



## Belle Character and Feminism in “Beauty and the Beast 2017”

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### Abstract

"Beauty and the Beast" is a well-known romantic Disney movie that explores men and women's gender roles in society. In the movie, there is a representation of reality that is presented. It affects viewers' understanding of reality. Movies not only have a positive effect, many movies also contain representations of gender inequality. This study seeks to explain how feminism is portrayed in the 2017 film Beauty and the Beast. This study took a qualitative approach, employing Peirce's semiotics analysis method. The study's findings indicate that the feminism representation reflected in the figure of Belle is postmodern feminism, as Belle focuses more on demonstrating her existence as a woman by being herself. Belle's postmodern feminism is reflected in her intelligent personality, bravery in opposing the man's point of view, tough and brave attitude, decisive figure, and the presence of gender equity in a film.

**Keywords:** Disney movie, postmodern feminism, representation, semiotics

### Introduction,

Movie is one form of type media that plays an important role in shaping 'popular culture' which often instills certain values, including the application of certain social and political ideologies (McQuail, 2000:540). Movie is one of the main instruments that shape construction gender in society. Man and woman have been represented by mass media conform to cultural stereotypes to reproduce traditional gender roles.

The construction of reality in movie, is usually depicted through signs and symbols that store messages from the creators. The impact of movie on society can be seen from the linear relationship between movie and society. In line, movie always influence and tend to shape society based on the message behind it (Sobur, 2004: 127). The great influence of the movie, in fact, does not always have a positive impact on the message given. There are still many messages that tend to harm one part in describing a construction of reality. The construction includes the existence of gender inequality in the movie. One example of gender inequality that is often found is in the movie of the Walt Disney Company, especially Disney Princess Fairy Tales (Disney Princess). Disney princess characters are usually depicted as princesses who can't do anything without the help of their prince. The construction that is built ultimately leads to the understanding that a woman is a weak figure and always accepts her powerlessness. This is further strengthened, from (Hastari, 2012:19) who said that since it was first brought up in visual form through films, Disney Princess Fairy Tales has indeed received strong

criticism from feminists. The female characters displayed by Disney are considered to contain negative stereotypes against women and support patriarchal values.

In movie, women are often positioned as the second class gender. The female figure is always demeaned and women are never involved in decisions so that women have less access to improvements quality of life, such as access to education, economic, socio-political and other fields. The position of women is always under the position of men this is reflected that men always dominate women. Role of women often shown as a woman who is weak. Women who are often positioned as class gender these two places the female figure can only do work in the domestic area only.

Previous research on feminism, conducted by Perawati (2018). The purpose of this research are to know the kind of feminism in the Maleficent film by Robert Stomberg, factor causing the feminism, and to know the influence of feminism on the main character. The author used mimetic approach by Abrams and feminism theory by Rosemarie Putnam Tong. The result showed one kind of feminism that existed namely, ecofeminism. Factors that led to the appearance of feminism in the maleficent film, namely ecological protection factors and ending domestic violence and abuse factors.

To conducted this research, the writer uses the film Beauty and The Beast to research because of its uniqueness that is different from the previous Disney Princess movie. Especially in live action movies. Because the series of animated fairy tale films The only Disney Princess that has been made into live action so far is new Snow White and the Huntsman, Cinderella, and Maleficent (Sleeping Beauty). This research answer the research questions: what are the characteristics of Belle? and how representation of feminism shown in the movie?

### **Research Methodology,**

In this study, researchers used qualitative research. According to Creswell (2016) qualitative research is a type of research that explores and understands the meaning of a number of individuals or groups of people originating from the problem social. Qualitative research in general can be used for research about people's lives, history, behavior, concepts or phenomena, social problems, and others.

The data collected will be divided into two types data sources are: 1. Primary data is data obtained by directly from the object of research in the field based on the results of observations, namely film in Beauty and the Beast 2017. 2, Secondary data, is the data obtained indirectly from the object of research in the form of documentation and publication data which is still related to the research discussion. Such as articles, books, and relevant supporting data.

In analyzing the research data, the researcher used the method semiotic analysis by Charles Sanders Peirce. Semiotics for Peirce in the *Sundries of Semiotics* is an action, influence, or cooperation of three subjects, namely sign, object and interpretant. According to Peirce, signs are everything something that is in someone to express something else in some thing or capacity.

A sign can mean something to someone if a good relationship means it is mediated by the interpretant. Interpretant as a psychological event in the mind of the interpreter, it just has to be understood non anthropomorphic. The essence of the mark according to Peirce is its ability "represent" in some way or certain certainty. Technical analysis that used in this research is semiotics by Charles Sanders Peirce with the Triangle Meaning theory which consists of three main elements, namely: Sign, Object and Interpretant .

