

“Life in Plastic, but Patriarchy isn’t Fantastic”: Barbie (2023) as a Confrontation of Gender Inequality

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Abstract

This study explores how *Barbie* (2023), directed by Greta Gerwig, critiques gender inequality and the persistence of patriarchal values through its story and imagery. By applying Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze and Sylvia Walby's framework of patriarchal structures, the research investigates how the film reconstructs ideas of femininity and masculinity. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the analysis focuses on dialogue, visual framing, and narrative structure across both *Barbie Land* and the real world. The findings reveal that the film questions objectification and rigid gender norms, expressing a feminist message that values independence, emotional depth, and self-awareness. This study also highlights how popular cinema can act as a medium for challenging patriarchal narratives and supporting feminist perspectives within mass culture.

Keywords: gender roles, gender inequality, patriarchy, the male gaze, Barbie

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality remains a major global concern that stems from social, political, and economic structures, where traditional gender roles shape what society expects from men and women. Rather than a natural condition, it is a socially constructed phenomenon maintained through daily interactions and institutional practices (Lobrner, 2001). Historically, men have been associated with leadership and authority in the public sphere, while gender itself functions as a set of cultural assumptions and practices (Barker and Jane, 2016). Within this framework, feminine qualities continue to be regarded as less significant than masculine ones (Nash, 2022), positioning women in a subordinate role and reinforcing their marginalization within patriarchal structures that embed these roles across politics, work, and culture (Walby, 1990).

Gender stereotypes, both descriptive and prescriptive, influence perceptions of abilities, appearances, and occupations (Johar et al., 2003), contributing to wage gaps, limited career mobility, and underrepresentation in leadership. The six patriarchal structures as proposed by Walby's (1990)—household production, paid work, the state, violence, sexuality, and cultural—interconnect to sustain gender inequality. Media and popular culture play a central role in reproducing these norms, often portraying men as powerful actors and women in appearance-focused or secondary roles (Baker & Raney, 2007). Even when narratives challenge stereotypes, women may still be objectified through the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975), reinforcing patriarchal ideals that position men as dominant and women as passive.

Media and popular culture also play a significant role in shaping societal perceptions of gender roles. Media portrayals are not only widespread but also visually influential, as characters with highly idealized appearances are more likely to be viewed as aspirational (Greenwood, 2016). *Barbie* (2023), directed by Greta Gerwig and co-written with Noah Baumbach, provides a pertinent case study for examining the contemporary negotiation of gender roles in popular culture. Centring on Barbie, an iconic cultural figure inhabiting the seemingly flawless and all-female *Barbie Land*, the narrative disrupts its utopian setting when the protagonist begins to question her identity and purpose. Her journey into the real world exposes her to the entrenched realities of gender inequality

and patriarchal structures, creating a sharp contrast between the imagined matriarchal ideal and the persistent gender hierarchies of everyday life. In *Barbie* (2023), Gerwig uses humor, irony, and fantasy to question beauty standards and gender stereotypes while revealing the societal systems that restrict women's freedom. The film follows Barbie's journey from the perfect world of Barbie Land into the real world, where she confronts discrimination and gendered expectations. At the same time, Ken's experience provides an opposing perspective, his attempt to understand masculinity exposes how patriarchal systems also pressure men to conform to narrow ideals of strength and dominance. By depicting both characters' struggles, the film portrays gender inequality as a structure that confines everyone, not just women.

Earlier analyses of *Barbie* (2023) have focused on specific aspects such as language use, symbolism, or masculine identity. For instance, Taha (2024) examined gendered language, Byrnes et al. (2024) critiqued the film's surface-level feminism, Yakal (2024) explored Ken's masculinity, and Myisha et al. (2023) observed lingering patriarchal ideas despite feminist themes. Dewayani (2024) discussed visual representations of gender equality. However, these studies tend to isolate certain elements rather than examine how narrative, characterization, and imagery together construct the film's broader critique of patriarchy. To fill this gap, the present study combines Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze theory and Sylvia Walby's concept of patriarchy to offer a more holistic interpretation of *Barbie* (2023) as a cultural text that both reflects and challenges gender inequality. Through this approach, the research aims to show how the film contributes to feminist cinema and encourages broader discussion on gender justice in contemporary society.

