

GENDER OPPRESSION IN THE MALEFICENT MOVIE BY ROBERT STROMBERG: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstrak

Penindasan gender masih menjadi isu yang tersebar luas di masyarakat, sering kali digambarkan dalam berbagai bentuk media, termasuk adaptasi dongeng. Berakar pada konstruksi masyarakat yang memihak laki-laki, penindasan ini terwujud melalui mekanisme eksplisit dan implisit, yang memposisikan perempuan sebagai subordinat. Penelitian ini menyelidiki penggambaran penindasan gender dalam *Maleficent* (2014) karya Robert Stromberg dengan menggunakan analisis sastra feminis. Dengan menggunakan teori feminis liberal Simone de Beauvoir, penelitian ini mengkaji film tersebut untuk mengungkap dinamika penindasan gender. Data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini meliputi dialog, adegan, wawancara dan sumber pendukung lain yang berkaitan dengan penelitian. Analisis tersebut mengidentifikasi tiga hasil utama: 1) indikator penindasan gender yang terdapat dalam film, yaitu gender dan kekerasan, gender dan subordinate, serta gender dan stereotype; 2) penggambaran penindasan tersebut melalui karakter, gaya, dan diksi; 3) alasan kontekstual di balik penekanan film terhadap penindasan gender, yang dikaitkan dengan pengalaman pribadi penulisnya, yang mengalami penindasan gender saat bekerja di perusahaan Disney, dan juga pendapat pribadi sutradara yang ingin memberikan gambarnya. pemberdayaan perempuan dalam film tersebut. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang bagaimana penindasan gender dikonstruksi dan direpresentasikan dalam media kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Penindasan gender, *Maleficent*, perspektif feminis, feminis liberal, Film

Abstract

Gender oppression remains a pervasive issue in society, frequently depicted in various forms of media, including fairy tale adaptations. Rooted in societal constructions that favor men, this oppression manifests through both explicit and implicit mechanisms, positioning women as subordinate. This research investigates the portrayal of gender oppression in Robert Stromberg's *Maleficent* (2014) using a feminist literary analysis. Employing Simone de Beauvoir liberal feminist theory, the study examines the film to uncover the dynamics of gender oppression. The data used in this research includes dialogue, scenes, interview and other supporting sources related to the research. The analysis identifies three primary outcomes: 1) the indicators of gender oppression present in the film, namely gender and violence, gender and subordinate, and gender and stereotype; 2) the depiction of this oppression through character, style, and diction; 3) the contextual reasons behind the film's emphasis on gender oppression, which are linked to the personal experiences of its writer, who experienced gender oppression while working at the Disney company, and also the personal opinion of the director, who wanted to provide a depiction of female empowerment in the film. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of how gender oppression is constructed and represented in contemporary media.

Keywords: Gender oppression, *Maleficent*, feminist perspective, liberal feminist, Movie

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender oppression is an occurrence rooted in gender norms, relationships, and societal stratification passed down through generations, evolving into a phenomenon normalized by many. It is a pervasive issue, particularly affecting women in society. Furthermore, the patriarchal system positions men consistently above and superior to women, resulting in gender oppression manifesting through consumption patterns, perspectives, and societal thought patterns. The patriarchal culture assumes that supreme authority resides in the family and society. Abuse of power from this view causes women to be considered beneath men, do not have free rights, and only obey men (Hajir & Marsih, 2023).

Injustice prevails within certain groups due to differing opinions about gender roles in society. Many families in traditional religions prefer sons over daughters (Wongnuch et al., 2023). Gender oppression persists in society; thus, it often occurs and has become a normalized phenomenon. This mindset is certainly detrimental to those feeling the impact of gender oppression in their lives. Society's belief in men having a higher position than women is an unwritten rule embraced by many. Females are consistently relegated to a secondary status, viewed as extensions of men and regarded as lowly entities (Movva et al., 2023).

Gender oppression is a prevalent issue in society and is even depicted in fairy tale stories. It arises from societal constructions detrimental to the position of women, leading to oppression and control by men in patriarchal societies. This is evident in fairy tale movies, which are dominated by patriarchal ideologies that portray women as passive and submissive. Disney is one of the big companies in the entertainment world that has the power to enchant their audience with timeless stories of classic fairy tales (Laemle, 2018). Walt Disney, a company contributing numerous memorable fantasy stories to children worldwide, has historically featured plots predominantly focusing on male characters, limiting female roles and mobility. Many female Disney characters play standard roles, such as housemaids, or play no part at all, serving as supporting characters to the male protagonist (Maity, 2014).

