THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMINISM OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN MULAN MOVIE AS SEEN THROUGH LIBERAL FEMINISM APPROACH



Submitted as a Partial of the Requirement for Getting Bachelor Degree of Education in English Department

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The Researcher

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas tentang feminisme yang terjadi pada tokoh utama dalam Film Mulan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis upaya yang dilakukan oleh tokoh utama dalam memperjuangkan perempuan untuk memiliki hak yang sama dengan laki-laki tanpa memikirkan berbagai resiko yang akan ia tanggung sendiri dalam film Mulan melalui pendekatan Feminisme Liberal. Jenis penelitian adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah analisis dokumen. Penelitian ini menggunakan naskah dan audiovisual (film) sebagai data primer dan data sekunder yang berasal dari penelitian sebelumnya yang berkaitan dengan penelitian dan artikel. Teknik pengumpulan data dengan cara menonton film, kemudian merekam dan mencari data melalui internet yang membahas tentang penelitian dan pengambilan gambar. Peneliti menemukan adanya upaya dan tujuan yang dilakukan oleh tokoh utama untuk mendapatkan pengakuan atas kesetaraan tanpa memandang jenis kelamin.

Kata kunci: Disney, Feminisme, Feminisme Liberal, Tokoh Utama, Film.

Abstract

This research discusses the feminism that occurs to the main character in *Mulan Movie*. This study aims to analyze the efforts made by the main character to fight for women to have the same rights as men without thinking about the various risks that she will bear herself in the movie *Mulan* through the Liberal Feminism approach. The type of study is descriptive qualitative. The method used in this study is document analysis. This study used script and audiovisual (movie) as primary data and secondary data comes from previous research related to the research and articles. The technique of collecting data is by watching movies, then recording and searching for data via the internet that discusses the research and takes pictures. Researchers found that there were efforts and goals made by the main character to get recognition on equality regardless of gender.

Keywords: Disney, Feminism, Liberal feminism, Main character, Movie.

1. INTRODUCTION

The United States has a considerable impact on its products in the AV (Audio Visual) industry that can be enjoyed by various communities around the world. American animated films often feature themes about world civilization in various countries such as China, Greece, England, Saudi Arabia and many more. The

creators often look for sources of inspiration to be used as the plot from one of which is folklore from various countries and cultures, such as in Aladdin (1992), Mulan (1998), King Arthur (2004), Kung Fu Panda (2008), and Robin Hood (2010). This is one of the attractions to explore further about contacts between American cultures and other cultures (Tian & Xiong, 2013).

Literature is a theoretical idea by the creator and has many hidden meanings in the mind of the creator of the theoretical idea (Perumal, 2014). Writing is the attraction of someone who expresses ideas and then compile them as a story, fiction and so on. Literature can emerge from creative thoughts and data in a text (Dubey, 2013). Literature that describes a human life that can be enjoyed, understood and utilized by the community is an inventive literary work. The author creates consequences in compiling his creative mind and making it a scientific work (Cahyaningsih, 2017). Literature has a very imaginative positive form as a manifestation of human life and society in general, through language as a medium and has benefits in human life. It can be concluded that literary works are a representation of human life (Sumampouw, 2021). Literature consists of various genres, namely short stories, novels, dramas, and poetry (Ramrao, 2016).

According to (Fadlilah et al., 2021), film is an example of the endless mass media. Given that the film is used as a medium of expression that aims to make the public get the messages contained in a scene from the film. Each scene can provide meaning values, norms and so on, which can influence people's mindsets about the films presented. Film functions as a medium of expression, empowering the wider community as well as developing ideas, arts, culture, education and entertainment. Moreover, it also functions as a source of current information and a medium that conveys a message from the maker to the general public.

Literature is a form of expression of human thought where people can think of various ideas and ways to convey their experience in order to provide broad insight in making scenarios. Animated characters, visuals and scenarios are important frameworks in a literary work, and films are adaptations of literary works that have these elements (Ramrao, 2016). Films in particular are adaptations of literary works that contain elements such as characters, visual

animation, and scenarios (Keles, 2015). One of the famous animated film productions is The Walt Disney (Salden, 2019). Disney animated films are suitable for children and adults because the types of genres are mostly live-action, musical animation, comedy, family, horror and many other types of genres that Disney can present to its viewers. Thus, Disney movies are suitable for all ages from children, teenagers, to adults at once (Moran, 2016). Walt Disney changed the concept of the main female character in the film to be more feminist, this is where they enter a new era in which a beautiful princess full of tenderness becomes a princess who is independent, strong and can make decisions to determine her own destiny (England et al., 2011).