THEORY

A. Patriarchy

Patriarchy is not merely about individual behavior but a deeply rooted system that operates through social, cultural, and political institutions. It shapes gender relations by maintaining male dominance and restricting women's autonomy and access to power (Johnson, 2004). This structure manifests through unequal economic opportunities, the division of labor based on gender, and control over women's sexuality. Walby (1990) identifies six interrelated structures that sustain patriarchal dominance: paid work, household production, culture, sexuality, violence, and the state. Each of these structures reinforces the marginalization of women, creating a system in which inequality is normalized and perpetuated.

B. The Male Gaze

The "male gaze" is a critical concept introduced by Laura Mulvey in her 1975 essay "*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*," which examines how cinema and media position women as objects of male desire. Mulvey defines the male gaze as a power dynamic within the narrative and visual structure of films where the camera, narrative perspective, and characters are all designed to satisfy a heterosexual male viewer's visual pleasure. In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female (Mulvey, 1975). Female characters are often portrayed as being concerned with their appearance and are more likely to be judged based on it (Gerding & Signorielli, 2014). The perpetuation of the male gaze in visual media leads to a cycle where women are not only objectified but also internalize this objectification, leading to self-objectification (Dang, 2022). By structuring films around male pleasure and male perspectives, the male gaze reinforces the broader societal structures of gender inequality.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study applies a descriptive and analytical method to explore how *Barbie* (2023) portrays gender inequality and patriarchal values. The approach emphasizes careful description and interpretation of the film's narrative, characters, and visual elements to uncover the social and

cultural meanings they convey. As stated by Loeb et al. (2017), descriptive analysis is a flexible process that allows researchers to revisit and refine their understanding as new insights emerge. This characteristic makes it appropriate for studies that involve complex cultural texts such as films.

The analysis focuses on how the film reflects and critiques gendered power relations by using two theoretical perspectives: Laura Mulvey's concept of the Male Gaze and Sylvia Walby's theory of Patriarchy. Mulvey's framework helps to examine how women are represented in visual storytelling and whether the film reinforces or resists gender stereotypes. Walby's theory provides a broader context for understanding how social institutions and cultural norms sustain patriarchal systems, allowing the study to connect the film's imagery with real-world structures of inequality.

The data were taken from thirty selected scenes and narrative elements in *Barbie* (2023). These include dialogue, character behavior, plot progression, and visual framing that illustrate gender roles, masculinity, femininity, and patriarchal control. The film was watched several times to ensure a comprehensive understanding of its themes and symbolism. Each relevant scene was recorded and classified according to its connection with Mulvey's and Walby's frameworks. The data were then arranged in a table to organize both visual and textual findings based on their relation to gender inequality, objectification, and power structures. After organizing the data, each item was examined to determine how the film questions or reproduces patriarchal ideas. The analysis also considers the cultural implications of these portrayals for discussions about feminism and equality in contemporary media.

Through this method, the study seeks to provide a balanced interpretation of *Barbie* (2023) as a film that engages critically with issues of gender and representation. Particular focus is placed on how the characters interact, how the story develops, and how visual elements are used to express ideas about gender. This method enables a more detailed and thoughtful interpretation of how *Barbie* (2023) represents and questions gender inequality. It also adds to wider academic discussions on how film and media influence, shape, and sometimes challenge the way society perceives gender roles.

DISCUSSION

The Portrayal of Gender Inequality

Barbie (2023) offers a thoughtful and visually engaging portrayal of gender inequality through two contrasting worlds: the imagined matriarchal society of Barbie Land and the patriarchal structure of the Real World. These settings serve not merely as backgrounds but as intentional spaces that question how gender roles are created, maintained, and normalized. Gender inequality, in this context, refers to the unequal treatment and perception of individuals based on gender. Such disparity does not arise from biological differences but is shaped and reinforced by social norms and institutional practices (Lorber, 2001). By juxtaposing the fantasy of Barbie Land with the realities of the real world, the film exposes the mechanisms by which social institutions, cultural practices, and media reinforce gender hierarchies that privilege men while restricting women's agency.



Figure 1. Scene of the gigantic appearance of Barbie among young girls playing with baby dolls
(Source: Barbie 2023, Time Code: 00:01:58).