It is not surprising that feminist groups have been the main opponents of the fairy tale genre since the beginning of the 20th century, criticizing stories as a source of misogyny in society, given the emphasis on the limited ideas of femininity conveyed in tales. Classic tales have been rewritten by feminist authors into "non-sexist" versions suitable for both adults and children. This is an intriguing illustration of how a cross-cultural dialogue may bring a modern viewpoint to a traditionally composed work. One of feminists' main concerns is the way gender roles are constructed, which clearly suggests chauvinistic views. The stories create "positions to occupy" as male and female members of society, producing a "script" of how each gender should act.

However, there have been notable changes in the formulation of fairy tale movies, particularly in Disney's approach. This has been greatly influenced by the achievement of modernism in the era of feelings, where many definitions of concepts have changed both in the fields of politics and social life. Classical understanding is losing its dominance, and many people are having difficulty coping with the problem of existence. A postmodernist attitude is a very complex thing, like real life itself. Naturally, this also influences the development of character in literary works. *Maleficent* (2014) stands out as a film where the antagonist is the main character, presenting a different perspective from the typical protagonist in Disney films. *Maleficent* is portrayed as a strong and brave female character, reimagining the traditional fairy tale narrative. She is described as an evil witch who cursed Aurora to sleep forever. In this film by Robert Stromberg, the audience is brought to see another point of view of *Maleficent*, she is the strongest fairy in the Moors who ends up being hurt by her lover for the sake of power which makes her hate humans and curse Aurora. This film broke the discourse of the original fairy tale which saw *Maleficent* as just a villain and shifted Aurora's position as the main character. The character *Maleficent* has strength and power that comes out of the stereotype of the main character that often comes out of other fairy tales. Apparently *Maleficent* does manage to bring a new insight to its audience (Tarihi & Melda ÜNER, 2017).

Several previous studies used *Maleficent* (2014) as a research object; the first research was conducted by Khoirunisa & Rahayu (2020) try to find out the causes and effects of the conflict faced by the main character and the ego defense mechanism of the female lead in the film *Maleficent* by Robert Stromberg. The results of this study found that because of the disappointment felt by the female lead because she was betrayed by Steffan, it became the cause of the conflict for the female lead, which gave the effect that *Maleficent* cursed Aurora because Steffan cut her wings. *Maleficent*, who sincerely loves Aurora, turns out to be good. Projection and repression are the two ego defense mechanisms of the female lead in the film *Maleficent*. The second research was conducted by Reny Hariyati & Tjahjono (2022) on how Vandana Shiva's ecofeminism in the movie *Maleficent* portrayed nature and women. According to the study's findings, this movie shows how humans abuse nature and how women are oppressed as a consequence. As a result, it is necessary to destroy the relationship between men (the ruling class) and women to free nature. Buzarna-Tihenea Assist (2019) conducted research on the evolution of the main characters in Disney fairy tales, and one of them is the character *Maleficent*, who underwent an evolution from a negative character in the *Sleeping Beauty* fairy tales. In the film *Maleficent* (2014) by Robert Stromberg, the character experiences a change from being a kind-hearted fairy who turns into an evil fairy with a heart full of revenge because of the trauma she experienced caused by King Stefan. At the end of the story, *Maleficent* experiences a change in character again because of her affection for Aurora, which makes her a wise fairy.

Ramadani et al., (2021) conducted research about feminism in Maleficent movie by Robert Stromberg. The aim of this research is to analyze feminism in the film Maleficent using qualitative methods. The results of this research show that researchers found that ecofeminism is a type of feminism found in films. The factors that cause ecofeminism in films are ecological protection factors and ending domestic violence and abuse factors. Apart from that, the influence of feminism on the main character is that women and nature dominate, and it emphasizes the importance of developing a more interdependent worldview, emphasizing that all living things are essential to the health of the earth and that people are neither superior to nor different from other living things. Setyawan et al., (2020) conducted research regarding changes in the main character in the film Maleficent using mise-en-scene, which aims to find out how aspects of mise-en-scene influence most of the changes in the main character. Researchers used the theory of the three-dimensional figure by Brodwell and Thompson and the theory of character change by Lajos Egri to analyze the data. The results of this research found that the main character had a three-time change in character from protagonist to antagonist and back to protagonist. Maleficent's mise en scene shows and validates a valid character development in the lead characters.

With the research conducted using the film Maleficent (2014) by Robert Stromberg as the research object, it becomes evident that there is a research gap in analyzing gender oppression in Maleficent (2014). Researchers feel it is necessary to conduct further research using the same object to analyze gender oppression in films, providing a new understanding of the results obtained during the research. In this research, the researchers are interested in analyzing gender oppression in Maleficent (2014) by Robert Stromberg using a feminist perspective that focuses on liberal feminism. Maleficent, who is the villain in the classic fairy tale Sleeping Beauty, presents an interesting point of view, showcasing her strong, firm, and cruel character because she is a victim of gender oppression. The research questions that will guide this study are: 1. What are the main indicators of gender oppression in the film Maleficent by Robert Stromberg? 2. How is gender oppression depicted in the film Maleficent by Robert Stromberg? 3. Why is gender oppression addressed in the Maleficent movie?

