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Judul : Conflict about women's position in the U.S. Military as reflected
in ridley Scott's *G.I. Jane*

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

America has experienced many historical events that make it become a modern country. America is also a nation with various characters embodied in its people. Americans consist of people with heterogeneous background. They are different in ethnic and culture. However, these differences do not separate them. Instead, America finds its way to become a mature nation.

In the 20th century, America positions itself as a big nation. During the century, it has transformed into a super power nation. Its influences affect many traditional cultures and beliefs. The American economics, cultural products, lifestyles, social attitudes, and politics have transformed a traditional thought into a modern one. In the end of the century, the American domination has widely spread throughout the world.

American popular culture becomes the most important aspect of America's domination in globalisation era. Popular culture is produced and distributed in large quantity in order to get much profit. Popular culture product is not always a

qualified one but it has to be liked by many people. It provokes people to consume the product. The culture tends to stimulate the appearance of consumptive society.

Film is a product of popular culture and many people in the world consume it. At present day, film has become a good product to gain profit. Not only do the producers distribute the film, but they also offer other products related to it, such as merchandise, soundtrack albums, games, posters, etc to obtain people's desire to watch the film.

The desire to watch film often comes from outside the film itself. Many of the viewers are interested to watch it because of its stars and merchandise. Some of them even do not care about the plot or the story. Film is no longer a product of a self-contained industry, but one of a range of cultural commodities produced by large multinational conglomerates whose main interest is more likely to be electronics or petroleum than the construction of magical images for the screen (Turner, 1993: 40).

Film is also a media that involves many people as its viewers. Therefore, a film can stimulate people to send their opinion and argument. It involves people to act and respond about the theme, story, visual graphic, sound effect and many more. Film can also be viewed as social criticism since it contains symbolic texts. As said by Turner (1993: 40), "Film is not even the final target of enquiry, but part of a wider argument about representation—the social process of making images, sounds, signs, stands for something—[....]".

G.I. Jane is an American film produced in 1997 by Danielle Alexandra and directed by Ridley Scott. The screenplay is written by David Twohy and Danielle Alexandra. The film, produced by Caravan Film and distributed by

Buena Vista Home Entertainment, describes the condition of women in military, especially in Special Forces, such as SEALs. It also shows how male soldiers treat their female companions badly. They consider that female cannot survive in a hard test. They also think that they can fight better if there are no women around them. Women are only disturbance to them. “[...] Men fight better without women around. And that is an historical fact,” said the Chief in the movie script.

G.I. Jane is starred by Demi Moore as Lt. Jordan O’Neil, Viggo Mortensen as John James Urgayle, and Anne Bancroft as Sen. Lilian DeHaven. The movie shows the first female candidate for elite force SEALs, Jordan O’Neil, who struggles to reach her position. She wants to prove that women can do whatever men do. Her existence in elite training academy for Navy SEALs is actually Senator DeHaven’s maneuver in politic. She wants to use Jordan for her own advantage in her political campaign.

A lot of people refuse her to serve the military as SEALs member. During the training, she receives plenty of mocking and pressures from her chief and companions. Chief Urgayle runs a brutal training program that involves 20-hour-per day of running, marching, and crawling through obstacle courses under worst weather conditions while carrying landing rafts—not to mention eating out of a garbage can during breaks. He does it on purpose so that O’Neil gives up from the training. Nevertheless, instead of running away from the harsh training, O’Neil manages to survive the entire test and proves that a woman is capable of surviving under worst situation.

G.I. Jane describes clearly the condition of women in a military camp along with the problems they have to deal with. In fact, Americans experienced

such condition during the year of 1948 until 1993. This is because the 1948 Combat Exclusion Law was regulated in American Military policy. The regulation limited women's efforts in serving in military. Moreover, the Public Law eliminated the women's accession point for female officers. In 1972, women were allowed to join Air Force, Army, and Navy, but for non-combat position. Joining combat is still forbidden for women. Even if they were accepted to join the military, they had to deal with the discrimination done by male soldiers and even the head commander.

In everyday life, women's position is below men's. There are beliefs and values in society that make women under men's shadow. The condition above makes women's role in society less than men's. Most people believe that women's roles are only bearing children and taking care of them. Such judgements have embodied in the people's minds for thousands of years.

This thought surely limits women's activities. It seems like their place is only inside the house. The outdoor activities are forbidden for them. However, actually, not every woman stays at home and watches her children grow. Some of them do their outdoor activities. They work in offices, coffee shops, restaurants, and even join military.

The outdoor activities, such as working in restaurant and coffee shop, are familiar to the society. Since women are capable of cooking and serving food, there are not any debates on that in society. However, joining the military is a kind of odd thing to women. Even though they are allowed to join military, their position is mostly behind the desks. They are rarely placed in a dangerous

circumstance, such as in combat. Mostly they are dealing with papers, military files, and logistics.

