

Representation of Women's Struggle in *Red Snake: Sister in Arms* Film

Dhiyaul Saninah¹, Jonathan Irene Sartika Dewi M², Wilma Prafitri^{3*}

^{1,2,3}Mulawarman University

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Abstract: This study examines the gender struggles faced by female characters in *Red Snake: Sister in Arms*, a film portraying women's resistance to oppression. Using a qualitative method and feminist theoretical framework, particularly McQueen's theory on gender conflict and Petrie and Boggs' approach to characterization, this research identifies struggles related to love, aspiration, and autonomy. The findings reveal that the female characters serve as embodiment of gender resistance, highlighting how narrative and visual storytelling challenge patriarchal norms. The manifestations of gender conflict include the pursuit of love, the quest for aspirations, and the confrontation with life's realities. The researchers affirm that female characters are portrayed as embodiment of gender conflicts in the film *Red Snake Sister in Arms*. This is illustrated through the acts of female characters and representations of gender conflicts. This is also exemplified by other characters that oppose the gender battle.

Keywords: feminism, film, gender struggle, representation

INTRODUCTION

Feminism is a women's movement to fight for their rights, degrees, and positions. Feminism issues always find their place in our society. Society often controls how women should behave. Feminism issues seem like an endless discussion among experts. The core objective of feminism according to Bertens, feminism began with a focus on gender because changing gender roles is an effective way to change the power dynamic between men and women. Because women are perceived to be fearful, dependent, and irrational, feminism attempted to dismantle this gendered stereotype (Bertens, 2017). Feminism critically challenges the systemic subordination of women and seeks gender equality. In media, especially film, feminist narratives can subvert traditional gender roles. *Red Snake: Sister in Arms* offers a

*Corresponding author: wilma.prafitri@fib.unmul.ac.id

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compelling portrayal of women's resistance against gendered oppression in a conflict zone. This study investigates: How are women's struggles represented in the film?

The researchers used *Red Snake: Sister in Arms* film as an object of the research. The film by Caroline Fourest, was released on 9 October 2019 in France. As an audiovisual media of entertainment, the film tells the story of a woman who is kidnapped and sold into slavery by a group of terrorists. She decided to fight for an act of revenge by joining the international women's brigade that aims to fight the oppression of the terrorist group. *Red Snake: Sister in Arms* film is a French historical film that tells the story of the war in a Middle Eastern country in August 2014, set in a village in western Iraq, and tells the story of a group of international women's brigades with different backgrounds and cultures. This research highlights women's battle to assert their rights and dignity, as they face oppression from a group that perpetrates arbitrary injustice against individuals and society. This research examines how the female character embodies her societal struggle through the lens of feminist philosophy and gender conflict.

Characters are usually defined by the people created by the playwright. The character must be fictional while the story can be based on real life, and the character usually can be rendered as types or individuals. According to Petrie and Boggs, the best reflections of character are a person's actions. It must be assumed, of course, that real characters are more than mere instruments of the plot, that they do what they do for a purpose, out of motives that are consistent with their overall personality. A major aspect of film characterization is revealed visually and instantaneously (Petrie and Boggs, 2000).

In literature and movies, characters are designed to embody personal motivations and acts, offering insights on human behavior and cultural frameworks. Feminism, as an analytical paradigm, scrutinizes the processes of power, autonomy, and subordination, especially in relation to women across diverse situations. Linking character portrayals to feminist ideas enables an exploration of how narratives can either challenge or reinforce society norms, providing a key framework to interrogate and redefine power relations.

According to Linda Gordan, feminism is an analysis of women's subordination to figure out how to change it. For Gordan (2002) feminism also means sharing in an impulse to increase the power and autonomy of women in their families, communities, and society. On another occasion, Gordon defines feminism as a critique of male supremacy, formed and offered in the light of a to change it.

This section presents multiple studies employing the same hypothesis but utilizing various subjects to substantiate the research. Three interconnected studies will be examined. The initial pertinent study is "*Struggle of Woman in the Novel Sing Me to Sleep by Angela Morrison (The Analysis of Feminism)*" (2017) authored by Eka Serli Sudarni. This research examines the protagonist's quest to attain his love. The researchers exclusively examines the female character's quest for autonomy and the rights of other women. The second one is the from "*An Analysis of Woman Struggle in Louisa May Alcott's Novel Little Women*" (2018) by Heni Rahayu. The researchers discusses the discovery of the women's struggle contained in the novel and also the struggle of the main character in realizing her dream. The third previous study is the thesis titled "*An Analysis of Feminism in the Film 'Maleficent' (2021)*" by Fitrahramadani. The study opted to examine feminism in the film *Maleficent* directed by

Robert Stromberg. In addition to being intriguing, the research revealed one aspect of female oppression by males, wherein men sought to exert control over women. The results of this research, the writer found one kind of feminism that existed in the *Maleficent* film, namely eco feminism. For the factors that led to the appearance of feminism in the *Maleficent* film, the research found, namely: ecological protection factors and ending domestic violence and abuse factors.

