WOMAN’S RIGHT TO GET FREEDOM IN JOSEPH RUBEN’S

SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY MOVIE (1991):

A FEMINIST APPROACH

by:

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SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

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WOMAN’S RIGHT TO GET FREEDOM IN JOSEPH RUBEN’S
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SUMMARY

The major problem of this research is to explain woman’s right to get freedom reflected in Joseph Ruben’s Sleeping with the Enemy movie. Objectives of this research are: to analyze the movie based on its structural elements, and to analyze movie based on A Feminist Approach theory by Lady Mary Worley Montagu and The Marquis de Condorcet.

In conducting this research, the researcher uses qualitative research, in which the primary data are taken from Sleeping with the Enemy movie and the secondary data are taken from other data related to the research such as movie script, internet and other relevant information.

This research comes to the following conclusions. First, based on the structural analysis of the movie, it shows that the character and characterization, setting, plot, point of view, theme, Mise-en-scene, cinematography, sound, and editing are related to each other and form the unity into good quality of a movie. Second, based on Feminist Approach analysis, there are women’s position, women’s role, women’s right, and women’s participation. The struggles are getting freedom in women’s position as a woman, woman’s role in the household, woman’s right in her life as a wife.

Keywords: Woman’s right, Sleeping with the Enemy, Feminist Approach.
1. Introduction

Feminism is “the organized movement which promotes equality for men and women in political, economic and social spheres”. The word “feminist” was popular in the 1980’s. In this year feminist try to individuals not only to increase public role for women but also woman’s right to define themselves as autonomous being. They can complete in public life such as: political, economic and social. The important thing is woman have found their right to contribute their self in the society.

Sleeping with the Enemy is one of the most popular epic drama movies that is surely such miracles. The screenplay of this film is adapted from the novel with the same title written by Nancy Price. Nancy Price is an American Novelist. She was born 3 February 1880 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and raised in Detroit. She is famous for her Sleeping with the Enemy (1991). Before becoming into a novelist, she writes poems.

She writes many novels. Some of them are A Natural Death, A Accomplished Woman (1979), Sleeping with the Enemy (1987), Night Woman (1992), Bonfire’s Daughter (1997), Snake in the Balck berries (2001), and Two Liars and Bride (2003). Her novels become best sellers, and have been translated into fifteen foreign languages. A Twentieth Century Fox film starring Julia Roberts was made of her novel Sleeping with the Enemy.

Sleeping with the Enemy was directed by Ruben, he was born 1951 in Briarcliff, New York, USA. He works as Director, Producer, Screenwriter and he also graduated from University of Michigan, theater and film and Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, BA. He makes his feature directorial debut at the ripe age of 24 with the bleak psychodrama “The Sister in Law” (1975).

Ruben also ever directs many films, there are The Sister in law(1974), The Pom Pom Girls (1976), Joyride (1977), Our Winning
Sleeping with the Enemy is a major critical success. Sleeping with the Enemy was made in February 8, 1991. This film was taken 99 days, which is setting of place New York. The duration of this film is 108 minutes. It is released in VCD and DVD and distributed by 20th Century Fox. The score by Jerry Goldsmith won the BMI film music award 1992, and the film was nominated for the Academy Of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Films Saturn Award for 1992 in four categories: Best Actress (Roberts), Saturn Award For Best Supporting Actor (Bergin), Best Horror Film and Best Music (Goldsmith). The good response from public makes Sleeping with the Enemy only had $20,000,000 for their budget, finally gain $100,294,830 for their worldwide gross.

Sleeping with the Enemy is one of the most popular epic drama movies that is surely such miracles. Sleeping with the Enemy is a movie about the struggle of Laura to get her freedom in her life. Laura who is played by Julia Roberts in this movie is about a battered wife stalked by her abusive husband. Laura Burney lives with her husband in Cape Cotton, home near sea. Martin is played by Patrick Bergin. Laura is an obedient wife. However, her marriage is not all that it seems. Her possessive and abusive husband, Martin, is a controlling man who one day interprets her interaction with a neighbor at their beach home as flirting and strikes her in the face and kicks her as she lies helplessly cry on the floor. Laura sees her way out by planning and faking her own death at sea in a storm off Cape Cotton near the couple’s luxurious ocean view home. Martin attends her funeral when her body is not found.