2. METHOD

This research uses a feminist perspective to analyze a literary work, with a focus on liberal feminist theory. This research will analyze the gender oppression that occurs in the *Maleficent* (2014) film. In order to determine the relationship between literary works and society, a literary study type was applied in this research. Literature is the creative work that portrays human existence in society in a way that society may appreciate, comprehend, and employ. The primary standard that is applied to literary works is "truth," or everything that the author intends to depict, according to Pradopo (1994: 26). The researcher employs document analysis as the method for collecting research data. In qualitative research, the document analysis process involves examining and interpreting the collected data to derive meaning and enhance understanding. This analytical approach is crucial for developing knowledge through the examination of the analyzed data.

The method of data analysis used in this study is qualitative. The study's results using qualitative research methods were obtained from finding the linkage of the text with the context in the community, wherein this study of the gender oppression that occurred in society was published in the movie. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there are three techniques for analyzing qualitative data that has been obtained, namely: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion. The primary data source are the main data obtained from the movie from all the scenes, dialogues, monologues, phrases and sentences in the movie. The primary data sources of the study are *Maleficent* movie by Robert Stromberg, written by Linda Woolverton. This film has a duration of 97 minutes and was released on May 30, 2014, in the United States. Aside from the main data obtained from the movie, the researcher also took data from internet sources such as interview on YouTube. The secondary data source are the supporting data taken from literary books, criticism, internet, and articles related to the movie. The secondary data of the research are taken from any information related to the movie from other books, article, and internet.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Finding

The Indicator of Gender Oppression

In the finding section, the researcher intended to answer the research question regarding gender oppression in *Maleficent* (2014) by Robert Stromberg using a feminist perspective. In addition to including the data, the researcher also added a description to make it easier for the reader to understand the data.

a. Gender and Violence

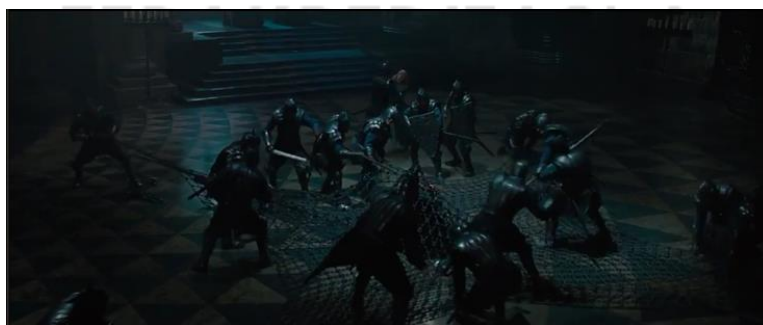


Picture 1- Stefan cut Maleficent wings with iron chain



Picture 2 - Maleficent lost her wings due to Stefan

From the data above, it can be seen that there was physical and mental violence experienced by the female main character. This violence occurred when the main female character, Maleficent, was given sleeping pills by Stefan, which Stefan used to cut Maleficent's wings. This caused Maleficent to lose her ability to fly and also left Maleficent with a deep sense of hatred and disappointment. This is a turning point experienced by Maleficent, which makes her an evil fairy who is full of anger and also has the desire to take revenge on Stefan for his actions. This indicator can be found in minutes 00:16:28–00:19:56.



Picture 3 - Stefan troops surround and trap Maleficent

In the second data point, the female main character, Maleficent, encounters violence from Stefan's soldiers at the palace. While attempting to rescue Aurora from her curse, Maleficent, accompanied by her servant Diaval, infiltrates the palace. However, after successfully saving Aurora, she falls into Stefan's trap. Stefan, attempting to capture and kill her, surrounds Maleficent with his soldiers. Caught and unable to resist, Maleficent endures beatings and violence from the surrounding soldiers, incapacitated as her magical abilities wane. Stefan strategically employs iron, known as the fairy's weakness, to capture Maleficent. This indicator can be found in minutes 01:18:28–01:22:15.

b. Gender and subordinate

Views on gender can lead to the subordination of women, with assumptions that place one gender as lower than another. In the Maleficent movie, the two neighboring kingdoms have a bad relationship. The human kingdom is led by a greedy king who is trying to control the Moors kingdom and all its treasures. King Henry underestimates Maleficent's position as the leader of the Moors kingdom and intends to seize power from her. He taunts Maleficent because he sees her as being under his authority. This type of gender subordination is often experienced by women, who are considered to have an emotional, irrational attitude and are therefore deemed incapable of leadership, resulting in their relegation to unimportant positions.