The reason why women are forbidden to join combat is that they are considered having less strength than men. Moreover, the authorized officers in military are afraid that they will give away military secrets to the enemy when they are captured during the action. They are also worried that women cannot stand if the enemy harms them. That is why in some Special Forces women's existence is forbidden.

The controversy of women's existence in military is the reflections of what happens in American society. They have experienced this matter for several years. This thing also gives a great impact on their thought concerning with women serving in military. It can be said that this matter has embodied in American's thought and have become their beliefs and values.

Based on the statements above, it is interesting to analyze the women existence in military through *G.I. Jane*. The research analyzed the conflict about women's position in the U.S. military, especially in combat. It also mentioned the factor that causes the conflict.

Thus, since this research is in the field of American Studies, the use of interdisciplinary approaches was a must. It is because American Studies is a study about American experience, which may cover the history of American growth and change, image, reality, and influence, and to reveal the experience, it is not enough to use only one approach. Therefore, in this research, it would be appropriate to use more than one approaches. They were sociological approach,

feminism approach, historical approach, and semiotic approach, especially semiotic film theory.

B. Research Limitation

In order to focus the analysis, it is important to give some limitations in this research based on the background above. The research was limited to some aspects, such as attitudes, behaviours, and ways of thinking of some characters, which led to the description of the condition of the American society, especially the condition of women in military and the discrimination that they have to deal with. The limitation of this research included the analysis of regulation and law that had connection with the women's right in military.

C. Problem Statement

The whole statements above are actually the introduction for formulating the problem statement, which is:

How is the conflict about women's position in the U.S. military, especially in combat, reflected in *G.I. Jane*?

D. Research Objective

The objective of this research is to find out how the conflict about women's position in the U.S. military, especially in combat, as reflected in *G.I. Jane*.

E. Research Significance

The research could give a contribution on understanding the social condition of American society and its government in relation to women's position in military as reflected in *G.I. Jane*. Furthermore, it can also give a contribution on understanding the culture of the American society and it can give more information to the next researchers who want to analyse the American society or the America's government and their policy. Hopefully, it can give much benefit to the next research and to the readers about the American society, culture, and its experience.

F. Research Methodology

1. Type of Research

The type of research of this study is library research in the form of descriptive qualitative one. In Pengantar Metoda Penelitian Linguistik Struktural, Subroto stated that:

Penelitian kualitatif itu bersifat deskriptif. Peneliti mencatat dengan teliti dan cermat data yang berwujud kata-kata, kalimat-kalimat, wacana,

gambar-gambar/foto, catatan harian, memorandum, video-tape. Dari data yang bersifat deskriptif itu peneliti melakukan analisis data untuk membuat generalisasi atau kesimpulan umum yang merupakan sistem atau kaidah yang bersifat mengatur atau gambaran dari orang-orang yang dijadikan subjek penelitian. (Subroto, 1992: 7)

Therefore, descriptive research is activities to observe all of the data, analyse them and make some conclusions based on them. Those kinds of activities are used as a guidance to accomplish the research.

2. Data and Source of Data

a. Main Data

The source of data of this research is the original film of *G.I. Jane* directed by Ridley Scott, produced—in 1997—by Danielle Alexandra and distributed by Buena Vista Home Entertainment. The main data consisted of characters and characterization, dialogues, body language, visual images, and original soundtrack, which were related to the women's existence in the military, especially in combat, such as the policy that regulates women in combat, the debates among the society, and other things that could be used to solve the problem statement.

b. Supporting Data

Supporting data were collected from other sources that support the main data. This data are used to help answer the problem statement. They were collected from the script of the film written by David Twohy and Danielle Alexandra, review of the film, some criticisms taken from the Internet, articles, and also other books related to the women's existence in military especially in combat.

3. Technique of Collecting Data

This study is a library research or referential research. It means that this research used all possibilities to take the data from the sources of data. Many references were read to collect data and information to support the research. It used all the information from the books, film review, and Internet.

First of all, the data were collected by seeing and observing the film as the main data carefully and repeatedly to get a deep comprehension of the issue. The next step was to make a note—from the main data and supporting data—of important facts that were related to the problem statements which were analyzed in this research, such as the women's existence in the military, especially in the combat.

4. Technique of Processing Data

The data processing phases are directed as follows:

a. Description phase

The problem statements and the data that were used in this research were exposed.

b. Analysis phase

In this phase, the fundamental theories of this research were applied.

c. Interpretation phase

The results of the previous phase were crystallized based on the problem statement and the objective.

d. Evaluation phase

The results were evaluated and examined. It constituted a conclusion and evaluation of the problem solving of the previous phase.

G. Theoretical Approach

Since this research is based on American Studies, the film was analysed by using the interdisciplinary methods. In this research, four approaches were applied to solve the problem statement above. They are:

1. Sociological Approach

Since this research is about film, which is included as art, the meaning of art must be understood. According to The Free Dictionary, “art is the product of human creativity” (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/art>). The purpose of works of art is to communicate ideas—such as in politics and religion—and to create a sense of beauty or pleasure. It can be said that art is a form of cultural expression since art is used as a media to reflect ideas, thoughts, and critiques toward a certain phenomenon which happens in society. Therefore, film—as a part of art—may be used to reflect ideas, thoughts, and critiques through the media of language.

