OPPRESSION AGAINST WOMEN IN JOSEPH RUBEN’S SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY MOVIE: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

RESEARCH PAPER

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Sleeping with the Enemy movie was directed by Joseph Ruben and written by Nancy Price. This 99 minutes movie was released on February 8, 1991 by 20th Century Fox starring Julia Roberts. This movie won an award in BMI Film Music Award 1992 and was nominated for Saturn Award 1992 in four categories: Best Actress, Best Horror Film, Best Music, and Best Supporting Actor.


Sleeping with the Enemy tries to show the ordinary circumstances of recent women oppression, and the evasive action might provide a permanent solution. The plot challenges the oppressed woman to rise above her limitations as a person. She rises to the challenge and regains her self-respect. In this case the main character is Laura Burney, a woman who finds herself in
an abusive marriage. She feels that if she doesn’t get away from the marriage her husband will kill her. She fakes an accidental death, but eventually her husband finds her and it becomes a fight to the death.

Laura Burney (Julia Roberts) presumably has everything any woman can ever want, a beautiful home, a handsome and wealthy investment counsellor husband, and any material pleasure she could desire. However, her marriage is not all that it seems. Her abusive possessive husband, Martin (Patrick Bergin), is a controlling man who one day interprets her interaction with a neighbour at their beach home as flirting and strikes her in the face and kicks her as she lies helpless on the floor.

Laura sees her way out by planning and faking her own disappearance at sea in a storm off Cape Cod near the couple's luxurious ocean-view home. Martin attends her funeral when her body is not found.

In flashback, we see how she swims for safety, having taken swimming lessons at the YWCA. She secretly returns home, retrieves some clothing and cash she had hidden away in preparation, disguises herself and leaves home after flushing her wedding ring down the toilet.

Laura moves to Cedar Falls, Iowa. In preparation she has told her husband that her mother died, and pretended to attend the funeral, but secretly she had moved her to a nursing home in Iowa. She rents a modest house and adopts the name Sara Waters.

Picking apples from a neighbour’s garden one day she is caught by the owner, Ben Woodward (Kevin Anderson), who teases her about stealing
them. After a poor beginning, Ben asks Laura to dinner, where he tells her that he teaches drama at the local college, but Laura tells him nothing about her.

Martin is enraged to learn from a chance phone call from a friend of Laura's from the YWCA that Laura had been taking swimming lessons. Martin believes that the friend is talking about someone else until the woman mentions the bruises on Laura's body, which Laura claimed to get from gymnastics. Martin heads off home to do detective work. He finds the ring in the toilet bowl where it failed to flush, and sets out to find her. From the Cape Cod nursing home, he finds out that Laura's mother isn't dead, and using a detective agency he traces her to her new nursing home in Iowa. He visits the blind woman, Chloe Williams (Elizabeth Lawrence), without revealing his identity.

Meanwhile Laura and Ben have a falling-out when he discovers that her real name is not Sara. They make up with a date at the college. Laura rejects a pass from Ben, and leaves. The next day she confesses that she is on the run from an abusive husband.

Martin and Laura, who is in disguise, show up at the nursing home at the same time, but they do not see one another. Posing as a policeman warning Chloe about the dangerous Martin Burney, he learns from her that her daughter is seeing a college drama teacher in nearby Cedar Falls. Martin is about to smother her with a pillow, when a nurse arrives and unknowingly thwarts him.
Martin visits the wrong college drama teacher and threatens him with a gun. The man protests that he is gay, and Martin knocks him unconscious. Martin finds Laura and Ben and clandestinely follows them to the fair and back to her home. Laura first knows something is up through a series of seemingly random mishaps: her bath overflows, her toast burns, and the canned goods in her kitchen cupboard are lined up meticulously (one of Martin's idiosyncrasies). Then she hears the Symphonie fantastique, a musical piece Martin used to like to make love to. She then hears Ben at the door. As she makes her way to the door, she sees Martin's reflection. He pulls a gun and threatens to kill Ben if she doesn't get rid of him. She talks to him through the door's security chain and begs off from their date.

After closing the door, Martin resumes his conversation with Laura. Ben, hearing them, breaks down the door and struggles with Martin, who knocks him unconscious with the butt of his pistol. He aims the gun at Ben's head.

Laura, in an effort to keep Martin from killing Ben, pretends to go along with Martin's plans to take her back. However, she takes him by surprise by fighting back when she kicks him in the groin. Martin drops the gun and she manages to take control of it. She fires a single shot at Martin, just missing his head. Martin, undaunted, dares her to call the police. She tells him to stop coming closer, but Martin walks forward slowly. She reaches for the phone and does so, stating, "Come quickly. I've just killed an intruder," aiming the gun at Martin with her trembling hand.
Martin's face turns to horror and Laura shoots him three times in the chest before dropping the pistol. As a sobbing Laura collapses, Martin grabs her by the hair and points the gun to her face. But when he pulls the trigger, the gun only clicks, as all the bullets are gone. Martin sags lifelessly to the floor. As Ben slowly wakes up, Laura goes to him and they embrace. The movie ends with a close-up of Martin's body lying in the foreground with Laura's wedding ring inches from his hand.

