa said, and she held Anca's hand.

Even with the laces tight, Anca's ankle turned a bit, and every step hurt. She couldn't keep from limping.

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This page is critical as it introduces the conflict surrounding Anca's injury and the societal expectation that immigrants, even children, must be physically fit. The visual likely portrays Anca struggling with her physical condition but remaining determined. The tension between her physical limitations and her inner resilience is significant, as it reflects her agency in a world that places rigid expectations on her. Nonetheless, in Anca's Journey, education and intellectual growth are depicted as powerful tools for female empowerment, in line with the principles of Liberal Feminism. *"The development of intellectual capabilities in female characters reflects the feminist push for gender equality in all spheres of life."* (McRobbie, 2009, p. 57). The repeated references to Anca's intelligence throughout the story highlight the role of education as a means to break the limitations imposed by societal expectations, especially for girls in patriarchal structures.

The statements *"Anca reads like a professor!"* (Siburt, p. 5), *"I know from your letters you are smart."* (Siburt, p. 8), *"I'll help you,"* (Siburt, p. 14) Ilsa said, and she held Anca's hand. These serve as a significant moment in the story, where Anca's intellectual abilities are celebrated. This emphasis on her academic prowess aligns with Liberal Feminism, particularly Betty Friedan's argument that women should have the opportunity to engage in intellectual pursuits to break free from domestic confines. Friedan (1963) stresses that education is essential for women to achieve personal and professional fulfillment, arguing that *"Women must be liberated from domesticity and empowered to engage in intellectual and public life"* (p. 107). Anca's intellectual growth symbolizes a departure from traditional gender roles that confine women and girls to the domestic sphere, positioning her as an empowered young female character who is recognized for her mind.

Similarly, the line *"I know from your letters you are smart"* (Siburt, p. 9) reinforces the importance of education in Anca's life. Her intellectual capacity is not only acknowledged but celebrated, showing that her education is a key factor in her personal empowerment. This reflects Friedan's assertion that education is critical for breaking down gender barriers and achieving equality. *"Education is the foundation for gender equality, allowing women to challenge and overcome the societal structures that limit them"* (Friedan, 1963, p. 112). Anca's education thus becomes a tool for both personal development and societal defiance, as her intelligence allows her to rise above the challenges she faces as a young girl and a migrant.

In contrast to her intellectual strength, Anca is also expected to demonstrate physical competence. The line *"Stand,"* Mrs. Becker commanded. *"Practice walking"* (Siburt, p. 14) reflects societal expectations that Anca must not only prove herself intellectually but also meet physical standards. *"It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others."* (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56) This pressure to conform physically contrasts with the emphasis on her education and intellect, illustrating the dual expectations placed on girls and women to succeed in both arenas. Education gives Anca the tools to articulate her identity beyond the roles imposed on her by society. In the process of learning and growing intellectually, she is able to redefine herself and express her individuality. Bhabha's quote highlights the importance of language and education in constructing and articulating new identities, particularly in environments that demand negotiation between different cultural expectations. Friedan criticizes this societal obsession with physical appearance and ability, arguing that it detracts from women's intellectual and personal growth: *"The societal fixation on physical fitness and appearance limits women's opportunities for true personal and intellectual development"* (Friedan, 1963, p. 143). The juxtaposition of intellectual empowerment with physical demands further highlights the challenges that girls like Anca face as they navigate both societal and patriarchal expectations.

Anca's Journey uses education and intellectual growth as key tools for female empowerment, in line with Liberal Feminism. The recognition of Anca's intelligence serves as a counter-narrative to traditional gender roles, emphasizing the importance of education in breaking down barriers and promoting equality. However, the story also reflects the tension between intellectual and physical expectations, demonstrating the broader societal pressures placed on women and girls to excel in all areas of life. At the end of the story, all members of the family reunite and feel happy as they arrive at the port.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, the research shows how Anca's Journey challenges traditional gender roles and addresses the issue of migration through the dual lenses of *Liberal Feminism* and *Cultural Hybridity*. The story highlights how education and intellectual growth become key tools for female empowerment, as seen through Anca's journey. The repeated references to her intelligence and learning emphasize the feminist argument that women, including young girls, should have the opportunity to break free from domestic confines and pursue intellectual fulfillment. Anca's education not only enables her personal development but also challenges the societal expectations that limit women's roles, aligning with Betty Friedan's Liberal Feminism.

Cultural Hybridity helps us understand Anca's negotiation of her dual identity as a migrant child. Anca navigates between the cultural traditions of her Romanian heritage and the new demands of American society. Her intellectual growth takes place in a metaphorical *"third space,"* where new identities are formed through the blending of cultural influences. Anca's resilience in the face of societal expectations regarding both physical health and intellectual competence demonstrates the intersection of gender and cultural identity.

Ultimately, Anca's Journey uses the themes of migration, education, and gender to depict the ways in which female characters can assert *agency* and *resilience* within patriarchal and migration-focused narratives. The story portrays how girls like Anca can resist limiting societal labels and expectations by embracing both intellectual empowerment and cultural negotiation. This integrated approach offers a nuanced understanding of how children's literature can reflect and shape discussions on gender equality and cultural identity in migration contexts. Portraying intellectual growth as a form of empowerment, the narrative sometimes reinforces traditional expectations regarding physical strength, especially for migrants. The pressure on Anca to demonstrate physical fitness *("America wants healthy people—even children")* reflects societal voices that prioritize physical capability over other forms of strength. This expectation places undue pressure on young girls like Anca, who are already grappling with the challenges of migration and cultural adaptation.

The narrative emphasizes Anca's resilience but does not fully explore the emotional toll of living between two cultures, which is a key aspect of cultural hybridity. Migrant children often face deep psychological struggles in maintaining their cultural roots while adapting to new societal norms, and these internal conflicts could have been more thoroughly examined in the story. By focusing predominantly on Anca's intellectual abilities and physical resilience, the story could risk simplifying the lived experiences of migrants who deal with more complex issues such as trauma, discrimination, and economic hardships. A more nuanced approach to these challenges could have deepened the narrative's engagement with feminist and cultural theories, offering a more critical perspective on the broader social structures that limit women's and migrants' potential. Despite criticisms, Anca's Journey remains an important text for introducing young readers to the themes of gender, migration, and identity formation. The illustrated story offers valuable insights on how children's literature can serve as a platform for exploring dynamic social issues, empowering young readers to reflect on their own experiences of identity and belonging. Through the lenses of Liberal Feminism and Cultural Hybridity, the story emphasizes the importance of intellectual empowerment and cultural negotiation in shaping resilient female identities, contributing to the broader discourse on migration, gender, and literature.

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Research Article

Negotiating Identity: The Impact of Cultural Displacement, Memory and Adaptation on Children in *Haiti is My Home*

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"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth.
These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them."
*- **Isaiah 42:16 NIV***

ABSTRACT

This research analyzes *"Haiti Is My Home"* through the framework of Stuart Hall's Cultural Identity Theory (1990), investigating the emotional and psychological impacts of displacement on children, the influence of memory and nostalgia in identity formation, and the varied approaches to adaptation within a novel environment. The narrative centers on Marie, a young girl who is uprooted from Haiti to Boston following a catastrophic earthquake, as she endeavors to acclimate to her new surroundings while her cousin Johanne fully embraces their altered circumstances. The findings indicate: **1)** The examination illustrates that displacement profoundly undermines Marie's sense of self. Her emotional and psychological distress is manifest in her struggle to reconcile her past in Haiti with her current reality in Boston, intensing in feelings of alienation and resistance to assimilation. Conversely, Johanne embodies the constructive potential of adaptation, exhibiting resilience and enthusiasm regarding their newfound situation. **2)** Memory and nostalgia are crucial in the formation of Marie's identity, as her recollections of Haiti offer comfort, yet simultaneously worsen her alienation from Boston. Sensory stimuli, such as the aroma of familiar cuisine, tether Marie to her past, complicating her adjustment to her new environment. *3)* The contrasting behaviors of Marie and Johanne underscore the varied ways in which individuals cope with displacement, illustrating that adaptation is shaped by both individual experiences and emotional connections to prior contexts. This suggests that cultural identity is constructed and shaped and continually redefined, especially in the context of displacement and migration. The narrative's exploration of the issue of cultural dislocation highlights that identity is not static but is continuously reshaped in response to emerging realities.

Keyword: *Children's literature, Cultural Displacement, Postcolonial Identity, Hybridity, Colonial   Alienation*

INTRODUCTION

The effect of cultural displacement on identity is one of the critical issues in literary works, especially in narratives about migration and the emotional challenges faced by displaced individuals. In *Haiti Is My Home*,

the author explores the tension between displacement and adaptation through the experiences of Marie, a young girl forced to leave Haiti after a devastating earthquake. This tension is seen in her contrasting feelings about her homeland and the challenges of adjusting to life in Boston, while her cousin Johanne approaches adaptation more optimistically. Likewise, in reality, displaced children, including those impacted by the Syrian conflict, encounter emotional and psychological challenges as they adjust to unfamiliar surroundings, frequently separated from their families and homes. Save the Children (2023) highlights the severe impact of displacement on children, emphasizing the need for humanitarian support and protection, mirroring the experiences of characters like Marie.

Haiti Is My Home, written by Katherine Follett and illustrated by Gabhor Utomo, is part of the Learning A-Z shared reading collection, aimed at young readers. The book, designed for Level 3 readers with a word count of 833, serves both as a story and an educational tool, teaching verb inflections and language skills. Set against the backdrop of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the narrative explores the themes of loss, adaptation, and cultural displacement, reflecting the real-life struggles of immigrant children like Marie, who must adjust to life in a new environment after a disaster. The book targets early elementary readers, making complex themes of migration and resilience accessible through simple language. Beyond its educational purpose, the story fosters empathy and understanding of the emotional challenges of displacement, illustrating how children can adapt and find a new sense of belonging despite initial difficulties. In the story Haiti Is My Home, the author highlights the tension between displacement and adaptation through the experiences of Marie, a young girl who grapples with leaving Haiti following a devastating earthquake. This tension is embodied in her contrasting feelings about her homeland and the challenges of adapting to life in Boston. As the narrative unfolds, themes of cultural identity, nostalgia, and belonging are woven into Marie's experience, contrasted with her cousin Johanne's more optimistic approach to adaptation.

Upon examining the story, Stuart Hall's Cultural Identity framework is used for understanding the problems of identity in the context of displacement. Hall argues that *"cultural identity... is a matter of becoming as well as of being"* (Hall, 1990, p. 225), a notion that captures the evolving and fluid nature of identity as individuals confront new cultural environments. Marie's struggle to adapt in Haiti Is My Home reflects this ongoing process of transformation, where her past life in Haiti and her new experiences in Boston create a continuous negotiation of identity. This is particularly evident when Marie's sense of alienation in Boston is highlighted by her dislike of the city's dark, imposing buildings, as Hall explains that *"cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories"* (Hall, 1990, p. 225), highlighting how her connection to Haiti informs her perception of the present.

Children's literature, in this context, plays a pivotal role in addressing the emotional and psychological issues faced by young readers who may experience or empathize with themes of displacement. By depicting characters like Marie, children's literature helps young readers navigate their own identities in the face of unfamiliar environments and cultural shifts. As Maria Tatar (2009) points out, *"Children's stories have always*

served as a space for exploration, where the young reader can reflect on their own position within the world" (p. 7). Through stories like *Haiti Is My Home*, children are given the tools to explore concepts such as belonging, cultural identity, and adaptation in an accessible and relatable way. These narratives foster empathy, allowing readers to identify with displaced characters, thus promoting a deeper understanding of the emotional challenges associated with migration and adaptation.

The story also emphasizes the role of memory and nostalgia in shaping identity, as Marie's memories of her homeland offer a sense of continuity and comfort amid the dislocation. For instance, the smell of stew reminds her of Port-au-Prince, serving as an anchor to her cultural identity and shared history with her family. As Hall notes, *"cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us... with stable, unchanging, and continuous frames of reference and meaning"* (Hall, 1990, p. 223). Marie's memories of Haiti provide her with a sense of belonging that helps mitigate the emotional challenges of displacement.

In this analysis, we will explore how *Haiti Is My Home* portrays the emotional and psychological effects of displacement on children, the role of memory and nostalgia in identity formation, and the contrasting perspectives of Marie and Johanne in their adaptation to a new environment. Furthermore, we will examine the significant role children's literature plays in helping young readers understand and process the complex emotions surrounding cultural displacement. Through these lenses, the story reveals the complexities of negotiating identity in the face of cultural dislocation and offers a means of emotional navigation for its readers.

Binary Opposition

DISPLACEMENT	ADAPTATION
Displacement is illustrated in *Haiti Is My Home*, by Marie's difficulty in adjusting to her new life in Boston. She feels uprooted from her home in Haiti, where she had a deep connection to the culture, warmth, and vibrancy of her surroundings. Her negative perception of Boston, with its cold weather and serious atmosphere, highlights her emotional dislocation. Stuart Hall's notion that *"Cultural identities are constantly undergoing transformation"* (Hall, 1990, p. 226) reflects Marie's challenge in redefining her identity after being displaced from her familiar environment. Her resistance to her new surroundings shows her struggle to reconcile her past and present.	In contrast, Johanne represents adaptation, as she approaches their new life in Boston with optimism and acceptance. Unlike Marie, Johanne embraces the positive aspects of Boston, such as the safety, cleanliness, and opportunities. Hall's concept of *"becoming"* (Hall, 1990, p. 225) reflects Johanne's ability to integrate her experiences in Boston into her identity, seeing the move as an opportunity to learn and grow. Johanne's adaptability highlights her resilience and willingness to position herself positively within a new cultural context, suggesting a forward-looking approach to life in a different environment.

METHOD

Upon doing the analysis, this study adopted a qualitative approach to literary analysis, employing Stuart Hall's (1990) *Cultural Identity* theory as the primary theoretical framework to examine how people negotiate their identities in response to cultural displacement and migration. It is applicable as it explores how individuals

reconstruct their self perception when they are uprooted from their cultural homeland and placed in a foreign context. The method involved a close reading of *Haiti Is My Home*, focusing on how the themes of cultural displacement and identity formation were explored through the characters and their experiences. Specifically, the analysis was centered on Marie's *emotional* and *psychological* struggles with *displacement*, and the contrasting *perspectives* between her and her cousin Johanne. The research was expected to show how the story portrays the emotional and psychological effects of displacement on children, role of memory and nostalgia for home play in shaping identity and the depiction of the story on contrasting responses to displacement.

By analyzing key moments in the text, supported by relevant quotations, the method allows for a thorough exploration of how the narrative reflects Hall's concept of cultural identity as a constantly evolving construct. Additionally, the study will examine binary oppositions such as *displacement* versus *adaptation*, as represented by the two main characters. This approach will facilitate an understanding of how identity is negotiated in response to migration and displacement, offering insights into broader themes of cultural adaptation in children's literature as well as its role in providing *character-based* learning to young readers.

DISCUSSION

1. Emotional and Psychological Impact of Displacement on Children in Haiti Is My Home

The illustration visually highlights Marie's emotional struggle with displacement. The scene shows Marie sitting on the floor, pulling off her wet boot with a frustrated expression, while her mother stands nearby with a concerned look, suggesting a lack of comfort in her current environment. The muted tones and the closed-up space of the apartment, with its dim lighting, emphasize the contrast with her likely memories of Haiti, which she would associate with open spaces, warmth, and vibrant colors. The dark, steep stairs mentioned in the text are also part of the setting, adding to the closed, suffocating feeling that Marie associates with Boston. Her body language, sitting on the floor with wet boots, mirrors her feelings of being out of place and overwhelmed by her new environment. This captures her emotional and psychological displacement.

Marie and Pierre climbed the stairs to their apartment. Marie hated the steep, dark stairs and the closed-up feeling of the heated rooms.

Mama kissed Marie's forehead. "Did you have a good day?" she asked.

"No," Marie frowned, yanking off her dripping boot. Marie hadn't had a good day since her family left Haiti.

