

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

There have been a lot of studies regarding the relationship between literature and film. The relationship between literature and film is usually known as adaptation. Film adaptations of multiple works are no less popular than the original works. According to John Ellis (1982), in his book entitled "The Literary Adaptation: An Introduction," it is said that 30% of narrative films created by the classic Hollywood era are the result of adaptations of novels into films. The adaptation process is a complicated thing and not easy to do. Since then, there have been many film adaptations of various works, such as short stories, drama scripts, novels, and so on. Novels adapted into films are usually novels in great demand by people because of the good plots and stories that make them into films. Some examples of popular novels adapted into films are *Little Women* (1868-1869) by Louisa May Alcott, which was adapted into a film with the same title in 2019, then there is the Harry Potter novel series (1997-2007) by J.K. Rowling, which was adapted into films from 2001 to 2011, and there are many other film adaptations.

According to George Bluestone (1957), the differences and similarities between the film and its sources, as well as the relationship between the two media, are important considerations when adapting a novel into a film. George Bluestone (1957) states that this is "Two Ways of Seeing" in his *Novels into Film*. In the view of

Bluestone, novels and films are two completely separate types of media. Which novel uses a linguistic perspective, and which film uses a visual one. Filmmakers have challenges because of this variation. According to Bluestone (1957), the interesting thing about novels and films is that while they appear to be compatible, they are actually opposites. There are several film adaptations that discuss the lifestyle of a society. From the description of this lifestyle, it can be found that there is a classification among the people. This classification triggers various bad assumptions from the upper and lower classes. Even so, this bad assumption can be rebutted by giving good treatment that is not the same as what is assumed by the upper class, so that each class can live a decent life in peace.

One of the famous film adaptations recently is the film adaptation of Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians* novel with the same title directed by Jon M. Chu, who is a Singaporean Chinese who is successful in the United States as a director, producer, and also scriptwriter. Kevin Kwan, the writer of the novel *Crazy Rich Asians*, is a Singaporean-American novelist who has been awarded various titles. In 2014, Kwan was named the "Five Writers to Watch" in Hollywood's Most Powerful Authors list by The Hollywood Reporter. In the 2018 version of Time magazine, Kevin Kwan is included in the list of the one hundred most influential people in the world. Not only that, Kwan is also in "The Asian Hall of Fame," which is a project of the Robert Chinn Foundation which was initiated in 2004.

The novel *Crazy Rich Asians* is a novel written by Kevin Kwan in 2013. The novel *Crazy Rich Asians* tells about the cultural conflict that arises between generations who grew up in Singapore and America. This novel not only tells about

the relationship that occurs between the rich and ordinary people but also talks about how the Chinese people live with a culture that is still quite thick. From the beginning of the novel, a family tree of the Young, T'sien, and Shang clans is immediately presented, which can help the reader understand the relationship between each character that appear in *Crazy Rich Asians*. Nick, who is the main male character in this story, introduces Rachel to his family as his girlfriend. However, Rachel gets the first unpleasant response from Nick's family. From this novel, various interesting perspectives can be found regarding various aspects, especially about the lifestyle habits of a rich person and also about happiness. This novel tells how a rich Singaporean Chinese family has a good image but has conflicts within their family. In an interview with Talks at Google (2017), Kwan stated that the film was the first romantic comedy in Hollywood history to have an Asian male lead. It was also the first Hollywood studio-produced film in 26 years to feature an all-Asian cast.

The *Crazy Rich Asians* novel was adapted into a film, and the film was released in 2018. The film was directed by John M. Chu and produced by Nina Jacobson, Brad Simpson, and also John Penotti. On August 7, 2018, this film was shown for the first time at the TCL Chinese Theater. It began its release in America on August 15, 2018, and was produced by Warner Bros. Pictures. This film is able to provide a visual about negative stereotypes about someone's background. The film shows how Nick's mother, who is of Chinese descent and lives in Singapore, views her son's lover, who is of Chinese descent and living in America. There is a bad stereotype of Chinese in Singapore to Chinese in the US. This stereotype makes Rachel, Nick's girlfriend, disliked in Nick's family. However, from the emerging stereotypes, Rachel could

fight against the assumptions based on the stereotypes attached to her. Rachel, who is a professor at a university in New York, is brave enough to face Nick's family, and she succeeds in becoming part of the Young family.

Jon M. Chu adapted the novel into a film for a reason. In his interview on Good Morning America (2018), he said that he wanted to adapt the novel because it has historical and cultural significance. Upon release, the film grossed over \$238 million against a \$30 million budget, making it the highest-grossing romantic comedy film during the 2010s. This film received several awards, such as being nominated for the 76th Golden Globe Awards for Best Film (2019), Musical or Comedy and Best Actress (2020), receiving four nominations at the 24th Critics' Choice Awards (2019), and so on. Based on the explanation above, analyzing the novel and its film adaptation is interesting. The exciting aspect of these works is how they depict different lifestyles and fashion behaviors from different cultures and also from different social classes. In the view of Haralambos and Holborn (2004: 1), there are several different social groups in society, and social groups with the highest ranking can be influenced by factors of wealth and prestige.