While prior studies have analyzed individual female protagonists and broader feminist themes in literature and film, few have explored collective female resistance in war contexts through a feminist cinematic lens. This study addresses this gap by analyzing *Red Snake* using McQueen's gender conflict theory.

METHOD

This study uses qualitative content analysis to examine selected scenes, dialogues, and character arcs in *Red Snake: Sister in Arms*. Using McQueen's gender conflict theory and Petrie and Boggs' characterization framework, the researchers identified thematic categories related to love, aspiration, and autonomy. Data were collected through repeated viewing and manual transcription of relevant scenes.

This research uses a film object and focuses on the film. The researchers need to interpret the meaning of the film that is presented. This statement was supported by Tracy (2019) states resolved the researchers instrument is important, and that in qualitative research the researchers serves as the instrument. According to Kumar, anything that becomes a means of collecting information for the research tools or a research instrument (2011). For that reason, the researchers is the instrument of this research.

This can be done by seeing Scenes in the film, the female character's conversations, the actions of the female character, and how the female character is, which means that all the research is done in detail in the analysis of the film.

This research uses the film *Red Snake: Sister in Arms* film as the data source. The film was published in 2019. This film was produced by Metropolitan Film export Production. This film is French and uses Arabic, and French and is dominated by English. This film is an hour 52 minutes and 26 seconds long. The researchers takes the data of the film through dialogue, the female character, and the sequence of the storyline. Data consisting of dialogues, actions, and film sequences related to the process of gender struggle were displayed through sentences, words, and paragraphs.

The initial action required by the researchers is to view the film *Red Snake: Sister in Arms*. At this stage, the researchers must scrutinize the film meticulously to discern the intricacies and comprehend the character's challenges. The last phase involves gathering all facts pertinent to female character development and personality structure, documenting it in a notebook. This stage involves examining each sequence in the film pertinent to the data. The researchers must complete all aforementioned processes prior to organizing the data to identify the appropriate information for analysis.

RESULTS

The researchers presents the findings of the research questions after the researchers collected the data from female characters' appearance, speech, actions, and other characters that are responsible for emphasizing gender struggle and Feminism. After analyzing the film, the researchers found that there are struggles of the female character from the film. Female characters are depicted as gender struggle ideals, according to the study. These themes are portrayed in female characters' struggles for love, dreams, and life.

Struggle for Love

The first gender struggle of the female character is a struggle for love, which means intense emotion, choice assessment, and commitment. Moreover love from parents is unconditional love and everyone deserves it.

Fig. 1 Zara wants to follow her father (Red Snake: Sister in Arms 07:58 – 08:01)

Check Point Guard 1: Only Men, Not Women! (separated Zara hand from her father)

In this scene, a frightened Zara hugs her father as jihadists loot his village. When Zara tries to take refuge in her father, the jihadist says "Only Men, Not Women" and the jihadist tries to separate Zara from her father. As explained in the previous chapter, what is carried out by jihadists is very opposite to the gender struggle in struggle for love. This is an attempt at gender struggle in society and Zara tries to fight the jihadists who express their struggle to protect her father. Zara's actions are a kind of struggle for love. The father tried to fulfill his wish to protect his child. This love struggle scene shows the actions of parents, especially fathers who try to protect their children under any circumstances.

Fig. 2 Zara's mom trying to hug Zara, so that they are not separated from their children (Red Snake: Sister in Arms 08:40 – 08:45)



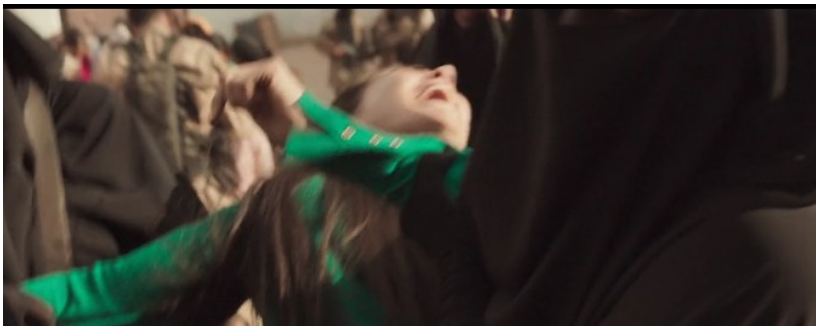
Check Point 4 : We also take the old?

*Check Point 5 : Yes, but **on another bus, not with the fresh ones***

In this scene, after Zara separates from her father, Zara is hugged by her mother and sister. This scene is also a form of gender struggle in the struggle for love, this can be seen when the jihadists force Zara from her mother. As McQueen said in the previous chapter, children

need unconditional love from their parents, which can be demonstrated by protective actions. In this scene, jihadists also do things that are contrary to the gender struggle for love.