Mulan (1998), Moana (2016), Beauty and The Beast (1991), Tangled (2010), Frozen (2013) and many more are Walt Disney films that raise the topic of feminism. Feminism is one of the ideas that can have a big impact on people's mindsets, so Walt Disney gave a genre change to one of his animated films and it becomes one of the biggest influences of feminism (Hays, 2019). Disney has changed the main female character in the film to be strong, brave and full of intelligence (Hays, 2019). Behind the main female character in Disney Princess who is masculine, strong and brave, she still gives a soft nature as a woman in the film (England et al., 2011). Walt Disney wanted to convey to all moviegoers that women are not weak and can be despised. Fa Mulan (1998) and Live-action Mulan (2020) are the examples of Disney films that show masculine and feminine traits in the main female character, which aim to break patriarchy in society (Listiani, 2020).

(Chen et al., 2021) Disney's Mulan movie was officially released in September 2020. "Mulan" is derived from the long narrative poem "Song of Mulan" in China's Northern Dynasty. It tells about the story of a girl named Mulan who wants to fight for women's rights so that they can choose the path they choose regardless of gender, she also disguises herself as a man and joins the army to save her ailing father to carry out the assigned task. She makes an unexpected feat on the battlefield and refuses the gifts bestowed by the emperor. It is because she only hopes to restore her family's great name and be able to reunite after the war is

over. In this long narrative poem, the writer sees Mulan's kindness and courage. Furthermore, the writer highly praises her for defending her country and loving her homeland. Unlike most of the other poems that tell about war, this poem is full of descriptions of everyday life in ancient China, which have both value and literature in the story. At the same time, this poem is re-adapted internationally in which Chinese culture is a unique culture and has an interesting story in the poem that becomes its main feature. Over the years, overseas creators have adapted to different cultural backgrounds which are recognized all over the world. Mulan is a woman who comes from China and is finally able to be popular in the Chinese market. Disney's Mulan creative strategy started in 1998 in which the animated film of Mulan produced by Walt Disney was officially released by a director and writer who had modified the scenario from the basic structure of the original story to some extent. In the end of the animated film "Mulan", its amazing production and moving plot won awards all over the world. Besides, it also got the highest ratings from audiences on major movie review websites. It has a rating of 86% (out of a total of 100%) on US review website Rotten Tomatoes and 7.9 out of 10 on Chinese review website Douban.com. With Chinese audience's help and recognition of their own culture, Disney successfully enters the Chinese market with this film and at the same time, brings Chinese culture to audiences around the world. Mulan's 1998 animated film has grossed \$304 million globally (Qingli & Ying, 2020).

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the film "Mulan". First, Wibisono (2018) discusses the struggle of the main character. Second, Listiani (2020 discusses the identification of the representation of feminism values, especially radical feminism in the main character Mulan in the film "Mulan". Third, Sulistia (2016) discusses the disclosure of female masculinity or masculine characters reflected in the main character Hua Mulan as depicted by the Disney film "Mulan" and how her masculinity affects her ideas in relationships with the opposite sex. Fourth, Wijayati (2020) discusses the struggles and life paths of the main character to find her happiness. Fifth, Rahmayanti (2019) discusses about the struggle of the main character who is not discouraged to achieve his dream.

In the studies above, one of the similarities with this research is the object of research, namely the film "Mulan". In addition, previous research and this study discuss the main character. However, what distinguishes this research from previous research is the theory used and the problems raised in this study that have not been studied before.

In this study, the researcher is interested in researching the *Mulan* film because of its unique story and moral message that is very inspiring and can motivate researchers, especially the efforts made by the main character to fight for women to have the same rights as men without thinking about the various risks, that she will bear it all herself. Therefore, the researcher intends to analyze the feminism that occurs to the main character in *Mulan* movie. Hence, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "The Representation of Feminism of The Main Character in Mulan Movie as Seen Through Liberal Feminism Approach".