The opening scene of the film functions as a striking metaphor for early gender socialization. In patriarchal societies, household production and caregiving responsibilities fall disproportionately on women, reinforcing gendered domestic roles (Walby, 1990). Young girls play with baby dolls, which symbolize domestic roles, until Barbie arrives in her iconic black-and-white swimsuit. The girls' smashing of the dolls is a symbolic rejection of imposed caregiving roles and reflects Walby's public/private divide. In Walby's terms, the baby doll becomes an ideological tool that confines women to the private sphere, valorizing motherhood and domesticity while excluding them from public power. Visual techniques amplify this symbolism. The cinematic gaze has historically positioned women as objects of visual pleasure, reinforcing traditional gender hierarchies through techniques such as framing, camera angles, and shot composition (Smelik, 1995). The low-angle shot of Barbie towering above the girls mirrors the grandeur of Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey monolith, positioning her as a catalyst for a leap in imagination. At the same time, the swimsuit evokes Mulvey's Male Gaze, as Barbie's introduction frames her body as a spectacle. This tension between her symbolic empowerment and her visual objectification foreshadows the film's ongoing negotiation between empowerment and constraint. The film's commentary on intergenerational transmission of gender norms appears in the narrator's remark, "Which can be fun, at least for a while, anyway. Ask your mother." (Barbie, 2023, 01:35). This casual aside underscores how domestic femininity is normalized within families, passed down as tradition, and internalized long before it is consciously questioned.



Figure 2. Scene of Midge's isolated appearance
(Source: *Barbie* 2023, Time Code: 00:06:14).

This is further echoed in the introduction of Midge, Barbie's pregnant friend. Midge is shown smiling and waving from a fenced-off background, symbolizing her marginalization. While motherhood is idealized as a traditional feminine role, it is often pushed aside in favor of more glamorous, marketable images of women. The narrator's remark, "She was discontinued by Mattel because a pregnant doll is just too weird." (*Barbie*, 2023, 06:18) references real-world history and critiques society's double standard: women are expected to become mothers, yet visible representations of pregnancy are deemed unattractive or inappropriate. This reflects Walby's patriarchy theory, where women are confined to the private sphere while men dominate public power. Midge's sidelined presence visually reinforces how pregnancy, although natural and significant, is excluded from the celebrated version of femininity in Barbie Land.

In Barbie Land, the Barbies occupy all positions of authority, serving as presidents, judges, construction workers, and even Nobel Prize winners, as illustrated in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Scene of The Barbies' diverse roles in Barbie Land
(Source: *Barbie* 2023, Time Code: 00:06:38).

The Kens, in contrast, fill decorative, low-agency roles. This inversion of traditional gender hierarchy is not presented as utopia but as satire that underscores the artificiality of gendered divisions. The matriarchal order becomes a symbolic mirror for patriarchal reality and asks audiences to question the legitimacy of dominance-based systems, whether male or female. The

narrative makes clear that replacing one form of dominance with another does not necessarily produce justice, as exclusion persists when power is concentrated in the hands of a single group.

This critique sharpens when Barbie and Ken cross into the real world. Here, Barbie's identity is diminished to her appearance, objectified by strangers, and stripped of the respect she is accustomed to in Barbie Land. Ken, meanwhile, experiences the opposite and is met with admiration, authority, and unearned privilege. This disparity vividly captures the cultural bias of patriarchal systems, which reward men with authority regardless of competence while undermining women's credibility and autonomy. Upon entering the real world, Barbie's shock deepens when she visits Mattel's corporate headquarters, where the boardroom is filled with male executives.

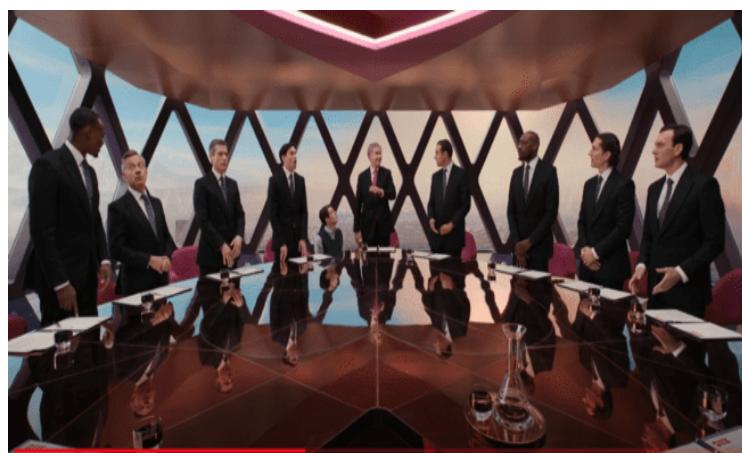


Figure 4. Scene of Mattel's male-dominated leaders in the office room
(Source: *Barbie* 2023, Time Code: 00:46:31).