Picture 4 - King Henry brought his troops to conquer the Moors kingdom

From the data above, King Henry brought his troops to conquer the Moors kingdom, which was growing in power and prosperous. However, Maleficent, as the guardian of the Moors at that time, confronted King Henry and his troops in front of the kingdom's borders and asked them not to go any further. Hearing this, King Henry refused, mocked Maleficent, and then ordered his troops to kill Maleficent. This indicator can be found in minutes 00:09:35–00:11:15.



Picture 5 - King Stefan's troops are shown attacking the Moors kingdom

In the data above, King Stefan's troops are shown attacking the Moors kingdom under the leadership of Maleficent. King Stefan, frightened by Maleficent's curse and power, attempts to destroy the moors and kill Maleficent. He ordered his troops to attack the Moors kingdom continuously without stopping until they succeeded in breaking through the defensive wall created by Maleficent to protect the Moors kingdom. This indicator can be found in minutes 00:38:30–00:40:00.

c. Gender and stereotype

In a patriarchal culture, men have greater opportunities to select and secure employment compared to women. This disparity arises from the stereotype of women as weak, relegating them to a secondary position without the freedom to choose from the available job opportunities. Historically, women have been regarded as extensions of men and inferior entities. Society views women as being responsible for domestic work and not having freedom for themselves. As a result, many women find themselves in lower-level roles, often underestimated and viewed as weak individuals.



Picture 6 - Women working as palace servants



Picture 7 - Men working as high-ranking officials in the palace



Picture 8 - Men working as general and soldier in the palace

Based on the provided data, it is evident that in this film, women are exclusively employed as palace servants, with high-ranking positions within the palace predominantly occupied by men. Men are even afforded the opportunity to pursue roles as soldiers and ascend to the rank of captain of troops for the palace. Conversely, women are relegated to tasks in the background, such as washing and sewing clothes, with no prospects for attaining higher positions within the palace.

Description of How Gender Oppression Depicted in Maleficent Movie (2014) by Robert Stromberg

a. Character

1) Oppressing character

The characters engaged in oppression in this film are Stefan and King Henry. The first character, King Henry, is depicted as a king driven by greed for power and control over the Moors kingdom, which is under Maleficent's protection. This data can be found in minutes 00:14:00 – 00:15:12.

King Henry: When I ascended to the throne I promised the people one day we would take the Moors and its treasures. Each of you swore allegiance to me and to that cause.

Stefan: Your Majesty.

King Henry: Defeated in battle. Is this to be my legacy? I see you're waiting for me to die. It won't be long, but what then? I will choose a successor to take the throne, to care my daughter. Who among you is worthy? Kill the winged creature! Avenge me! And upon my death you will take the crown.

From the data above, it can be observed that King Henry, upon realizing the increasing power of Maleficent and the Moors, felt threatened. Consequently, he instructed his subordinates to hunt down and kill Maleficent in an attempt to avenge his defeat in controlling the Moors. King Henry's greed motivated his desire to assert control over the Moors kingdom and its wealth.

The second character is Stefan. Stefan, who has a closer relationship with Maleficent than anyone else, feels he has the opportunity to fulfill his ambition to become king by avenging King Henry by killing Maleficent. This data can be found in minutes 00:19:00 – 00:19:57.

King Henry: What is this?

Stefan: I have avenged you, sire.

King Henry: She is vanquished? Oh, you have done well, my son. You have done what others feared to do. You will be rewarded.

Stefan: I shall do my best to be a worthy successor, your majesty.



Picture 9 - Stefan presented Maleficent wings to King Henry

From the data above, it can be seen that Stefan brought Maleficent's wings to King Henry as proof that he had succeeded in avenging King Henry by killing Maleficent. He got Maleficent's wings by drugging Maleficent and cutting her wings when she was unconscious, then immediately ran away and went to the palace.

2) Oppressed Character

Narrator: Stefan and Maleficent became the most unlikely of friends. And for a time, it seemed as if, in them at least, the old hatred between men and fairies had been forgotten. As it will, friendship slowly turned into something else. And on her 16th birthday, Stefan gave Maleficent a gift. He told her it was true love's kiss. But it was not to be. As the years passed, Stefan's ambition pulled him away from Maleficent, and towards the temptations of the human kingdom. While Maleficent, the strongest of the fairies, rose to become the protector of the Moors. Maleficent often wandered alone and sometimes wondered where Stefan might be, for she had never understood the greed and envy of men.