In *Haiti Is My Home*, the emotional and psychological effects of displacement on children are explored primarily through the character of Marie, who struggles deeply after leaving her homeland. The quote, *"Marie hadn't had a good day since her family left Haiti"* (Follet, p. 6), describes her sense of emotional turmoil and inability to adjust to her new life in Boston. This reflects the profound loss and identity crisis that displaced children often experience, as they are torn from their familiar surroundings and forced into foreign environments. Hall asserted that *"cultural identity... is a matter of becoming as well as of being"* (Hall, 1990, p. 225), emphasizes that identity is constantly shaped by both past occurrences and present realities. Marie's

cultural identity, deeply rooted in Haiti, is challenged by the new and unfamiliar struggle context of Boston. Her inability to find joy or contentment since leaving Haiti highlights how her sense of self, tied to her homeland, is in conflict with the new environment. The emotional weight of displacement for children like Marie involves not just the physical act of leaving home but the ongoing psychological struggle to reconcile their past identity with their new, evolving reality. *"psychological acculturation involves a process where individuals experience stress and disorientation when adjusting to a new cultural environment, particularly when the differences between the original and new culture are significant"* (Berry, 1997, p. 12). Berry's assertion on acculturation highlights the psychological stress that individuals like Marie experience when they are forced to adapt to a new culture that feels drastically different from their own. This aligns with Marie's emotional turmoil, as she struggles to connect with Boston's unfamiliar environment and faces feelings of dislocation. The stark contrast between Haiti and Boston intensifies her psychological discomfort, illustrating how cultural displacement often leads to stress and confusion in young individuals.

The visual elements in the illustration capture Marie's emotional detachment and sense of alienation in Boston, as described in the text. The *"dark and serious"* brick buildings are shown in the background, with their dull and rigid appearance, symbolizing the cold and unwelcoming atmosphere that Marie perceives. The winter trees are bare, lifeless, and contribute to the bleakness of the environment, reinforcing her feeling that Boston is devoid of warmth or vitality, which contrasts with her memories of Haiti. The people in the image, dressed in somber black coats and walking with closed body language, appear to be moving briskly and without interaction, further emphasizing the isolation and impersonal nature of the city. Their serious expressions and the lack of eye contact with each other or with Marie visually reinforce her sense of being an outsider in this foreign environment. The illustration mirrors the text's description of how alienating and cold Boston feels to Marie, highlighting the emotional and psychological impact of displacement as she struggles to find comfort in a place that feels so different from her home in Haiti.

In Haiti Is My Home, the emotional and psychological effects of displacement on children are vividly illustrated through Marie's experience of alienation in Boston. The quote *"Marie hated Boston. The brick buildings were dark and serious"* (Follet, p. 5) symbolizes her deep discomfort and inability to connect with her new surroundings. The dark and imposing architecture of Boston contrasts with her memories of Haiti, which she associates with warmth and openness, reinforcing her sense of cultural dislocation. Stuart Hall's assertion that *"cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation"* (Hall, 1990, p. 225) offers a perspective for understanding Marie's struggle; Marie's cultural identity is deeply tied to her past in Haiti, and she feels lost in the unfamiliar environment of Boston. This contrast between her rooted identity and her new reality leads to psychological discomfort. Erikson

explained, *"In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity."* (Erikson, 1968, p. 130). This emphasizes that the disturbance of a person's established identity, like Marie's, can result in psychological discomfort when trying to adapt to a new environment that feels strange and detached from their previous experiences. Moreover, Hall argued that while cultural identity is always evolving, it is rooted in historical experiences and shared cultural codes, and the sudden shift from one cultural context to another leaves Marie feeling disconnected and unsettled. This illustrates the broader emotional impact of displacement on children, where the loss of familiar surroundings contributes to a profound sense of alienation and struggle to adapt. In terms of children's literature, this illustrated story *'Haiti Is My Home'* plays an important role in shaping their identity from a young age. *"Children's stories have always served as a space for exploration, where the young reader can reflect on their own position within the world"* (Tatar, 2009, p. 7). Tatar points up on how children's literature creates a platform for self-reflection, enabling young readers to learn and explore their identity, emotions, and place in the world through experiences depicted in the story.

2. **The Role of Memory and Nostalgia in Shaping Identity in *Haiti Is My Home***

The illustration visually captures Marie's nostalgic memories of her homeland, *Port-au-Prince*, and how these memories influence her sense of identity and perception of Boston. The scene is bright, warm, and vibrant, with colorful storefronts and flowers spilling out of windows, symbolizing the liveliness and warmth that Marie associates with her home in Haiti. The open marketplace, characterized by vibrant productive and high spirited individuals, depicts the sense of community and intimacy that Marie yearns to experience. These visual features stand in high contrast to her sentiments regarding Boston, which she regards as frigid, dim, and inhospitable. The depiction of *Port-au-Prince* shows the joy and warmth of her memories, thereby reinforcing her emotional connection to Haiti. Such affirmative recollections play a crucial role in shaping her identity, complicating her ability to adapt to Boston, as the bustling, animated streets of Port-au-Prince are in strong opposition to the dreary and melancholic tone she encounters in her new urban setting. This sense of nostalgia creates a divide between her established identity in Haiti and the alienated reality of Boston, exacerbating her feelings of alienation. *"Nostalgia, especially in relation to migration, functions as a psychological tool that aids in preserving one's identity; however, it may also generate friction between historical and contemporary experiences, thereby complicating the process of adaptation"* (Boym, 2001, p. 25). Boym's analysis of nostalgia offers valuable understanding into how Marie's memories of Haiti offer her a sense of continuity with her past but simultaneously make it harder for her to embrace her new life in Boston. While the comforting smells and memories of *Port-au-Prince* help her hold on to her cultural identity, they also heighten the contrast between

her familiar past and the alien present. This strain complicates her process of adaptation, as Marie struggles to harmonize the affection of her recollections with the harshness of her new setting.

Memory and nostalgia play a crucial role in shaping Marie's identity and her perception of Boston. The memories of Haiti, symbolized by sensory experiences such as the *"smell of flavorful stew"* (Follet, p. 7), serve as a comforting link to her homeland. This smell evokes positive memories of her life in *Port-au-Prince*, offering her emotional solace in an unfamiliar environment. Stuart Hall suggested that cultural identities are grounded in *"common historical experiences and shared cultural codes"* (Hall, 1990, p. 223), which provide a stable framework of meaning for individuals. For Marie, her memories of Haiti are foundational to her sense of self, helping her maintain continuity with her past even as she struggles to adapt to her new life in Boston. Additionally, Marie's nostalgia for the past is evident in her comparison between her brother Claude's life in Haiti, where they played soccer every afternoon, and his life in Boston, where he now works late into the evening. This comparison underscores her longing for the lost simplicity and joy of her former life. Hall's notion that *"the past continues to speak to us"* but is no longer a simple or factual representation of that past (Hall, 1990, p. 226) reflects Marie's evolving identity. Her memories are not static; they influence her present perception of Boston, intensifying her feeling of dislocation. The tension between her nostalgic memories and the reality of her new environment illustrates the problematic issue of her identity as it transitions between two cultures. The past informs her sense of self, but it is also constantly in flux, as she experiences the emotional and psychological effects of displacement. In the context of children's literature, children tend to learn, imitate or mimic their surroundings, including cultural learning in their society. *"Children's literature is one of the primary ways societies transmit their cultural values to the next generation"* (Nodelman, 2008, p. 12). Nodelman highlights how children's books play a crucial role in passing down cultural values and norms, helping young readers understand their cultural identity.

3. Adaptation Strategies in *Haiti Is My Home:* Marie and Johanne's Perspectives

The illustrations vividly capture the contrasting perspectives of Marie and Johanne as they adapt to their new environment. In the first image, Johanne is seen smiling and expressing joy as she leans out the window, excited by the experience of snowflakes, symbolizing her positive and open attitude toward adapting to Boston. Her wide smile, bright orange scarf, and energetic body language reflect her enthusiasm and willingness to embrace new experiences. In contrast, Marie appears frustrated, her face tense as she warns Johanne, *"Don't be. I hate this place"* (Follet, p. 11) Marie's body language, crossed arms and a frown, emphasizes her resistance to the new environment, showing her reluctance to embrace Boston. The muted color tones of her clothing and the rigid posture further highlight her discomfort and emotional distance from the new surroundings. *"Resilience, defined as the capacity to adapt successfully in the face of*
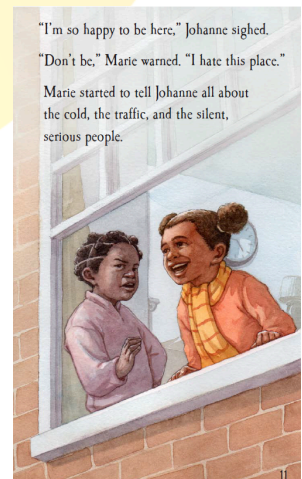
adversity, plays a crucial role in how individuals navigate displacement and cultural change" (Masten, 2001, p. 228). Masten's concept of resilience clarifies Johanne's ability to adapt to Boston with enthusiasm and optimism. Unlike Marie, Johanne embodies resilience by viewing the new environment not as a loss, but as an opportunity for growth. Her willingness to embrace the unfamiliar (as seen in her excitement about snow) reflects her capacity to adapt positively to adversity. In contrast, Marie's resistance shows a lack of this resilience, as she remains emotionally tied to her past life in Haiti, making it difficult for her to embrace change. Furthermore, the portrayal of the characters in children's stories can be amusing but at the same time, children can learn morals that will sharpen their analytical thinking that eventually helps promote social awareness. *"The importance of children's literature extends beyond mere amusement; it encompasses its capacity to cultivate social consciousness and analytical reasoning in developing minds" (Zipes, 2009, p. 15).* Zipes emphasizes the bifunctional nature of children's literature in simultaneously offering enjoyment and inspiring young readers to enhance their social consciousness and critical thinking abilities.

In the second illustration, the differences are even more seen. Johanne continues to enjoy the snowfall, laughing and catching snowflakes on her tongue, symbolizing her excitement about the new environment. Meanwhile, Marie's expression remains one of displeasure, as she gestures toward Johanne, clearly unenthusiastic about the experience. The playful joy seen in Johanne's face contrasts sharply with Marie's grumpy demeanor, visually emphasizing their different emotional responses to adapting to Boston. Together, these illustrations illustrate the different ways the girls react to displacement: Johanne with positivity and excitement, and Marie with reluctance and resistance. This contrast in their perspectives helps to visually reinforce the theme of adaptation to new environments, as Johanne embraces change while Marie struggles to let go of her connection to her past life in Haiti. *"Literature for children is a key element in the development of moral reasoning, helping children distinguish right from wrong and explore ethical dilemmas in a safe context"* (Lurie, 2003, p. 9). Lurie emphasizes the significant moral and ethical teachings present in children's literature, which assist young readers in cultivating more concept learning of morality.

In *Haiti Is My Home*, the contrasting perspectives of Marie and Johanne in their adaptation to a new environment are portrayed through their different reactions to Boston. Johanne's excitement is evident in the quote, *'"I'm so happy to be here,"'* (Follet, p. 11) *"Johanne laughed, catching snowflakes on her tongue"* (Follet, p. 12), which reflects her positive outlook and openness to adapting to her new surroundings. Stuart Hall's theory supports this by explaining that *"cultural identities are the points of identification... not an essence but a positioning"* (Hall, 1990, p. 226). Johanne's willingness to embrace new experiences, like catching snowflakes, shows that her identity is not fixed but shaped by her positive attitude towards Boston, allowing her to position herself in a way that helps her adjust more easily to the new cultural context.
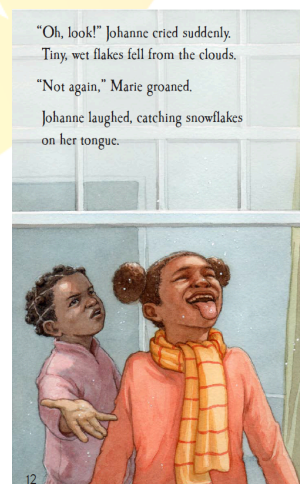
On the other hand, Marie's resistance to Boston is clear in her warning to Johanne: *"'Don't be,' Marie warned. 'I hate this place.'"* (Follet, p. 11). Marie's negative perception of Boston reflects her deep emotional attachment to her past life in Haiti and her struggle to adapt to the new environment. Hall's concept of diasporic identity, which *"constantly produces and reproduces itself anew, through transformation and difference"* (Hall, 1990, p. 235), highlights Marie's ongoing identity conflict. While Johanne embraces the changes, Marie remains firmly rooted in her memories of Haiti, finding it difficult to transform and adapt. This tension between her sense of self in Haiti and the reality of living in Boston prevents her from fully engaging with her new environment, showing how displacement can affect identity in different ways for individuals.

CONCLUSION

In Haiti Is My Home, the narrative explores the emotional and psychological effects of displacement on children, the role of memory and nostalgia in shaping identity, and the contrasting perspectives of adaptation through the characters of Marie and Johanne. Utilizing Stuart Hall's Cultural Identity theory as a framework, the story shows how displacement unsettles Marie's sense of identity, making it difficult for her to balance her past life in Haiti with her present in Boston. Marie's emotional struggle is clear in her failure to connect with her new environment, leading to feelings of alienation and discomfort as she resists embracing her new reality.

The role of memory and nostalgia is a crucial aspect of Marie's identity, with sensory experiences like the smell of stew serving as emotional anchors to her homeland. These memories provide her with comfort but also intensify her feelings of displacement, as the warmth of her past in Haiti contrasts sharply with the cold, serious atmosphere of Boston. It suggests that while cultural identities are rooted in the past, they are continuously evolving, yet Marie's inability to let go of her memories makes it difficult for her to adapt.

In contrast, Johanne's adaptability is reflected in her positive outlook and willingness to embrace new experiences, such as her excitement about snow. Hall's notion of identity as fluid and shaped by positioning within new environments is illustrated through Johanne's acceptance of Boston and her view of it as an opportunity to grow. This adaptability highlights the psychological resilience that some individuals may display in response to displacement.

Emphasizing the problematic issue of cultural identity in the context of displacement, Johanne represents the possibility of growth and adaptation, Marie embodies the emotional struggle that can accompany such transitions. The contrasting responses to displacement in the story show how past experiences, memories, and individual perspectives shape the ability to adapt to new cultural environments. This analysis demonstrates that identity is not static but constantly negotiated in the face of changing realities, particularly for children facing the psychological and emotional impacts of migration and displacement.

As part of children's literature, the illustrated storybook *Haiti Is My Home* offers several character-based learning lessons. The story teaches *resilience* through Johanne's optimistic adaptation to her new life in Boston, showing the importance of perseverance. It fosters *empathy* by allowing readers to

understand the emotional struggles of displacement, encouraging kindness towards those in similar situations. *Adaptability* is highlighted by contrasting Johanne's openness with Marie's resistance, emphasizing the value of embracing change. The story also explores *cultural identity*, demonstrating the importance of honoring one's roots while being open to transformation that eventually emphasizes the need for *emotional expression and support* during times of change.

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Challenging Gender Binaries in A 'Journey to Honor':
A Feminist Critique of Performativity in *Mulan* (2020) Movie

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"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free,
nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
*- **Galatians 3:28 NIV***

ABSTRACT

This study examines the portrayal of gender roles of the characters and the social expectations in *'Mulan,' (2020)* the live-action movie, using the feminist theory of *gender performativity* by Butler, J. (1990). The research focuses on how Mulan's character challenges traditional gender roles in Chinese society, the significance of *"chi"* as a metaphor for inner strength and its gendered portrayal, and the societal consequences of defying gender expectations. By applying a qualitative approach, the study explores key aspects such as female stereotypes, empowerment, and cultural symbols within the movie, while connecting them to feminist theory. The research reveals that **1)** Mulan's character actively subverts the gender binary of masculinity versus femininity by assuming roles traditionally reserved for men, thereby challenging stereotypes about female weakness. **2)** The metaphor of *"chi"* is analyzed as a representation of inner strength, with Mulan's mastery of it breaking gendered associations of power with masculinity. **3)** The movie highlights the societal risks women face when defying gender norms, as well as the rewards of embracing individuality and agency. The movie offers a nuanced depiction of gender roles, blending Confucian values with feminist ideals. Mulan's journey not only represents female empowerment but also blurs the lines between traditional masculine and feminine traits, ultimately questioning the fixedness of gender identity. This study aims to contribute to feminist discussions in literary analysis through movies as media and offer insight into how globalized interpretations of cultural narratives can reflect evolving perspectives on gender equality.

