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Representation of Feminism in Nausicaa's Character Explicit Trait

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A B S T R A C T
The media has the power to attract its audience to believe in what they consume. The depiction of feminism in female characters in animated films is still mainly focused on the visual aspect, with personalities that tend to be sexual and passive. Female character design needs special attention to show variations in capabilities, providing a positive view to the audience. Therefore, this research aims to identify design elements of characters' explicit traits that can be used as categories in analyzing the representation of feminism in female character design. The research uses a content analysis method to analyze the animated film Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind from Studio Ghibli. The movie was released in 1984 during a change in perspective towards women's empowerment in Japan. The film is analyzed using three categories of characters' explicit traits, which are body shape, costume, and attributes. The movie is separated into segments that fit the power-with category in the depiction of feminism in film. The researcher identifies each segment based on the categories. This research concludes that the characters' explicit traits represent the third wave of feminism. Those traits explained the process and outcome of the character's experience and fight throughout the film. They also portray an active female character.

INTRODUCTION

Feminism is an activity carried out by feminists to end gender discrimination that caused by a patriarchal culture that often marginalizes women's lives in society (Arby et al., 2022). The development of feminism has shown achievements for feminists in supporting women's emancipation, however, the movement still invites both supportive and opposing views. Despite the long-standing presence of the feminist movement in society that has been through changes through four waves since 1830, issues regarding inequality for women still persist.

The dynamics of feminism in the society have brought this topic into the mass media, it started from social to entertainment perspectives. The feminist messages conveyed in the mass media spark discussions among people because the feminist movement has been a combination of unified opinions from groups opposing public norms, leading to the development of general awareness about feminism. This topic attracts public attention, prompting corporations to use this situation as part of film media content. The presence of feminism in films serves as a reference for people because films offer various content options for their audience. The dynamics of life in the world can be poured into film elements that reflect the situations creators want to convey (Stebner et al., 2017). One medium that can be used for this purpose is the animation film genre.

Animation is a film medium consisting of repeated images in several frames, creating movement (Gupta & Chaudhuri, 2018). It has several elements to support the delivery of messages

in the story, including characters designed with both explicit traits and character's core (McKee, 2021). According to McKee, explicit traits are visible visual elements, while the core of a character is their personality. Characters in animated films play a big role in building emotional relation towards the audience (Difitrian & Saleh, 2024). Zahra & Mansoor (2024) stated that emotions can build up in a short period of time, that is why character holds a huge part in giving the message throughout the film.

As the world of animation has developed, observations of female characters show that there is still a primary focus on visual aspects that are sexual and submissive (McClearen, 2015). This raises questions about the capability of a female character to provide an optimistic stance that can offer a positive perspective to the audience. Regarding feminism, a female character can represent values as she embodies ways of thinking and behavior, giving the impression to the audience that she is able to overcome and resolve problems in the film's story. However, this is often depicted through sensual body visuals and a tendency towards masculine personalities. This is supported by McClearen's statement that the intellectual and strength of women in the discourse of feminism in films often focus on sexual appeal, while masculine traits are applied to cover femininity, which is often considered a dependency for women (Radner & Stringer, 2011). Additionally, the interactions performed by female characters are often passive. According to Radner and Stringer, female characters are often sidelined in public interactions to maintain their domestic image. The portrayal of a character influences the representation of feminism; therefore, the explicit design of a character plays an important role in giving a certain perspective to the film's audience.

Audiences need to understand the portrayal of women in society from the perspective of the patriarchal system, cultural values, traditional norms, and social behavior (Haryanti & Suwana, 2014). This sharpens the public's knowledge in understanding that the representation of women is not always as objects, side characters, or passive figures compared to male characters. Media plays a role in delivering messages through accurate portrayals or exacerbating depictions, therefore, appropriate representation of women needs to be implemented in the media. This will lead to a good communication between the filmmaker and the audience where the audience can understand the film message properly (Halim & Yulius, 2023).

Papastavros, (2023) conducted research on the role of Yubaba as a monstrous mother figure in the film "Spirited Away" produced by Studio Ghibli to understand the portrayal of female antagonistic roles both locally and globally from the perspectives of sexual deviance, gender, and cultural norms using Japanese psychoanalytic theory and femininity. The researcher examined the visual and characteristic design of Studio Ghibli's female characters using theories of femininity and psychoanalysis to understand the stereotypes of the depiction of antagonistic mothers in Japan. Papastravros' research studies about the portrayal of female antagonistic roles while this research examines the representation of feminism in the design of main female character. According to Takemaru (2010), women were only allowed to focus on marriage in the 1980, with Japanese society considering being a wife as a woman's job. Women empowerment move happened during this period resulting to Japanese women's access to education in 1990s. This research aims to identify the elements of explicit traits in the character design of Nausicaa in the film *Nausicaa of The Valley of The Wind* that was released on 1984 to analyze the representation of feminism in the female character.

METHOD

The researcher reduced the elements of explicit traits from McKee's character design theory into categories used in content analysis with a literature review method. The researcher identified the elements of Nausicaa's explicit traits in the film *Nausicaa of The Valley of the Wind* using text analysis based on the categories. The film material was divided based on the criteria for the depiction of feminism in films according to Sutherland and Feltey (2017), which defines power-with as follows:
a. Women struggle in oppressive circumstances
b. Women realize the extent of the oppression they experience
c. Women collaborate to fight against oppression

The researcher used these criteria to segment the film because Sutherland and Feltey state that power-with is a characteristic of feminist films that fosters solidarity between both genders towards equality

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Character design in animation is one of the main elements that can influence the imagination of the film's audience. The visuals and personality of a character are modified so that the audience understands the story's message the filmmaker wants to convey (Ekawardhani et al., 2020). Both are results of considerations that have continuity, as the creation of characterization impacts the visuals. Eder (2010) states that characters contribute to factors that enable the audience to understand, feel, and enjoy the aesthetics in a film. According to McKee, (2021), characteristics and behaviors such as age, gender, race, gestures, occupation, costume, behavior, and apparent traits in a character constitute the persona they wear while interacting with other individuals. Therefore, a character has dimensions that explain contradictions in their personality and define a complex identity. The visual appearance of a character can represent the character's background.