Based on Peirce's triangle of meaning theory, the steps of analysis carried out by researchers are:

- a. Identify the signs contained in the film scene Beauty and the Beast 2017
- b. Interpret one by one the signs that have been identified in the scenes from Film
- c. Overall meaning about some of the existing scenes in Film is then associated with representation feminism.

## **Findings and Discussion,**

### **Findings**

#### **Belle Character**

##### ***Kind***

The first thing that comes to mind after seeing Belle's character is that she is a good-looking woman. Being good-looking women, means that she brings the happiness and kindness to others. This is one of Belle's characteristics.

*Mr. Monsieur : Good Morning, Belle!*

*Belle : Good Morning, Mr. Monsieur Jean, have you lost something again?*

The quotation occurs when Belle visits the town library. She returned the greeting with a friendly smile and inquired about Mr. Monsieur's situation. Responding to greetings in a friendly manner and inquiring about conditions makes other people happy. We can tell Belle is a good girl based on what she says in the quotation above. According to the dialogue in the scene, Belle is a good girl. It is clear from her actions and the way she interacts with villagers, antic goods, and Beast that she is a good girl.

##### ***Smart***

The author discovered Belle to be a bright young lady. Personal descriptions of other characters can demonstrate this. She can read and teach others to read, and she can recall quotes from books. The first piece of evidence came from the villagers, who described her as "with a dreamy, far-off look and her nose stuck in a book." (Beauty and the Beast, Bill Condon, 00:07:10) "Now it's no surprise that her name means beauty; her looks are unrivaled...nothing she's like the rest of us." (Beauty and the Beast, Bill Condon, 00:07:48-00:08:05)

According to the dialogue scene, Belle is beautiful and smart because she is diligent in reading books, indicating that she is a smart girl. The author discovered proof that there are personal

descriptions from villagers and other characters, Belle teaches a little girl to read, and Belle's ability to remember a passage from the book.

### ***Creative and Multitasking***

Multitasking is the Another one of Belle's characterizations. Multitasking is can do more than one job or activities at the same time. Belle has a creative mind, which is evident when she is faced with a dilemma. Belle, the first piece of evidence, is surrounded by designsketches of a washing machine on a workstation. Belle positions the little barrel, then fastens a rope to a leather strap, shaves chips off a slab of soap, collects the soap chips in a small sack, and hurries out.

The little girl asked Belle-

*Little girl : what is she doing?*

*Belle : Laundry*

It happened while Belle was reading a book and doing laundry in town. With her washing machine, Belle can do two activities at once when washing clothes and doing her hobby.

### ***Brave***

The author sees that one of Belle's characteristics is a brave girl. Brave means having high self-confidence and not being afraid to face dangers and difficulties. Belle is a brave girl, and it can be proven from her actions and dialogues. Some of the dialogues are as follows:

*Belle: Philippe...what happened? Where is papa? take me to him!*

This incident occurred when Maurice's horse (Philippe) came to Belle's house without Maurice being ridden. After that, Belle went to save her father by riding a horse that came through the icy forest. Belle kept running until she arrived at the cursed castle. Belle dismounted from Philippe and took the wood, then bravely walked to the castle. he dared to walk Alone in a strange place. even though it was a very scary place. This cursed castle looks haunted. Belle was not afraid and still wanted to continue. Without hesitation, he took the lamp (Lumiere) and ran up the stairs after hearing his father cough.

### ***Assertive***

Assertive means having a strong stance that is difficult to shake. He will choose boundaries and know what is right for him. Below are three pieces of evidence scenes that show Belle to be a resolute character. The proof was when Belle was washing and teaching little girls to read, but the principal didn't like it and the villagers got angry and spilled Belle's laundry on the ground. Then Le Fou told Gaston to be Belle's hero and he followed Belle to her house.

*Gaston : Belle! I heard you had trouble with the headmaster! He never liked me either.*

*Belle : All I wanted was to teach a child to read*

*Gaston : The only children you should concern yourself with will be...your own.*

*Belle : I'm...not ready to have children.*

*Gaston : Oh...Belle. Do you know what happens to spinsters in this village after their father dies? They beg for scraps, like poor Agathe. This is our world belle. For simple folk like us, it doesn't get better.*

*Belle : I want to be a farm girl. But I'm not simple. And I'm never going to marry you, Gaston. I'm sorry.*

According to the conversation, Gaston approached Belle after learning that he had problems with the principal and convinced her to marry him. Gaston had done many things to get Belle, but Belle firmly rejected Gaston and insisted, "I will never marry you, Gaston."

