

CHAPTER I

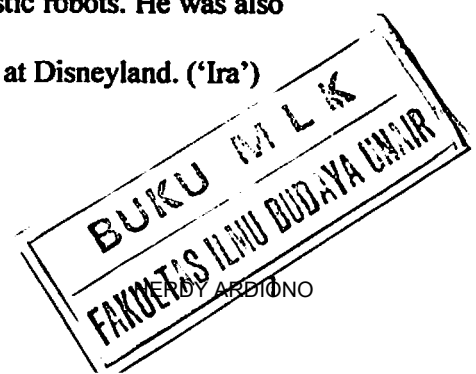
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The Stepford Wives is a movie about the domination of husbands to their wives. Some people believe that wives should be placed in private area, whereas the public area is dominated by husbands. The wives responsibility is doing the housework while the husbands' is working outside the house to earn money. However, many women have their own career outside the house. They want to join actively in women's movement, which demands fair opportunities between men and women. They do not want to stay at home but some husbands cannot accept it. They want their wives dedicate their lives only for their families. They also want their wives to be beautiful, obedient, and submissive for them. Claire Wellington can create perfect housewives by her experiment.

This movie is based on a novel with the same title *The Stepford Wives* written by Ira Levin. He has already wrote many books, such as: *A Kiss Before Dying* (1953), *The Perfect Day* (1970), *The Boys from Brazil* (1976), *Sliver* (1991), *Rosemary's Baby* (1967) and other works which are considered near-classics of American literature ('Ira').

The Stepford Wives Book was first published in 1972. The idea for *The Stepford Wives* comes to Ira Levin after reading a popular book entitled *Future Shock*. He becomes fascinated with its references to domestic robots. He was also fascinated by the animated figures in the Hall of Presidents at Disneyland. ('Ira')



According to Ira Levin, in 1972 the Women's Liberation Movement was at its zenith. Everytime people turned around they were hearing about what today's women really wanted. In the middle of all this, Ira Levin came up with an idea about what men want. How dare men have demands of their own and replace American women with robots. Considering those reasons, Ira Levin writes *The Stepford Wives*.

Many filmmakers have make movies based on Levin's books. *The Stepford Wives* is one of them. *The Stepford Wives* became a movie in the year of 1975 and 2004. As the movie successful in taking attention of the audiences, they make several sequels of it for television. They are: *Revenge of the Stepford Wives* (1980), *The Stepford Children* (1987) and *The Stepford Husbands* (1996) ('Ira').

The writer chooses *The Stepford Wives* which is made in the year of 2004 in his analysis. It is a remake of the 1975 film adaptation. Director Frank Oz and Script writer Paul Rudnick present a dramatic reworking of the horror classic, putting a totally over the top slant on the story that gives it true comedic value.

Frank Oznowicz, the director of *The Stepford Wives* 2004, was born in Hereford, England on May 25th 1944. Movies to which Oz has lent his voice include *The Muppet Movie* (1979), *The Dark Crystal* (1982), *The Great Muppet Caper* (1981), *The Muppets Take Manhattan* (1984), *The Muppet Christmas Carol* (1992), and *Muppet Treasure Island* (1996). He also performs Yoda in *Star Wars: Episode One - The Phantom Menace* (1999) and the other *Star Wars* movies.

As an actor, Oz has appeared in *The Blues Brothers* (1980), *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), *Trading Places* (1983), *Spies Like Us* (1985),

Innocent Blood (1992) and *The Blues Brothers 2000* (1998). In 1986, Oz directed his first movie, *Little Shop of Horrors*. Since then, he has directed *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (1988), *What About Bob* (1991), *Housesitter* (1992), *Indian in the Cupboard* (1995), *In & Out* (1997), *Bowfinger* (1999), *The Score* (2001) and *The Stepford Wives* (2004).

Paul Rudnick, the script writer of the movie, was born on December, 29th 1957 in Piscataway, New Jersey. Early on, he knew what he wanted to do with his life, writing in a grammar school essay that he wanted to be a playwright.

Rudnick knew he was gay by the time he went to Yale University, where he received a B. A. in theater. He considered further study at Yale's graduate program in drama, but soon decided he needed to move to New York to begin a career in writing.