Laura swims to safe herself. She returns home secretly. She takes some cloths and money that have hidden away in preparation, disguises
her and leaves home after flushing her wedding ring down the toilet. Laura plans to move to Cedar Falls, Iowa. She rents a modest home and adopts the name Sara Waters. One day in the garden she meets with Ben Woodward (Kevin Anderson), who teases her about stealing them.

Martin gets a call from Laura’s friend. She says that Laura is the best student in YWCA, a swimming course. Hearing about that, Martin is mad and throws the phone down. Arriving home, He finds Laura’s ring in Waters closet. Then, Martin rents a detective to search where Laura is. That man traces Laura’s mother in the new nursing home in Iowa. Martin finds Laura and Ben, and clandestinely follows them to a local fair then back to her home. Martin aims the gun at Ben’s head. Martin drops the gun and Laura manages to take control of it, call the police, She reaches for the phone and does so, stating, aiming the gun at Martin with her trembling hand. Martin sags lifelessly to the floor. Ben slowly wakes up, Laura goes to him and they embrace.

There are four reasons why the writer chooses *Sleeping with the Enemy*. The first is this movie is very good and interesting. This movie tells about woman’s struggle to gain her freedom right from the restraints the husband who is over possessive person. This movie can be examples of woman emancipation. The second is this movie is played by Julia Roberts as Laura Burney or Sara Waters In this movie she has a strong character, impatient and ambitious to get her freedom right. The third is this movie gives a positive message to viewers of a woman’s struggle to gain freedom. The last is *Sleeping with the Enemy* movie is one of epic drama romance movies tells about struggle of woman’s also tells about love romance story between Sara Waters and Ben Woodward as her boyfriend in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

**Problem Statement** in this research is “How is woman’s right to get freedom reflected in Joseph Ruben’s *Sleeping with the Enemy* movie?”
**Limitation of the Study** in this research, the writer focuses on the analysis of the Laura’s right to get freedom in *Sleeping with the Enemy* movies directed by Joseph Ruben’s, screenwriting “Laura Burney” as the major characters by using feminist approach.

**Objectives of the Study** based on the problem that has been stated above, the objectives of the study are as follows: (1) to analyze the movie based on the structural elements and (2) to analyzes the movie based on the feminist approach

**Literature Review** the first study about *Sleeping with the Enemy* movie is conducted by Intan Febrianti, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (2007) entitled “Women Oppression in Sleeping with the Enemy movie: A Liberal Feminist Approach”. In this paper the study shows the relationship between the movie and the social phenomena in America. The movie also views that women must be brave to face the risk, in order to reach their right. Therefore, women should have brave mentality to support their purposes toward freedom.

The second writer is conducted by Yoga Mahardika, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (2009) entitled “Oppression Against Women In Joseph Ruben’s Sleeping with the Enemy movie: A Feminist Perspective”. In this research the conclusion of the study he shows the lack of woman’s position, role, rights, and participation caused by oppression.

The third writer is conducted by Nindi Mariatus Sholikah (2010) entitled *Rising From Being Inferior In Joseph Ruben’s Sleeping With The Enemy (1991): An Individual Psychological Perspective*. In her research she shows the phenomenon of a wife who has inferiority feelings to her husband. In her research she also shows that woman has no authority to order the equipment with men in the house.

The difference study between this research and the previous ones are about the problem of the study. In this study, the writer focuses on
Woman’s Right to get freedom in the *Sleeping with the Enemy* movie with feminist approach.

**Research Method** In this research, the writer uses a qualitative research. It is library research while data sources are using literary data. It purposes to analyze the movie using feminist approach. The steps to conduct this research are (1) determining the type of study, (2) determining the object of the study, (3) determining the data and data source, (4) determining technique of data collection, and (5) determining technique of data analysis. The object of the study is *Sleeping with the Enemy* movie directed by Joseph Ruben and published in United States of America 1991. It is analyzed by using a feminist approach.

There are two data sources that are needed to do this research (1) Primary Data Source, the primary data source is *Sleeping with the Enemy* movie directed by Joseph Ruben from United States of America and adapted from the novel with the same title by Nancy Price, (2) Secondary Data Source, the secondary data sources are from other data related to the research such as movie script, internet and other relevant information.