Patriarchal structure of paid work is evident in the gendered division of labor, where men typically hold higher-status and higher-paying positions (Walby, 1990). Figure 4 directly reflects Walby's structures of paid work, where men dominate leadership positions. A persistent wage gap between men and women compounds this economic disparity. Patriarchal beliefs about women's capabilities dictate workplace hierarchies, perpetuating inequality (Rawat, 2014). Occupational segregation continues to relegate women to lower-paying roles, while men dominate executive and decision-making positions (Cotter, Hermsen, & Vanneman, 2003). The absence of women in decision-making roles is presented as a normalized condition rather than an exception. Male characters are typically portrayed with greater complexity, engaging in more action-oriented and leadership roles (Aubrey & Harrison, 2004). This is supported by a scene where the male worker in Mattel says, "*I'm a man with no power, Does that make me a woman?*" (*Barbie*, 2023, 46:33), which crystallizes internalized misogyny by equating femininity with weakness. Here, patriarchy is not only embedded in institutions but also reproduced through everyday language that diminishes women. The boardroom sequence also dramatizes the emotional and psychological effects of systemic exclusion. Barbie's confusion at finding no women in leadership mirrors the way institutional patriarchy masks gendered barriers as meritocracy. Meanwhile, Ken's contrasting experience, in which he is welcomed and respected without qualification, exposes the ease with which patriarchy bestows status on men while women must constantly justify their presence.

Then there is Gloria, a Mattel employee and mother figure in *Barbie* (2023), emerges as one of the film's most authentic and relatable characters. While Barbie embodies an idealized and

flawless version of femininity, Gloria represents the everyday realities faced by women who navigate work and family life within a society still influenced by patriarchal values. Her emotional monologue becomes a central moment in the narrative, offering a sincere and powerful reflection on the conflicting expectations that women are expected to meet. She says,

"You're supposed to love being a mother, but don't talk about your kids all the damn time.

You have to be a career woman but also always be looking out for other people.

You have to answer for men's bad behavior, which is insane, but if you point that out, you're accused of complaining.

You're supposed to stay pretty for men but not so pretty that you tempt them too much..."

(Barbie, 2023, 01:14:13).

Each line reveals a specific double standard, highlighting the no-win situations women face in their personal and professional lives. These contradictions reflect Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy, particularly the role of ideological structures in maintaining inequality through cultural norms and media representations. The demand to remain beautiful yet non-threatening, for instance, connects to Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze theory, showing how women's bodies and appearances are constantly scrutinized and controlled. Gloria's speech also illuminates the hidden emotional labor women perform daily, from managing appearances and emotions to maintaining relationships, often without recognition or support. Narratively, it shifts the focus from Barbie's polished perfection to the authentic and frequently messy reality of being a woman, making Gloria the emotional core of the story. Her words connect the world of fantasy with the realities of women's everyday experiences, creating a moment of shared understanding between the characters and the audience. This scene functions not only as a critique of gender inequality but also as an invitation to question the cultural and ideological forces that continue to sustain it.

Breaking Masculinity and Femininity Stereotypes

Ken's character development in *Barbie* reverses the conventional pattern of the male gaze. Rather than depicting women as dependent on male attention, the film portrays Ken as seeking validation from Barbie, admitting, "I only exist within the warmth of your gaze." His reliance on her recognition exposes the fragility of a masculinity that is defined by external approval rather than personal identity. This portrayal illustrates how patriarchal culture conditions men to equate their sense of worth with power or acceptance, instead of fostering emotional awareness and self-understanding. When Ken encounters the real world, he becomes fascinated by the male dominance he sees in public spaces. He interprets patriarchy in the most straightforward and literal way, describing it as "where men and horses run everything." The inclusion of horses as a symbol of power reflects his surface-level understanding of the system. Instead of questioning its fairness or considering its effects, Ken sees patriarchy as an opportunity to claim authority. He returns to Barbie Land, determined to recreate this order, believing it will secure him respect.



Figure 5. Scene of Ken takes over the Barbie Dreamhouse and turns it into his Mojo Dojo Casa House
(Source: Barbie 2023, Time Code: 00:59:19).

Ken's transformation of Barbie's Dreamhouse into the "Mojo Dojo Casa House" serves as a visual representation of the patriarchal appropriation of space. The house is filled with symbols of conventional masculinity, including gym equipment, beer cans, and horse imagery. These items signal dominance and physical strength but lack genuine substance. In Walby's terms, this mirrors the way patriarchy operates within institutions, taking over spaces associated initially with women and rebranding them under male control. The Kendum, however, is hollow. It offers Ken no real fulfillment or community, only a performance of power. Ken's emptiness becomes clear when he admits to Barbie, "*I don't know who I am without you.*" This confession removes the façade of confidence and exposes his inner insecurity. The film uses this moment to critique a form of masculinity built on dominance and validation from others, showing how it prevents men from developing a stable sense of identity.

