AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN STRUGGLE IN EQUALITY IN WONDER WOMAN 1984 BY PATTY JENKINS

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Abstract

This research is about a woman who becomes a superhero. The film is titled Wonder Woman 1984 directed by Patty Jenkins. This study will cover two subjects that are still directly tied to the film, with two research questions, i.e. (1) How Kate Millet's theory was depicted when Diana Prince gained equality rights in the movie Wonder Woman 1984 by Patty Jenkins? (2) What factors causing Barbara Minerva (the antagonist) rebel against other people perceived from gender equality in the movie Wonder Woman 1984 by Patty Jenkins? This research will also be founded on Kate Millett's philosophy of feminism. Therefore, the researcher uses the method by watching the movie and close reading its script, then identifying the data based on the research question, analyzing by applying Kate Millet's feminism theory, and last but not least, interpreting the literature object. After analyzing the data, it can be concluded that Diana Prince is the main character who reflects the feminist side the most. Even though she is a woman, she is not afraid to do the dangerous things that men usually do. In this film, Diana Prince gets motivation from the people around her to be herself. In addition, Diana Prince also wants to have a good influence on the people around him by helping the weak and upholding justice. Also, Barbara Minerva was initially thought of as someone who was treated unfairly, not treated well, not considered by those around her. But one day she gets the power from Dreamstone to become like Diana Prince. This study suggest future researchers can explore further about the social conditions and the political economy system in this film.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Feminism, Wonder Woman 1984 by Patty Jenkins

INTRODUCTION

Feminism has been gaining attention in this digital era in terms of gender equality in employment, protection rights, freedom of expression in the world of political economy, racial equality, and social equality in society. Basically women do not have equal rights with men in society where women are placed far below the level of men; not appreciated because of principle of society's mindset towards women who are weak and incompetent, women are easy to be manipulated and harassed, women are not comparable to men where they do not have fundamental power in the political and economic sphere, and society considers women to be equal to housemaids who require them only to cook and do household chores, for nothing other than studying or attending school like normal school students (Ruxton, 2004).

In this digital era, we could take some examples of the rise of feminism in movies, such as *Wonder Woman 1984* by Patty Jenkins (2020) is the second movie from the first *Wonder Woman (2017)* where Diana Prince living in the 1980s hiding from the world by working in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC curating ancient artifacts that later identified as the Dreamstone containing a Latin inscription claiming to grant the holder one wish.

Wonder Woman is a superheroine who appears in DC Comics' American comic books. The character initially debuted in All Star Comics #8 on October 21, 1941, and her first appearance in Sensation Comics #1 in January 1942, making her a founding member of the Justice League. Since then, DC Comics has published the Wonder Woman series practically continuously. Princess Diana of Themyscira is her official title in her country, the Island Nation of Themyscira. She sometimes uses her civilian alias Diana Prince to fit into society outside of her homeland.

Wonder Woman 1984 by Patty Jenkins (2020) was equal parts muscle and heart, with perfect tonal balance between engrossing action and soft humor, stunning spectacle and endearing romance. The extraordinarily captivating Gal Gadot, who was more than simply a stunning and statuesque bombshell, was at the center of it all. She exuded goodness, brightness, and optimism in a contagious way, inspiring you to believe in the power of superheroes beyond simple clichés about doing the right thing and safeguarding humanity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to most of the history of women in Europe, women were only allowed to take care of all household affairs, while public affairs and other affairs related to external matters were left entirely to men. In fact, it is not uncommon to find cases where women are not allowed to own their own property, are not allowed to study or are not even allowed to participate in other social events outside the house (Burkett & Brunell, 2021). Therefore, Women at the period formed a movement to oppose the existing stigma and rules in order to obtain their full rights to be considered as regular human beings in general. This movement is called as feminism.

Feminism is defined as a belief in the political, industrial, and gender equality of the sexes, manifested particularly such as through active campaign in support of women and gender equality (Ritzer & Ryan, 2010). In ideology, the feminist movement is divided into three phases, the first of which focuses on expanding opportunities for women through suffrage; the second wave sought to expand women's equality by relying on prior feminist successes; and the third wave seeks to evaluate, reclaim, and reframe conceptions about women, gender, attractiveness, sexuality, femininity, and masculinity, among many other issues.