To analyze a film is not simple. A person must consider other aspects related to that film, such as the background of the author, the time and place when it is published, the society that surrounds the author, etc. Thus, to reveal the meaning of a film the use of sociological approach is a must, since sociology is a study of the condition of a society in a certain time and place. Schaefer states, “Sociology is the systematic study of social behavior and human groups. It focuses primarily on the influence of social relationships on people’s attitudes and behavior and how societies are established and change” (2001: 7). Therefore, by

using the sociological approach, the characters of the film and the situation created by the author can be related to the reality as the background of the work.

2. Feminist Approach

The study of feminism is a kind of gender study focused on how the characteristic of women itself formed their personality. Humm said that, “[...] the word feminism can stand for a belief in sexual equality combined with a commitment to eradicate sexist domination and to transform society” (1992: 1).

For some people, feminism is a term that is used to describe women’s superior ideology. Feminism depends on the premise that women can consciously and collectively change their social place. The main direction of feminism is woman’s liberation as an opportunity for women to gain an understanding of certain unique ways of thinking and acting.

This approach is used because the whole theme is closely tied to the women’s struggle in gaining self-existence in male-dominated world. Arivia stated that, “Teori-teori feminisme amat berperan untuk menjelaskan ketidakadilan perempuan dalam kehidupan sosialnya. Ketidakadilan yang dialami mengakibatkan gerakan-gerakan perempuan yang menolak sistem patriarkhal” (2003: 307). In the film, there is a phenomenon to gain the equality between women and men; in this case, the phenomenon is about the issue of placing women in military, especially in combat.

3. Historical Approach

Since the situation in the film reflects the condition in the society, the use of historical approach is a must. By using historical approach, the historical facts that can be used as the basic understanding of the situation in the film can be

obtained. “Historical approach is important to be used to know a history as a revelation of an event that becomes the setting background of the film. It can reveal the facts that are hidden by the time and place boundaries into an understanding of a social phenomenon and then create some pattern of society behaviour” (Daiches, 1974: 94).

This kind of criticism flourishes most when the critic is aimed to make the readers aware of something happens in a different tradition from that they are accustomed. It is commonly used to draw our attention. Thus, it can help us to see the methods and objectives of the film for what they really are. In other words, one must—in Matthew Arnold’s phrase—“see the object in itself as it really is” before one can begin to assess its value (Daiches, 1974: 95).

4. Semiotic Film Theory

At the beginning, semiotic theory was found by Saussure. He has introduced the foundation of structuralism. He introduced *langue* and *parole* and determined their differences. In further development, Roland Barthes through his *Mythology* developed the theory. He used *signifier* and *signified* to express his idea. He also showed the representation of certain hidden symbolic meanings by inventing first order semiotic system and second order semiotic system.

In the end of the 19th century, an American philosopher, Charles S. Peirce, has found and developed the semiotic theory. He emphasized semiotics as a relation between sign, object, and interpretant (Lapsley, 1988: 35). Peirce has classified signs into three terms; they are icon, index, and symbol. Then, the French scholar Christian Metz applied the semiotics theory into film for the first time. He distinguished images into filmic image and cinematic image. Metz places

a film as a *text* that should be revealed by the audience. Allen and Gomery said that, “film semiotics has sought to explain how meaning is embodied in a film and how that meaning is communicated to an audience” (1985: 77).

Therefore, this research also considered the semiotic film theory to analyze the main data. The use of this approach is a must because in this research the source of data—the film—was looked as a *language* that is composed of signs and *symbols*. This approach was used to explain how the film contains signs and symbols and how to deliver the meaning of those signs and symbols to the audience. According to Douglass and Harnden:

Film semiotics is an intellectual field of study in its own right and can shed interesting light on how a film conveys meaning. The emphasis in semiotics is more purely anthropological, philosophical—even political—however, and is not intended to illuminate film and the filmmaking process so much as to illuminate the workings of the human mind. (Douglass and Harnden, 1996: 250)

H. Thesis Organization

The thesis consists of four chapters and arranged as follows:

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research background, research limitation, problem statement, research objective, research significance, research methodology, and also theoretical approach which contains of four approaches.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses about the four approaches that are used in this research. It consists of feminism, semiotic film

theory, American social condition in the 20th century including the condition of women at that time, and basic terminology in cinematography.

CHAPTER III. ANALYSIS

This chapter consists of the analysis of the film. It presents the debates among the society about the existence of women in military—especially in combat—and their response toward the government's policy. This analysis includes two sub-divisions, they are

- a. Conflict in Society about Women in the U.S. Military, Especially in Combat, Reflected in *G.I.Jane*
- b. Factor that Causes the Conflict Reflected in *G.I.Jane*

CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter consists of the conclusion and recommendation of the research.