

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains background of the study, research problems, aims of study, and significance of study.

1.1 Background

Narrative is one form of text used to convey stories, experiences, or information in an engaging way. Narrative texts not only serve to entertain but also to deliver moral messages or life values. Recent studies applying Barthes' semiotic approach (Yudaryanti, 2024) emphasize that narrative has a complex structure consisting of elements such as plot, characters, and setting, all of which contribute to the overall meaning of the story. In this context, narrative texts can be seen as tools for constructing cultural understanding and identity through repeated storytelling.

In literary and communication studies, narrative texts are often analyzed through diverse theoretical lenses. According to Barthes (1977), narratives function not only to tell stories but also to create meaning through codes and symbols, a perspective reinforced by Ramadhani and Suryaman (2024), who demonstrated how these codes reveal layered cultural values in literary texts. Therefore, narrative analysis involves uncovering symbols and codes that allow readers to interpret multiple layers of meaning within a story.

With the development of technology and media, narratives are no longer confined to books or oral storytelling but are also found in films, video games, and other digital platforms. Research indicates that multimedia narratives can

influence how people perceive and experience stories while enhancing emotional engagement (Brunner, 2019). In this regard, it is important to consider how visual and auditory elements in multimedia narratives interact with traditional textual elements, creating a richer experience for audiences.

Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is widely used to examine how meanings are constructed and communicated through media texts. Barthes proposes three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation refers to the literal meaning of a sign, while connotation refers to the cultural and emotional meanings associated with it. Myth operates at the ideological level, where certain cultural values and beliefs are presented as natural and unquestionable. Through these concepts, Barthes' semiotic framework enables researchers to uncover hidden meanings and ideological messages embedded in visual images, dialogue, and characterization. Therefore, this theory is considered appropriate for analyzing women's narratives and gender representation in the film *Anora*.

The analysis of narrative structures, as seen in "*Anora*" (2024), is a drama-comedy film directed by Sean Baker, a filmmaker known for portraying marginalized communities and social realities in contemporary society. The film gained international recognition after winning the Palme d'Or at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival. The story follows Ani, a young woman working as a sex worker in Brooklyn, whose life changes dramatically after becoming involved with the son of a wealthy Russian oligarch. Through its portrayal of class inequality, power relations, and women's experiences, *Anora* provides a rich narrative for examining how female characters are represented and how gender-related meanings are constructed within cinematic texts.

The film “*Anora*” (2024) is a romantic comedy-drama that tells the story of *Anora* “Ani” Mikheeva, a 23-year-old stripper in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, who becomes involved with Ivan “Vanya” Zakharov, the son of a Russian oligarch. The story begins when Vanya hires Ani for \$15,000 to accompany him for a week, which unexpectedly leads to an impulsive marriage in Las Vegas. However, when Vanya’s family learns about the marriage, they attempt to annul it, pulling Ani into emotional and social conflicts that upend her life (Baker, 2024). The film was produced by FilmNation Entertainment LLC and Neon, directed and written by Sean Baker, and producer by Sean Baker, Alex Coco, and Samantha Quan. The lead roles are played by Mikey Madison as Ani and Mark Eydelshteyn as Vanya, with Yura Borisov, Karren Karagulian, and Vache Tovmasyan in supporting roles.

Based on the synopsis of *Anora*, the writer chooses to analyze the narrative construction and the representation of women in the film, focusing on how female characters are depicted through Roland Barthes’s lens of denotation, connotation, and myth. This analysis aims to examine how narrative elements in *Anora* denotatively present women through erotic club visuals, defiant dialogue, and Ani’s shrewd yet constrained characterization, connoting vulnerability and resilience, challenging myths of passive, one-dimensional sex workers while critiquing toxic masculinity and savior tropes in gender representation. This approach is chosen because the complexity of gender representation in “*Anora*” allows for an in-depth exploration of how cultural meanings and gender ideologies are shaped within the film’s narrative. Therefore, the research is titled:

"The Construction of Women's Narratives in the Film *Anora*": A Qualitative Analysis of Gender Representation."

1.2 Research Questions

To understand the complexities of constructing women's narratives and gender representation in the film *Anora*, this research focuses on several crucial research questions:

1. How are women's narrative constructed in the film "*Anora*" through visual elements, dialogue, and characterization?
2. How is gender represented in the narrative of the film "*Anora*"?

1.3 Aim (s) of Study

The objectives of this research are:

1. To analyze the construction of women's narratives in the film "*Anora*" through visual elements, dialogue, and characterization.
2. To analyze the representation of gender roles in the women's narrative of the film "*Anora*".

1.4 Significance of Study

This research is expected to provide benefits, both theoretically and practically:

1.4.1 Implication

The result of this study is expected to support the semiotic analysis of narrative construction and gender representation through Roland Barthes' theory

of denotation, connotation, and myth (Barthes, 2012).

1.4.2 Application

The findings of this research may serve as a reference for:

1. This research illustrates to educators how the representation of women in the film *Anora* reflects complex gender issues. It acts as a valuable resource for instructing students on gender-related topics and the portrayal of women in media.
2. For academics, the study provides in-depth insights into the depiction of women in *Anora*. This enhances scholarly discussions regarding gender representation and inspires further inquiry in the fields of gender and media studies.
3. For filmmakers, the results can assist in crafting more authentic and diverse female characters. They highlight the significance of equitable gender representation in cinematic works.
4. For writers, this research offers a beneficial perspective for developing richer and more authentic narratives about women. It also promotes the investigation of pertinent gender themes in both literature and film.
5. For general audience, the study enhances comprehension of how women are represented in "*Anora*." It fosters a more critical perspective on gender representation in the media we consume daily.