1. Second-wave of Feminism

The Second Wave of Feminism is typically defined as the feminism period from the 1960s to the late 1980s. It was a reaction to women returning to their responsibilities as housewives and mothers following the conclusion of World War II. Men who had to leave the workforce to join the armed forces had returned, and women were sacked and replaced by men (Ruxton, 2004). This movement began in the United States of America and subsequently expanded to other Western countries. While the First Wave was primarily concerned with the suffragette fight for the right to vote, the Second Wave was more concerned with both public and private inequalities (Burkett & Brunell, 2021).

Rape, woman's choice, domestic abuse, and workplace safety were all highlighted within the movement, and there was considerable attempt to change popular culture's negative and inferior image of women to a more positive and realistic one (Thompson, 2017). Women developed their own popular culture, which spread through feminist cinema, music, books, and other places as possible as they can do.

2. Equality Rights

In her book, Sexual Politics (1970), Kate Millett explains how at that time women were forced to accept all the actions of men which were included in patriarchal acts such as accepting dominated entirely by men and accepting patriarchal values to be applied in daily life as if it were something natural and usual. Kate Millett examined the power of patriarchy at the time and came to the conclusion that men have power over women, and this dominance is distributed as a living value and social norms in society at large. After reflecting on this fact, Kate Millett wrote Sexual Politics in order to spread her theory on gender equality to the wider world so that this intellectual knowledge can be used as a lesson for women everywhere; thus, the theory of gender equality is known as radical feminism, which is considered to be radical feminism included in political theory and movement (Millett & Kaplan, 2014).

Gender equality is a principle that maintains that men and women must be treated equally and without discrimination. Gender equality is also an aim of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations (Draft Committee, 1948).

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative method to collect data in the form of statements, conversations or dialogues, scenes, and any other non-numerical data. By evaluating data, this method explores events, actions, and relationships with those around. The data for this study came from Patty Jenkins' *Wonder Woman 1984* film, which was read and classed based on sociological features before being analyzed using Kate Millett's feminism theory.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will cover two topics: the gender equality that emanates from Diana Prince's character and the circumstances that turn Barbara Minerva against the people around her. All *Wonder Woman 1984*-related topics will be examined in light of Kate Millett's gender equality theory.

1. Diana Prince Gained Equality Rights in the Movie Wonder Woman 1984

The Amazons are shown racing in the opening sequence of *Wonder Woman 1984* by Patty Jenkins. Diana Prince used an ingenious strategy to avoid being left behind by the other contestants. However, Diana Prince was not permitted to fire an arrow through the final barrier. There are some points according to how Diana gained equality rights in the movie. First point is Diana got motivated from other people, second point is She wants to influence other people in becoming super hero and the last point is because she saw Asteria sacrifices herself for Themyscira.

1.1 Getting Motivation from Other people

Diana Prince is not an instant super hero. She gained her power by learning from the elder since she was a child. She is very brave enough to learn about anything especially in self-defense.

Furthermore, the scene in the movie *Wonder Woman 1984* also begins to show how Diana Prince gets affirmation after getting her failure in the match.

Hippolyta : Look to the Golden Warrior Asteria. She did not become a legend out of haste. She did it through true acts of bravery: like patience, diligence, and the courage to face the truth.

In this case, Asteria becomes a legend through her true acts of bravery until the point she has the courage to face the truth. During the second wave of feminism, affirmations and education were given to women so that they could fight and dare to speak up. Here it is seen that women in their time were motivated to face reality, to have courage, and to fight for their rights. Similarly, Diana Prince receives motivation to be like Golden Warrior Asteria someday and strength to do what she is supposed to do.

Ordinary individuals do not have the strength and enormous heart of a lady who is willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of others. Only persons with strong values are capable of doing so. Furthermore, if this is done by a woman, it will be deemed pretty amazing because this type of action is typically done by men. Although Diana Prince first adored the Golden Warrior Asteria's figure, she has demonstrated that one day she will do the same thing as the Golden Warrior Asteria did before.