Keyword: *Mulan, Feminism, Gender Performativity, Patriarchy, Gender Roles*

INTRODUCTION

Literature is important for various reasons, including its exploration of different levels of human experience and societal structures. As Eagleton (2008) notes, *"Literature, in the sense of a body of written works, offers us a unique way of seeing the world."* (p. 16) Through literature, knowledge about contrasting viewpoints, social issues, and experiences and beyond can be observed and learned. It provides readers with stories from different cultural perspectives, time periods, and life experiences, fostering empathy by broadening people's horizons. Literature reflects the values, beliefs, and social issues of any period, capturing the essence of the

human condition. Hence, literature *"puts life into words"* and can awaken deep-seated emotions which mirrors the real-life human condition, helping to form connections between the reader and the art form.

According to the World Economic Forum (2024), Global Gender Gap Index, *68.5% of the global gender gap has been narrowed*. However, this statistic highlights that women still encounter significant social inequalities and injustices. As noted by Butler (1990), *"Gender is not something one is, but something one does—an act,"* (p. 33) and the struggles of women to achieve equity reflect the broader societal dynamics at play. Although Mulan is a fictional narrative, its underlying message about gender roles resonates deeply with real-world social structures and should continue to be reflected in conversations about gender equality. These significant statistics show that society still marginalizes women, often overlooking their true capabilities: a theme central to the Mulan narrative.

The perception of gender roles in a society often constructed by the strong ideology of patriarchy that eventually creates structures of hierarchy. By reason of the disparity; Feminism, a movement which promotes equal rights for all genders, stresses the importance of viewing gender equality as a foundation for building a harmonious, resilient and integrated society. Yet, achieving this equality is not straightforward, as societal beliefs often uphold patriarchal values. As Woolf (1929) expressed, *"For most of history, Anonymous was a woman,"* (p. 43) emphasizing the historic marginalization of women's voices. These patriarchal beliefs result in issues related to active gender construction versus passive gender absorption, as well as conflicts between women and society.

Previous research by Tisnawijaya, C., & Tano, A. (2017), this study examined the societal roles attributed to males and females within Chinese culture, especially through the perspective of Confucian thought, and scrutinized the issue of gender disparity as represented in the animated film Mulan (1998). It revealed that society expects more traditional roles from females than from males. However, the current study shifts focus to the live-action movie Mulan (2020), examining feminist theory through the lens of Judith Butler's gender performativity. As Butler (1993) asserts, *"The body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated over time."* (p. 59) The research explores how active gender construction and passive gender absorption are portrayed in the 2020 movie, released on September 4, 2020.

Produced by Walt Disney Pictures, the Mulan live-action movie blends action, adventure, and drama, suitable for viewers aged 10 and above. Directed by Niki Caro, screenplay by Rick Jaffa, Amanda Silver, Lauren Hynek, and Elizabeth Martin, the movie is based on the Chinese folktale, The Ballad of Mulan. Then, Disney's 1998 animated movie released as a prequel before this live-action movie, *"Mulan"* (2020). The cast includes Liu Yifei as Mulan, Gong Li as Xianniang, Jason Scott Lee as Bori Khan, Yoson An as Chen Honghui, Cheng Pei-Pei as The Matchmaker, Donnie Yen as Commander Tung, and Tzi Ma as Hua Zhou. The movie has received several awards and nominations such as, an Oscar costume design and visual effects, and a Critics' Choice Award. Liu Yifei, the main character *'Mulan,'* was also nominated for Best Actress, while Donnie Yen received a nomination for Best Supporting Actor, and Niki Caro for Best Director.

The movie's plot revolves around Hua Mulan, who fears her father's conscription into the Chinese military. Despite being ineligible as a girl in a patriarchal society, she takes his place, disguising herself as a man

named Hua Jun. Throughout her journey, she faces numerous challenges, but through honor, bravery, and authenticity, Mulan saves her family and country, gaining recognition from the emperor. The movie captivates audiences with its portrayal of a woman who defies societal constraints and displays persistent self-belief and courage. As Butler (2004) suggests, *"Gender fluidity allows individuals to transcend socially prescribed categories,"* (p. 43) and Mulan's character exemplifies this idea, particularly in its depiction of gender roles within a patriarchal society. The movie offers valuable insights into Chinese culture, despite being presented from a Western perspective.

This analysis highlights several key topics: Gender Roles and Expectations, Representation of Women's Voices, Feminist Symbols, and Female Cultural Aspects. The concept of *"feminine"* often describes not only gender but also personality and characteristics. Similarly, *"masculine"* extends beyond men to encompass behavior and styles. As Judith Butler emphasizes, *"The performativity of gender revolves around repetition"* (Butler, 1990, p. 191), asserting that both feminine and masculine traits are socially constructed and continually reinforced in patriarchal society, rejecting the idea that being masculine means literally men, and feminine means definitely women despite the reproduction.

Patriarchy, the philosophy asserting male superiority over female counterparts, delineates the societal roles of women according to the functional aspects of their reproductive organs pertaining to procreation (Irigaray, 2004). This ideology renders *"motherhood as a taken-for-granted identity for women"* (Woodward, 1999: 242). The feminine mystique, portraying the roles of wife and mother as the inevitable fate of every female, has confined women to the private sphere (Friedan, 1963). Hence, the gender roles assigned to women within society are predominantly restricted to procreation and child-rearing within domestic environments. Conversely, men are afforded greater liberties within the public domain. This ideology, therefore, presumes that being female equates to femininity, while maleness corresponds with masculinity.

The designations masculine and feminine represent stereotypes within the realm of *"sexual politics,"* which pertain to power dynamics wherein the former is regarded as superior to the latter (Millet, 2000: 23). Typical masculine traits include strength, activity, and rationality. In opposition, traits deemed feminine, such as frailty, compliance, and emotional depth, sharply contrast with masculine traits, thus legitimizing the control of women by men. In other words, men dictate the gender roles assigned to women.

Stereotypes, generalized ideas about specific groups, are ingrained in social psychology and are not always accurate. *Gender roles* define societal expectations that are oftentimes determined by the patriarchal system that puts men above women; though, these roles evolve over time. In terms of culture, Confucianism, a Chinese philosophical system dating back to 500 BCE, emphasizes social harmony and etiquette, aligning closely with patriarchal principles. *"Confucianism, a system of philosophical and ethical teachings founded by Confucius around 500 BCE, has deeply influenced Chinese culture and governance, emphasizing morality, social harmony, and proper conduct."* (Yao, 2000, p. 45).

The opposition is framed around the belief that traits are inherently more capable of wielding power *(masculinity)* compared to *(femininity),* and the movie challenges this notion by showing Mulan defying these

gendered expectations. This study seeks to examine how society treats women differently from men and what drives the perception that females are inherently weaker. Furthermore, it aims to show how women can be powerful and strong, challenging negative stereotypes.

Binary Opposition

MASCULINITY	FEMININITY
In *Mulan*, masculinity symbolizes not just power and strength but societal dominance, where men are seen as the natural defenders of honor through physical combat. Judith Butler challenges this, asserting that *"gender is not something one is, but something one does, an act"* (Butler, 1990, p. 33). The movie questions the fixedness of masculinity by showing how it is performed, rather than inherently possessed.	Femininity in *Mulan* is framed as passive, where women are expected to achieve honor through subservience and obedience. Yet, Mulan disrupts this binary by stepping into a space traditionally reserved for men, defying the illusion that power belongs solely to masculinity. Butler argues that *"the performativity of gender revolves around repetition… norms create the illusion of a stable gender identity"* (Butler, 1990, p. 191). Mulan's journey reveals the fluidity of gender, proving that resilience and strength are human qualities, not gendered ones.

METHOD

This analysis employs a qualitative approach to explore the critical issues presented in the *Mulan (2020)* live-action movie, using Judith Butler's theory of *gender performativity* (1990). Butler argues that gender is not inherent but socially constructed through repeated actions and societal norms. The focus of this analysis is on how gender performativity is portrayed in Mulan through Active Gender Construction and Passive Gender Absorption, examining how characters either challenge or conform to societal expectations of gender. Key aspects of feminism explored in the movie include: Female Stereotypes: Addressing socially perpetuated stereotypes about women's perceived weaknesses, Female Solidarity and Empowerment: Highlighting the portrayal of women's voices and actions as they strive to challenge negative gendered expectations, Female Cultural Aspects and Symbols: Analyzing how Confucian values of social harmony and etiquette interact with the movie's feminist themes.

The research specifically focuses on gender performativity by analyzing how characters either resist or adhere to traditional gender norms. Mulan (2020) was chosen for its portrayal of Mulan's determination in overcoming societal limitations. Despite the limitations imposed by traditional gender roles, Mulan challenges societal expectations, disguises herself as a man, and successfully accomplishes her mission. This journey of self-belief and defiance provides a compelling basis for feminist analysis. Additionally, as a famous character in Chinese folklore, Mulan's story gives a great chance to look at how it has been retold for a worldwide audience, blending both Western and Chinese cultural elements.

This analysis collected data by examining key elements in the movie, such as cinematography, dialogue, visual imagery, and plot, focusing on how societal expectations for women are depicted. The study connects these aspects to feminist theory, especially Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity, which challenges the usual belief that gender is fixed and highlights how it is shaped by actions and behavior.

DISCUSSION

1. **Challenging Traditional Gender Roles through Mulan's Character**

In Mulan (2020), traditional Chinese expectations about women's roles are portrayed through various scenes that reflect societal limitations. One such scene features Mulan failing to perform a task of serving tea, a skill historically associated with femininity in Chinese culture. This moment illustrates how women are expected to adhere to specific domestic roles, such as gracefully managing household duties. Mulan's failure to meet this expectation shows her rebellious nature, questioning the idea that a woman's value depends on following traditional roles. Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity underscores this, as Butler (1990) explains, *"Gender is not something one is; it is something one does"* (p. 25). Mulan's behavior, defying her gender role, emphasizes the fluidity of gender identity, suggesting that identity is shaped by actions rather than inherent traits. Through the depiction of Mulan's rebellion, the movie critiques limiting gender conventions and demonstrates the potential for women to surpass societal anticipations, ultimately affirming that a woman's value is independent of conforming to designated social roles.

In Mulan (2020), the main character challenges traditional gender roles in Chinese society, which is a key focus of the movie and connects closely with Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity. Butler argues that gender is not an inherent or stable identity but rather a series of repeated acts that conform to societal expectations. Mulan's odyssey of liberating herself from the limitations imposed by traditional femininity to adopt characteristics typically associated with masculinity serves as a paradigm for the contestation and reconfiguration of gender roles. The film illustrates Mulan's subversion of these established gender conventions, interrogating the validity of rigidly defined gender roles and emphasizing the dynamic essence of identity. *"Could you tell her that only a son could wield chi? That a daughter would risk shame, dishonor, exile?"* (00:11:25) This quote occurs early in the movie when Mulan's father is speaking to her mother about the expectations of women in their society. The conversation highlights that, traditionally, only a son can wield chi, a powerful force representing inner strength and combat ability. Women, on the other hand, are not expected to possess chi, and attempting to wield it would bring shame, dishonor, or even exile to the family. This pivotal moment in the movie addresses the societal belief that only men can wield *"chi,"* symbolizing strength, power, and bravery, while women are discouraged from displaying such qualities. The warning that a daughter who shows chi risks shame and exile underscores the rigid gender roles that dictate how women must behave. Butler (1990) asserts, *"Gender is performative, and it is through repeated acts that social norms, especially regarding gender, are reinforced and challenged"* (p. 33). Mulan's decision to step into a male role and defy these norms by disguising herself as a man disrupts this performative reinforcement. Her actions illustrate how gender roles are not innate but constructed through societal repetition, and by stepping outside of these expectations, she challenges the binary distinctions of strength assigned to men and weakness assigned to women.

In this scene from Mulan (2020), the cinematography emphasizes the traditional values of traditional society, as well as the disappointment directed toward Mulan for failing to meet those expectations. The dim,

warm lighting creates an intimate, judgmental atmosphere, while the rich color palette of purples, reds, and golds symbolizes the elegance and rigid societal standards these women uphold. The framing positions the matchmaker at the center of the group, reinforcing her authority and the collective scrutiny Mulan faces. The tight composition around the tea ceremony, a symbol of grace and femininity; it contrasts with Mulan's perceived failure. The women's

body language, particularly their stiff posture and disapproving expressions, further conveys their dissatisfaction. This visual tension is complemented by the spoken line, *"We see in a good wife,"* (00:19:35) *"They have failed to raise a good daughter"* (00:19:50), which stresses on the societal pressure on Mulan to conform to traditional gender roles signify the societal expectations placed on women, particularly within the context of traditional values. In this scene, the matchmaker and the women surrounding her are evaluating Mulan's behavior, implicitly comparing her to the ideal qualities expected of a wife: grace, obedience, and modesty. The phrase reflects the deeply ingrained gender roles in traditional Chinese culture, where a woman's worth is often tied to her ability to fulfill domestic duties and embody the characteristics of a *"good wife."* It reinforces the rigid social framework that Mulan is expected to fit into, and it serves as a direct contrast to Mulan's own desires and abilities, which do not align with these restrictive ideals. The line sets the stage for the disappointment that follows when Mulan fails to meet these standards, further emphasizing the tension between individual identity and societal expectations in the movie.

By the order of the emperor, Mulan's father must accept it to join the army, Mulan steps in and tries to stop him from going to war. Her father insists that she must accept her role as a daughter and woman, staying behind to care for the household. He believes her place is not on the battlefield, but in the home, where societal norms dictate women should remain. *"I know my place. It is time you learned yours."* (00:27:10) This statement reflects the deeply ingrained hierarchy of gender roles in traditional society, where women are expected to "know their place" as subservient and obedient, particularly within the domestic sphere. Mulan, however, defies these limitations, stepping into a role of leadership and strength, one that society has traditionally reserved for men. Butler's (1990) asserted that *"gender is not a stable identity but a fluid expression"* (p. 15) is exemplified in Mulan's defiance of the *"place"* society has assigned her. Rather than conforming to prescribed gender norms, Mulan chooses a path defined by her own abilities and aspirations, challenging the static nature of femininity. Her actions demonstrate that identity is not fixed or determined by gender but is instead shaped by personal agency and choice, illustrating Butler's assertion that gender is fluid and constructed through action.

In the quiet moments after her father's conscription, Mulan is conflicted about her place in society. She feels torn between honoring her family by adhering to societal norms and her desire to protect her father by taking his place in the army. Staring into her reflection, she questions whether the role she is expected to play reflects her true identity. *"When will my reflection show who I am inside?"* (00:36:15) Mulan's internal struggle is captured in this reflective moment, where she questions the role she is expected to perform as a woman and

whether it aligns with her true self. This line highlights the tension between Mulan's personal identity and the societal expectations imposed on her based on her gender. Butler's (1993) argued that *"the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time"* (p. 59) is relevant here. Mulan's ongoing attempts to fit into society's expectations, like trying to fulfill her family's wishes, clash with her personal longing for freedom and self-expression. As she looks at her reflection, it reveals her struggle between the social expectation being a woman and her true self. This shows the tension that happens when someone is forced to follow a gender role that doesn't match who they really are.