The technique of data collection is library research, the steps are: watching the movie several time, reading the English subtitles, determining the character that will be analyzed, taking note of important parts in both primary and secondary data, classifying and determining the relevant data, taking notes from the material and some other resources related to the movie. The technique used in analyzing the data is descriptive analysis. It concerns with the structural elements of the movie and a feminist approach.

2. Feminist Theory
   a. Notion of Feminism

   Feminism is “the organized movement which promotes equality for men and women in political, economic and social spheres”. The word “feminist” was popular in the 1980’s. In this year feminist try to individuals
not only to increase public role for women but also woman’s right to define themselves as autonomous being (Mandell, 1995:4). Women have great opportunity to change their life. They can complete in public life such as: political, economic and social. The important thing is woman have found their right to contribute their self in the society.

There are several kinds of feminism movement that can be mentioned; First, Liberal Feminism refers to woman’s equality with men in public sphere. Second, Radical feminism refers to the elimination of violence against women in patriarchy culture. Third, Marxist Feminism refers to the woman’s exploitation, woman’s oppression, and capitalists. Fourth, Socialist Feminism refers to equality in class, gender, sexuality and race. Fifth, Postmodern Feminism refers to a critical response to beliefs, values and ideals that can to dominate the modernist period or culture. And Sixth, Lesbian Feminism is a cultural movement and critical perspective, characterized by contestation and revision and particularly refutes heteronormativity, the assumption that everyone is "straight" and society should be structured to serve heterosexual needs.

b. Liberal Feminism

Feminism begins during The Enlighten with such thinkers as Lady Mary Worley Montagu and The Marquis de Condorcet championing woman’s education.

Basically, the goals of liberal feminist are ending woman’s legal, economic and social dependence upon men, obtaining the freedom and opportunity to engage in education and training, promoting open competition and enacting lacus and public policies guaranteeing.

c. Major Principle of Feminism

1. Woman’s Position

Women had been regarded as inferior to men rationally. Their positions were under men. It is difficult for them to enter in public life, because it was dominated by men. Women can’t be equal to the men,
because men consider that women are a weak person. It is recognized
that women are inferior to men, and the women become to the lowest
level, even treated as the second class. The feminist movement tries to
change the assumption that women are inferior to men. According to
Rosaldo (1974:21) “some area of activity is always seen as exclusively
or predominantly male, and therefore overwhelming and morally”. This fact seems that everywhere men have some authority over
women; they have a culturally legitimated right to her subordination
and compliance. Feminist believes that women can reach the same
degree with men. The view that women must be inferior to the men or
on the contrary should be erasing.

2. Woman’s Role

There is presumption that woman as weak person and men as a
strong person. And it is a stereotype that women are always associated
with domestic role. According to Murphy (1995:49) states that a
woman’s roles in domestic area as wife and mother gave her life a
moral dimension, hopeful, women like this can be a good wife with
take care child and serve husband.

Besides wife and mother, they can participate in public life. Now, woman’s role not only in domestic area but also they can
develop their experience. Women as well as men, they can participate
in public life and richer their experience (Murphy, 1995:39).

3. Woman’s Right

We know that every person was born equals. Every person has
the same right and chance to express their idea. In this case, women
can express what they want without a restraint from public opinion.
Mandell (1995:5) states that person should be allowed to exercise
freedom of choice unfettered by either public opinion or law. In
principle every person was given equal opportunity and civil right.
Andersen (1983:139) states that all people should be given equal
opportunities and civil right should be extended to all. It means every human being either men or women should have the same opportunity and right to do their activity without gender differentiation.

4. Woman’s Participation

In our society the men participation is more important than women. Women are less participated and men are much participated. The women voice, decision, opinion, and critique are ignored by the men (Mandell, 1995:188). In liberal feminism women have equal participation with men, so that women feel that men appreciate their work in order to get profession, and women have the similar access to the means participation in social, politic, economic, and the roles in the society (Mandell, 1995:215).