But being like the Golden Warrior Asteria is not an easy thing to do. Diana Prince also meets her obstacles. The following utterances demonstrate of how Diana Prince's interaction with Antiope reveals a feminist side.

Diana : But I would've won, if you didn't– Antiope : You cannot be the winner, because you are not ready to win, and there is no shame in that. Only in knowing the truth in your heart and not accepting it. No true hero is born from lies.

Based on the conversation above, it shows that women sometimes can be lost in some things, but that does not mean they have failed to be herself. Even ordinary women are sometimes ignored in the real world because of the societal construct that makes them appear that way. Diana Prince is in the same boat. Even Kate Millet, in her book *Sexual Politics*, stated that men have created authority over women, but that this power is based on a social construct rather than any natural or anatomical basis.

Diana Prince's challenge and fear is about being defeated and not being properly considered. Diana Prince despises it. Diana Prince even demonstrates a protest because she believes that she could win. Nonetheless, Diana Prince was encouraged to accept her setback and strive for self-improvement in the future so that she might continue to embrace the feminist ideas she had previously embraced. Through experiences related to the challenge and her fear, getting motivation is not only by affirmation. Diana Prince can feel motivated by people who underestimated her power.

The next utterances show about how Maxwell Lord underestimate Diana Prince.

Maxwell : Poor Diana. Why be such a hero? You could have kept your pilot and your powers, if only you'd join me. Wanna reconsider? I'm a forgiving man! You want him back? Just say the word. You can have it all! You just have to want it!

Maxwell Lord underestimate Diana Prince knowing that she could have everything even Steve Trevor who has already passed away. Maxwell knew that Diana is powerless without the love of her life. From the utterance above, it is also showing that men tend to underestimate women. Men used to think that women can do nothing without them. In fact, women can stand alone on their own feet.

Receiving treatment in which Diana Prince was declared incapable of doing the real thing, she was able to stimulate and encourage herself to prove that she actually could. Diana Prince had a similar situation when she was young, when she tried to win the match at Amazons but was stopped by Antiope, and she managed to prove that she is capable of saving the world through her acts. What Lord Maxwell does to Diana Prince would just make Diana Prince more determined to prove that what Lord Maxwell stated previously was false.

After going through several things and obstacles, Diana Prince is finally forced to let Steve Trevor go. Once Steve Trevor said to her an affirmation word:

Steve : And you only made it better. But you know what you need to do. The world needs you.

Here, Steve Trevor reassured Diana Prince once more that she is a hero the world needed. Even Steve Trevor knows if Diana Prince has the ability to save everyone from the selfishness and their egoistic thoughts on wishing something which does not worth the price because it could ruin their life. He believes that she can solve all of their problems since he considers Diana Prince to be a strong and unbeatable woman. Diana Prince's mind then opened. She tells herself once more that she could live without Steve Trevor. In the end, Diana Prince, like her initial ambition to be like Asteria, sacrificed her own happiness to save others.

1.2 Her Willing to Influence Other People

Diana Prince continues to act in saving the world as in 00:12:28 or 00:15:08. Not only that, Diana Prince also saves her office mate, Barbara Minerva, who is being sexually harassed. The following utterances demonstrate of how Diana Prince's action reveals a feminist side which refuses to remain silent when an unpleasant treatment occurs to Barbara Minerva.

Diana saving Barbara from being harassed Diana : Simple self-defense. Used his own momentum against him. I'll teach you. Honestly, it takes no power at all. Are you okay?

Diana Prince does not let the man get what he wants. She fights back even though the stranger who was bothering Barbara Minerva was a man. This shows that even a woman has the power to fight as a gender equality action should be done. Diana Prince does not stand by, watch only from afar, and let Barbara become the man's next victim for following the drunken man's hidden desires.

In the meantime, Diana Prince also teaches Barbara Minerva how to defend herself when such a crime happened next time. This is shown in her words after repelling the drunken man, "*Simple self-defense*. *Used his own momentum against him*. *I'll teach you*. *Honestly, it takes no power at all. Are you okay?*" Actions and words like this ultimately influence Barbara Minerva to be more assertive and refuse to be a weak person.