Following her reflective moment, Mulan continues to wrestle with her role in society. Looking into her reflection, she wonders whether the person she is on the outside matches her true self on the inside. This marks the beginning of her realization that she can no longer conform to societal expectations if they conflict with her inner identity. *"Who is that girl I see, staring straight back at me?"* (00:36:35) This quote reflects Mulan's journey of self-discovery and identity. She questions both her role in society and how she shows herself to others. Judith Butler's (1993) assertion that *"identity is a process of becoming, not a fixed state of being"* (p. 55) perfectly encapsulates this stage of Mulan's journey. As Mulan questions the identity she presents to the world, she also begins to challenge the expectations that society has placed upon her. This marks a pivotal moment in her character arc, where her internal conflict shifts toward action—an action that will redefine her role in society. This transition from questioning to actively challenging societal norms reflects the evolving complexity of Mulan's character.

After revealing herself as a woman, Mulan faces the consequences of her deception. A character warns her that continuing to live as someone she is not will only lead to disaster. This statement encapsulates the danger Mulan faces in a society that punishes those who defy gender norms. *"You will die pretending to be something you are not."* (01:24:20) This line highlights the dangers Mulan faces for defying societal expectations and breaking gender norms. By pretending to be a man and taking her father's spot in the army, Mulan faces serious risks like being exiled, losing her honor, or even being killed. Judith Butler (1993) explains that *"transgression of gender norms invites punitive responses, as it threatens the stability of the social order"* (p. 72). Mulan's actions have deeply threatened the rigid social structure that upholds male dominance, and this scene illustrates the risk she faces by pretending to be something she is not. Yet, despite these risks, Mulan's courage to continue disguising herself and pushing forward illustrates the potential for breaking these norms. Her success in the end underscores the movie's message that transgressing gender expectations, although dangerous, can ultimately lead to empowerment and change. This moment serves as the culmination of Mulan's journey, reinforcing the movie's critique of rigid gender binaries and societal expectations.

Mulan (2020) offers a significant examination of conventional gender roles and societal expectations. Through her deeds, Mulan contests the stringent dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, exemplifying Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity. The movie illustrates that gender identity is not static but rather fluid and shaped by societal norms; however, individuals, such as Mulan, possess the autonomy to challenge and redefine these established conventions. Each act of resistance accumulates, constructing a unified narrative that

interrogates and reinterprets gender roles, while simultaneously empowering individuals to liberate themselves from societal limitations.

2. The Symbolism of *"Chi"* as Gendered Power

Mulan's journey depicts a compelling illustration of women's narratives contesting societal gender norms. A notable scene in which Mulan persuades her fellow warriors to fight for their dynasty, despite previously disguising herself as a man, highlights the transformation of societal views on female strength. Initially, Li Shang dismisses her leadership after discovering her true gender, yet, another warrior, Ling, speaks up in her defense, saying, *"She is braver than any man here"* (01:26:10). This demonstrates the shift in societal perception when confronted with undeniable evidence of female capability. Butler (1990) argues that *"identity is not reflected by gender but by actions"* (p. 10). Mulan's courage and leadership break the binary framework of masculinity and femininity, showing that leadership and bravery are not exclusive to men. Her actions become symbolic of female empowerment, embodying the courage to challenge and redefine societal expectations of gender.

In this scene the cinematography emphasizes Mulan's inner resolve and the significant turning point in her journey. The dim lighting, illuminated by soft, warm torchlight, highlights Mulan's face, drawing attention to her determination. Dressed in a red robe, symbolizing strength and courage, Mulan stands out against the muted background. The close-up framing of her face isolates her from the surroundings, underscoring her individuality and the personal nature of her journey. The shallow depth of field blurs the background, keeping focus on Mulan, while the minimalistic setting and stoic facial expression convey the gravity of the moment as her comrades accept her as Hua Mulan. This combination of elements reinforces the solemnity of the scene and Mulan's transformation into a trusted warrior.
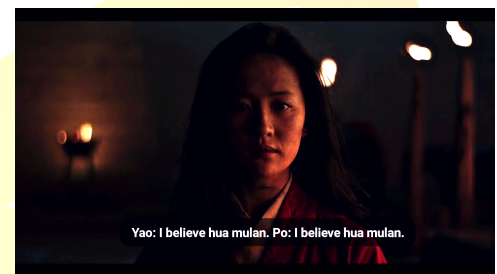
In Mulan (2020), *'chi'* serves as a metaphor for inner strength, traditionally reserved for men in Chinese culture. The narrative establishes 'chi' as a power tied to masculine roles, but Mulan's ability to wield it challenges the rigid gender boundaries around strength and capability. Judith Butler's theories on gender fluidity and performativity offer a framework for understanding how the movie uses *'chi'* to deconstruct the binary associations of gender and power. *"Her chi, the boundless energy of life itself... speaking through her every motion."* (00:10:30) This line is spoken by the narrator as Mulan's incredible abilities are showcased in various scenes. Her natural agility, quick thinking, and physical prowess are highlighted as expressions of chi, a force that gives life and power to every action. This line acknowledges that 'chi,' traditionally seen as a masculine force, flows through Mulan, suggesting that strength and power are not limited to men. Butler (2004) asserts that *"the fluidity of gender means it can transcend its binary framework, with individuals embodying traits beyond socially prescribed categories"* (p. 43). In the context of Mulan, the concept of *'chi'* is beyond the gender binary, with Mulan embodying traditionally masculine traits of strength and combat ability. By doing so, she disrupts the

societal notion that *'chi'* and power are exclusively male attributes, demonstrating that gender is not a fixed boundary but a fluid expression of human potential.

The part when Mulan's father says, *"A warrior's chi is powerful, but only a son can wield it."* (00:13:45) who reiterates the cultural belief that only men, particularly sons, are fit to control and utilize *'chi.'* This line sets the stage for the gendered expectations of who can wield power in society. The gendered restriction of *'chi'* serves as a societal norm that Mulan challenges through her actions. Her father's belief that only men can wield *'chi'* reflects the rigid cultural norms that confine women to passive roles. Judith Butler (1990) explains that *"cultural norms construct gendered attributes, but those norms can be resisted through subversive acts"* (p. 45). Mulan's decision to harness her *'chi'* and disguise herself as a man to fight in her father's place represents a subversive act that directly challenges the gendered limitations placed on power and strength. In proving herself capable of wielding *'chi,'* Mulan resists and transcends the cultural expectations that confine women, embodying Butler's concept of resisting societal norms through defiance. *"Confucianism reinforces a patriarchal order in which men are seen as the natural leaders, while women are relegated to domestic roles."* (Rosenlee, L. H. L., 2006, p. 17) It aligns with Confucianism's patriarchal view that men, specifically sons, hold leadership roles and the capacity for strength. Mulan defies this by demonstrating that she can wield chi, thus rejecting the notion that power is an inherently male trait.

In the scene when Mulan's father tells her about the phoenix, it is a powerful, yet elegant symbol in Chinese mythology. The phoenix is described as both beautiful and strong, blending traditionally feminine and masculine qualities, and is considered a guardian figure. *"Do you know why the phoenix sits on the emperor's right hand? She is his guardian, his protector. She's both beautiful and strong."* (01:15:30) The phoenix in this scene serves as a symbol of the balance between strength and beauty, qualities that are often gendered as masculine and feminine, respectively. Judith Butler (1993) asserted that *"symbols in narratives often serve to both reflect and challenge gender norms"* (p. 62). The phoenix embodies both masculine and feminine traits, representing a rejection of binary gender categorizations. Similarly, Mulan, like the phoenix, blends these qualities, showing that beauty and strength are not mutually exclusive. Through the phoenix, the movie challenges the societal norms that strictly associate strength with men and beauty with women, suggesting that these attributes can coexist in a single individual, regardless of gender. Mulan's character mirrors this blend, further defying the binary framework of gender.

The movie uses *'chi'* as a metaphor for inner strength and power while challenging its traditional association with masculinity. Through her defiance of gender norms, Mulan proves that *'chi'* and strength are not limited by gender. Judith Butler's theories on gender fluidity and the subversion of norms provide a lens through which we can understand how Mulan's journey deconstructs the gendered expectations surrounding power, showing that strength transcends societal boundaries and can be embodied by anyone, regardless of gender.

3. Defying Gender Expectations in Patriarchal Societies

The presentation of feminist symbols is highlighted; while traditionally, women in patriarchal societies were confined to roles within the home, Mulan breaks away from this limitation by taking on the responsibilities of a warrior. This subversion of expected roles aligns with Butler's (1990) assertion that *"the category 'woman' is constructed and performed in various ways"* (p. 10), indicating that Mulan's identity and strength go beyond societal norms and cultural expectations. The movie shows that gender is not rigid and that women can take on roles usually meant for men, providing a strong message about women's ability to challenge gender restrictions.

In Mulan (2020), the movie vividly portrays the consequences that Mulan faces for defying traditional societal expectations about gender roles. Her journey is full of dangers, both socially and physically, as she steps away from the traditional role expected of women in her culture. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and its consequences is essential to understanding how Mulan showcases the dangers and rewards of challenging gender norms. *"A daughter would risk shame, dishonor, exile."* (00:11:25) This quote is delivered during a conversation where Mulan's father explains the consequences Mulan could face for stepping out of her traditional gender role. It highlights the heavy social penalties that await women who do not conform to societal norms. Mulan risks exile and dishonor for stepping outside of her gender role, illustrating the severe consequences of defying societal expectations. *"transgressing the boundaries of gender roles threatens the very structure of society, often resulting in exclusion or punishment"* (Butler, 1993, p. 45) is reflected here. The strict separation of male and female roles is important for keeping society stable, and those who push against these limits, like Mulan, risk being punished. Mulan's actions reveal the rigidity of these norms and the costs associated with defying them. *"Filial piety, the central virtue in Confucianism, places an obligation on children, especially sons, to care for their parents and maintain family honor."* (Eno, R., 2015, p. 92) In Confucianism, it is typically the son's role to protect and serve the family. Mulan's act of taking her father's place in the army shows her adherence to filial piety, but it challenges the gender expectations in Confucianism that usually prevent daughters from fulfilling such duties. Her act of service breaks the gendered limitations placed on filial duty.

When Mulan's identity as a woman is revealed. She risks harsh punishment for pretending to be a man, and the character who says this warns her about the consequences of continuing to hide her true identity. *"You will die pretending to be something you are not."* (01:24:20) This quote highlights the physical and social dangers Mulan faces by disguising herself as a man. *"The risks involved in gender nonconformity are both social and physical, as individuals face dangers for defying the roles imposed on them"* (Butler, 2004, p. 58) fits perfectly with Mulan's situation. Her life is in danger because she chooses to go beyond the traditional roles expected of her gender. This illustrates the extreme measures society takes to maintain these rigid roles, and how those who cross these lines, like Mulan, must confront not only social exclusion but also potential harm.

Upon preparation for Mulan's meeting with the matchmaker, her family hopes that her adherence to traditional roles will bring honor to the family. It represents the pressure placed on women to conform to societal expectations to uphold family honor. *"Bring honor to us all."* (00:08:50) This statement reflects the pressure

Mulan faces to adhere to traditional gender roles in order to bring honor to her family. *"Honor and social status are tied to the successful performance of gendered roles"* (Butler, 2004, p. 67) is relevant here. Mulan is expected to fulfill her role as a woman through marriage and domestic duties, as society equates such roles with family honor. However, Mulan's desire to bring honor through her own path as a warrior challenges this association, showing that gendered expectations of honor can be redefined. In the framework of Confucian philosophy, the family unit is regarded as the fundamental component of society, and the responsibilities of women are intricately linked to the preservation of familial harmony and the execution of their prescribed obligations. (Berling, J. A., 2000, p. 45) It reflects the Confucian expectation that women bring honor to the family through domestic roles and traditional gender behavior. Mulan's journey challenges these norms, as she chooses to bring honor by protecting her family in a non-traditional way, rather than through marriage or household duties.

During a scene where Mulan is preparing for the matchmaker's evaluation, the women comment on her appearance. Makeup is used to represent femininity and following traditional gender expectations. *"The fiercest winter storm could not destroy this makeup."* (00:19:10) Mulan uses makeup to disguise herself, showing how superficial aspects of femininity are employed to enforce gender expectations. *"Appearance and behavior are regulated according to gender norms"* (Butler, 1990, p. 25) applies here, as the makeup represents how society regulates women's behavior and appearance to fit traditional standards. However, as Mulan later breaks away from this superficial presentation, it demonstrates her rejection of these externally imposed norms and the limits of outward conformity.

"There have been many tales of the great warrior, Mulan... But, ancestors, this one is mine." (01:42:00) is spoken toward the end of the movie, as Mulan's legend as a warrior is told. The narrator reflects on how Mulan's story, although widely known, carries personal significance to the speaker. Mulan's depiction as a legendary warrior challenges the usual idea of heroism, where men are often viewed as the main heroes. Judith Butler (1990) stated that *"the category of 'woman' is not a fixed identity but one that is contingent upon historical and social context"* (p. 10). Mulan's heroism redefines the notion of a warrior, traditionally a male role, and expands it to include female strength. By doing so, the movie suggests that heroism is not a trait limited to one gender, challenging the historical context that often excludes women from such roles.

In this scene, the close-up shot of Mulan's sword, engraved with the words *"Loyal, Brave, True"*, emphasizes the core values that define her character and journey. The focus on the sword, with its intricate design and sharp details, symbolizes Mulan's strength and honor as a warrior. The use of shallow depth of field keeps the background blurred, ensuring that all attention is drawn to the engraved words, which are central to both her identity and the message of the film. The gold detailing on the sword contrasts with the darker background, further highlighting its significance as a symbol of her courage and unwavering commitment to these values. This moment visually reinforces the qualities that Mulan embodies, aligning her personal traits with the values traditionally associated with heroism and honor in Chinese culture.

As Mulan is recognized for her bravery and loyalty at the end of the movie, Mulan is given a sword inscribed with the words *"Loyal, Brave, True, and Devotion to Family"* (01:40:15). These values encompass Mulan's character and journey, demonstrating that her actions transcend gender roles. The importance of family loyalty strongly influences Mulan's choice to take her father's place in battle. These traits, which are traditionally associated with male warriors, are attributed to Mulan as a female warrior. Mulan embodies traits such as loyalty, bravery, and truth, which are traditionally associated with male warriors. *"Cultural norms assign traits such as bravery and loyalty as masculine qualities, but they can be equally embodied by women"* (Butler, 1990, p. 19) applies here. Mulan's character challenges the gendering of these traits, demonstrating that bravery and loyalty are not inherently masculine qualities but can be embraced by anyone, regardless of gender. This reconfiguration of gendered traits reflects a broader shift in the movie's portrayal of heroism, as it opens up these qualities to both men and women.

Mulan (2020) vividly portrays the consequences of defying societal expectations based on gender. Through her journey, Mulan faces social and physical risks for breaking gender norms, yet her ultimate success challenges these rigid roles. Judith Butler's ideas about how gender is performed and how societal rules can be challenged help explain how Mulan's actions not only go against what society expects, but also change the way we see the roles women can have in both society and history.

CONCLUSION

Mulan (2020) movie challenges traditional ideas about gender roles and what society expects, providing a deep look at gender identity using Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Throughout the movie, Mulan breaks away from strict gender norms, whether by using 'chi,' which is usually seen as a male power, or by refusing to follow the passive role that women are typically expected to play. Butler's theories help us understand how Mulan's actions subvert these norms, pushing beyond the limits imposed on her by society.

The first aspect, focusing on Mulan's defiance of gender roles, highlights how her journey challenges the binary view of gender, showing that traits like strength and leadership are not inherently masculine. In doing so, Mulan reveals the fluidity of gender, as Butler describes, and proves that identity is shaped by action rather than the fixed roles assigned by society. The second aspect, addressing chi as a metaphor for inner strength, further illustrates how power transcends gendered boundaries. Mulan's mastery of chi, a force believed to be the domain of men, demonstrates that strength and capability are not restricted by gender. Butler's concept of resisting societal norms is mirrored in Mulan's actions, as she proves that gender is not a limitation on power or success. The third aspect, focusing on the consequences of defying societal expectations, shows how Mulan faces both social and physical dangers for challenging gender norms. Yet, her ultimate success redefines heroism and honor, traditionally viewed through a masculine lens, by attributing these qualities to a female warrior. Mulan's actions show that women can have various roles in society and history, supporting Butler's idea that gender is flexible and changes with different social and historical circumstances.