2. METHOD

This type of research is literary research. This research has the aim of looking at the relationship between literary works and society. Literature can be used as a source to find data. Then, Researchers get various types of data about the work of literature through. The primary data source in this study was a film called *Mulan* by Niki Caro and the script was created by Elizabeth Martin. Then, secondary data in the form of perspective liberal feminism approach, film review, commentary, previous research and other souces of relevance.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Representation of Liberal Feminism in *Mulan*

Women can do anything they want: Mulan's mother was disappointed with Mulan's father who only let his daughter act uncontrollably just to catch chickens, which daughter should be gentle, graceful and elevate the family's honor, however, here Mulan acts and behaves tomboyish which only humiliates the Hua family. This is also supported by the dialogue in the scene which explains that Mulan must bring honor to the family, where the culture in the (Chinese) village believes that it is women who will bring honor to her family by finding a partner or getting married soon. In the village it is believed

that an elegant woman will get a good husband. Based on the data above, it can be concluded that Mulan does whatever she wants, such as behaving and catching chickens, it makes her mother disappointed in the local tradition that a girl should act gracefully.

Women also have the same potential as men: Mulan's father advised Mulan to hide the gift that had been given to her by her ancestors who would later become a young woman and it was her father's responsibility to protect her. However, Mulan did the exact opposite as her father suggested. He accidentally shows the Chi he has, when he joins the military (China). Because of this, Commander Tung finds out that Mulan has Chi. From the data above, the researcher can conclude that Mulan actually has the same potential as male soldiers, but because of the custom that women should not have that much chi, Mulan's father asked her to hide it. But in the end he accidentally showed his Chi.

Women have choices and are able to think individually and rationally: Mulan's father and mother are discussing, mother and father decide to bring Mulan to an arranged marriage so that Mulan quickly finds a partner and gets married to a good man. When, Mulan's parents talk to Mulan about her decision to match Mulan. Mulan's face changes, Mulan looks shocked and saddened by her family's decision. This is also supported by dialogue between the characters who initially accepted the decision to be matched, although initially disappointed, but he followed the decision made by his family, especially his mother. Here Mulan feels unable to do what she wants. However, due to the culture in which she lives, her family, especially her mother, requires Mulan to find a partner.

3.1.2 Mulan's efforts to fight women's rights in the film "Mulan"

Dare to take arisks to join the army: Mulan is very much ready to play the role of a man. He left his house to carry out activities in public spaces which are more male-dominated. This explains that gender roles are no longer important to him. Mulan's act of replacing her father on the battlefield was a very

reckless act. The regulations state that only household heads and sons can voluntarily join the Chinese army.

Successfully performed the male role: Mulan and the entire army of soldiers perform self-defense movements using sticks. This scene proves it with hard work and unyielding. He can do anything, his success in playing male roles is shown in Mulan's martial arts practice action against Hong Hui. Mulan feels proud and her actions are able to make all the soldiers believe that she is a man. This convinces Mulan that her disguise is a success.

Mulan dares to speak the truth and is ready to accept all the consequences: in the first battle launched, it was Mulan who became part of the wing. He hid behind a hill and thought of tactics to disperse the enemy's focus on attacking his troops to keep his troops safe from enemy attacks. Mulan's tactics made Rouran's army collapse. However, his actions forced him to give up and tell his commander the truth. Mulan confesses to the commander and all her friends that she is a woman named Hua Mulan. Commander Tung still follows the existing rules, if a soldier betrays he will be expelled from the army. However, Mulan chose to be killed rather than return to her village. Commander Tung chose to expel Mulan.

A woman who gets recognition: Mulan finally gains recognition from the entire society and Mulan also receives recognition from the Emperor because she had helped protect the kingdom and saved the Emperor and the others. Mulan is given the honorary title of Emperor to become part of the Imperial Officers. However, Mulan apologizes and refuses the offer because she has to return to her family and apologize to her family who were overcome with fear after Mulan made the decision to protect her father. This scene proves that Mulan has been recognized by the entire community and has brought honor to her ancestors, to her family and village. Mulan succeeded in breaking society's view of men and women prevailing in her village. It also proves that women can also determine what they want to do. This can be seen from the award given by the government to Mulan. Mulan manages to take the responsibility and the risk to prove that she has the right to make decisions to determine her

own path. He succeeded in raising the honor for his family and the name of the Emperor.

3.1.3 Niki Caro's Reasons for Supporting the Representation of Feminism in the Film Mulan

Niki Caro is the director who produced the live-action film Mulan which was released in 2020. This film is adapted from the 1998 animated film Mulan. This film provides a different point of view from most of the Princess films produced by Disney. The film Mulan gives a distinct impression through the main character who succeeds in breaking the character of the princess who is supposed to be graceful, gentle and feminine.