Maleficent is a character who undergoes oppression in this film. As the strongest fairy in the Moors, she grew up with a profound curiosity about human life. Her life takes a turn when she encounters Stefan, who infiltrates the Moors to steal gemstones. Their meeting leads to the formation of a friendship that evolves into a deeper relationship for Maleficent. In a relationship with Stefan, Maleficent believes in the feelings he imparts to her. When Stefan gives Maleficent a true love's kiss, she is convinced of his sincerity. Despite being left without a word by Stefan, who is driven by ambition and greed to become king, Maleficent wonders about Stefan's whereabouts and awaits his arrival in the Moors. This data can be found in minutes 00:09:13 – 00:09:24.

Stefan: Maleficent!

Maleficent: So, how is life with the humans?

Stefan: Maleficent, I've come to warn you. They mean to kill you. King Henry will stop at nothing. Please, you have to trust me.

Narrator: They spoke of many things, and the years faded away. And she forgave Stefan his folly and his ambition, and all was as it had been long ago.

From the data above, it is evident that Maleficent finds herself in an uncertain relationship with Stefan. As time passes, the distance between Maleficent and Stefan grows. Nevertheless, Maleficent retains deep feelings for Stefan. After a prolonged absence, Stefan returns to the Moors to warn Maleficent about King Henry's plan to kill her. Unaware of Stefan's motives, she forgives his actions and welcomes him back into her life. However, Stefan exploits Maleficent's enduring love and trust for his own gain, aspiring to become king and fulfill his ambitions. This data can be found in minutes 00:15:38 – 00:16:30.

b. Event/plot

1) Stefan cut Maleficent wings

In the film "Maleficent" (2014) by Robert Stromberg, a depiction of gender oppression is evident when Stefan cuts off Maleficent wings by putting sleeping pills in her drink. Stefan manipulates Maleficent trust and love for him to fulfill his ambition of becoming king.

2) Stefan orders his soldier to hunt down Maleficent

Narrator: Stefan shut himself behind the walls of his castle while his soldiers rode far and wide to hunt Maleficent down. But she made walls of her own, that the Moors might never again suffer the touch of any human. And she reveled in the sorrow that her curse had brought.

The depiction of gender oppression in the film "Maleficent" (2014) by Robert Stromberg is illustrated when Stefan, feeling anxious about the curse and the existence of Maleficent, orders his soldiers to hunt down and kill her at all costs. He is determined not to let Maleficent live and roam freely. This data can be found in minutes 00:33:39 – 00:34:09.

3) Stefan traps and surrounds Maleficent

Guard: Get back! Hold it steady.

Guard: Pull to the left! Pull

Guard: Hold the line! Look out. Hold your line.

Guard: Close in. brings it down!



Picture 10 - Stefan troops surround Maleficent using an iron shield, her weakness

The depiction of gender oppression reflected in the film "Maleficent" (2014) by Robert Stromberg occurs when Maleficent is trapped and surrounded by Stefan's troops in the palace. In an attempt to help Aurora, break free from the curse, Maleficent decides to sneak into Stefan's palace. Inside the palace, Stefan has set up various traps to capture Maleficent, exploiting her weaknesses, which he learned from Maleficent herself, with the intention of harming her. This data can be found in minutes 01:20:12 – 01:21:50.

c. Style

1) Symbolism

The symbolism in the Maleficent movie (2014) is divided into several parts, namely:

a) Magic

Stefan: You failed me.

General soldier: The wall cannot be burned. It is indestructible.

Stefan: Nothing is indestructible! Not the wall! Not Maleficent! Not even her curse!

The symbolism in the movie "Maleficent" (2014) is represented by the magic that Maleficent possesses. Being the strongest fairy in the Moors, Maleficent's magical power becomes a symbol of her strength. However, this power also makes her a target of oppression by Stefan and King Henry, who perceive her magical abilities as a threat to their dominance. This data can be found in minutes 00:39:33 – 00:40:00.

From the data above, it can be observed that Stefan instructs his soldiers to kill Maleficent and destroy the Moors. As time progresses, Stefan's feelings of fear and anxiety intensify, primarily due to Maleficent's curse and her formidable power, which he finds insurmountable.

b) Iron

Stefan: Where are your workers?

Iron Worker: In their beds, Majesty.

Stefan: Get them back to work without delay.

Iron Workers: They're exhausted, sire. But I'll have them back to work at first light.

Stefan: I need them back to work now.

Iron Worker: It's the wee hours.

Stefan: Aye. Aye. It is the wee hours. So, wake them up.

Iron Worker: Sire?

Stefan: So, wake them up, and get them back to work now! We're running out of time! Go, now!