Mulan (2020) redefines the boundaries of gender roles, emphasizing that *identity, strength, and heroism* are not tied to societal expectations of gender. The movie aligns with Judith Butler's theories, illustrating how individuals can resist and transcend restrictive norms, offering a new narrative of what it means to be a woman in both society and history. Revealing the challenges of the traditional gender roles using Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, the study explores how the movie redefines concepts like *strength* and *heroism* for female characters, expanding the roles women can play in society and history. The research is expected to add to broader discussion about gender identity and how literature media helps to promote a more open and adaptable understanding of gender roles. The research also highlights the power of movies in challenging societal norms and promoting progressive cultural narratives.

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Research Article

Redefining Feminine Strength and Vulnerability:
A Gender Performative Analysis of *Wonder Woman 1984* (2020) Movie

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"She is clothed with strength and dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come."
*- **Proverbs 31:25 (NIV)***

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the critical issue in Wonder Woman (1984) in feminist perspective, by using Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity. The movie explores the interconnectedness of feminine strength and vulnerability, traditional gender roles, and the theme of power and agency. Diana Prince's journey reflects the societal pressure on women to embody both strength and emotional complexity, while Barbara Minerva's transformation into Cheetah represents the internalization of masculine ideals of power. As the results: 1) The movie demonstrates that feminine strength and vulnerability can coexist, subverting the notion that power must align solely with masculine ideals. 2) Wonder Woman (1984) critiques traditional gender roles by showing how women's autonomy is often constrained by societal expectations, particularly in relationships and social responsibilities. 3) The movie reveals a significant difference in how power and agency are explored between male and female characters, with male characters like Max Lord wielding unchecked power, while female characters must navigate moral and societal limitations. Through Butler's framework, Wonder Woman 1984 critiques traditional gender norms, suggesting that true empowerment comes from redefining power and success beyond patriarchal structures. This article is expected to enhance feminist discourse in movie analysis by offering a more profound insight into how media portrayals of women both challenge and uphold societal standards. Hence, it enhances critical conversations around gender, power, and identity, encouraging further exploration of how movies can influence and reflect progressing perspectives on gender equality.

Keyword: *Wonder Woman (1984), Feminism, Gender Performativity, Patriarchy, Gender Roles*

INTRODUCTION

Literature and movies, though distinct in their mediums, are deeply interconnected as forms of storytelling and artistic expression. Both serve as vehicles for exploring human experience, cultural values, and social issues, often using similar elements such as narrative structure, character development, and symbolism (Eagleton, 2008). While literature conveys its messages through written words, movies use visual imagery, sound, and dialogue to craft stories that can evoke the same emotional and intellectual responses (Mulvey, 1975). In adaptation studies, movies often bring literary works to life, transforming novels, plays, and poems into visual narratives that can reach wider audiences (Hutcheon, 2013). Moreover, movies in terms of literature offer critical insights into societal norms and power dynamics that mirror the real human condition, making them valuable subjects for analysis in

fields such as feminism, psychoanalysis, and cultural studies (Butler, 1990). Both literature and movies shape and reflect the human condition, making their study integral to understanding the broader cultural landscape. Wonder Woman 1984 (Jenkins, 2020) provides a profound understanding for feminist analysis, particularly in how it shows gender roles, power dynamics, and the social expectations placed on women. This analysis uses Judith Butler's (1990) theory of 'gender performativity' to examine how the movie explores the balance between strength and vulnerability in the main character, Diana Prince, and how these traits connect to broader ideas about womanhood and power.

Through the lens of feminist theory, *Wonder Woman 1984* interrogates the intersection of feminine strength and vulnerability, a key tension embodied by its protagonist. Diana Prince represents an idealized form of female empowerment, yet the narrative also delves into her personal sacrifices, love for Steve Trevor, and the emotional challenges that come with her role as a hero. This binary of strength versus vulnerability reflects Butler's assertion that *"gender is not something one is, but something one does—an act"* that is shaped by societal norms and expectations (Butler, 1990, p. 33). The movie questions whether these qualities must be in opposition, or if they can coexist within the complex identity of a modern woman.

In recent research, Smith (2023), in the article titled *"Gender Representation in Superhero movies: A Contemporary Feminist Analysis"* published in *The Journal of Gender and Media Studies*, explored the portrayal of female superheroes in recent blockbuster movies, emphasizing how these characters both challenge and reinforce traditional gender stereotypes. The study concluded that while superhero movies like *Captain Marvel* and *Black Widow* offer strong female leads, they often still operate within frameworks that subtly reinforce male dominance, particularly through the narrative arcs of the male supporting characters. In comparison, the current study on Wonder Woman 1984 examines a different angle by focusing specifically on the intersection of feminine strength and vulnerability, using Judith Butler's theory of performativity to analyze the protagonist's internal conflict between personal desires and societal responsibilities. This research gap highlights the need to further investigate how *Wonder Woman (1984)* uniquely portrays the balance between *empowerment* and *emotional vulnerability*, a theme less emphasized in Smith's broader analysis of superhero movies.

This study explores three key research questions, each grounded in feminist theory: How *Wonder Woman (1984)* depicts the intersection of feminine strength and vulnerability in its female protagonist, and what does this reveal about societal expectations of women, In what ways the movie challenge or reinforce traditional gender roles through Diana Prince and her relationships with male characters and How power and agency are explored differently between female and male characters, particularly in the context of Barbara Minerva's transformation into Cheetah. These questions guide the exploration of the movie's narrative, offering insight into how contemporary media continues to shape and reflect gendered power dynamics.

The binary opposition of *strength* versus *vulnerability* in Wonder Woman 1984 highlights the ways in which female characters navigate power within a male-dominated society. Strength, often framed as a traditionally masculine trait, is embodied by Diana's heroic actions, yet her vulnerability, particularly regarding her love for

Steve Trevor, reveals a more nuanced understanding of power. This juxtaposition echoes Butler's argument that *"gender performativity is not a stable identity or locus of agency but a performative accomplishment"* (1990, p. 191). The movie ultimately challenges the rigid distinction between these traits, suggesting that they are not mutually exclusive but rather part of the dynamics of female identity.

By exploring power, independence, and gender roles, Wonder Woman 1984 adds to the ongoing feminist discussion about women's roles in both public and private life. This analysis looks at these themes to help deepen the understanding of how media portrayals of women can both question and support societal expectations.

Binary Opposition

STRENGTH	VULNERABILITY
In *Wonder Woman 1984*, Diana's strength reflects traditional masculine ideals of power, independence, and leadership. *"Gender is not something one is, but something one does, an act."* (Butler, 1990, p. 33) Her heroism challenges stereotypes of female passivity, embodying fearless physical prowess and moral integrity.	Diana's vulnerability centers on her emotional sacrifices, particularly her love for Steve Trevor. *"The performativity of gender revolves around repetition... norms create the illusion of a stable gender identity."* (Butler, 1990, p. 191) The movie shows that vulnerability is not weakness but part of human complexity, challenging the notion that it is inherently feminine or inferior.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach to explore the feminist themes presented in Wonder Woman 1984 (Jenkins, 2020), utilizing Judith Butler's theory of *gender performativity* (1990) as the central framework. Butler's theory asserted that gender is a social construct created through repeated actions and societal expectations, rather than an inherent identity. In this analysis, the focus is on how Wonder Woman 1984 portrays the tension between feminine *strength* and *vulnerability* through the protagonist, Diana Prince, and how these qualities challenge or reinforce societal norms.

Data for this study were collected by examining the critical issue found in the movie, and analyzed not limited to the character interactions, the dialogue, but also the visual components, and the cinematic techniques. The analysis specifically concentrated on the depiction of power relations, gender roles, and societal expectations of women within the movie. For example, the use of lighting, camera angles, and framing during key emotional scenes highlights Diana's internal struggle between personal sacrifice and her heroic duties, creating a visual representation of the balance between strength and vulnerability. These cinematic techniques contribute to the movie's narrative, making the feminist themes more visually impactful.

The analysis focuses on three main themes: *Feminine Strength* vs. *Vulnerability*, *Gender Roles* and *Relationships*, and *Power* and *Agency*. In exploring these themes, key scenes and dialogue were examined, including the use of cinematography to visually communicate the complexity of Diana's character. For instance, close-up shots often emphasize Diana's moments of vulnerability, particularly in her interactions with Steve Trevor, while wider shots are used in battle scenes to highlight her strength and independence. The contrast in these

visual elements highlighted the movie's portrayal of the tension between external empowerment and internal emotional conflict.

This study connects Butler's theory with the movie's visual storytelling, examining how *Wonder Woman (1984)* either subverts or supports traditional gender norms. The interrelation between narrative content and cinematographic choices reveals deeper insights into how media representations of women can both challenge and reinforce societal expectations. Additionally, the research compares Diana Prince's depiction with existing literature on gender portrayals in superhero movies, contributing to the broader feminist discourse in media studies.

DISCUSSION

1. Female Empowerment vs. Fragility

The issue of feminine strength and vulnerability is portrayed through Diana Prince's journey in Wonder Woman (1984), which challenges societal expectations of women. The movie presents a complex narrative in which Diana embodies both traditional masculine ideals of physical strength and the emotional complexity often associated with femininity. The scene uses lighting, framing, and costume to highlight the character's struggle between wanting to be strong and powerful, like an "apex predator," and hiding the feel of vulnerability. The close-up shows that her desire for strength is also a response to her own insecurities, reflecting seeking empowerment by rejecting traditional ideas of female weakness. These dual aspects highlight the tension between external power and internal vulnerability, a theme central to Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Butler argued that gender is not a fixed identity but is continuously constructed through repeated performances (Butler, 1990), which is evident in how Diana navigates her roles as a hero and a woman. *"I don't want to be like anyone," "I want to be an apex predator."*
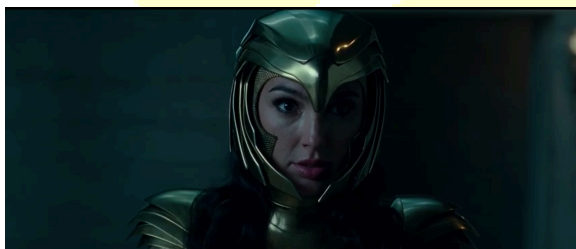
(02:01:30) Barbara Minerva (Cheetah) highlights the societal pressure on women to adopt forms of power that align with traditional masculine ideals. Barbara's desire to be an *"apex predator"* represents an attempt to assert strength by embodying traits typically associated with men, such as domination and aggression. According to Butler, gender is performative, and Barbara's transformation reflects her internalization of masculine power structures, showing that her idea of empowerment is shaped by societal norms that equate power with masculinity (Butler, 1990). The movie critiques this performance by illustrating the limitations of adopting these traits, as Barbara ultimately loses herself in the pursuit of power. *"Gender is not something one is, it is something one does—an act, a performance that is repeated"* (Butler, 1990, p. 33). Butler's concept of gender performativity is relevant here, as Barbara's desire to become an apex predator reflects her effort to perform strength in a way that mimics masculine ideals. This raises

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the issue of whether women can find empowerment within patriarchal frameworks or must redefine power in ways that embrace traits traditionally viewed as feminine, such as emotional vulnerability.

In another scene, The camera switches one after the other the two characters talking about how true greatness comes from honesty, not lies, and focuses on each character's emotions and ideas. The character in the golden armor represents real strength, which comes from being truthful and understanding vulnerability, not just being powerful. Diana shows her confidence saying, *"Nothing good is born from lies. And greatness is not what you think."* (02:08:42) Here, Diana reflects her rejection of external definitions of greatness, which are often linked to masculine concepts of physical strength and invulnerability. Throughout the movie, Diana grapples with her personal vulnerability: her love for Steve Trevor and the emotional sacrifices she makes, and realizes that true greatness comes from authenticity and emotional depth. Butler's theory of performativity suggests that societal expectations of gender are created through repeated actions, but individuals can subvert these expectations through alternative performances (Butler, 1990). Diana's rejection of traditional ideals of strength and her embrace of vulnerability challenge the gender norms that dictate how women should behave and what traits they should value. *"The performativity of gender involves a repetition of acts that reinforce norms, but also provides the possibility of subverting them"* (Butler, 1990, p. 191). This concept applies to Diana's realization that greatness is not rooted in societal ideals of strength, but in her ability to embrace her emotional complexity. By doing so, Diana subverts the traditional masculine definition of power, offering an alternative model of heroism that incorporates vulnerability as a source of strength rather than weakness.

In Wonder Woman (1984), the issue of strength and vulnerability in the character of Diana Prince offers a nuanced depiction of gender that aligns with Judith Butler's theory of performativity. The movie challenges societal expectations of women by showing that power and vulnerability are interdependent. Both Diana and Barbara's journeys highlight how societal norms shape performances of gender, with Barbara adopting a more masculine form of power and Diana redefining what it means to be strong. By subverting traditional gender norms, Diana's character provides a feminist critique of how women can navigate power within a patriarchal society, suggesting that true empowerment lies in the ability to redefine strength on one's own terms.

2. Gender Roles and Relationships

The portrayal of gender roles through Diana Prince's relationships with male characters reveals significant insights into the movie's treatment of traditional gender expectations. The movie explores the societal norms that dictate women's roles, particularly in relation to love, sacrifice, and identity. Using Judith Butler's theory of performativity, we see how the movie challenges or reinforces these traditional roles through Diana's emotional conflicts and Barbara Minerva's transformation. The scene uses close-up shots to focus on the character's face, emphasizing her emotional pain and vulnerability. This choice highlights the contrast between her strong, armored appearance and the deep sadness she feels, showing that even strong people can experience intense emotional struggles. The camera work makes her vulnerability more visible, suggesting the idea that strength includes facing

painful truths in relationships. In this quote *"I've never wanted anything more. But he's gone. And that's the truth."* (02:13:49) Diana's deep emotional struggle with the loss of Steve Trevor highlights a common theme in feminist criticism—women are frequently expected to make personal sacrifices, especially in the name of love, while male characters are not subjected to the same expectations. Diana's grief and eventual acceptance of Steve's departure underscore how women are often portrayed as bearing the emotional burden in relationships. This reflects societal norms where female characters must choose between personal happiness and responsibility. *"The freedom to act and define oneself is shaped by gendered expectations, which often limit women's autonomy"* (Butler, 1990, p. 89). Butler's idea that societal expectations correlated to women's autonomy is evident in Diana's experience. Her love for Steve forces her to set aside her own emotional needs for the greater good, emphasizing the notion that women's personal desires are frequently placed behind their responsibilities as caregivers or heroes.

Furthermore, Diana highlights the societal pressure on women to achieve perfection in all aspects of life, balancing personal desires, career success, and social expectations. *"You can't have it all. You can only have the truth. And the truth is enough."* (02:14:27) Diana's realization that *"the truth is enough"* reflects her rejection of these unattainable ideals, recognizing that true empowerment comes from authenticity, rather than conforming to patriarchal standards. This scene emphasizes the conflict between societal demands for women to *"have it all"* and the reality that these expectations often force women to sacrifice their true selves in the process. *"The body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated over time"* (Butler, 1993, p. 59). Gender performativity is central to Diana's realization at this moment. The pressure for women to *"have it all"* is part of the repetitive acts that reinforce gender norms. Diana's rejection of this narrative is a subversive act, challenging the performative expectations placed on women by society. By embracing her truth, Diana disrupts the repeated performance of gendered ideals, asserting that fulfillment and strength do not come from conforming to external demands, but from staying true to oneself.

Reflecting Steve Trevor's return, reveals how traditional narratives often depict women's happiness and desires as secondary to the decisions made by male characters. Diana's happiness is tied to Steve's presence, but his choice to return disrupts her emotional state, suggesting that women's feelings are often placed in the background while male decisions take precedence. *"The masculine subject, constructed through the repudiation of the feminine, expresses its power through the subordination and regulation of women"* (Butler, 1990, p. 18). Butler explores how the construction of gender in patriarchal systems often privileges masculinity by subjugating femininity. It aligns with the theme of male dominance and societal expectations that influence women's roles and behaviors. Butler's critique about male dominance aligns with this scene, where Steve's return and subsequent decisions highlight how male characters often control the narrative, while women are expected to manage the

emotional fallout. This reinforces the traditional gender dynamic where women's autonomy is restricted by the actions and choices of men.