While Ken struggles with self-definition, the women of Barbie Land represent an alternative understanding of femininity. They hold leadership roles and professional achievements while maintaining their individuality, empathy, and sense of style. The film challenges the belief that women must sacrifice femininity to achieve authority, suggesting instead that compassion, creativity, and emotional awareness can coexist with power. This portrayal questions the long-standing association between leadership and traditionally masculine traits such as aggression and competitiveness. Stereotypical Barbie's journey, however, reveals the vulnerability of femininity when it is built entirely on the idea of perfection. Her existential crisis begins when she experiences physical changes and unsettling thoughts that disrupt her ideal image. In the real world, she becomes objectified and diminished, facing harassment and insecurity. This stark contrast to her life in Barbie Land underscores the constant tension women experience between empowerment and objectification.

Gloria's character deepens this redefinition of femininity. As both a mother and an employee in a male-dominated company, she reflects the realities of modern womanhood. She manages the demands of caregiving and professional life, yet her contributions remain largely unseen by those in positions of authority. The film presents her persistence as a quiet yet powerful form of strength, equal to that of the accomplished Barbies in Barbie Land. Through her, the narrative acknowledges the everyday resilience often excluded from mainstream feminist portrayals, affirming that empowerment can also emerge from endurance and balance. The intertwined

journeys of Ken and Barbie reveal how rigid gender expectations constrain both men and women. Ken's embrace of patriarchal ideals fails to bring him fulfillment, while Barbie's encounter with sexism in the Real World forces her to confront and redefine the perfection she once embodied. The resolution does not restore Barbie Land to its original female-dominated order. Instead, it evolves into a more balanced space where both Barbies and Kens are encouraged to seek purpose beyond dominance. This outcome supports the film's central message that true equality comes not from replacing one gender's control with another, but from dismantling the hierarchies altogether.

Critique of Women's Objectification

Objectification involves seeing a person as a mere instrument of sexual pleasure or as an object of consumption, rather than as a whole, complex human being with desires, abilities, and capacities (Nussbaum, 1995). For decades, the Barbie brand has embodied narrow beauty ideals, portraying women as flawless, youthful, and aesthetically pleasing. This image aligns with male gaze theory, in which women are positioned as passive objects of visual pleasure (Mulvey, 1975). *Barbie* (2023) directly acknowledges this legacy while seeking to subvert it by shifting the focus from Barbie's physical perfection to her thoughts, emotions, discomfort, and growth. This transformation is captured in the line, "She might have started out as just a lady in a bathing suit, but she became so much more" (*Barbie*, 2023, 03:02). The statement references Barbie's 1959 debut in a revealing swimsuit, a design created for visual consumption. While the bathing suit represents objectification, the second half of the statement signals a redefinition of Barbie as a subject with agency, no longer valued solely for appearance but for narrative depth and emotional complexity. The film also satirizes the policing of women's bodies through the character Weird Barbie, who warns Stereotypical Barbie about cellulite:

"That's cellulite.
That's gonna spread everywhere.
And then you're gonna start getting sad and mushy and complicated."
(*Barbie*, 2023, 21:19)

While humorous on the surface, the line critiques society's fixation on physical perfection and the belief that aging or imperfection diminishes a woman's worth both physically and emotionally. This moment sparks Barbie's self-awareness and marks her shift from being an object defined by perfection to an individual questioning societal judgment.



Figure 6. Scene of a man harassing Barbie in the Real World
(Source: *Barbie* 2023, Time Code: 00:29:23).

Moreover, Barbie's first experience in the real world deepens this exploration. Her discomfort under men's stares is expressed in the line, "Why are these men looking at me?" (Barbie, 2023, 28:01). This is contrasted with Ken's enjoyment of similar attention, as seen in their exchange:

Ken: "And there's no undertone of violence,"
Barbie: "Mine very much has an undertone of violence."
(Barbie, 2023, 28:24)

This contrast reveals the gendered nature of the gaze. For Ken, attention signifies admiration. For Barbie, it carries a threat and vulnerability. This becomes clear in the harassment scene, where Barbie is catcalled and slapped by a passing man, marking her first direct encounter with sexual harassment. The moment echoes earlier depictions of baby dolls that condition girls into domestic roles, suggesting that women, from childhood to adulthood, are shaped as objects of expectation and desire. Through Mulvey's lens of the male gaze, Barbie shifts from controlling her own image to being reduced to the passive subject of male dominance. Barbie's response is an act of resistance, pushing back against being treated as an object. However, instead of being protected, she is arrested, which highlights how systems of authority often fail to support women who stand up against harassment. It reveals how a woman's attempt to reclaim her dignity can be punished, reinforcing how patriarchal structures protect male behavior while silencing female resistance.