Again, Diana Prince does not give up. Yet, she managed to influence people around the world to renounced their wish by her wisdom to acknowledge about the truth. The dialogue below demonstrates Diana Prince's ability to be a role model for everyone: Diana : I've never wanted anything more. But he's gone, and that's the truth. And everything has a price, one that I'm not willing to pay. Not anymore. This world was a beautiful place just as it was, and you cannot have it all. You can only have the truth, and the truth is enough. The truth is beautiful. So, look at this world, and look at what your wish is costing it. You must be the hero. Only you can save the day. Renounce your wish if you want to save this world.

Diana : I wasn't talking to you. I was talking to everyone else. Because you're not the only one who has suffered, who wants more, who wants them back, who doesn't want to be afraid anymore or alone, or frightened, or powerless. Because you're not the only one who imagined a world where everything was different, better, finally a world where they were loved and seen and appreciated finally. But what is it costing you? Do you see the truth?

Being a role model means that Diana Prince has a strong value so that people can finally obey her words. In this case, it is also proven that Diana Prince, who in fact is a woman, is indeed capable of being a role model. Not only men can be role models, but women can also do the same thing.

Diana Prince finally understands the truth of her life and accepting the fact that Steve Trevor is gone forever. Diana Prince here also announces everyone to renounce their wishes because accepting the truth is more beautiful rather than living with lies. The resolution of the movie stars here. Diana Prince as a protagonist in *Wonder Woman 1984* movie by Patty Jenkins is finally holds her strong ending where she influences others about the truth. She actually leads them to live into a better version of reality.

1.3 How She Saw Asteria Sacrifices Herself for Themyscira

Later on, Diana mentions again about how Asteria sacrifices herself for Themyscira. The utterance below will be the evidence:

Diana : When mankind enslaved the Amazons, my mother freed us. But someone had to stay behind to hold back the tide of men so the others could escape to Themyscira. My people gave up all of their armor to make her one suit strong enough to take on the whole world, and Asteria sacrificed herself for a better day for others.

What Asteria has done for her people exemplifies feminist behavior. Asteria decides to sacrifice herself and do whatever she can to prevent the people of Themyscira

from suffering and being enslaved by other clans. As previously stated, Diana Prince considers Asteria to be a role model in her life; therefore, what Diana Prince does next is unquestionably feminist behaviors because Diana fights for the rights of the oppressed and protects the vulnerable one.

2. Factors That Set Barbara Minerva Against Other People in the Movie *Wonder Woman 1984*

In a story, of course, there will be antagonist characters that are formed to prevent the protagonist from carrying out its main mission or getting the goals he or she wants. In *Wonder Woman 1984* movie by Patty Jenkins, Barbara Minerva becomes the antagonist.

2.1 People around Barbara Minerva Treat Her Cruelly and Carelessly.

Barbara Minerva begins her performance with a scene where she walks into her workplace and has an unpleasant experience such in the utterance below:

Jake : Oh my. Barbara : Jake, hi. Can you– Jake keeps walking and leaves Barbara. Barbara : Hi. I know, walk much? The latch of my–

The scene above is a scene where people really do not consider about Barbara Minerva's presence. Even when Barbara Minerva is in trouble, because she tripped on her own heels and her piles are everywhere, people ignored her as if it does not really matter. Jake, Barbara Minerva's co-worker at the museum, actually watched as Barbara Minerva fell and dropped the files in her hands, but he only reacted "*Oh my*." and left Barbara Minerva just like that without any intention of helping her even though Barbara Minerva had asked him to help her kindly. This is sufficient to explain also how women are often not considered their presence because they are not much more important than men.

But unlike Diana Prince, people know, people talk to, and people remember Diana Prince. Somehow this makes Barbara Minerva wants to be like Diana Prince.

The urge to be like Diana Prince or the urge to be as awesome as Diana Prince is conveyed by Barbara Minerva during their dinner in this utterance below:

Barbara : Because you just seem like the kind of person whose, like, always out. Like, people are asking you to go out all the time and you live out. You're just out. Like, you never get in. You just seem like you'd be really popular. And I would know because I've never been popular.