In an interview, Niki Caro said that "Mulan is a feminist character who represents ancient Chinese Confucian values as well as the image of a strong woman who is not afraid of adversity, prospering in a male-only environment and loyalty to her family" (Orlin, 2020). Here Niki Caro also added in the interview that "women can also determine their own path without limits" (Orlin, 2020). This statement explains that Niki Caro strongly supports the representation of feminism in the film Mulan. The reason is, the main character Mulan is able to convey to the entire audience about the struggle of a young woman who wants to prove that women also have the right to choose the path they want without thinking about the risks that will be faced later.

3.2 Discussion

In the previous sub-chapter the author has classified psychology into 3 sub-chapters, namely ID, Ego & Super Ego. These three elements cannot stand alone and must remain a unity. Therefore, in this discussion sub-chapter, the author will discuss how the correlation between ID, Ego, and Super Ego in Jack is.

3.2.1 Representation of Liberal Feminism in Mulan

Based on the results of the analysis, it is known that the representation of liberal feminism shown in the film "Mulan" includes: women can do whatever they want. This is evidenced by the representation of Mulan's character who does whatever she wants, such as behaving and catching chickens, this makes her mother disappointed in the local tradition that a girl should act gracefully.

Women also have the same potential as men. According to (Clifford, 2001) liberal feminism assumes that the subordination of women is rooted in legal constraints that exclude or hinder the full and equal involvement of women in the public arena.

Based on the results of the study, it is known that the representation of liberal feminism in the form of the main character Hua Mulan who also has the same potential as men, it is shown that Mulan's character actually has the same potential as male soldiers, but because of customs that require that women should not have chi. it was so big that my father asked him to hide it. But in the end he accidentally showed his Chi. The next representation is that women have choices and are able to think individually and rationally. This is shown through Mulan's character who accepts the decision to get married, although initially she is disappointed, but she follows the decisions made by her family, especially her mother. Here Mulan feels unable to do what she wants. However, due to the culture in which she lives, her family, especially her mother, requires Mulan to find a partner.

According to (Tong, 2009) explains that in the view of liberal feminism, a woman has the right not to marry, work, and change herself for the better if it is her personal choice and the woman feels that choice is the best for her. Liberal feminists are inspired by the principles of enlightenment, that men and women have the same opportunities and rights, therefore there is no need for distinction. Because if women are involved in various roles (social, political, economic) it will be considered good without thinking about the function of the reproductive organs because they are not considered a barrier (Umar, 2010). According to liberal feminists, "rights" should be given priority over "goods." In other words, the whole system of individual rights is justified, because these rights provide a framework, which is the basis for us to choose what is best for each of us, as long as we do not take away the rights of others. Freedom of rights is what drives some of these liberal thinkers to keep pressing the growth rate of equality in a linear fashion (Eidelweis, 2018).

3.2.2 Mulan's efforts to fight for women's rights in the film "Mulan"

Liberal Feminism is a feminist movement which states that women have the same rights to achieve freedom in various sectors such as politics, religion, education and work (Eidelweis, 2018). The goal of the liberal feminist movement is to create a just and compassionate society in which freedom thrives and grows healthily (Tong, 2009). Based on the results of the analysis, it is known that Mulan's efforts in fighting for women's rights are Dare to take risks to join the army, Successfully Perform Men's Roles, Mulan dares to speak the truth and is ready to accept all the consequences and is able to Get Recognition from the community.

Regarding the right to autonomy, according to liberal feminism, women's oppression is caused by their own fault or in other words, if the system has provided equal opportunities to men and women and if women are not able to compete, they will lose, it means that women are the ones to blame. For that, if every individual has the free right to choose any job that he thinks is good and does not harm or disturb others, then he must be able to compete. That is why this school proposes to solve women's problems by preparing women to be able to compete in a world full of free competition (Umar, 2010).