3. Research Finding

a. Woman’s Position

Sleeping with the Enemy movie seems to show that woman is naturally inferior to man physically and biologically. They cannot compete in the area which is dominated by men. It is caused “woman is naturally inferior to man in terms of strength and speed”.

Sleeping with the Enemy tells about a peasant woman, Laura Burney, from Cape Cod, South Carolina. She is Martin’s wife. Martin is temperamental and rough man. In this movie, Laura is a downtrodden woman. She always hurt by her husband if her thinking is not the same as him. It can be seen in the scene when they have dinner in their terrace and discuss about Laura’s work in the library. But Martin disagrees because she can waste her time and cannot keep her house.

Laura Burney : Mrs. Clark called from the library. She said they could use me full time now.
Martin : You already work three mornings a week and I support that because I know your love of books. What about our home? Don't you love our home as much?
Laura Burney : Has your dinner been late to the table even once?
Martin : Oh, I can remember not so far back it was late. By two days.
Laura Burney : That was six months ago. (SWTE, 16:35).

Laura is a kind and obedient wife. She always obeys all Martin commands because Martin is a perfectionist person in fashion and neatness. It can be seen in the scene when Laura and Martin want to go to the party. Laura wants to wear white dress but Martin asks Laura to the black one (SWTE, 04:17).

b. Women’s Role

Women’s Role in *Sleeping with the Enemy* reflected when Laura lives with Martin. Laura is Martin’s wife. As a wife, she is always obeys Martin’s commands. She does all activity in her home as Martin’s wants. She is always keeping cleaning and neatness her home. Martin gives information to Laura that there is not neat. It can be seen in the scene when Martin invites Laura to arrange the towel on the wasteful (SWTE, 07:05).

c. Women’s Right

Women’s rights expressed in the *Sleeping with the Enemy* movie cover the right as wife in household, the right in defending herself, the right in decision making, the right to get freedom and the right to get happiness.

The right as a wife in household reflects when Laura lives with Martin as his wife. Actually she wants to get happiness and care from her husband. But she does not get it. It is because Martin is perfectionist person in everything. He wants everything to go as he wants. He always angry and hits Laura if she has mistake. But Laura perceives it as usual. She does not act when she is hurt because of Martin’s behavior.

Martin does not want if her wife knows with other men, although she just sees other men in back of windows. It can be seen in the scene when Martin beats Laura after talking with John Fleishman.

| Martin  | : Nice-looking man, the doctor. |
| Laura Burney | : Doctor? |
| Martin  | : He says I have a beautiful home. Best on the beach. |
Laura Burney : When was he in here?
Martin : Yesterday while I was in town?
Laura Burney : Martin, I don't know the doctor.
Martin : Sure you do. Young, good-looking. Outfitting his sailboat down there. He says you've been staring at him from the window all day.
Laura Burney : Does it give you that much pleasure to humiliate me?
Martin : Stop it! Now you'll sulk, won't you?
Laura Burney : No.
Martin : Yes, you will.
Laura Burney : I won't.
Martin : You'll pout and spoil our supper. Our beautiful supper. Just smell the bread. I'm so sorry. Will you smile? Your doctor friend, he asked us to go sailing tonight (SWTE, 10:09).

The right in defending herself, it is reflected when Laura defends herself from her husband. Laura considers that her happiness is with Ben. She does not want to be back and live with her husband, so that when Martin beats Ben up, Laura wants to help Ben’s life and her from Martin. She kills Martin by shooting his chest.

Martin Burney : He doesn't matter. He's nothing, Laura. Nothing.
Ben Woodward : Fuck you.
Martin Burney : What's his name?
Laura Burney : Ben. Martin, he...
Martin Burney : He doesn't have anything to do with us, does he, princess? Does he?
Laura Burney : No.
Martin Burney : Remember our honeymoon. The night I taught you to dance. Of course you haven't forgotten. You said those were the happiest days of your whole life. Remember this? This is yours, Laura. We are one. We will always be one. Nothing can keep us apart.

Laura Burney : Martin...
Martin Burney : I'm impressed. Now let's end this while you're still ahead.
Laura Burney : Come to me, Martin. Walk this way.
Martin Burney : Always my pleasure.
Laura Burney : That's far enough.
Martin Burney: Oh, I don't think so. Here feels right. There's the telephone. You could call the police. I know your every thought, Laura. You're wondering if they can protect you. Who knows? They may issue an order instructing me to stay away from my own wife. Nothing can keep me away. I love you, Laura. I can't live without you. And I won't let you live without me. Think carefully.