The symbolism in the Maleficent film (2014) is iron, which Stefan uses as a tool to oppress Maleficent. Iron itself is a symbol of human strength and confidence in power. Stefan uses iron as a form of confidence in the power he has to oppress and fight Maleficent. This data can be found in minutes 00:55:50 – 00:56:40. Iron is a weakness for Maleficent, who is a fairy, because it can burn and weaken the strength of fairies. He employed iron workers to work day and night to make weapons and traps in the palace, which he would use to trap and then kill Maleficent.

c) Wings

Aurora: Do all the Fairy people have wings?

Maleficent: Most do.

Aurora: Then why don't you? All the other fairies fly.

Maleficent: I had wings once. They were stolen from me. That's all I wish to say about it.

Aurora: What color were they? Were they big?

Maleficent: So big they dragged behind me when I walked. And they were strong. They could carry me above the clouds and into the headwinds. And they never faltered, not even once. I could trust them.

The symbolism in the Maleficent movie (2014) is Maleficent's wings. Wings are a symbol of freedom and autonomy. The wings that Maleficent has given her the power to become "protector of the Moors." This data can be found in minutes 00:54:35 – 00:55:25. From the data above, Maleficent, who lost her wings, experienced limitations in the freedom and power she once possessed. Stefan betrayed Maleficent by cutting her wings, violating her bodily autonomy, and constraining her power and freedom. For Maleficent, this betrayal led to a loss of security and identity, causing her transformation from the "Protector of the Moors" to a tyrant.

2) Diction

The diction used in the Maleficent film (2014) is divided into several parts, namely:

a) Winged Elf

Maleficent: Go no further!

King Henry: A king does not take orders from a winged elf.

Maleficent: You are no king to me.

From the data above, King Henry referred to Maleficent as a winged elf to ridicule her appearance, characterized by large wings and an unusual demeanor in the eyes of humans. This insult was exacerbated by the soldiers laughing in agreement with King Henry's disparaging remarks. This data can be found in minutes 00:10:40 – 00:11:00.

b) A silly peasant girl

Soldier 1: Is that her? Is that Maleficent?

Soldier 2: I don't know.

Soldier 1: No, it's just a silly peasant girl.

From the data above, two soldiers who were on guard in front of the Moors' thorny wall saw a woman with a long robe covering her face and hair around the Moors' wall. Seeing the woman's shabby appearance, they mocked her for looking like a beggar. This data can be found in minutes 00:44:00 – 00:44:25.

c) A fairy creature without a wing

Stefan: How does it feel? To be a fairy creature without wings in a world where you don't belong?

From the data above, Stefan ridiculed Maleficent's helpless condition without the wings that he had previously cut off. This seems to show that Stefan's position is superior to that of Maleficent, who is helpless and trapped in Stefan's palace without being able to put up a fight against Stefan and his soldiers. This data can be found in minutes 01:22:00 – 01:22:25.

Reason of Addressing Gender Oppression in Maleficent Movie (2014) by Robert Stromberg

The reason why the theme of gender oppression is present in the film *Maleficent* (2014) by Robert Stromberg is the personal experience of the story's author, Linda Woolverton.

1. Personal experience

Linda Woolverton, the scriptwriter for the film *Maleficent* (2014), experienced gender oppression in her career as a Disney story writer. Gender oppression can occur for women in various settings, with the workplace being a common environment where it is prevalent, especially in male-dominated fields. From the Austin Film Festival YouTube channel (2019), during an interview at this film festival, Linda shared her personal experience of facing gender oppression when she initially began working at Disney. As a female scriptwriter in an environment dominated by men, she encountered challenges in obtaining opportunities and trust for significant work projects. Linda felt overlooked by her male superiors, and she had to navigate the struggle alone when advocating for changes to one of Disney's stories, specifically transforming the character Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* into a more dominant female character, departing from the passive portrayal in the original narrative.

2. Changing Stereotypes of female heroines in Disney Films

The Walt Disney Company has achieved success by transforming well-known fairy tales into animated films that resonate with audiences, including stories like *Cinderella*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. These fairy tales traditionally portray women as always needing to be beautiful, passive, gentle, and generous. On the other hand, male characters in Disney stories are typically depicted as princes who save the female lead, embodying strength and wisdom. This narrative reinforces the notion of women's dependence on men.

From the Austin Film Festival YouTube channel (2018), during an interview at this film festival, Linda Woolverton expressed her desire to challenge the traditional portrayal of female characters in Disney films. She aimed to create female protagonists who were not depicted as weak and perpetual victims in the story.