The depiction of gender roles and relationships in Wonder Woman 1984 reveals how societal expectations shape the experiences of female characters. Through Diana's emotional sacrifices and Barbara's pursuit of power, the movie reflects the pressures placed on women to conform to patriarchal ideals. Using Butler's frameworks, both challenges and reinforces traditional gender roles, particularly in the way women navigate love, power, and autonomy within a male-dominated world.

3. Power and Agency

The exploration of power and agency differs significantly between the female and male characters, particularly in the case of Barbara Minerva (Cheetah) and her transformation. The movie highlights how societal expectations shape women's experiences of power, often forcing them to navigate a delicate balance between strength

and conformity. By contrast, male characters like Max Lord are portrayed as freely wielding power without the same moral constraints. This analysis uses Judith Butler's theory on male dominance to explore these themes. *"The world needs you. You know what you need to do."* (01:56:43) The scene emphasizes the woman's internal struggle with power and agency, occupying the close-up shot to capture the intensity of the moment, and highlighting her emotional conflict as she faces the responsibility that comes with her power. The man's words place the focus on her decision-making, stressing her agency in determining the course of action. The framing and composition suggest that while she holds significant power, it is her choice and sense of duty that will ultimately guide her actions, indicating personal agency. This stresses out the societal burden placed on female heroes, like Diana, to be the constant saviors. While male characters, such as Max Lord, act for personal gain, Diana is expected to fix the world's problems while still adhering to ideals of femininity and moral responsibility. This reflects the gendered expectations that women must not only wield power but also remain nurturing and selfless in the process. *"The masculine subject, constructed through the repudiation of the feminine, expresses its power through the subordination and regulation of women"* (Butler, 1990, p. 18). Butler's assertion that male dominance is often maintained through the subordination of women connects to the way Diana's power is framed. She is expected to save the world, yet her agency is constrained by societal norms that define women as nurturers first, even in roles of power. Her power is regulated by these cultural expectations, unlike the unchecked power of her male counterpart, Max Lord.

Diana's realization in this line encapsulates the feminist critique of the *"having it all" narrative, "You can't have it all. You can only have the truth. And the truth is enough."* (02:14:23) which places unrealistic expectations on women to balance power, success, and personal happiness. The movie critiques this notion by showing that such

expectations are unattainable, and Diana's embrace of truth over perfection represents a rejection of the societal pressure to do it all. *"The masculine subject... expresses its power through the subordination and regulation of women"* (Butler, 1990, p. 18). Butler's statement about male dominance is reflected in the societal systems that demand women to achieve everything without providing the necessary support. Diana's realization is a form of resistance against this narrative, rejecting the idea that women must meet impossible standards of strength and success.

Max Lord's philosophy of limitless expansion and power reflects the patriarchal ethos of unchecked male dominance. *"I've never been one for rules. The answer is always more."* (02:00:43) the close-up shot on the woman captures her reaction to the man's statement and focuses on her face, showing a mix of realization and concern. The bright background contrasts with the tension in her expression, highlighting her internal conflict as she processes the implications of his words. This moment contrasts power and agency, as the man's disregard for limits contrasts with her awareness of the potential consequences, emphasizing the differing ways they each perceive and exercise power. His pursuit of *"more"* contrasts sharply with Diana's restrained and morally guided use of power, which illustrates the gendered differences in how male and female characters are allowed to exercise agency. While Max's power is portrayed as a natural right, Diana's strength is subject to scrutiny and moral boundaries. *"The masculine subject... expresses its power through the subordination and regulation of women"* (Butler, 1990, p. 18). Butler's argument that male power is often constructed through the control of others aligns with Max Lord's approach to power. His unrestrained pursuit of dominance contrasts with Diana's morally constrained use of strength, highlighting the societal double standards that govern how men and women are allowed to wield power.

Power and agency are explored in deeply gendered ways, with male characters like Max Lord representing uncontrolled dominance while female characters, such as Diana and Barbara, must navigate societal expectations and moral boundaries in Wonder Woman (1984). Through Butler's framework, the movie critiques how patriarchal structures regulate women's power and limit their agency, reinforcing the need for feminist redefinitions of strength and empowerment.

CONCLUSION

In Wonder Woman 1984, the movie explores significant feminist themes surrounding gender performativity, power, and agency, particularly in its treatment of the protagonist Diana Prince and antagonist Barbara Minerva (Cheetah). Through Judith Butler's framework, the movie reveals how societal expectations impose limitations on women, forcing them to navigate the tension between strength and vulnerability. Diana embodies an idealized form of empowerment, but her journey highlights the complex emotional sacrifices women are expected to make in both personal and public spheres.

The movie challenges traditional gender roles by illustrating how women's ability to act independently is frequently limited by societal expectations, especially in terms of relationships and their roles within society Diana's emotional sacrifices, her realization that *"having it all"* is an unrealistic narrative, and her rejection of patriarchal expectations reflect a deeper feminist commentary on the demands placed on women. Meanwhile, Barbara's transformation into Cheetah demonstrates the pressure on women to align with masculine ideals of power, illustrating the ongoing struggle to find empowerment within a patriarchal system.

Ultimately, Wonder Woman 1984 challenges the binary distinctions of strength and vulnerability, power and subjugation, presenting a more nuanced depiction of female heroism. By challenging conventional gender norms, the movie presents a feminist analysis of power and agency, proposing that genuine strength comes from reshaping the concepts of success and empowerment based on individual definitions.

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Challenging the 'Dumb Blonde' Stereotype: A Feminist and Intersectional Analysis of Gender and Professionalism in *Legally Blonde* (2001) Movie

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> *"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."*
> *- 1 Peter 3:3-4 (NIV)*

ABSTRACT

This study examines how *Legally Blonde* (2001) depicts femininity using a qualitative content analysis: intelligence, and gender dynamics by applying feminist criticism, *gender performativity* by Judith Butler (1990) and *intersectionality* frameworks by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991). In addition, the elements of the visual narratives *(cinematography)*, such as: camerawork, tones of colors were analyzed. As the result: **1)** It reveals how the movie subverts traditional gender stereotypes by showing Elle Woods' transformation from being perceived as a *"dumb blonde"* to a competent lawyer, challenging societal expectations that femininity equates to a lack of intelligence. **2)** It highlights the challenges women face in male-dominated professions, as seen in Elle's experience navigating *Harvard Law School* while maintaining her feminine identity. **3)** It focuses on how Elle's success illustrates that professional competence and femininity are not mutually exclusive, as her journey critiques the rigid expectations placed on women in professional spaces. This research offers a detailed perspective on gender roles in media, highlighting how movies can either question or uphold societal expectations related to gender and career achievement.

Keyword: *Legally Blonde (2001), Feminism, Gender Performativity, Patriarchy, Gender Roles*

INTRODUCTION

Movies, as a form of media, play an increasingly significant role in modern literature, reflecting societal norms, attitudes, and conflicts while offering accessible interpretations of complex human experiences. As visual narratives, they blend storytelling with symbolic elements, often addressing cultural, political, and gender-related issues. *Legally Blonde (2001)*, directed by Robert Luketic, offers a powerful platform for analyzing gender dynamics, particularly through the lens of feminist criticism. The movie highlights important issues like gender stereotypes, making feminine traits seem less valuable, and the difficulties women face in jobs mostly dominated by men. These problems reflect real-life situations, as women everywhere still deal with society's expectations, discrimination, and the lack of respect for femininity in the workplace. According

to the Catalyst Report, *"Women in male-dominated industries face pervasive stereotypes and often engage in underappreciated tasks, leading to burnout and high levels of stress."* (Catalyst, 2023). Women in male-dominated industries face pervasive stereotypes, such as being seen as less capable leaders. They often take on tasks like organizing or helping others at work, which are not recognized or rewarded. This can lead to exhaustion, and many report feeling stressed, anxious, and unsure of their abilities Occupational segregation and lack of mentoring exacerbate the challenges, with women disproportionately holding lower-paying jobs while being underrepresented in higher-paid industries.

Beyond its humorous and lighthearted portrayal, *Legally Blonde (2001)* movie, carries significant extrinsic value as a commentary on gender and societal expectations. The movie challenges deeply ingrained stereotypes about femininity, especially the notion of the *"dumb blonde,"* by positioning its protagonist, Elle Woods, as a woman who defies these assumptions. Elle's journey from a fashion-driven socialite to a competent lawyer offers a critique of how women are often judged by their appearance, with her ultimate success serving as a challenge to patriarchal structures that dominate professional fields like law.

The film highlights Elle Woods, a character who initially comes across as concerned with appearances and clothing but unexpectedly ventures into a transformative journey of self-awareness and empowerment. Following her rejection by a partner who deemed her *"too blonde,"* Elle decides to enroll in *Harvard Law School* with the intention of reclaiming his affection. Nevertheless, she gradually uncovers her own capabilities as she navigates the competitive and predominantly male arena of law, ultimately surpassing the expectations imposed upon her. A critical theme within the narrative addresses the ways in which women are often stereotyped and marginalized based on their physical appearance. Elle's evolution from a fashion-centric socialite to a proficient attorney challenges these stereotypes, establishing Legally Blonde as a critique of the interplay between gender, intellect, and professional efficacy.

Despite the extensive feminist analysis of media and movies, research specifically addressing *Legally Blonde (2001)* remains limited. Previous studies, such as Jane Brown's (2010) article *"Gender Stereotypes in Popular Cinema: A Study of 'Legally Blonde' Using Gender Performativity Theory"*, focus primarily on how Elle's journey fits into Judith Butler's theory of gender *performativity*. Brown's research highlights how Elle *"performs"* femininity and how this performance is received and critiqued by the patriarchal society at Harvard Law. The results indicate that Elle reclaims feminine traits and challenges gender roles, but the study does not fully address the systemic barriers women face in male-dominated professions, particularly how these barriers intersect with femininity and societal expectations.

This study aims to bridge that gap by expanding the analysis to include Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality and examining how Elle's journey reflects the broader struggle of women facing multiple axes of discrimination *(e.g., gender, appearance, and professional identity)*. By exploring the binary opposition of *Intelligence* vs. *Appearance*, this study aims to uncover how *Legally Blonde (2001)* simultaneously subverts

and reinforces societal stereotypes, contributing a more detailed understanding of gender dynamics in popular media. Likewise, this research examines the portrayal of femininity in Legally Blonde from Judith Butler's standpoint that gender is a performance carried out through our conduct; additionally, it embraces Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework concerning the intersection of multiple identity aspects, like gender and race, and their ramifications on personal experiences. It investigates the portrayal of femininity in Legally Blonde. As per Butler, gender is neither a natural nor a permanent characteristic, but rather something we *"perform"* based on the roles and behaviors society expects from us. In the case of Elle Woods, her embodiment of traditionally feminine traits is initially perceived as a weakness, but she later subverts these expectations by excelling in a male-dominated space without abandoning her femininity. The concept of intersectionality as articulated by Crenshaw will be employed to examine the ways in which Elle's identity as a "blonde" female interacts with the obstacles she encounters within a professional environment, thereby providing a more nuanced comprehension of how intersecting identities shape individuals' experiences of both discrimination and empowerment.

Scholarly works on feminist movie criticism have explored how popular cinema often perpetuates or challenges gender stereotypes. Mulvey's (1975) argued that the *"male gaze"* is prominent to better understand how women are often objectified and seen through a male-dominated perspective. In her article *"Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema",* Mulvey explained that women in movies are frequently portrayed as objects of desire, existing mainly to satisfy the male viewer's pleasure. While Legally Blonde may initially conform to this trope with Elle's portrayal as a *"dumb blonde,"* it ultimately subverts the male gaze by allowing Elle to emerge as a multi-dimensional character who commands respect in both feminine and professional spaces. Additionally, Butler's (1990) work on gender performativity in Gender Trouble provides essential insights into how Legally Blonde questions the performative nature of femininity and the expectations tied to it.

This study will explore how Legally Blonde subverts traditional gender stereotypes through its portrayal of Elle Woods and challenges societal expectations about *appearance* and *intelligence*. By employing the theoretical frameworks of gender performativity and intersectionality, this research seeks to address the ways in which the movie critiques the intersection of gender, appearance, and professional competence. Hence, this study is to reveal Legally Blonde critiques on stereotypes of femininity and the *"dumb blonde,"* it also reinforces certain gender norms by placing value on Elle's appearance and aligning her success with her eventual acceptance into the patriarchal space of law. This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the related issue between gender, societal expectations, and professional success. Applying feminist theory to analyze Legally Blonde, this study will add to the ongoing discussion about how gender is shown in media and what these portrayals mean in real life. The findings are expected to highlight how popular movies can both challenge and perpetuate existing gender norms, offering valuable insights for both feminist movie criticism and the broader discourse on gender equality.

Binary Opposition

INTELLIGENCE	APPEARANCE
In *Legally Blonde*, Elle Woods' intelligence is revealed through her ability to succeed in the academic and professional world, particularly in the male-dominated field of law. Her intellect is highlighted in scenes where she defies expectations by excelling at Harvard Law School. *"You got into Harvard Law?" - "What, like it's hard?"* This line reflects how Elle subverts the stereotype of women, particularly those who embrace femininity, being perceived as less competent. (Butler, 1990, p. 54) Her success serves as a critique of gender norms that equate femininity with a lack of intelligence.	Elle's appearance, particularly her *"blonde"* stereotype, is used to diminish her abilities and reduce her to superficial judgments. *"You're breaking up with me because I'm too... blonde?"* highlights the societal tendency to judge women based on their looks rather than their capabilities. However, the movie subverts this expectation, showing that appearance is not an indicator of intellectual worth. (Butler, 1990, p. 68) Elle reclaims her femininity, showing that being fashionable and intelligent are not mutually exclusive.

METHOD

By implementing a qualitative strategy alongside content assessment, this analysis examined the *Legally Blonde (2001)* movie from a feminist point of view. It focused on two contrasting ideas: Judith Butler's theory of *"performativity"* and Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of *"intersectionality."* These ideas helped explore how the movie shows femininity and gender roles, how they are shaped, performed, and challenged throughout the story. The study also considers the binary opposition of intelligence vs. appearance, exploring how these concepts intersect to reflect broader societal attitudes toward gender.

The main data for this research were collected from specific scenes and dialogues in Legally Blonde. The focus is on important moments that highlight gender stereotypes, the downplaying of feminine traits, and the difficulties women encounter in male-dominated environments. This included the extraction of relevant quotes from the movie subtitles that highlight the protagonist's experiences with gendered expectations, as well as analyzing pivotal scenes where Elle Woods subverts or conforms to societal stereotypes about femininity and intelligence.

This research centers on two principal concepts, one being *'gender performativity,'* a term articulated by Judith Butler in 1990, which posits that gender roles are manifested through actions that align with societal expectations. This concept is employed to examine the character of Elle Woods, specifically analyzing her enactment of femininity and the evaluations it receives within a professional context. At the same time, 'intersectionality' reveals how a person's identity, incorporating elements like gender expectations and economic standing, significantly influences their unique experiences of both bias and advantage (Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1991). This investigation explores the ways in which Elle's identity as a *"blonde"* woman intersects with her encounters in the predominantly male law.

The data were studied using thematic analysis, which looks for repeating ideas about gender stereotypes, the connection between *appearance* and *intelligence*, and the difficulties women face in workplaces dominated by men. The analysis process involves coding dialogue and scenes based on themes of stereotyping, gender expectations, and professional challenges. Additionally, binary opposition analysis is used to explore the contrast between intelligence and appearance as presented in the movie, framing the critique of societal norms. Expert commentary from scholars like Judith Butler and Kimberlé Crenshaw provides theoretical context and depth to the findings. This qualitative analysis aims to offer insights into how *Legally Blonde* addresses and critiques societal expectations of femininity, particularly in relation to professional competence. By using both theories, gender performativity and intersectionality, this study gives a more detailed view of how the movie shows gender roles, adding to the larger conversation about how gender is represented in media.