Here it appears that Barbara Minerva showed her interest in Diana Prince by telling her about Barbara Minerva's first impression when she saw Diana Prince. Diana Prince is regarded as a popular woman who has a nice life and is admired by everyone. On the other hand, the quote above appears to illustrate how Diana Prince managed to establish an image of herself as a woman with high character and value, as opposed to Barbara, who is rarely considered by others.

Not stopping at the praise section, Barbara Minerva even compared herself to the first impression she got from Diana Prince. This is shown in the last sentence of Barbara Minerva, "*And I would know because I've never been popular*." In this case Barbara Minerva pitied herself for never being as good as Diana Prince because she was never be that popular girl. This sentence she deliberately said to attract compassion and empathy from Diana Prince.

In the dialogues below Barbara Minerva shows how she experienced sexual harassment in the form of catcalling:

Stranger: Hey there, sweetheart. You need some help?
Barbara: No, I'm fine. Thank you.
Stranger: 'Cause, uh, you know, you look as though you're having a little bit of trouble walking in those heels, huh?
Barbara: It's okay. I wear these heels all the time.
Stranger: Hey, come on. Let me walk you home.
Barbara: I'm not going home.

Stranger: Hey, I'm just trying to be nice here. Barbara: Huh? Come on. Stranger: Hey, hey. Hey, hey! Barbara: What are you doing? Stranger: Hey, hey! Barbara: Let go of me! Stranger: I'm just trying to help you! Barbara: Let go of me! Let go of me!

According to Merriam-Webster, catcalling is a condition in which a person voices their thoughts towards another person in an unpleasant context, disrespectful, and even comments with a context that leads to sexuality. In Barbara Minerva's dialogue above, it shows how Barbara Minerva becomes a victim of catcalling by strangers when she was walking alone to her house. Even though Barbara had repeatedly refused the stranger's invitation, the stranger still stood firm in his stance to take Barbara Minerva back to her home, of course with other hidden intentions. This shows how men often behave arbitrarily towards women. The stranger is trying to take advantage of Barbara Minerva by forced her over and over again, "*Hey, come on. Let me walk you home.*", "*Hey, I'm just trying to be nice here.*", "*I'm just trying to help you!*" The words he utters at the first glance would be kind, but the gesture of the half-drunk man showed that he had other intentions in helping Barbara Minerva. Here women are also always considered as weak creatures who do not have the strength to survive alone. This is shown in the quote, "Cause, uh, you know, you look as though you're having a little bit of trouble walking in those heels, huh?"

Catcalling can happen to anyone and anywhere. Things like this, even in the real world, still happen often. The perpetrator of the catcall is usually a man, and the victim is a woman. Men like to tease women who are walking alone by making derogatory comments or stating something that makes someone uncomfortable when experience it. These comments are usually related to a person's physical condition as well as sexualize them. Therefore, sometimes catcalling can be the reason someone feels traumatized. Worse, this is sometimes also followed by physical touch in restricted areas of the human body. Like the quote above, Barbara can only ask the catcaller to let her go and let her go.

2.2 Barbara Minerva Gets Help in Achieving Her Desire

Later on, Barbara finds out that she is carrying a Dreamstone that can grant all her wishes. There Barbara Minerva asked that he be like Diana Prince. Here is the evidence:

Barbara : I do know what I'd wish for. To be like Diana. Strong, sexy, cool. Special.

The quote above shows how a woman can be very attractive because she is strong, sexy, cool, and looks special. In the era of second wave feminism, women are usually seen as weak creatures because they always need men's help or are unable to do all their affairs, except for household matters, without male intervention. So, the depiction of a Diana Prince through the description by Barbara Minerva is very clear if Diana Prince is a feminist.

The researcher highlights the term strong in Barbara Minerva's request because Diana Prince has a side that not all women have, which is being strong in the sense of being strong against the injustices that Barbara Minerva has encountered. Diana Prince appears to be fearless, which makes Barbara Minerva aspire to be like her.

2.3 She Changes into Something She Desired and Gets Revenge

After Barbara Minerva's wish comes true, she becomes as strong as Diana Prince.

Barbara : She's right. It's not that hard. Yeah, I think I get it now. His body weight does do all the work. So easy. I think I could do this... all... night... long!