Fig. 3 Zara trying keeps her brother by her side (Red Snake: Sister in Arms 14:21- 14:32)



In this scene, Zara tries to protect her sister from the jihadists. Zara doesn't answer the question given by the jihadists and hugs her sister. However, the Jihadist was angry and tried to separate Zara from her sister and the Jihadist slapped Zara. This is a struggle for love from brother to sister, shown by his deciding to hug his sister as a form of protection because of affection, emotions, and actions.

Fig. 4 the chief calms Zara (Red Snake: Sister in Arms 01:32:51 – 01:34:34)



- Zara : I feel it inside me all the time, his smell, his face disgusts me....
- Chief : you'll get out of it. But it takes time. Believe me. I was 16 when it happened to me. It took me years to understand that it was not my fault. And it wasn't my fault. It's a war.
- Zara : if it's a war, why am i so ashamed, when men come back from the front, they who their wounds, we look at them as heroes, but for me im just feeling ashamed.
- Chief : **Zara, you are so brave. Look at me, the invasion you suffered is deeper and more cruel than bullets. And yet you are there standing, you are fighting, you are strong. Wars have always been waged on women bodies. But there, for once they fear us, this fear is our strength.**

In this scene the chief tries to calm Zara by hugging and giving positive affirmation to Zara, this can be seen in the conversation " **Zara, you are so brave. Look at me, the invasion you suffered is deeper and more cruel than bullets. And yet you are there standing, you**

are fighting, you are strong. Wars have always been waged on women's bodies. But there, for once they fear us, this fear is our strength. ". This is a Gender Struggle in the Struggle for Love because love concerns the life around us and what is loved.

Struggle for Dream

The first gender struggle of the female character is a struggle for dream, which means women have main desires because of oppression in some terms.

Fig. 5 Zara's brother reading a message from Zara (Red Snake: Sister in Arms 01:04:02-01:05:06)

"Dear my dearest brother, forgive me, I'm leaving to avenge our father and find Keiro. I have to, I need to, if not, I lost my mind. Take care of our mother, take her to Germany, I need to know that you are safe. And one day, perhaps maybe if God and angels are with us, I will find you, we will live together as a family again. I love you, as no sister has ever loved her brother"

*In this scene, Zara writes a letter to her brother. After successfully escaping, and meeting his mother and brother. Zara decides to leave her brother and mother and join the Snake Brigade to avenge their father and look for her sister. She hopes that one day they will be able to gather as part of their family. This can be seen in **"I Will Find You, we will live together as a family again"**. Gender Struggle in Struggle for Dream is visible because Zara feels oppressed because jihadists killed her father and her sister is still held hostage by jihadists, this is also what makes Zara committed to taking revenge for his father, finding his younger brother and having a dream of one day living together with his mother, brother, and sister as a family.*

Struggle for Fact of Life

The first gender struggle of the female character is a struggle for love, which means, women make their decisions having control over their own lives, and bodies. Also, remove all oppression and inequity through creating a more just society.

Fig. 6 The chief explains what happened in this revolution (Red Snake: Sister in Arms 30:49 – 31:30)



Chief : New Comrades from France. Our Kurdish people are very grateful that you left your homes to come to fight with the oppressed against our enemy. Our revolution has no boundaries, it is global, political, social, and ecological.

Kenza : It is a feminist revolution, right?

*Chief : Yes, you are right **it is also a feminist revolution.** Our mothers have fought, and our daughters will fight. We want to free women, this is our goal in life. We want to create a new better society.*

In this scene the chief explains what is happening in the current revolution, it can be seen in "**it is also a feminist revolution.**" This is a Gender struggle in Struggle for Fact of life, proven by the women fighting back, wanting to liberate women and others without discrimination and inequality, and wanting to have a better life socially, now, and in the future.

Fig. 7 The Snake Brigade manages to fight the war with the jihadists and free the prisoners, (Red Snake: Sister in Arms 01:44:52 – 01:45:10)



Chief : (Opened a room containing women who were made slaves and sex workers by jihadists)

In this battle, the Snake Brigade succeeded in defeating the Jihadists, the Snake Brigade freed the prisoners consisting of children and women who were detained as Sandra and would be sold for diamonds and children which became a suicide bomb. This is evidence of the gender struggle in Struggle for the Facts of Life, and the efforts of female characters have succeeded in liberating other women by fighting against Jihadists who discriminate and gender inequality.

DISCUSSION

This section presents a discussion based on the findings of the research. This research focuses on How does the female character represent women's struggle in the film *Red Snake: Sister in Arms*. It has been discovered that there were gender struggles that female characters experience in the struggle for love, dreams, and facts of life. In this case, the gender struggle experienced by female characters can also be seen in several other characters.