Rudnick wrote two ruthlessly funny satires: *Social Disease* (1986), and *I'll Take It* (1989). In 1996, Rudnick premiered *The Naked Eye*. He has also written and doctored screenplays. He wrote the original version of the film *Sister Act* (1992), which he intended as a raucous Bette Midler vehicle. He also wrote or helped write the screenplays for *The Addams Family* (1991, uncredited contributor) and *Addams Family Values* (1993), and *The First Wives Club* (1996, uncredited contributor). He also wrote the screenplay for *Isn't She Great* (2000). He also contributed the screenplay to Richard Benjamin's disappointing *Marci X* (2003). More successful was the screenplay for Frank Oz's star-studded comic remake of Bryan Forbes's 1975 film of Ira Levin's 1972 novel *Stepford Wives* (2004).

In the early 21st century, a fast-paced Manhattan couple, Joanna (Nicole Kidman) and Walter (Matthew Broderick), both work for a major television network. While she is a leader and breadwinner in producing reality shows, he is a mere middle management type. So when Joanna has a nervous breakdown, and Walter takes command, he's happy to find that for once in his life she's not stealing his fire. This sentiment is only asserted by the boys club that welcomes him when they move to the perfect town of Stepford, Connecticut. There, the women have been transformed by their husbands into a totally submissive, near-robotic state in which they are blissfully happy doing housework and looking pretty, and are totally compliant to their men. With Claire (Glenn Close) and Mike (Christopher Walken) leading this web of weirdness, Joanna and her only normal friend, Bobbie (Bette Midler), race to solve the mystery before they too become Stepford wives.

The writer is impressed by Claire's behavior, especially which is related to her curiosity in creating perfect housewives. He is interested in analyzing some factors that motivate Claire in doing her experiment. Her ambition really influences her psychological condition because it seems that she loses her consciousness.

The writer chooses Claire rather than the other characters because she is a very unique one. She seems that she has double personality. In the beginning of the movie, she is the kindest person that we have ever met, but in the end, she becomes a different person that we have thought before. The writer thinks that it is very interesting to analyze her. What and why she do such that thing.

What makes the writer more interested to analyze Claire's behavior is the lesson that we can take after we watch the movie. Considering this reason, the writer is interested to analyze Claire's ambition in creating perfect housewives.

B. Statement of the Problems

Considering the background of the study above, the writer will propose some problems as follow:

1. What is the background of Claire's experiment?
2. How does Claire's ambition influence her psychological condition?

C. Objective of the Study

Providing the answers to the above questions satisfactorily, the objectives of the study are below:

1. To find out the background of Claire's experiment which is related to her ambition.
2. To know how Claire's ambition influences her psychological condition.

D. Significance of the Study

By analyzing this movie, the writer hopes that it will give contribution to the world of knowledge generally and to the literature study particularly. The writer also hopes that this analysis will be an input for other further studies, especially in English Department, Airlangga University.

From this work, the writer hopes that the readers can study more about this movie beside Claire's ambition in creating the perfect housewives. The writer also

hopes that this work can help the readers analyzing another work which has similarity to Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives*.

E. Scope and Limitation

In this study, the writer concentrates on the subject matter by limiting only to the major's characters behavior since their behavior is representative enough to recognize the importance of what is going on related with the topic of analysis.

F. Theoretical Background

This thesis is intended to analyze Claire's ambition in creating the perfect housewives. The writer limits the analysis to the characterization, the setting and the plot. The plot is used to show the conflicts of the character related to her ambition and her psychological condition within the story. The setting is used because it plays an important role in emphasizing Claire's ambition. While characterization is used to know the characteristics of the characters. So, the writer decides to use the intrinsic approach since it concerns with intrinsic elements of a movie.

To support this, concerning with the topic of analysis, the writer uses psychological background of the character that regards the psychological condition of Claire.

G. Method of the Study

In working on the thesis, the writer reads many books, articles and dictionaries and brows many sites on internet related to the works of Ira Levin,

particularly of *The Stepford Wives*. Critics, reviews and commentaries are also taken to make the thesis get better. The writer also tries to find information from any particular books dealing with the literary theories and approaches that will be used in the analysis. As the main source of the analysis is the work itself, that is *The Stepford Wives* movie.

H. Definitions of Key Terms

Housewife : a married woman, whose main occupation is caring for her family, managing household affairs, and doing housework.

Housework : regular work done in housekeeping, such as cleaning, shopping and cooking.

Behavior : anything an organism does, any of its action as the subject matter of psychology.