

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Mulan is a film directed by Niko Caro and produced by Disney (Caro, 2020). The 2020 version is a film remade from the 1998 animated one (Qingli & Ying, 2020). *Mulan's 2020* version is different from *Mulan the Animation* because this film not only presents Mulan as a major female character and the heroine but also presents another female character, Xianniang as the female villain. In the film, Mulan's character is depicted as a girl who is brave and strong. Since she was a child she possesses a strong chi—life energy that is natural in the human body (Aulia, 2021). In contrast, her parents try to cover that up and do not permit her to use the power because in Mulan's society women are not allowed to show their power. However, the Chinese empire is attacked by the invaders of the northern region. Hence, each family must send one man to undergo training and join the war. Hua Mulan, therefore, disguises herself as a man and joins the army because her father's physical condition does not qualify him to fight.

Xianniang, on the other hand, is the supporting character. Same as Mulan, Xianniang is also portrayed as a powerful girl. Xianniang is a powerful witch who desires society's love and approval, but society's stigma toward witches pushes her to be an outsider once her power is known by the people in her village. Then, she chooses to join Bori Khan's side to take revenge and prove that women can be equal to men. She uses her power to assist Khan and bravely shows her identity. If they succeed in

conquering China, Bori Khan promises her that she will have the freedom to use her power. In the film, Xianniang meets Mulan for the first time when Mulan pursues Bori Khan's troops by herself. In that encounter, Xianniang taunts Mulan for disguising herself as a man. She tries to attack Mulan but her attack fails. After that encounter Xianniang meets Mulan again several times.

The objects of this study are two women in *Mulan*, the film. In the film, Mulan and Xianniang are seen as unique and extraordinary women. Mulan and Xianniang choose to join the war when other women of her age are taking care of her appearance and bringing honour through marriage. Therefore, the writer found this interesting to be analysed because the way Mulan and Xianniang behave is different from the norms that exist in their society. They choose unusual roles, for example, becoming a soldier and fighting in the war, a profession that was considered a man's job at that time. They choose to do what they want even though it is breaking the rule and they may have to face the consequences.

The objective of the study is to find out the representation of the feminist traits in the heroine and female villain in *Mulan*, the film. The writer is going to analyze the topic using Zambat's feminism theory. According to Zambat (2017), feminism is a complex and broad theory, although a lot of feminists disagree on many things, many feminists still agree on the five basic principles of equality. The first is working to increase equality. Feminists want to take more action to fight against political,

economic, and social disparities in society to create and raise awareness of gender equality. The second is expanding human choice in which according to the feminists, both men and women should have the freedom to pursue their interests, desires, and abilities. Therefore, they want to promote equality for both genders. The third is eliminating gender stratification which means that feminists oppose cultural and traditional norms that create gender inequality in social and economic areas. The last two principles are to end sexual violence and promote sexual freedom. Women have been suffering physical pain since the beginning of history. Thus, feminists defend that women should have control of their sexuality.

A previous study is done by Cahyono (2009) titled *A Woman's Struggle for National Defense Right Equality Found in "Mulan"*. He discovers information about the problems faced by women in the Mulan film in which women's rights are limited. They cannot contribute to defending their country, or speak in the middle of society, and they are even regarded as unworthy. In addition, he also examines women's struggle to support national defence rights as shown in *Mulan*. As a heroine in the film, Mulan works hard to break her traditional culture by showing her personal traits which show the strength of women to get equality between men and women. Mulan disguises herself as a man to join the army even though she has to face the consequences that she might be exiled if someone recognises her identity. Another example is her heroic action to save the emperor who is kidnapped by the Huns.

The difference between this study with the previous study is found in the object. While other research only focuses on discussing Mulan's character, this thesis will analyze and discuss Mulan as the heroine character and Xianniang as the female villain character and how they express feminist values. To study the film, the writer is going to use feminism theory. The writer's reason to analyse this study is that there are still stereotypes and discrimination that women experience in today's society. In addition, the writer also hopes that Mulan and Xianniang's characters can become an inspiration for other women.

1.2 Field of the Study

The field of study is literature, especially feminism.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This research focuses on the representation of the feminist traits in the heroine and female villain in *Mulan* film.

1.4 Research Questions

This research will focus on answering these questions:

1. What are the feminist traits of Mulan, the heroine, in *Mulan* the film?
2. What are the feminist traits of Xianniang, the female villain, in *Mulan* the film?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

With regard to the problems mentioned, the aims of this research are:

1. to find out the feminist traits of Mulan, the heroine, in *Mulan* the film.

2. to find out the feminist traits of Xianniang, the female villain, in *Mulan* the film.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Through this study, the writer hopes that the readers will get a better understanding of feminism. In addition, this research may be used as a reference for the next writer in the field of feminism.

1.7 Definition of Term

1. Feminist Traits

“Feminist traits are traits that exist based on the representation of a woman who confined in men's dimensions and try to liberate and discharge herself” (Ratnawati, 2018, p.238).

2. Heroine

“The heroes are connected to those who have to face a conflict created by the villain, sacrifice themselves, and put aside their concerns or priorities to help others” (Abrams, 1999, p. 224).

3. Villain

“A character whose evil intentions and actions have consequences for the protagonist. However, the villain becomes a complex character whose evil deeds are not always presented in black and white. Whether or not a character’s actions are truly villainous is up to the reader, their time, and their perspective to decide” (Cole, 2004, p. 3).