From the AMC Theatres YouTube channel (2014), the director of the film *Maleficent*, Robert Stromberg, discussed the theme of women's empowerment in the movie. This theme was considered unconventional for Disney films produced before *Maleficent*. The focus on women's empowerment in *Maleficent* establishes a unique connection with young girls. Additionally, it offers the audience a chance to experience the princess spirit within the film, enhancing their immersion in the fantasy narrative and providing a temporary escape from real life.

3.2. Discussion

Based on the findings presented in the section, the researcher has offered an explanation regarding the research question and discussed it from a feminist perspective. The research results on gender oppression in the film *Maleficent* (2014) by Robert Stromberg are derived from data presented in chapters one to five. The researcher explains the research question, covering indicators of gender oppression, the depiction of gender oppression in the film *Maleficent*, and the reasons the writer and director addressed the topic of gender oppression in the film.

The first question relates to the indicators of gender oppression in the movie *Maleficent*. Researchers apply the gender manifestation theory according to Dr. Mansour Fakih (2007) to examine indicators of gender oppression in this film. According to Dr. Fakih, there are five gender manifestations: gender and violence, gender and subordination, gender and marginalization, gender and stereotypes, and gender and double-job. Out of these five, the researcher found three indicators demonstrate gender oppression: gender and violence, gender and subordination, and gender and stereotypes.

The results of this research are examined using the theory employed by the researchers, namely liberal feminist theory. Feminism is a movement undertaken by women to achieve the same rights as men (Mandell, 1995). Due to the unfair treatment of women in society, women frequently experience gender oppression. Men have greater opportunities and prestige in society, while women are often tied to household work (Sarieddine, 2018). In feminist theory, three principles are applied by the researchers in this study.

The first principle is the position of women. In the *Maleficent* film, the position of women in society is still lower than that of men, which causes women to become subordinate to that of men, resulting in women experiencing oppression and being subjugated by men. The oppression that occurs is caused because of the position of women, who are lower to men. It becomes a form of manifestation of gender oppression, which causes women to experience violence both physically and psychologically (Fakih, 2007). The assumption that men hold more power than women causes a high number of violent actions towards women. The more dominant group commits violence against the oppressed group, which results in the oppressed group experiencing suffering because of the violence they receive (Kristami et al., 2022). In scene 00:16:28–00:19:56 *Maleficent* experienced violence and betrayal committed by Stefan through poisoning, which led to her losing her wings.

The second principle related to this research is rights. Women still face difficulties in fighting for their rights to be equal to men. This happens because of gender manifestation, which sees women as subordinate to men. Women are considered not to have important rights because they are still perceived as being below the rights obtained by men. According to liberal feminist theory, men and women have the same rights in all matters. The rights obtained by women cannot be influenced or taken away by men, and vice versa. Women's rights are no less sacred than men's rights (Azizah & Fitri, 2019). In the scene from 00:09:35 to 00:11:15, *Maleficent*, who holds rights as the leader and protector of the Moors due to

being a native inhabitant with the strongest power, must confront threats and power struggles from King Henry, the king of the human kingdom. King Henry and his troops attempt to seize control of the Moors kingdom from Maleficent out of greed. The rights that Maleficent should have as the leader and guardian of the Moors are almost taken over by other parties.

The third principle related to the research is the role of women. Traditional roles persist for women in films, with women predominantly engaged in domestic work. This is because gender manifestations provide labels or stereotypes that women are more involved in domestic work than men. One type of stereotype, originating from a gender perspective, causes injustice to one gender, usually experienced by women due to the labels given to them. Many women are given roles as adults, either as wives or mothers. Therefore, women are often trapped in domestic work because it is considered their role (Mustikawati et al., 2022). This is evident in the film, where female characters serve as servants responsible for tasks such as washing and sewing clothes, while men hold jobs as officials, captains, and soldiers. The scope of work held by men is broader and more varied than that of women, who are mostly assigned domestic tasks in the palace. In the workplace, women experience greater losses than men (Qianyi, 2022). Therefore, it can be concluded that the three feminist principles—positions, rights, and roles—are compatible with the film *Maleficent* (2014).

The second question concerns the depiction of gender oppression in the film. The depiction of gender oppression in films is examined through film elements according to Robert McKee (1997). In his theory, McKee explains the seven elements of a film: character, setting, plot, style, diction, conflict, and theme. Researchers identified three ways in which gender oppression is depicted in *Maleficent*: through characters, events/plot, and stylistic elements including symbolism and diction.

Researchers identified two types of characters depicting gender oppression: oppressing characters and oppressed characters. In this film, two oppressing characters were identified. In the scene from 00:14:00 to 00:15:12, King Henry is portrayed as an oppressing character who seeks to kill Maleficent through various means in order to control the Moors kingdom and seek revenge against her. Then, in the scene from 00:19:00 to 00:19:57, Stefan is depicted as an oppressing character for committing violence against Maleficent by cutting off her wings, which he offers to King Henry to secure his position as the next king.