DISCUSSION

1. **The Subversion of Traditional Femininity in *Legally Blonde***

The character of Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde* serves as both a reinforcement and a subversion of traditional gender stereotypes, particularly through her portrayal as a *"blonde."* From the beginning, Elle is confronted with the societal stereotype that blonde women are less intelligent or serious, a common trope that reduces women to their physical appearance. In the line, *"You're breaking up with me because I'm too... blonde?"* (00:08:10), Elle questions her partner's decision to leave her, which is based on her outward appearance. This moment reflects the widespread stereotype that associates blondes with shallowness or lack of intelligence. According to Judith Butler, gender is socially constructed through categories like *"blonde,"* which often reduce individuals to surface-level characteristics, stripping away their uniqueness and complexity (Butler, 1990, p. 54). This stereotype forces Elle to question her own worth, illustrating how societal expectations can diminish a woman's perceived value based solely on appearance.

In this scene from *Legally Blonde*, the cinematography emphasizes the theme of challenging societal expectations about femininity and intelligence, particularly within male-dominated spaces like *Harvard Law School.* The close-up shot of Elle Woods, with her confident expression and bright appearance in focus, highlights the tension between how others perceive her and her self-assurance in her own abilities. This framing allows the audience to connect emotionally with Elle, showcasing her as both misunderstood and confident, reinforcing the movie's message of breaking stereotypes. The bright and soft lighting reflects Elle's optimistic personality, contrasting with the more serious, muted tone of the law school environment, and

highlighting her blonde hair and vibrant appearance. The use of color distinguishes her from the darker, more subdued surroundings, symbolizing the clash between femininity and traditionally male-dominated intellectual spaces. *"Patriarchal structures in professional settings often create invisible barriers for women, where traits associated with femininity are dismissed as incongruent with leadership and competence."* (Connell, 2005, p. 130) This quote highlights how patriarchal values within professional fields often undervalue feminine traits, aligning with the broader issue in Legally Blonde where Elle Woods' femininity is initially viewed as incompatible with professional success. Elle's fashionable yet professional attire, paired with glasses, symbolizes her growing competence as a law student, further challenging the stereotype that femininity and intelligence cannot coexist. Through its use of framing, lighting, color, and costume, the cinematography in this scene effectively supports the movie's central message: that women can embrace their femininity while excelling in professional spaces, thereby defying societal expectations.

However, as the movie progresses, Elle subverts this stereotype by succeeding in *Harvard Law School,* proving that her intelligence far exceeds the expectations set by her appearance. The movie further addresses the trivialization of feminine traits through humor, as seen in Elle's line, *"Exercise gives you endorphins. Endorphins make you happy. Happy people just don't shoot their husbands."* (01:04:30). While this line is humorous, it simplifies serious issues related to femininity and fitness, suggesting that maintaining one's appearance can solve deeper emotional problems. As Butler suggests, humor can often hide more significant social issues, in this case reinforcing the stereotype that women's concerns are superficial (Butler, 1990, p. 68). This comedic approach masks the societal pressure on women to maintain certain physical traits while ignoring the more profound challenges they face.

Legally Blonde challenges the conventional *"dumb blonde"* stereotype by allowing Elle Woods to retain her feminine traits while excelling in a traditionally male-dominated field. However, it also highlights how humor and appearance-related concerns can overshadow more critical aspects of gender dynamics, thereby reinforcing some of the very stereotypes it aims to challenge.

2. **The Representation of Women in Male-Dominated Professions in *Legally Blonde***

In this scene, the movie showcases the contrast between Elle Woods' bold femininity and the traditionally serious, male-dominated environment of *Harvard Law School.* The wide shot captures Elle confidently arriving in her flashy pink outfit, driving a sleek black Porsche, further emphasizing her flamboyant and unapologetically feminine persona. The color palette here is significant, with Elle's bright pink attire standing out against the muted, neutral tones of the surroundings, symbolizing how she doesn't conform to the usual expectations of a law student. The positioning of the people in the background, who are dressed in darker, more subdued clothing

and are observing Elle, highlights how out of place she seems in this environment, visually representing the stereotype that femininity, particularly one as pronounced as Elle's, doesn't belong in such serious, intellectual spaces. The cinematography in this scene underscores the tension between appearance and competence, aligning with the movie's central theme that women should not have to abandon their feminine traits to be successful in professional spaces.

In *Legally Blonde*, the movie addresses the challenges women face in male-dominated professions by juxtaposing traditional feminine traits with the expectations and barriers women encounter in professional settings. From the outset, Elle Woods' character is presented through a lens that reinforces conventional gender roles, such as consumerism and superficiality, which society often associates with femininity. In the line, *"Oh gosh, I have to go shopping."* (00:03:11), Elle reinforces the stereotype that shopping and appearance are central to a woman's identity, an expectation deeply ingrained in gender norms. As Judith Butler suggests, gender identity is performed through repeated acts like language and gestures, which solidify these societal expectations (Butler, 1990, p. 45). In this case, Elle's focus on shopping reflects the narrow roles traditionally afforded to women, particularly when juxtaposed against the professional and academic demands of law school.

Despite these initial portrayals of traditional femininity, *Legally Blonde* subverts these gender expectations by showcasing how these feminine traits can coexist with professional competence and intelligence. Elle's association with pink, often dismissed as foolish, becomes a symbol of her confidence and identity. When she says, *"Whoever said orange was the new pink was seriously disturbed."* (00:47:21), Elle embraces her femininity unapologetically. As Butler notes, femininity is frequently trivialized, but reclaiming and redefining it can serve as a powerful act of resistance against societal norms (Butler, 1990, p. 70). By maintaining her style and personality throughout her legal journey, Elle challenges the notion that professionalism requires the abandonment of traditionally feminine characteristics.

The movie further addresses the biases women face in male-dominated professions through the iconic line, *"You got into Harvard Law?"* - *"What, like it's hard?"* (00:12:57). This line challenges the assumption that women like Elle, who embrace their femininity, are not capable of succeeding in prestigious, traditionally male-dominated spaces like Harvard Law. This expectation reflects the broader societal belief that academic rigor and professional competence are inherently masculine traits. Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality emphasizes that breaking gender norms in professional spaces is crucial to deconstruct power structures that limit women's participation (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1250). By excelling at Harvard while staying true to her feminine identity, Elle not only subverts these expectations but also highlights the unnecessary association between masculinity and success.

Legally Blonde portrays the challenges women face in male-dominated professions by first presenting and then dismantling the stereotypes tied to femininity. *"Cultural narratives that tie women's value to their*

appearance reinforce gender stereotypes that persist in both media and real-world professional contexts.'' (Goffman, 1979, p. 88) It supports the analysis of how Legally Blonde portrays cultural stereotypes, especially the notion that women are often judged by their appearance in both media and professional spaces. While Elle initially embodies traditional gender roles, her success in law school challenges the idea that women must conform to masculine norms to thrive in professional spaces, offering a nuanced commentary on the balance between gender identity and professional competence.

3. The Intersection of Femininity and Professional Competence in *Legally Blonde*

Elle Woods' transformation challenges societal expectations about femininity and intelligence, particularly within male-dominated spaces such as law school. At the beginning of the movie, Elle's view of law school reflects a common stereotype that intellectual and professional environments are inherently masculine, rigid, and devoid of any elements associated with femininity or fun. When she says, *"Law school is for people who are boring and ugly and serious"* (00:26:45), she expresses the expectation that women like her who embrace their appearance, fashion, and joy do not belong in such spaces. Elle's initial perception reveals the broader societal assumption that these spaces require a rejection of femininity to be taken seriously. However, as the movie progresses, Elle defies this expectation by bringing her unique personality into the academic world, showing that one can be both joyful and intelligent. Judith Butler's work on gender subversion emphasizes that breaking gender norms can challenge the established power structures that restrict participation in these fields (Butler, 1993, p. 89). Elle's decision to remain true to her identity while excelling at Harvard represents a subversion of these norms.

Furthermore, Elle's transformation from a seemingly superficial woman to a competent and successful lawyer directly challenges the belief that women must forgo traditionally feminine traits to succeed in male-dominated environments. In the line, *"I've decided that I want to pursue a career in law. I'm fully comfortable using legal jargon in everyday life"* (00:44:30), Elle confidently declares her decision to embrace her career in law while staying true to herself. This marks a significant shift in her character, from someone perceived as superficial to a respected professional. However, Elle never abandons her femininity in the process, which challenges the societal dichotomy between being feminine and being intelligent or competent. As Butler points out, the coexistence of femininity and competence disrupts the false assumption that these traits are mutually exclusive (Butler, 1990, p. 84). Elle's journey showcases that women do not have to sacrifice their femininity to gain respect in professional fields.

Legally Blonde uses Elle's transformation to challenge societal expectations about femininity and intelligence. By remaining authentic to her personality and traits, Elle shows that success in male-dominated spaces is possible without abandoning one's feminine identity, thereby offering a critique of the rigid and outdated expectations placed on women in professional environments. In this scene from Legally Blonde, the cinematography reinforces the power dynamics and challenges Elle faces in the male-dominated legal profession. The low lighting and rich, dark wooden tones of the office setting create an atmosphere of seriousness and authority, representing the traditional and rigid nature of the legal field. The character is seated in a large leather chair, dominating the frame with his posture and positioning, which signifies his control and authority over Elle in this moment. His body language, with a relaxed yet condescending posture, visually conveys his dismissive attitude, which is further emphasized by the dialogue, *"Too bad. I thought you were a law student who wanted to be a lawyer"* (1:15:20). This shot highlights the gendered expectations and the professional hurdles women face, particularly when they are judged not by their abilities but by how they align with male-dominated norms. The placement of the male character in the foreground, along with his indifferent expression and control over the environment, visually illustrates the theme of how women, like Elle, must navigate spaces where their ambitions are questioned and undermined.

In this graduation scene from Legally Blonde, the cinematography plays a key role in visually reinforcing Elle Woods' transformation and the movie's central theme of self-belief. The close-up shot of Elle as she delivers the line, *"...you must always have faith in yourself,"* (1:35:21) captures her facial expression, showcasing her confidence and newfound sense of accomplishment. The use of soft lighting highlights her face, adding a sense of warmth and positivity, which emphasizes the personal growth she has undergone throughout the movie. The background, slightly blurred but framed by large windows, creates a sense of openness and future possibilities, symbolizing Elle's bright prospects after overcoming the barriers of both gender stereotypes and male-dominated spaces. The graduation cap and gown, traditionally associated with academic achievement, contrast with Elle's character at the beginning of the movie, when she is judged for her looks and

femininity. The composition of this shot, with Elle centered and standing tall, visually represents her journey from being underestimated to proving her intelligence and worth, correlating with the movie's overarching message that confidence and self-belief are crucial to overcoming societal expectations. *"The redefinition of femininity in media, when women succeed without sacrificing their identity, provides a powerful message of empowerment, challenging the traditional associations of weakness with feminine traits."* (hooks, 1984, p. 45) It aligns with Elle Woods' journey in *Legally Blonde*, where she embraces her femininity while succeeding in a male-dominated space, serving as an empowering narrative.

CONCLUSION

Legally Blonde serves as a powerful exploration and critique of traditional gender stereotypes, particularly focusing on the intersection of femininity, intelligence, and professional competence in male-dominated spaces. Throughout the movie, Elle Woods defies societal expectations by proving that embracing traditionally feminine traits does not preclude success in rigorous and intellectual environments. The movie challenges the pervasive *"dumb blonde"* stereotype, showing that external appearance and intelligence are not mutually exclusive, but can coexist in harmony.

Elle's transformation from a fashion-obsessed socialite to a successful lawyer critiques patriarchal systems that frequently evaluate women based on their appearance instead of their skills or intelligence. The movie not only challenges traditional gender roles but also brings attention to the broader societal challenges women encounter, particularly in male-dominated professions like law. Elle's experience in law school showcases the challenges of navigating spaces where feminine traits are trivialized and undervalued. Her ultimate success demonstrates that women do not need to reject their feminine identity to gain respect or excel in such environments, offering an empowering narrative for women who face similar struggles in their careers.

Additionally, the movie addresses how humor can be used to mask and undermine serious gendered issues, as seen in Elle's witty lines that often downplay more profound societal pressures on women regarding their appearance and behavior. While Legally Blonde successfully critiques certain gender norms, it also reinforces some expectations by placing significant value on Elle's appearance and her eventual acceptance into patriarchal spaces like Harvard Law. The movie presents a dual narrative: it encourages women to embrace their true selves, while also highlighting the persistent conflict between femininity and the patriarchal norms that continue to influence professional environments. This analysis highlights Legally Blonde's complex engagement with gender stereotypes, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how movies can simultaneously challenge and reinforce societal norms about gender and professional success.

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Research Article

The Influence of Achievement in the Character Habituation Program on Students' Grades at Makarios Junior High School, West Jakarta, during the 2023/2024 Academic Year

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"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward."
*- **Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)***

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of the *Character Habituation* program on student *academic performance* at *Makarios Christian School* at *Junior High* level during the *2023/2024 academic year*. Character education has emerged as a critical element in the development of students' ethical principles, conduct, and educational achievement. This investigation utilized a comparative analytical framework to evaluate the influence of character habituation approach on individual student performance and the broader academic milieu, using Bandura's (1977) *Social Learning Theory* and Pearson's (1901) theory of *Correlation* analysis. The findings indicate that: **1)** The investigation revealed that students who regularly engaged in the Character Habituation program generally attained superior academic grades. This observation implies a moderate positive effect of the program on student performance. **2)** Students who engaged in the program continued to encounter academic obstacles, whereas a select few who abstained from participation still achieved elevated grades. This suggests that additional variables, such as individual academic capabilities or learning difficulties, also play a significant role in influencing academic outcomes. **3)** The outcomes from the Pearson correlation study suggested a moderate positive connection *(r = 0.45)* tying program involvement to educational achievement, illustrating that although the program aids in academic results, it is not the only major contributor. The implications of these findings are anticipated to inform educational policy by emphasizing the significance of character habituation programs in promoting comprehensive student development, proposing that the incorporation of moral and social principles into the educational curriculum can enhance both academic results and enduring values.

Keywords: *Character Habituation, Character Education, Pedagogy, Students' Achievement, Social Learning*

INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a critical focus within the educational system, emphasizing the need to foster moral and ethical development alongside academic achievement. The *"Character Habituation"* program at *Makarios Christian School Junior High*, implemented during the *2023/2024 academic year*, serves as a key initiative aimed at cultivating principles such as accountability, self-discipline, competency, and regard for others

among students. The program's structured activities, validated by parents and monitored by homeroom teachers, aim to enhance both ethical development and academic performance.

The integration of character education in schools has been shown to significantly influence students' motivation, discipline, and critical thinking skills, which are crucial for academic success. Previous research has demonstrated that character education programs can improve both behavior and academic outcomes by promoting values such as discipline and respect (Battistich & Watson, 2009). However, a critical issue observed in many schools today is the rise in disruptive behaviors and the increasing gap between student behavior and academic performance. For instance, a recent survey on academic dishonesty among Indonesian university students highlighted significant ethical concerns, revealing that students often rationalize dishonest behavior due to perceived pressures and subjective norms (Theory of Planned Behavior, TPB).

Located in West Jakarta, Indonesia, Makarios Christian School Junior High, an Adventist school under the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Education Foundation, embraces ten core values—*'Faith in God,' 'Respect,' 'Responsibility,' 'Self-Control & Moderation,' 'Honesty & Integrity,' 'Kindness & Compassion,' 'Contentment & Thankfulness,' 'Patience & Perseverance,' 'Peace & Humility,' and 'Loyalty & Commitment'*—as the foundation of its character education curriculum. These values are integral to the school's *Integrated Faith Learning (IFL)* approach, which is designed to instill character through both academic and extracurricular activities.