First gender struggle was identified as struggle for love. The researchers found Gender Struggle supposedly stigmatizes women and limits the way women are viewed. In this research, the struggle for love is not for one's partner but rather the struggle for love for one's family, father, and brothers, as well as for fellow women.

Second gender struggle was classified as the struggle for dreams. The product of the same oppressive social forces. Therefore, women experience many losses due to men's

power over them. Struggle for Dream is a form of women's resistance to fulfilling their desires to fulfill their ambitions. Men consider themselves to be for themselves, while women are for men, men consider themselves as subjects and women as objects.

In gender struggle, the third is the struggle fact of life. The gender struggle to survive in society. The struggle to gain control over their own lives and bodies, over women's sexual activities in general, legalizing prostitution to the detriment of women causes a widening gap between men and women, and exacerbates the global sex trade.

Based on the findings, the researchers finds the difference from the previous studies. First is the research entitled “Struggle of Woman in the Novel *Sing Me to Sleep* by Angela Morrison (The Analysis of Feminism)” by Eka Serli Sudarni. Sudarni’s research used Feminism theory and focused on the main character. She found that there are kinds of struggles of women. The first is the struggle to accept the facts of life. Second, the struggle to achieve a dream. Finally the struggle in the form of affection, and the struggle to get her love. This research used feminism and gender struggle, and the researchers did not focus on the main characters but focus on female characters.

The second previous study was entitled “An Analysis of Woman Struggle in Louisa May Alcott’s Novel *Little Women*” by Heni Rahayu. Rahayu’s research used the novel as an object, feminism theory, and focus on the main character. She found women's struggle contained in the novel and also the struggle of the main character in realizing her dream. In this research, the main character is a man, not a woman. She found the purpose of her research is a picture of a woman's struggle that occurred during the American Civil War in the main character's life. Second, she obtained depictions of women struggle to get the joy of life, struggling in their daily lives, and also fighting for their dreams.

The third previous study was entitled “An Analysis of Feminism in the Movie *Maleficent*” by Fitrahramadani. In Fitrahramadani’s research used feminism theory, especially ecofeminism. She found the influence of feminism on the main character, woman and nature dominated and thus stressed the need for a more interdependent worldview and that all living things are essential to the being of the planet and that humans are not separate or superior.

The fourth previous study was entitled “The March for gender equality of Algerian Women: The Struggle for Spatial and Historical Recognition” (2023) by Ourahmoune & El Jurdi. In Ourahmoune & El Jurdi's journal, they use social movements, collective action, and gender. This journal presented women's struggles for recognition in the Algerian Hirak, a postcolonial context with tense ideological stances that shape and sustain inequalities in gender relations. Two main dimensions of the struggle for recognition emerge, a spatial dimension and a historical dimension.

This research focuses on finding the gender struggle of women shown in the film *Red Snake Sister in Arms*, the war in the Middle East, where a group of jihadists kidnapped girls to sell them as sexual slaves. They fight for love's dreams and facts for life. This is where women's struggle begins. They decided to take revenge and help the women who were being held captive and bought and sold as lust slaves by joining The Snake Brigade. Even though the backgrounds are different, The Snake Brigade has one goal to fight jihadists. They learned to use weapons and found solidarity with those who rebelled and punished those

who oppressed them, fanatical jihadists who feared being killed by women. This world war was won by the snake brigade consisting of rebel women and they succeeded in freeing the women who were held captive and sold as sexual slaves.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing how Gender struggles are represented by a female character in *Red Snake: Sister in Arms* film, the researchers emphasize that the female characters depict gender struggles. In the view of gender struggle, women must reject all assumptions created by the patriarchal system. Therefore, the researchers concludes that the emphasis of female characters on appearance and gender depiction originates from radical feminist culture.

In this case, gender struggle is also represented through the actions of female characters in depicting gender. The action is depicted when the female character fights the Jihadists. In addition, the researchers concluded that the female character represents gender struggle based on McQueen and characterization. Characterization theory includes appearance, dialogue, external actions, internal actions, and reactions of other characters. The researchers also concluded that the Gender Struggle perspective on Struggle for Love, Struggle for Dream, and Struggle for Fact of Life is found in the female characters in the film *Red Snake Sister in Arms*.

The film *Red Snake: Sister in Arms* offers a nuanced portrayal of women's struggles in a patriarchal war zone. By analyzing the film through feminist theory, this study contributes to understanding how cinema can challenge and reconstruct gender narratives. Therefore, it is hoped that other researchers can analyze other characters in this film such as El Britani and other jihadists through the patriarchal system. Future research could expand the analysis to male characters or explore intersectional dimensions of race, class, and nationalism within feminist resistance or other researchers can build research that focuses on other literary criticism, as well as gender struggles or other literary theories.

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