3.2.3 Niki Caro's Reasons for Supporting the Representation of Feminism in the Film Mulan

The film Mulan is one of the films that raises the issue of the treatment of feminism contained in the storyline of this film which was released in 2020 by Director Niki Caro and stars Liu Yifei as the main character Mulan. Based on the results of the analysis, it is known that Niki Caro Supports the Representation of Feminism in the Mulan Film, namely Mulan is a feminist character who represents ancient Chinese Confucian values and the image of a strong woman who is not afraid of difficulties, is prosperous in a male-only environment and is loyal to her family (Orlin, 2020). According to Niki Caro also added in the interview that "women can also determine their own path without limits" (Orlin, 2020). This statement explains that Niki Caro strongly supports the representation of feminism in the film Mulan. The reason is, the main character Mulan is able to convey to the entire audience about the

struggle of a young woman who wants to prove that women also have the right to choose the path they want without thinking about the risks that will be faced later.

4. CLOSING

Based on the Liberal feminism approach, the aim of the liberal feminist movement is to create a just and compassionate society in which freedom thrives and is healthy (Tong, 2009). Based on the results of the analysis, it is known that Mulan's efforts in fighting for women's rights are Dare to take the risk of joining the army, Successfully Perform Men's Roles, Mulan dares to speak the truth and is ready to accept all consequences and is ready to accept, able to get recognition from the community. All these efforts appear in the film *Mulan*.

The first research question, it can be concluded by using Tong's theory of liberal feminism which focuses on the welfare and freedom of women to determine and choose what they want to do, and prove that their efforts to gain freedom are successful. Researchers found three indicators to answer the formulation of the first problem. The indicators are women can do anything they want, women also have the same potential as men, and women have choices and are able to think individually and rationally. The first indicator is women can do anything they want reflected by Mulan is where she must be required to be a graceful woman because in her village she believes that only elegant women will get a good husband, but here Mulan acts otherwise and is far from graceful because she is doing whatever she wants like catching chickens and making her mother feel disappointed, in the local tradition a girl should act gracefully. The second indicator is women also have the same potential as men which is reflected by Mulan when Mulan's father advises Mulan to hide the gifts that have been given to her by her ancestors, so Mulan actually has the same potential as male soldiers but in the end he accidentally showed his chi. The third indicator is women have choices and are able to think individually and rationally reflected by Mulan is when Mulan's parents decide to bring Mulan to an arranged marriage so that Mulan quickly finds a partner and gets married to a good man, Mulan's expression changes, Mulan looks shocked and saddened by his family's decision.

Although Mulan is basically disappointed, she follows the decisions made by her parents, especially her mother. Here Mulan feels unable to do what she wants. However, due to the culture in which she lives, her family, especially her mother, requires Mulan to find a partner.

According to the analysis of the second research question, it can be concluded that Mulan's efforts to fight for women's rights as a woman's consist of three efforts, namely Dare to take risks to join the army, Successfully Performed the Male Role, Mulan dares to speak the truth and is ready to accept all the consequences, and A Woman Who Gets Recognition. The first attempt, Mulan dares to take risks to join the army which is reflected by Mulan, is when Mulan is very much ready to play the role of a man. He left his house to carry out activities in public spaces which are more male-dominated. This explains that gender roles are no longer important to him. Mulan's act of replace her father on the battlefield was a very reckless act. The second attempt, she's successfully performed the male role as reflected by Mulan, was when she managed to prove it by working hard and never giving up. She can do anything his success in playing the male role is shown in Mulan's martial arts practice action against Hong Hui. Mulan feels proud and her actions are able to make all the soldiers believe that she is a man. The Mulan confesses to the commander and all her friends that she is a woman named Hua Mulan. Panglima Tung still follows the existing rules, if a soldier betrays he will be expelled from the army. However, Mulan chose to be killed rather than return to her village. Commander Tung chose to expel Mulan. The last attempt, a woman who gets recognition as reflected by Mulan when Mulan finally gains recognition from the entire society and Mulan also receives recognition from the Emperor because she had helped protect the kingdom and saved the Emperor and the others. Mulan is given the honorary title of Emperor to become part of the Imperial Officers. Based on the results of the analysis, it is known that Mulan's efforts in fighting for women's rights are Dare to take risks to join the army, Successfully Perform Men's Roles, Mulan dares to speak the truth and is ready to accept all the consequences and is able to Get Recognition from the community.

According to the analysis of the third research question, it can be concluded that Niki Caro's reasons for supporting the representation of feminism in the film Mulan. Niki Caro strongly supports the representation of feminism in the film Mulan. The reason is, the main character Mulan is able to convey to the entire audience about the struggle of a young woman who wants to prove that women also have the right to choose the path they want without thinking about the risks that will be faced later.

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