Various responses of this movie were captured after this movie was released. Rolling Stones wrote that Julia Roberts plays these early scenes with striking subtlety, freezing her face into a mask of serenity so as not to arouse suspicion. And Bergin, who was so heroic as Sir Richard Burton in Mountains of the Moon, is astonishing as the sadist in sheep's clothing. Ruben, as he proved in The Stepfather, is a master at detecting the brutality festering under blandness. Editorial web review quotes four star of five and wrote that this movie as an amazing performance with exciting twists. This movie has reach the level of $100,294,830 in U.S. Box Office from $20,000,000 production budget. This Rated R movie has won an award in BMI Film Music Award 1992 and nominated for Saturn Award 1992 in four categories.

Oppression of women in our patriarchal society is seen daily. Men dominate women in so many ways; it becomes hard to distinguish one form of oppression from another. Women are exploited and face oppression every day. In the workplace women are forced into low paying, insecure and unskilled jobs. Women's problems do not stop at the workplace. When we come home
they have to face another shift of housework with little help from their husbands. If this is not enough, women have to deal with violence.

The oppression of women is not determined by their biology, as many contend. Its origins are economic and social in character. Throughout the evolution of pre-class and class society, women’s childbearing function has always been the same. But their social status has not always been that of a degraded domestic servant, subject to man’s control and command. The origin of women’s oppression is intertwined with the transition from pre-class to class society. The exact process by which this complex transition took place is a continuing subject of research and discussion even among those who subscribe to a historical materialist view. However, the fundamental lines along which women’s oppression emerged are clear. The change in women’s status developed along with the growing productivity of human labor based on agriculture, the domestication of animals, and stock raising; the rise of new divisions of labor, craftsmanship, and commerce; the private appropriation of an increasing social surplus; and the development of the possibility for some humans to prosper from the exploitation of the labor of others.

Feminists have taken many different approaches to the analysis of cinema. These include discussions of the function of women characters in particular film narratives or in particular genres, such as film noir, where a woman character can often be seen to embody a subversive sexuality that is dangerous to men and is ultimately punished with death. Through the use of
various film techniques, such as shot reverse shot, the viewer is led to align herself with the point of view of a male protagonist. Notably, women function as objects of this gaze far more often than as proxies for the spectator. Feminist film theory of the last twenty years is heavily influenced by the general transformation in the field of aesthetics.

Based on the consideration above, the writer is interested in conducting a study on Joseph Ruben’s Sleeping with the Enemy by using feminist perspective because of women oppression case in this movie. The writer focuses his study on OPPRESSION AGAINST WOMEN IN JOSEPH RUBEN’S SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY MOVIE: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE.

B. Literature Review

The writer has conducted research in several Major Universities in Central Java and found that study on Joseph Ruben’s Sleeping with the Enemy has never been conducted by any other researcher in those Universities. The writer analyzes the women oppression in Joseph Ruben’s Sleeping with the Enemy by using Feminist Perspective.

C. Problem Statement

The problem statement in this research is “How is oppression against women reflected in Joseph Ruben’s Sleeping with the Enemy movie viewed from Radical Feminist?”
D. Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to the oppression against women of Laura Burney as the major character in Joseph Ruben’s Sleeping with the Enemy, viewed from the feminist perspective, particularly radical feminist.

E. Objective of the Study

The objective of the research is as follow:

To analyze the oppression against women in Sleeping with the Enemy movie by using feminist perspective viewed from Radical Feminist.

F. Benefit of the Study

The result of the study is highly expected to give benefit as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit
   a. To enrich references of feminist perspective in a movie, which can be used by those who are interested in analyzing this literary work.
   b. To give a high contribution to the body of knowledge, particularly to those who are interested in Joseph Ruben’s Sleeping with the Enemy.

2. Practical Benefit
   a. For getting deeper understanding about the movie, particularly feminist perspective.
   b. For getting bachelor degree of education in English Department.
G. Research Method

The writer analyzes Joseph Ruben’s Sleeping with the Enemy using qualitative method which employs the method of collecting, describing, classifying and analyzing the data which then drawing conclusion.

1. Object of the Study

The object of the study is Sleeping with the Enemy movie by Joseph Ruben released on February 8, 1991 published and distributed by 20th Century Fox.

2. Type of the Data and the Data Source

The type of the data is in the form of text, scenes, and movie script entitled Sleeping with the Enemy directed by Joseph Ruben. The writer divides the data source into two categories; Primary data source and Secondary data source.

a. Primary data source

The primary data sources of the study are movie and script of Joseph Ruben’s Sleeping with the Enemy. This movie was directed by Joseph Ruben, written by Nancy Price, distributed by 20th Century Fox and released on 8 February, 1991.

b. Secondary data source

The writer takes the secondary data source, including references and materials related to the study whether picking up from books or internet.
3. **Methods of the Data Collection**

The methods of collecting data are as follows:

a. Watching the movie for several times.

b. Finding some related books to find the appropriate theory.

c. Browsing on the internet to get information that related to the research.

d. Making notes of important parts in both primary and secondary data.

e. Arranging the data into several parts based on its classification.

4. **Method of the Data Analysis**

The data are analyzed by using descriptive analysis, where the data are collected, described, and analyzed. It concerns with the relationship between the movie and the Feminist theory to show how women oppression is reflected in the movie.

**H. Research Paper Organization**

Research paper organization is divided into six chapters. Chapter I is introduction which includes the background of the study, literature review, problem statement, limitation of the study, objective of the study, benefit of the study, research method and paper organization. Chapter II is underlying theory. It deals with the notion of feminism, the basic concept of feminism, structural elements and theoretical application. Chapter III deal with the social background of American Society in the late of 20th Century. Chapter IV is the structural analysis of the movie. Chapter V is feminist analysis. Chapter VI contains conclusion and suggestion.