The popularity of *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) succeeded in becoming the first film whose cast was mostly Asian, so you could say it was a big step in Asian cinema and able to compete in Hollywood. The changes in *Crazy Rich Asians* in the film adaptation and because this film is rich in values and cultural significance, I want to explore things related to cultural values, so I only focus on the lifestyle and fashion behavior in the story. I assume that the director had some considerations about presenting the dominant characters' culture when he adapted the novel to his film. I

am interested in discussing *Crazy Rich Asians* because the novel and its film adaptation are fun and well-known and have received good comments from critics. Several studies have discussed this film, but lifestyle and fashion behavior have yet to be discussed. From these changes, the researcher wants to show how unique Jon M. Chu is in adapting the novel into a film and how lifestyle and fashion behavior are presented.

Crazy Rich Asians film shows the director's interpretation of the interesting lifestyle and fashion of Chinese families in Singapore and the life of Chinese single mothers in the USA. Therefore, I am interested in examining how he interpreted the lifestyle and fashion behavior in the novel into his film. According to Smith and Maurer (2000), lifestyle is focused on how people live their lives in a society that involves patterns of working, eating, sleeping, playing, and communicating. In addition, according to Sproles (1979), fashion behavior can be defined as a way of behaving adopted by some members of a social group which can be seen because the chosen behavior can be considered socially appropriate for a particular time and situation. In addition, *Crazy Rich Asians* depict fashion behavior, so I think it is interesting to examine how Chu interprets the lifestyle and the fashion behavior so the reader can understand his interpretations and art perspectives on the novel.

1.2 Identification of the Problems

As the original work, the novel *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan has several changes in the film adaptation, such as the characters, setting, and plot from the novel to the film adaptation. In the adaptation process, novel writers and film directors have their own characteristics so that some changes can occur due to differences from text to screen and also different interpretations from different film directors. These changes focus on changing themes, remaking characters, storylines, etc. Kevin Kwan, as the novel writer, emphasizes social class as the identity of each character and becomes a benchmark for judging someone. Meanwhile, Jon M. Chu shows how social class appears as an interesting topic in the main character's love story in his film based on the novel. Therefore, I want to examine how novel writers and directors present their works that raise the same issues but are packaged in different forms, namely regarding differences in social classes, differences in stereotypes of several groups of society, as well as lifestyle and fashion behavior.

1.3 Review of Related Literature

The researcher of this study has examined a number of comparable papers to broaden and deepen understanding of the subject under discussion. Related studies that I have read are studies that discuss the same things with the same ideas and objects as related issues. To achieve a deeper understanding, this sub-chapter uses comparisons. To identify various viewpoints and opinions, I evaluated several published studies from several other studies.

The first is an article written by Kamilla Elliot (2010) entitled "Adaptation as Compendium: Tim Burton's Alice in Wonderland." This article discusses CGI (computer-generated imagery) and 3D techniques that use fantasy as an alternative reality to make things that made less sense into a form that would be more acceptable in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Elliot argued that both the sequel and the film were unsuccessful adaptations. This could happen because Elliot found that Burton, the film's director, tended to follow other films that had been made by previous directors by adding Alice in Wonderland scenes that were not in the novel, such as CGI effects and choreography. The researcher finds a compendium from the novel to the film in this article because such a long novel can be told in just a few hours. From this article, there are changes made by the director and creativity that make this film adaptation interesting to watch.

The next article is an article written by Haoling Liu entitled "An Adaptation Study on Cold Mountain from Novel to Movie" (2022). This study advances the process of turning Charles Frazier's book Cold Mountain into the 2003 film adaptation of the same title, directed by Antony Minghella. This study focuses on the analysis of montage techniques and plot adaptations from novels to film adaptations. The researcher finds scenes and characters from the book in the plot adaptation that are not in the film adaptation. Take Odell's tragic love story as an example. The researcher believes that this chapter is very important for the plot of the book because it depicts the theme of love and conflict. Then the researcher found that there was a montage technique in the film to increase the nuance or strengthen the message

conveyed. This article is well written so that I can clearly understand how the researcher proves the adaptation of the film plot.

Nailul Ifada and Zakiyatul Mufidah (2019) wrote an article entitled "Social Identity Expressions in Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians*." In the articles they write, they talk about a person's social identity. By adapting to the culture around us, identity can be a continuously relocated, produced, and changed party. In this article, they discover that the consumption of clothing, food, and the ownership of upscale items are examples of early manifestations of social identity. Overall, this article provides rich insights into the expression of social identity in *Crazy Rich Asians* in a way that is clear and easy to understand. Thus, this article can be used as a reference for this research.

Nasution et al., 2021, conducted an article entitled "Analysis of Social Class and Its Impact in Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asian Novel*." In their article, they discuss social class. The impact of this social class is that social conflicts will emerge, causing inequality between groups. The result of this research is that in *Crazy Rich Asians* there are two social classes, namely the middle social class and the upper social class. These social class differences can cause conflict in the environment and the family. The researchers very clearly describe it because they explain class classification very well. This article contains insight into social groups and the impact of these groupings in relation to the research I am doing, namely about the characters' lifestyles.