## **Discussion**

### **Feminism in Beauty and the Beast 2017**

As explained in conceptual framework, Cavallaro (2007) explain that the representation is artificial construction of reality in the form of images as well as visual images that become initial thoughts in understanding a reality. Film are images representation of reality from codes, conventions, and certain ideologies and cultures. In the 2017 film *Beauty and the Beast*, the reality of women's struggle changing gender roles in construction community culture is represented by figures Belle.

*Beauty and the Beast*, is a films that emerged during feminism third wave as negotiation and Disney princess character revamp. Belle described as a woman who independent, intelligent, decisive, tough and brave, understand the situation, including determine attitude towards things around, can solve the problem in their own way, and can make a choice to live his life. According to the original idea, *Beauty and the Beast 2017* still take themes, backgrounds and thoughts that the same as the era.

Society still views women as the figure of the other (the marginalized) and trapped in patriarchal oppression. However, in the latest version, responding to the condition Belle described as a tougher than before. Spirit feminism reflected in this film no longer an issue of equality gender in society, but in how girls can show his existence by being himself alone. This form of feminism, according to with the concept of postmodern feminism that allows women fight for their rights alone.

The main point of women's liberation of gender inequality starts from herself. In the condition of society which still marginalizes the role female, Belle is present as a figure who dare to fight cultural construction the. The uniqueness of reading book, describing that he is no longer trapped in traditional assumptions that women should always be in the domestic sphere. Belle is not anymore passive princess who can't do anything to change her life.

Postmodern feminism argues, to show its existence women can be present in his mind alone to fight against construction constraints which exists. In the movie *Beauty and the Beast 2017*, Belle's resistance to thought phallogocentric can be seen from her demeanor not easily melted by sweet words and gifts, do not accept the notion that women should always be prosecuted like what men want, including not accept the superficial understanding that women have to get married to get a safe position in society.

In the movie *Beauty and the Beast 2017*, representation Belle's character postmodern feminism consistently shown as a person who tough, brave, and dare to take decision. Even though the risk is high, he still determined to save his father. However, behind her tough attitude Belle has a side gentle to his father. He dared to take risk of sacrificing herself for his father free from the Beast palace. That is, Belle is not still waiting to be saved, however can also save. This matter reflects

women to perform a heroic act, which is usually only done by men. on the other hand, the 2017 film *Beauty and the Beast* is already show equality gender.

Gender equality is getting stronger, because some scenes show Belle get a chance to voice her opinion, including teaching the Beast some things he didn't know. Representation of postmodern feminism seen in this aspect. Girls and boys are different, but women only want rights be as free as men and can be self.

Gender equality in this film *Beauty and the Beast* implies that women have got opportunity to get the right same because of its existence. Attitude feminine women are no longer considered as the cause of the difference. Weak attitude gentle, affectionate, polite manner, is Belle's self-embodiment who shown to Beast. Based on 'text' or verbal symbols as products of signs, the relationship of meaning and existing message in the film, also depicted by the character Belle as a brave figure express his feelings formerly. In this case, women have dare to express herself in a declaration of love. Leadership attitude is not a hindrance again, but as destroyer of women's existence.

### **Conclusion and Suggestion,**

After reviewing the characterization of Belle in the film *Beauty and the Beast* and analyzing the feminism in the film, the writer concludes:

Belle's characterization based on what is described in *Beauty and Beast 2017* movie as a good girl, brave, smart, multitasking and creative, also assertive. The representation of feminism reflected in Belle is feminism postmodern. This is because when this film was made, the spirit of feminism that growing is on the wave third, where is postmodern feminism develop. Representation of feminism postmodern can be seen from the figure of Belle who no longer mind that itself is different from the cultural construction society, but more on how to show his existence by being herself.

Representation of feminism postmodern is also reflected in Belle's attitude who dared to go against the gaze of men. Girls can attend with her own thoughts to show its existence. Belle doesn't give up easily to sweet words and gifts, no accept the notion that women should always demanded as men want, including not accepting understanding shallow that women should get married to get a safe position in public. Belle stays firm on stance and not easily subject to men and dare to argue to voice her opinion.

Belle's character as a representation consistent postmodern feminism shown as a strong character, brave, and dare to take decision. Belle is no longer waiting for saved, but also can save. That means, women too can perform the usual heroic actions only done by men.

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