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory provides an essential perspective for understanding how the Character Habituation program influences students' academic outcomes. Bandura (2021) posits that learning occurs within a social context through processes of observation, imitation, and modeling. According to Bandura, children shape new behaviors and attitudes by observing individuals in their context, especially authority figures and peers who model both constructive and destructive behaviors. The Character Habituation program relies on this concept, suggesting that students who observe and internalize positive behaviors from their teachers and peers are more likely to experience academic success.

Character education has been extensively studied, with numerous research efforts highlighting its impact on various aspects of student life, including academic performance. For instance, a meta-analysis on the relationship between character education and academic achievements revealed a moderate yet significant impact on students' performance, underscoring the integral role character education plays in academic success *(Meta-analysis, 2021)*. Another study corroborated these findings, indicating that character education contributes to higher levels of educational outcomes, fostering virtues such as love, integrity, compassion, and self-discipline *(Meta-Analysis, 2017)*.

Research conducted at *SMP Negeri 1, Seyegan* demonstrated that students who participated in character education programs exhibited higher learning motivation, better discipline, and enhanced critical thinking abilities, contributing to improved academic performance. Similarly, a study at *SMA Sandikta, Bekasi City* found that character education significantly impacted students' academic achievements in social studies, improving

grades and fostering a positive learning environment (Influence of Character Education on Learning Achievement, 2024).

Bandura's Social Learning Theory is particularly relevant in understanding the impact of the Character Habituation program at *Makarios Christian School Junior High*. The theory emphasizes that learning is enhanced when students observe credible and relatable models who demonstrate the desired behaviors. This process of vicarious reinforcement, where students observe the consequences of others' behaviors, can significantly influence their learning and, ultimately, their academic performance.

METHOD

The *Character Habituation* program at *Makarios Christian School Junior High* involved a series of daily activities that students were required to complete at home. These activities, which include holy book reading, personal prayer, household chores, limited screen time, timely sleep, acts of kindness towards parents, polite speech, seeking parental blessings, healthy eating, and regular exercise, are designed to instill Christlike values, healthy habits, and academic discipline in students. The Character Habituation Program at Makarios Christian School Junior High includes a series of daily activities that students are expected to complete at home. Each student was required to fill out a Google Form daily, reporting their completion of the Character Habituation activities. Homeroom teachers then reviewed these submissions every morning to monitor students' engagement with the program. The data collected from these reports formed the basis of this study, which sought to analyze the relationship between the frequency of students' participation in the program and their academic performance.

This study employed a quantitative research method, using Bandura's *Social Learning Theory* (1977) and *correlation* analysis theory by Pearson (1901) to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between students' participation in the *Character Habituation* program and their *academic achievements*. *"The coefficient of correlation provides a quantitative assessment of the relationship between two variables, offering a means to predict the behavior of one variable given the value of the other"* (Pearson, 1901, p. 565). The academic performance data included students' average grades, which were then compared with the frequency of their Character Habituation submissions. Bandura's Social Learning Theory was incorporated to examine how students' exposure to role models, such as parents and teachers, who consistently demonstrated and reinforced the Character Habituation activities, influenced their academic performance. Meanwhile, the Pearson correlation was used to predict how student engagement in character habituation could be associated with their academic achievement. *"The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables"* (Schober, Boer, & Schwarte, 2018, p. 1763). It highlights the purpose of Pearson correlation, directly applicable to the study's goal of analyzing the relationship between student participation in the Character Habituation program and their academic performance. The analysis involved data from a sample of 66 students from grades 7-9 at *Makarios Christian School Junior High* during the *2023/2024*

academic year. Each student was required to fill out a Google Form daily to report their participation in the Character Habituation activities. Homeroom teachers reviewed these reports every morning to monitor student engagement in the program. The data collected from these reports served as the basis for this study, which aimed to analyze the relationship between the frequency of student participation in this program and their academic performance.

DISCUSSION

1. Results

The empirical evidence derived from the Character Habituation program highlights a notable trend: individuals who systematically recorded their participation in the program demonstrated an enhanced average academic performance in comparison to their peers who either rarely engaged or opted out completely. In particular, students in grades 7 through 9 who habitually completed and reported their Character Habituation endeavors consistently achieved scores that surpassed the class mean or positioned themselves among the highest-performing individuals.

Nevertheless, the data further reveals certain anomalies. There existed students who, notwithstanding their involvement in the activities, either neglected to submit their reports or exhibited hesitance in doing so. Additionally, a few students who did not engage in the program still achieved high grades, likely due to their pre-existing academic abilities. Conversely, some students who regularly submitted their reports did not perform as well academically, which could be attributed to underlying learning difficulties.

These findings suggest that while the Character Habituation program has a positive impact on academic performance for the majority of students, other factors such as inherent academic abilities and individual learning challenges also play a significant role. Bandura's (1977) assertion that *"social learning is enhanced when students perceive the model as competent, credible, and relatable"* underscores the importance of the perceived credibility and relatability of role models in the effectiveness of the program. In addition,

Pearson correlation analysis was chosen for this study because it is a widely used method for measuring the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. *"Correlation coefficients between 0.40 to 0.59 represent moderate positive correlations, indicating a linear relationship where increases in one variable are associated with increases in the other"* (Mukaka, 2012, p. 70). In this context, Pearson correlation was used to determine whether there is a relationship between the frequency of participation in the Character Habituation Program and students' academic performance *(measured by their average grades). "The measure of correlation expresses the tendency of the deviations of two variables from their respective means to vary together in a linear fashion"* (Pearson, 1901, p. 561). It underscores that the student participation in the Character Habituation Program varies in relation to their academic performance.

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis revealed a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.45. With a sample size of 66 students, this result indicates a moderate positive correlation between the frequency of participation in the Character Habituation Program and their academic achievement. In other words, there is a tendency for students who participate more frequently in the program to achieve higher academic performance. In the study, the Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.45, indicating a moderate positive relationship between program participation and student grades. This aligns with Mukaka's interpretation, helping readers understand the result. Here are the particulars:

Table 1. Data Sample

Sample Name	Grade	Total CH Submission	Average Score 23/24
Sample 1	7	7	84
Sample 2	7	30	90
Sample 3	7	5	87
Sample 4	7	27	91
Sample 5	7	20	91
Sample 6	7	15	92
Sample 7	7	21	91
Sample 8	7	**27**	88
Sample 9	7	2	81
Sample 10	7	3	88
Sample 11	7	1	85
Sample 12	7	25	91
Sample 13	7	4	76
Sample 14	7	2	83
Sample 15	7	6	85
Sample 16	7	16	92
Sample 17	7	4	82
Sample 18	7	1	85
Sample 19	7	25	91
Sample 20	7	3	83
Sample 21	7	4	83

Sample 22	7	1	82
Sample 23	7	26	86
Sample 24	7	**7**	81
Sample 25	8	6	87
Sample 26	8	17	89
Sample 27	8	2	81
Sample 28	8	**32**	92
Sample 29	8	1	85
Sample 30	8	18	90
Sample 31	8	23	93
Sample 32	8	2	84
Sample 33	8	10	89
Sample 34	8	30	94
Sample 35	8	**78**	93
Sample 36	8	26	91
Sample 37	8	5	85
Sample 38	8	9	83
Sample 39	8	31	87
Sample 40	8	21	87
Sample 41	8	9	83
Sample 42	8	33	90
Sample 43	8	23	83
Sample 44	8	12	84
Sample 45	8	1	83
Sample 46	8	26	85
Sample 47	8	4	75
Sample 48	8	16	86
Sample 49	9	5	89
Sample 50	9	5	96
Sample 51	9	24	94
Sample 52	9	45	97
Sample 53	9	6	83
Sample 54	9	5	92
Sample 55	9	17	90
Sample 56	9	4	91

Sample 57	9	5	95
Sample 58	9	5	89
Sample 59	9	5	96
Sample 60	9	5	94
Sample 61	9	5	97
Sample 62	9	6	83
Sample 63	9	5	92
Sample 64	9	13	90
Sample 65	9	18	91
Sample 66	9	38	95

2. Interpretation

A correlation coefficient of 0.45 indicates a moderate association between the two variables, signifying that an enhancement in participation in the Character Habituation Program is typically correlated with an augmentation in academic performance, albeit the association is not exceptionally robust. This could imply that even though the program supports students' academic progress, there are further factors that are essential in determining educational outcomes.

Table 2. Scale of Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Size of Correlation	Interpretation
0.80 to 1.00 (-0.80 to -1.00)	Very high positive (negative) correlation
0.60 to 0.79 (-0.60 to -0.79)	High positive (negative) correlation
0.40 to 0.59 (-0.40 to -0.59)	Moderate positive (negative) correlation
0.20 to 0.39 (-0.20 to -0.39)	Low positive (negative) correlation)
0.00 to 0.19 (-0.00 to -0.19)	Negligible correlation

Considering the Pearson correlation result of 0.45, it can be concluded that there is a moderate relationship between student participation in the Character Habituation Program and their academic achievement. This suggests that the program had a positive impact, though it did not entirely determine students' academic outcomes. Other factors such as inherent academic abilities, learning environment, and personal circumstances of the students likely also contributed significantly to their academic performance. *"The Pearson correlation assumes that the relationship between variables is linear and that the data are homoscedastic, meaning the variability in scores for one variable should be roughly the same at all values of the other variable"* (Laerd

Statistics, 2015). This highlights an important limitation of Pearson correlation. The study notes that other factors might affect grades, which could mean the relationship was not perfectly linear for all students. Understanding this limitation is key to interpreting the 0.45 correlation found in the paper. *"When two variables are perfectly correlated, the deviations from their mean values will always occur in a fixed proportion, indicating a precise linear relationship between them"* (Pearson, 1901, p. 563). It emphasizes the concept of linearity, which Pearson's theory relies on. In the study, this indicates that an increased involvement of students in the character development program is correlated with an enhancement in their academic performance.

Therefore, while it is necessary to advocate for proactive student participation in character education, educators ought to deliberate on further strategies and support to elevate students' academic success. Further studies could be conducted to explore additional factors that may influence this relationship and to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the Character Habituation Program.

The results of this study align with previous research indicating a positive correlation between character education and academic performance. The Character Habituation program, by fostering a structured routine that emphasizes Christlike behavior, healthy living, and academic discipline, contributes to students' overall academic success. The program's holistic approach, which integrates character development into daily life, creates a supportive environment that enhances students' motivation, discipline, and academic focus.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory further elucidates how the Character Habituation program may be influencing students' academic outcomes. The theory highlights that vicarious reinforcement, where students observe the consequences of others' behaviors, can significantly influence learning. This suggests that students who observe positive reinforcement for character-driven behaviors are more likely to emulate these behaviors, thereby improving their academic performance. However, the variability in individual student outcomes highlights the complexity of the relationship between character education and academic achievement. Factors such as prior academic abilities, learning difficulties, and personal circumstances can influence the effectiveness of character education programs. Therefore, while the Character Habituation program is beneficial for most students, it should be complemented with additional support for those with unique challenges to ensure that all students can benefit from the program.

CONCLUSION

The Character Habituation program at Makarios Christian School Junior High has proven to be an effective tool for enhancing students' academic performance by fostering Christlike behavior, healthy living, and academic discipline. The positive correlation between students' participation in the program and their academic achievements underscores the importance of character education in the holistic development of students.

Incorporating Bandura's Social Learning Theory, this study has demonstrated that observational learning, role modeling, and vicarious reinforcement are key components in the success of the Character Habituation

program. The findings suggest that students are more likely to adopt positive behaviors and attitudes when they consistently observe and engage with credible role models who reinforce these behaviors.

However, the study also reveals that individual differences, such as pre-existing academic abilities and learning challenges, can impact the effectiveness of character education programs. As such, it is recommended that the program be tailored to address the diverse needs of students, providing additional support where necessary to maximize its impact on academic performance.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the integration of character education in schools, particularly in fostering academic excellence alongside moral and ethical development.
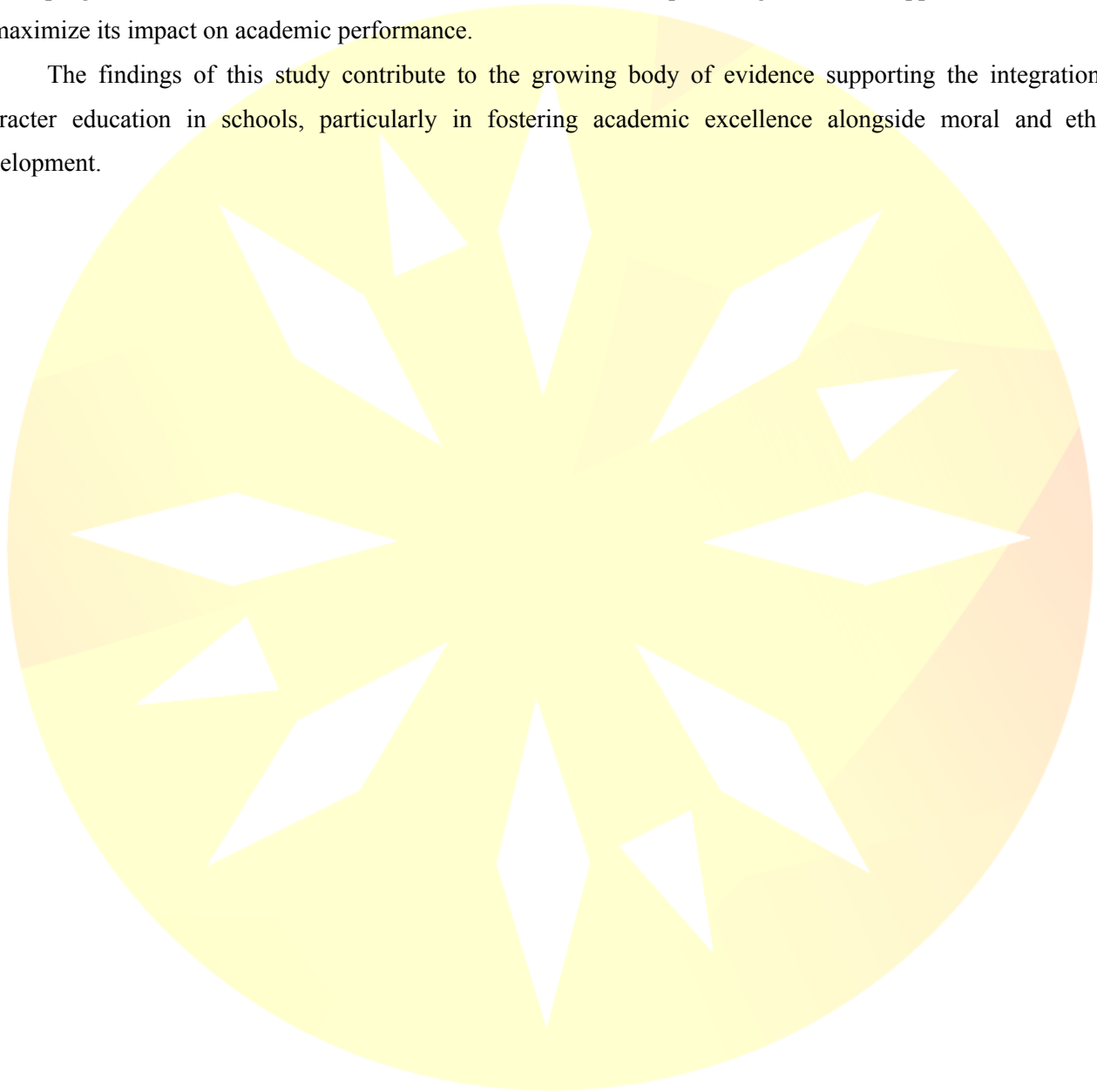
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"Boanerges" is an official school journal that emphasizes research, development, and innovation in the field of education. Its goal is to shape an outstanding generation through effective and contemporary learning. Each edition of this journal contains diverse articles written by educators, students, researchers, and educational practitioners. The content of the articles covers topics in the Social Humanities such as Literary Criticism, Linguistics, and Anthropology, as well as Sciences, Mathematics, and other efficient subjects.

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