Barbara Minerva manages to get her new power from wishing from the Dreamstone and fight back the old man who harassed her violently before. In this situation, it can also be observed that women can be strong, frightening, and brave if they want to be. From the standpoint of feminism, what Barbara Minerva performs is brave because she dared to confront the stranger who had previously taunted her until he fainted on the ground and could not get up.

Getting something that she does not have before makes Barbara Minerva definitely feel suddenly using the opportunity as well as possible for her own benefit even though it can often harm others. Barbara Minerva will feel like wanting that power again and again because humans are never satisfied. In this case, being strong and uncontrollable can sometimes be a problem.

The explanation above is also reinforced by the words of Barbara Minerva as below:

Barbara : I don't want to be like anyone anymore. I want to be number one. An apex predator, like nothing there's ever been before.

Barbara wants to be the most powerful woman in the world and there is no human that can stop her and crushing her down. Being the number one predator means that she has full power to fight the things that get in the way of her goals. She wants to empower herself with the full right to make her invincible towards everything in this world.

The moment Barbara Minerva realizes her life has changed because she is stronger than before, far better than before (as she perceived herself to be), she vows to keep whatever she has now, even if it is going to harm others. This shows in the utterance below:

Barbara : You've always had everything, while people like me have had nothing. Well, now it's my turn. And you're not taking it from me. Ever! Diana : If it's the monkey's paw, it takes as much as it gives. Yes, you're strong, but what did you lose, Barbara? Where's your warmth, your joy, your humanity? You're attacking innocent men, Barbara. Look at yourself.

Barbara Minerva refuses to accept women status and dignity to be weak and unable to defend themselves on everything, and she prevents Diana Prince to kill Maxwell and destroy her wishes. Diana Prince, on the other hand, tries to make Barbara Minerva remember her normal self and life so that she could be safe and have her warmth back without hurting anyone, that does not mean Barbara Minerva should be lowering herself and her dignity to men and power.

Barbara Minerva is terrified with the idea of being stomped on again if she let go of it all, so she continued. Diana Prince tries to tell Barbara Minerva that she is not being herself while under the effect of the Dreamstone abilities since she lacks the warmth she typically has. All of Barbara Minerva's actions are simply to sustain the strength she possessed at the moment.

Barbara Minerva is strong in her views despite constant opposition from Diana Prince. She even becomes irritated as a result of one of Diana Prince's statements to her.

Barbara : You renounced your wish.
Diana : I had to. And so do you. Nothing good is born from lies, Barbara.
We're wasting precious time.
Barbara : Even now, patronizing me.

Barbara Minerva feels offended to what Diana Prince just said, she thinks it is Diana Prince who still underestimating her. From the feminist perspective, this behavior of Barbara Minerva shows that a woman is refusing to be considered and seen as weak by others. She does not like it when other people would go back to being mean to her, treating her as if she is never there, even harassing her. She thinks as if she could never go back to her previous version of reality, to be a weak woman. Barbara Minerva still thinks that Diana Prince is patronizing her in superiority tone when in fact she just does not want Barbara Minerva to make the wrong decision and regret it later in future.

CONCLUSION

The researcher uses the film *Wonder Woman 1984* by Patty Jenkins (2020) as the object of research by evaluating the feminist side and gender equality in it. From this research, it can be seen that Diana Prince is the main character who reflects the feminist side the most. Even though she is a woman, she is not afraid to do the dangerous things that men usually do. In this film, Diana Prince gets motivation from the people around her to be herself. In addition, Diana Prince also wants to have a good influence on the people around him by helping the weak and upholding justice. This was triggered by Diana Prince's desire to become like the Golden Warrior Asteria where Asteria sacrificed herself to save Themyscira.

The second point that concludes this research is the antagonist in *Wonder Woman 1984* by Patty Jenkins, Barbara Minerva. Barbara Minerva was initially thought of as someone who was treated unfairly, not treated well, not considered by those around her. But one day she gets the power from Dreamstone to become like Diana Prince, from there Barbara Minerva begins to lose her identity and fight Diana Prince. Just like the previously explained theory regarding the antagonist, Barbara Minerva managed to prove that she is able to prevent Diana Prince from achieving her main goal.

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