

## **The Obstacle of Female Heroism in Robert D. San Souci's *Mulan* (Movie) as a Feminism Study**

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### **Abstract**

This writer's thesis discusses one of the elements of feminism, namely radical feminism in the Disney movie, *Mulan* employing Kate Millett's Theory, *Sexual Politics* (1970). This study uses a qualitative study as a reference in the preparation of research. Data collection was taken by watching movies, identifying data, and classifying data. The analysis is based on the statement of the problem. They are how Mulan struggled to prove that a woman is also able to become a hero and what the factors that make Mulan unable to be a proud as a daughter in her family. Sexual politics is a belief that struggles for women to have masculine and feminine behaviors by fighting for gender equality so that actually women also need to do men's roles. On the other hand, when women are only seen as weak figures, they are considered only capable of serving their husbands and caring for children, it is also considered that good women are only able to do. Besides that, Mulan wants to change the mindset of society if women can also do men's jobs. Women are able to fight if they have determination and courage. The purpose of the writer in writing this study is that readers who are currently studying feminism get a better idea of the history of feminism especially radical feminism, and the writer also wants to invite readers to fight and struggle for women's rights in a good way, because society needs to understand equality, namely women's rights such as women's empowerment, etc.

Keyword : *Feminism, Radical Feminism, Patriarchy, Sexual Politic*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Movie is a media that can educate and enable people to increase their understanding of a particular subject through visual media. Movie is a media that has significant influence in providing information and as a tool to convey messages to a person or audience. And also by using film, people can educate from moral values, education, society, culture, and others. *Mulan* shows that the function of feminism is only to the strong masculinity construction in society. If we only take a glance, then it seems that man and woman already have an equal position and role. However, it turns out that the winning of feminism happened because of the masculinity construction. In other words, masculinity has an important role in the success that Mulan got in the end. Therefore, feminism is not really an easy thing to get and a strong patriarchy construction will not be easily broken.

Based on the explanation from the background, then the problem statements in this study are:

1. How did Mulan's struggle prove that a woman is also able to become a hero in

*Disney's Mulan movie?*

2. Why did Mulan decide to disguise herself as a man?

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This thesis used "Sexual Politics" by radical feminist theorists Kate Millett. The reason the writer used it is, because Millett has the same aim with Mulan, that is to abolish male control. Researched from the idea of libertarian radical feminism, sex and gender are two different things, which cannot be immediately linked to one another. Selden (Ratna, 2012: 184) states that "there must be a distinction between female and male (as aspects of biological differences, the nature) and Masculine and feminine (as aspects of difference psychological and cultural)". This statement implies that femininity and masculinity are forms of cultural construction, which are not natural.

Through her theory, "sexual politics" Kate Millet (one of the radical libertarian feminists) this shows how the position of men is more dominant than women in patriarchal society. The word 'politic' refers to a structured power relationship that shows one group controls another group, while 'sexual' refers to the appointment supremacy of men (who are sex) against women, family, and society (Millet, 1970).

Basically, radical feminism strongly condemns the existence of a patriarchal system. Kate Millet argues that the root of pressure on women buried in the patriarchal sex or gender system.

Patriarchal ideology is exaggerating biological differences between women and men, make that provision men always have a dominant role and women are subordinate.

Radical feminism has a determined effort to destroy the sex or gender system the basic source of women's emphasis and to create a new society where women and men are equal in all things.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative descriptive study as a reference in the preparation of research. Data collection is taken in several ways such as watching movies, identifying data, classifying data, and classifying data.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Mulan wanted to replace her father as a soldier**

Mulan really wanted to replace her father who was injured. Then Mulan tried talk to Chi Fu, he is the royal advisor. Mulan asked to be allowed to replace her father, Fa Zhou.

#### **1.1 When women are forced to obey the orders of men**



Figure 1 : When Mulan interrupts Chi Fu. Old man in blue robes. He is the royal advisor.

The above picture showed a scene when Chi Fu came to the village to give announcements to all residents, he is a member of the consul and adviser to the Emperor who was also an adviser to Li Shang who was reluctant to allow the group of soldiers to join the war against the Huns.

Mulan really wanted to replace her father who was injured. Then Mulan tried talk to Chi Fu, he is the royal advisor. Mulan asked to be allowed to replace her father, Fa Zhou. With the aim of obtaining permission, Mulan was considered impolite. Because what Mulan has done is very contrary to the feminine character. The word “masculine” is mentioned, the first thing that will come out of everyone's mind is characteristic of a man with a handsome face, a strong body, and brave. Different the word “feminine” is mentioned, has characteristics that are beautiful and charming woman.

### 1.2 Mulan succeeded in performing male roles.



Figure 2: Mulan introduces herself as Ping.

The above picture showed a scene when Mulan was close to the fighting camp she was terrified if anyone suspected that she was a woman, and she introduces herself as Ping. So that before entering the fighting camp, she practiced speaking, walking and acting like a man.



Figure 3 : Mulan doing activities usually carried out by men.

The above picture showed a scene when Mulan joined training with all member to be a soldier. In undergoing a long war training process, Mulan is finally able to do activities that are usually done by men.



Figure 5 :Her bravery and her good strategy are succesful in defeatingtheir enemies.

From the scenes above proves that with persistent, strong and unyielding effort, she can definitely do anything. Mulan is able to follow movements like other men, Mulan shows that everyone can do anything if they have the intention and a strong will, whether they are male or female.

Mulan has a skill to think like a man, her velocity how to think and organize the right strategy proves that she got quality of a man. Then Mulan is successful in saving the country by shooting the last cannon to the top of the mountain that gives impact to the snow and their enemies killed by the snow slide.