Researchers identified one oppressed character in this film: Maleficent. They gathered two instances illustrating Maleficent as an oppressed character experiencing gender oppression. In the scene from 00:09:13 to 00:09:24, Maleficent, who harbors sincere feelings and great trust in Stefan, continues to await Stefan's arrival on the Moors. However, Stefan never communicates with Maleficent, leaving her waiting in vain. Then, in the scene from 00:15:38 to 00:16:30, Stefan approaches Maleficent and persuades her to believe his deceitful lies. Despite Maleficent's enduring love and trust in Stefan, she easily accepts his return to the Moors. However, Stefan manipulates Maleficent's unwavering love and trust for his own gain, aiming to become king and fulfill his ambitions.

The depiction of gender oppression can also be seen through the events/plots that occur in the film. Researchers found three data that illustrate gender oppression in the Maleficent film through events/plots, namely: Stefan cuts Maleficent wings, Stefan orders his soldiers to hunt down Maleficent, and Stefan traps and surrounds Maleficent. On Stefan cut Maleficent wings the researcher found one data related to this finding. In data 10, Stefan is seen cutting off Maleficent's wings after poisoning Maleficent with sleeping pills. Researchers obtained data on Stefan orders his soldiers to hunt down Maleficent which is found in scene 00:33:39 – 00:34:09. Lastly, there is data on Stefan traps and surrounds Maleficent in the scene 01:20:12 – 01:21:50, where in this data Maleficent is trapped by Stefan who lures Maleficent into the palace which is then surrounded by many of Stefan's armed soldiers. iron which is Maleficent's weakness.

Style is one of the film elements researchers used to analyze forms of gender oppression in the film Maleficent. This element is categorized into two types: symbolism and diction. Researchers examined the symbolism in the film to understand how various symbolic elements contribute to conveying the theme of gender oppression. Three symbols were identified: magic, iron, and wings. In addition to symbolism, researchers also analyzed the use of diction in the film to depict gender oppression experienced by female characters. The diction observed in the film includes three types: 'winged elf,' 'silly peasant girl,' and 'fairy creature without wings.'

The discussion of the last question explores why the topic of gender oppression is addressed in the film Maleficent (2014). Linda Woolverton, the scriptwriter of the story, experienced gender oppression in her work environment, specifically at the Walt Disney Company, which she discussed in an interview on the YouTube channel Austin Film Festival (2019). Additionally, in another interview on the same channel (2018), Linda aimed to change the stereotypical portrayal of women in Disney films. Robert Stromberg, the director of the film, also affirmed the presence of elements of female empowerment in this production during an interview with the AMC Theaters YouTube channel (2014).

Based on previous research, this research supports prior research. This research supports previous research because it supports the theories used in previous research. There are differences in the topics raised in previous research. In this research, there are two previous studies with different topics, namely the first research from Ramadani et al. (2021) with research discussing the topic of feminist analysis in the film Maleficent Movie by Robert Stromberg. The second research is from Wendranirsa (2014), who conducted research on magic as a form of oppression for women in the film Maleficent (2014). This research supports and complements the topics of previous research using a similar theory, namely feminist theory. Previous research also used the film Maleficent (2014) by Robert Stromberg as a research object.

4. CLOSING

Based on the research results presented in the previous chapter, the researcher successfully drew conclusions regarding three research questions in this study. First, the researchers identified indicators of gender oppression from the initial question. The three indicators derived from the research object are gender and violence, gender and subordinate, lastly gender and stereotype.

Second, the researcher outlined how gender oppression is portrayed in the research object. Initially, gender oppression is depicted through characters—both those who oppress and those who are oppressed. Subsequently, through events or plots, the researcher described actions that illustrate the gender oppression experienced by the characters. Lastly, the style of the Maleficent film, showcasing gender oppression through symbolism and diction, was examined.

Third, the study explored the reasons behind raising the topic of gender oppression in the film Maleficent (2014) by Robert Stromberg. Linda Woolverton, the screenwriter for the film, has personal experience with gender oppression in her work environment, aiming to demonstrate that women can compete with men in the production of films within major companies like Walt Disney. Additionally, Linda Woolverton hopes to alter the audience's perspective on Disney movie heroines, traditionally dominated by passive characters always subordinate to men. Robert Stromberg, the director of the film Maleficent, also strives to incorporate a woman empowerment aspect in the film, aspiring to inspire young audiences, especially women, to immerse themselves in the film and momentarily escape from the real world.

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