The next one is an article written by Muhammad Lutfi Obbi Kusuma and Winda Setiasari (2020) entitled "Hedonism in *"Crazy Rich Asians"* by Kevin Kwan. They discussed hedonism, a lifestyle that seeks pleasure in various ways, such as playing more, spending time outside the home, shopping, and so on. This hedonic lifestyle is quite a social concern because this lifestyle behavior tends to be more luxurious and seeks pleasure which causes individuals to only focus on themselves and are less sensitive to their environment. This hedonic habit cannot be separated from social life and will continue to influence the moral values of society. From this study, they found that in *Crazy Rich Asians*, this hedonic lifestyle is quite obvious. The visible influence of hedonism can be seen in the storytelling of the characters and their dialogues which exemplify hedonistic behavior. This article highlights that *Crazy Rich Asians* greatly emphasize wealth issues, and the author explains hedonism very easily. This paper makes a major contribution to research because it will help me see the behavior of upper-class society with its hedonism

The next related studies comes from Handa Putra Maiza with his thesis entitled *The Changing of Chinese Cultural Tradition in Singapore as Seen on Crazy Rich Asians by Kevin Kwan*. The thesis analyzes culture and traditions in the social life of the Chinese community in Singapore in the novel. This study uses postcolonial criticism of western representations and uses the concept of orientalism theory coined by Edward Said. Maiza also uses a sociological approach to literary works in his studies. As a result of this study, Maiza concluded that Singaporean Chinese have a culture and traditions that are different from mainland Chinese culture. Maiza takes examples from modern weddings, bachelor party culture, and tea drinking traditions.

These three cultures are not like Chinese culture but have been modified by the influence of other cultures such as English culture and influenced by the times. This is supported by the fact that Singapore itself was once colonized by the British. In his research, Maiza concluded that Chinese culture is not as traditional as western stereotypes. However, the findings in this study do not highlight the factors that influence Chinese cultural differences among Chinese Singaporeans. In general, this study is in line with my analysis because this study analyzes socio-cultural aspects which help me understand the cultural perspective and traditions of the Singaporean Chinese which is useful for me to analyze lifestyle factors that are strongly influenced by the traditions and culture of the Singaporean Chinese.

The last research is that of Pahlevi, D. R., & Sagimin, E. M. (2020), in a article entitled *Social Classes Reflected By The Main Characters in Kevin Kwan's "Crazy Rich Asians" Novel*. In the article, they talk about differences in social class, the reasons why there are different social classes, and other issues related to social class in *Crazy Rich Asians*. Problems regarding social class differences in *Crazy Rich Asians* can be seen from the existence of class conflicts in a relationship where the two partners have different backgrounds and social classes. They agree that this difference in social class can be seen from differences in lifestyle, family background, heredity, and so on, so people who are considered lower class tend to be avoided or even ostracized. The article they authored can clearly illustrate the contrasts between socioeconomic classes so that readers can distinguish between them. Their analyses helped me gain more understanding of how various social classes live.

In conclusion, of all the reviews that have been discussed, there are some topics that have not been studied, so I am interested in discussing *Crazy Rich Asians* from a lifestyle and fashion behavior that is different from what has been studied by some people. Most articles only discuss wealth, differences, and hedonism in novels, while this study will discuss the lifestyle and fashion behavior of novels and films. The way the director changes how the appearance of the character of lifestyle and fashion behavior is projected distinguishes this research from the previous paper about the film adaptation.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the phenomenon that has been explained regarding lifestyle and fashion behavior in the upper class with a focus on *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) as the object of research, the researcher decided to formulate two questions to be answered in the results and research chapter, which are classified as follows:

1. How does the director depict the lifestyle of Singaporean Chinese in the novel depicted in the film?
2. What are the differences of fashion behavior of the major characters in the novel depicted in the film?

1.5 Scope of the Research

There are many things that can be discussed in the film adaptation of *Crazy Rich Asians*. Therefore, the researcher intends to limit the issues discussed and also focus on examining how lifestyle and fashion behavior from the novel is presented in the film and how social status accentuates their lifestyle differences. The researcher is

interested in examining how these two elements played an important role in the success of Jon M. Chu's film *Crazy Rich Asians*. The changes can be seen in the way Jon M. Chu, the filmmaker, projects the character's images. In the adaptation version, the representations of the characters have an impact on the story's plot, theme, and other aspects. Apart from that, the researcher also intends to focus on studying the lifestyle and fashion behavior in the story. However, the depiction of lavish lifestyles and fashion in certain groups is shown openly.

1.6 Objectives of the Research

This research aims to show whether the film adaptation entitled *Crazy Rich Asians* by Jon M. Chu is faithful to the novel or not. The purpose of this research can be related to the research question. Therefore, the researcher pays attention to how Jon M. Chu makes an adaptation of the novel *Crazy Rich Asians* into a film, especially in the description of themes and characters regarding lifestyle and fashion behavior. In order to achieve this goal, the researcher will prove it by conducting a study of novels and films about lifestyle and fashion behavior in *Crazy Rich Asians*.