The metaphor of patriarchal control reaches its peak in the Mattel boardroom scene, where all-male executives put Barbie into a life-sized doll box.



Figure 7. Scene of Mattel's male workers putting Barbie inside a box
(Source: Barbie 2023, Time Code: 00:47:52).

Initially presented as harmless, the act quickly reveals itself as an attempt to trap and silence her. The bright packaging and slogan "She's having the best day" clash with Barbie's visible discomfort, symbolizing societal pressure for women to maintain a cheerful façade despite feeling constrained. The CEO's insult, "Get in the box, you Jezebel!" (Barbie, 2023, 47:25), draws on a long history of using derogatory labels to shame women who defy prescribed norms, reinforcing cultural mechanisms of control. The term "Jezebel" has long been used to portray women, especially Black women, as hypersexual, manipulative, and immoral. The Jezebel stereotype continues to serve as a cultural tool used to justify the regulation, exploitation, and objectification of women's sexuality (Collier, Taylor, & Peterson, 2017).

Barbie's rejection of this confinement culminates in her conversation with Ruth Handler, the doll's creator. Barbie articulates her desire,

*Barbie: "Yeah. I want to be a part of the people that make meaning.
Not the thing that's made. I want to do the imagining. I don't want to be the idea.
Does that make sense?"
Ruth Handler: "I always knew that Barbie would surprise me, but I never expected this."
Barbie: "Do you give me permission to become human?"
Ruth Handler: "You don't need my permission." (Barbie, 2023, 1:42:34)*

This conversation reframes agency as self-defined rather than granted by authority. This marks Barbie's transformation from a commodified image into a self-determining individual, fully aware of the patriarchal constructs, including Barbie herself, that shape women's roles.

The film closes with Barbie visiting a gynecologist, a scene that may appear lighthearted but carries significant symbolic weight.



Figure 8. Scene of Barbie visiting a gynecologist
(Source: *Barbie* 2023, Time Code: 01:47:10).

By embracing her biological reality, Barbie rejects the sanitized, sexless image of the doll and claims ownership of her body. Her adoption of the name Barbara Handler, along with her simple clothing and ordinary demeanor, signifies a rejection of restrictive beauty standards in favor of individuality and authenticity. This act challenges the notion that women's bodies exist for external evaluation and reframes womanhood as defined by choice and agency rather than visual appeal. Through these narrative moments, *Barbie* delivers a layered feminist critique of women's objectification. It traces Barbie's evolution from a passive icon to an active subject, revealing how objectification operates through beauty norms, language, institutional power, and cultural narratives. Through its blend of satire, emotional tension, and empowering moments, the film encourages audiences to question the systems that restrict women to traditional roles and to imagine a society that recognizes women for their depth, independence, and humanity.

CONCLUSION

Barbie (2023) offers a reflective examination of gender by dismantling traditional binaries and revealing how ideas of masculinity and femininity are shaped by social and institutional influences rather than biological factors. The film questions patriarchal constructions of

masculinity through Ken's reliance on external validation and his realization of the emptiness that comes with dominance. At the same time, it reimagines femininity as a form of strength that embraces leadership, empathy, and emotional awareness. The film also addresses the objectification of women by challenging the male gaze and drawing attention to the often overlooked aspects of womanhood, such as motherhood, aging, and emotional labor. Barbie's transformation from an idealized doll into a self-aware woman reflects a rejection of patriarchal definitions of perfection and an affirmation of identity based on authenticity and choice. Through this portrayal, *Barbie* (2023) encourages reflection on the cultural systems that restrict gender expression and influence how society defines value and identity. The film envisions a more balanced world where individuals are appreciated for their depth, agency, and individuality rather than for their conformity to social expectations.

DECLARATION

We acknowledge the use of Paperpal (<https://paperpal.com>) to enhance clarity and academic phrasing, as well as to support note summarization and final draft proofreading in the writing of this article.

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