Laura Burney: Yes, give me the police. Hurry, please.

Martin Burney: This is our last chance.

Laura Burney: Yes, this is Sara Waters at Tremont.

Martin Burney: Take that chance.

Laura Burney: Come quickly. I've just killed an intruder.

Door…. Door… door… (SWTE, 43:25).

The right in making decision, it is reflected when Laura falls herself in the sea and swim to the shore. When she was a child she could not to swim. She is nearly drowned when she was a child. When Laura, Martin and John Fleishman are sailing, it comes storm suddenly. Martin helps John Fleishman to reach the screen. Without Martin knowing, Laura falls her body in to the sea and swim to the shore. She knows that is a way to her for leaving her husband. Actually Laura cannot swim but she tries to learn swim and to be a good student in the YWCA swimming course. It can be seen in the flashback scene when Laura falls her body in to the sea and swims to the shore or in the flashback when she learns swim in the YWCA swimming course.

Laura Burney: That was the night that I died, and someone else was saved. Someone who was afraid of water, but learned to swim.

Laura’s friend: Come on, Laura!

Laura Burney: Someone who knew there would be one moment when he wouldn't be watching. Someone who knew that the darkness from the broken lights would show the way. (SWTE, 25:24).

The right in getting freedom in the Sleeping with the Enemy movie, it is reflected when Laura after leaving Martin, she can live without Martin’s role again. She can visit her mother in the Hillgrove nursing home. She does not need to be a neatness person in everything, and she
also can be friendship with other men. It can be seen in the scene when Laura visits her mother in the Hillgrove nursing home (SWTE, 21:44).

The right in getting happiness in *Sleeping with the Enemy* movie, it is reflected when Laura leaves Martin. She meets Ben in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Her life with Ben was change. She gets her happiness from Ben. She feels happy. It is not likes her life with Martin. She can work in the library full day in a week. She also can get her loves and care from Ben (SWTE, 21:42).

d. Women’s Participation

Women generally have fewer participation and career opportunities than men do. Women’s participation in *Sleeping with the Enemy* movie is demonstrated that a woman has participation in her working.

As a woman, Laura does not want just to stay at home alone. She wants to spend her time working in a library. Laura wants to work in the library full day in a week but her husband refuses it. Martin just gives work permission three times in a week to Laura. He thinks if Laura works full day in a week she cannot keep her home. She does not have time for Martin and she can be late to serve their dinner. It can be seen in the scene when they have dinner in the terrace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laura Burney</th>
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<td>That was six months ago. (SWTE, 16:35).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Conclusion

After analyzing this movie according to problem statements and previous chapters, the writer concludes there are two aspects; structural analysis of the movie and Feminist Approach.
Based on the structural, this movie is based on novel with the same title by Nancy Price. This movie tells about Laura Burney who wants to get her right to get her freedom for happiness in her household from her abusive and possessive husband. In this movie the director, Joseph Ruben wants to deliver the message that woman’s right as a wife, women can get her freedom, happiness and care from her husband. In order to the message, the director creates a character Laura Burney who acts a downtrodden wife in her life. Her husband always tortures her if she has mistake, meanwhile little mistake for example when Laura spies on John Fleishman from the back of the window.

In *Sleeping with the Enemy* movie, Laura Burney gets her right in her life as a woman. First, she lies to her husband and runs away from him In order to reach her freedom and happiness in her life. Second, she lives in Cedar Falls, Iowa and meets with Ben. She gets her happiness in her life with Ben Woodward.

Second, based on the Feminist Approach, Joseph Ruben wants to say that women’s right in household, women reach her freedom to gets her happiness and care from her husband. Women’s right to get her happiness in household, she does not wants do roughly by her husband, so, if she has mistake her husband always hits her body. And she feels downtrodden by her husband’s behavior. Women’s right to get care from her husband. The women wants her husband gives more attention for her, so, she can feels comfort in her life with her husband.
REFERENCE