Disguised as a man to replace his father's role as a soldier was something that was prohibited at that time, because being a soldier and doing war was the role of a man. However, in the development of human life, the gender differences have shifted their meaning by society. Society positions women as gentle people, acting as housewives who raise their children, being good servants to their husbands, starting to serve food, drink and in bed.



Figure 6 :Mulan helps Li Shang

The scene shows if men can also be weak while women can be strong. Men always play a role as a savior and protector for female figures. But this time Mulan as a woman who saved Li Shang even though she still is disguised as a man.

### 1.3 Mulan dared to take risk



Figure 7 :Mulan's identity was exposed by Li Shang

After her identity as a woman was exposed, she was allowed to remain living as payment for saving Li Shang. But she still has a sense of responsibility to continue with their intention to save the country.

Mulan show if she is someone who has responsibility, when she refuses to go home after his identity has been revealed.



Figure 8 :Mulan ignored by Shang and also nobody listen to her

Mulan quickly caught up with the soldiers and told her that the Huns were still alive but no one believed it.

### 1.4 Mulan is able to become a leader with a plan.



Figure 9 :Mulan on climbed the pillars of the emperor's palace

It turned out that Mulan's words were proven, the emperor was held hostage by the Huns. Mulan, who had other ideas, carried out her action. But apparently she wanted to go

in the opposite direction and say that she has to do something because the country is in danger. Mulan's actions show that she wants to finish what she started even though she is now a woman again.

Even though her identity as a woman has been revealed, her friends, including Li Shang, still want to be friends with her. When the emperor is kidnapped by the enemy, Mulan devised a plan which was also assisted by the team.

Mulan, her team, and Li Shang are on the pillars of the emperor's palace using the cloth. Here it is seen that Mulan's position is in the top position compared to the rest and shows that she makes plans as well as being the leader of the plan.

### **1.5 Results of Mulan's Efforts to do the change and get recognition for their accomplishments.**



Figure 10 : Mulan get recognition for their accomplishments

Mulan is truly considered a Chinese hero. All the people in the palace yard even the emperor herself paid tribute to Mulan who had saved China. Of course, from what Mulan has done, she gets deep happiness that goes beyond the material rewards and rewards she gets.



Figure 11 : Mulan presented his father with the palace medal as a gift.

The next day, Mulan returned to her family's house. She immediately presented his father with the palace medal as a gift and also as proof that he too could give honor to her family. However, her father said that the honor he was proud of was having Mulan as his daughter. Mulan show that women can have a place or opportunity in the public sphere with hard struggle.

## **2. Factors that make Mulan unable to be a proud as a daughter in herfamily.**

Woman should honor their families by being beautiful, warm, graceful, elegant, calm, polite and obedient, when they grow up they can be matched with a respectable man. Not by taking up arms at war.

### **2.1 Mulan had different thought with the society about women's attitude or behavior to be a bride**



Figure12 : Mulan must wear a beautiful clothes

This scene also shows how a woman is must look attractive in front of men by wearing clothes that are beautiful and has a slender body, which means that there is a relationship between the object that is highlighted and the environment around it. Therefore, most women only do activities at home or in the private things because as if one of the functions of its existence is to become decoration that men are proud of.

### **2.2 The most important thing for women is to have a husband and marriage**



Figure 13: Mulan Practices to be a good bride

Feminism was created as a result of the patriarchy system which ignored women's rights to be considered equal with men.



Figure 14 :Mulan is tested, whether she can pour tea well or not.

The scenes above shows that society believes that women must have a good, calm attitude and obey. To fulfill their duty as good wives they must show a sense of belonging dignity like serving husbands and future in-laws. A good woman is shown as being focused In domestic work, obeying men, beautiful, and others.

### 2.3 Mulan's efforts to do change



Figure 15 :Mulan seeing her reflection Figure 16 : Mulan cuts her hair

Mulan knew that his identity was exposed the punishment was death penalty, she still wants to do what he thinks is right. Related with radical feminism, because Mulan looks firmly at the relationship or power relation between men and women, the source of the problem is the patriarchal ideology. There is a view that oppression of women occurs as a result of a patriarchal system. Women's bodies are the main object of oppression by male power.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion is based on the findings. *Mulan* movie describes the criteria for the ideal woman, it confirms the actual message for women. It does show some feminist qualities, but it also retains the notion of patriarchy. Almost all of the ideal characteristics describe the physical qualities of women. Thus, this gives a message that anyone can be a feminist, but still cannot leave the norms of patriarchy that are already alive.

*Mulan* movie proves that the function of feminism is only for the construction of masculinity in society. At first glance, the position and roles of women and men are not equal. However, the power of feminism turns out to be due to the construction of masculinity. The point is that masculinity has an important role behind the success that Mulan has in the end. Therefore, the crisis of feminism is easy to get and also a strong



patriarchal construction will not be easily broken. On the other side, in this movie empowering women. This shows that actually women can also have an important role in society.

Mulan's efforts to make changes, she used various ways to get a place in the public sphere. The ways that she does are certainly contrary to the gender roles that she should do. The results of her efforts to make changes, she managed to get recognition from many people. This effort she did for the sake of her family and also for herself, which in the end she was able to do something useful in the public sphere.

## SUGGESTION

Here the writer hopes that later the audience can understand the meaning of the film to be conveyed. So that through this research, it can be applied in everyday life. Besides that, writer hopes that in the future there will be more research on women's struggles especially gender equality in the past and in the present era. For further research interested in conducting research with the same theme and study. In fact, this research is far from perfect. In this case there are still parts of the discussion in this thesis that can be investigated further and more deeply.

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