Table 1. Explicit traits in character design theory by Robert McKee (2021)

No.	Explicit Traits	Definition
1	Name	Name as an identification of the role and a determinant of a character's quality
2	Costume and body	Costume refers to the clothing and accessories worn by the character. The body depicts age, attractiveness, height, weight, skin color, and posture of the character.
3	Gender and sex	Gender of the character and the behavior they exhibit concerning their gender.
4	Way of speaking	Way of speaking relates to the vocabulary, tone, sentence structure, and word choice used by the character to convey their expression.
5	Expression and gesture	Expressing language through (1) facial and body movements like hand and head movements that enrich the conversation, (2) symbolic gestures such as thumbs up, and (3) imitation movements.
6	Profession	Character's identity can be identified from the work they perform.
7	Attribute	Objects owned by the character that serve as symbols depicting their identity.
8	Knowledge	Quality of education and lessons the character has acquired during their life.
9	Religion and belief	Values the character believes in, whether they are good or bad, including belief in God or trust in other individuals or objects.
10	Manner	Behavior exhibited by the character when interacting with other characters in an environment.

In the process of determining analysis categories, the researcher reduced ten elements to three explicit traits. The process is done by eliminating categories irrelevant to the discussion of feminism. Some categories that deemed similar were combined, so their value could be represented by other categories. The categories used for text analysis of animated films are body shape, costume, and attributes.

The name and way of speaking of a character are not relevant in the discussion of the representation of feminism in character design. The gender category is not used because the researcher determined that the research object is female characters. Expression and profession categories can be represented by costume as a form of identity related to daily work. Gesture and manners categories are related to the discussions about character interaction. Intellectual knowledge and beliefs are aspects of privacy that are more appropriately combined with the internal of the character's traits.

In the previous discussion, the biggest issues in the depiction of feminism in media are related to body shape, clothing, and the portrayal of submissive traits in female characters. A character's

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personality can be analyzed through the visuals that form them. The categories used to identify character design from explicit character traits need to be relevant to these issues. Therefore, the researcher conducted an analysis using three categories: explicit traits in terms of body shape, costume, and attributes. Here is a detailed explanation of these three categories:

1. Body Shape
   Body shape is an element of appearance in character design with various shapes and sizes that matched to the character's personality. However, female characters in films are often depicted with an hourglass shape or emphasizing body parts like the chest and waist. Body shapes are generally categorized into five types, which are rectangular, triangular (pear-shaped), inverted triangle, round (apple-shaped), and hourglass. This occurs due to the perception of women as objects by the audience, both consciously and unconsciously.

2. Costume
   The clothing worn by a character forms their values and identity through appearance. Normative femininity in media often portrays female characters wearing tight clothing, revealing a lot of skin, and/or emphasizing body assets, resulting in a lack of variation in the depiction of feminist clothing for women. This is often seen in female superhero characters and shojo (young girl) anime characters.

3. Attributes
   Attributes are objects that serve as distinctive signs completing the character's appearance, such as books, money, flowers, weapons, and so on. The use of attributes on female characters needs to be considered because everyday objects they carry can define their personality, which in some media tends to lead to passive sexuality or socially acceptable feminine traits.

The researcher chose the film *Nausicaa of The Valley of The Wind* because, according to Takemaru (2010), before the 1980s, women were only allowed to focus on marriage, Japanese society regarded being a wife as a job for women. Women began to gain access to education, leading to an increase in female education entering the 1990s. Therefore, the author used a film released during that period.

The analysis of Nausicaa's character in the film *Nausicaa of The Valley of The Wind* is divided into five segments:

1. Amidst the commotion caused by the enemies from Tolmekia, Nausicaa enters the room where her father has been killed. She becomes enraged and immediately kills the soldiers and attacks the General with a long hammer. The action is stopped by a male character called Lord Yupa.

Figure 1. Nausicaa Fights The Tolmekian Soldiers.
(Source: Nausicaa of The Valley of The Wind film, 1984)

2. Nausicaa dreams of herself as a child running and then standing under a large tree, this segment is a part of her memory. This time, she hides and protects a baby Ohm from her parents who were asking her for it, believing that humans and insects cannot coexist. They think Nausicaa is being used by the Ohm. Nausicaa cries when the baby Ohm is taken from her and pleads for the baby Ohm not to be killed, then wakes up from her sleep.

Figure 2. Little Nausicaa protects baby Ohm
(Source: Nausicaa of The Valley of The Wind film, 1984)

3. Nausicaa is imprisoned by the Pejite soldiers because she is considered to have hindered their plan to attack the Tolmekian soldiers. Asbel's mother frees Nausicaa by giving her clothes to disguise herself. Nausicaa receives support from the citizens of Pejite and then sets off towards the Valley of the Wind with Asbel's help.

Figure 3. Nausicaa Receives Supports from Pejite Villagers to Go to Protect Her Own Village.
(Source: Nausicaa of The Valley of The Wind film, 1984)

4. While being injured from being shot by the Tolmekian soldiers as she tries to save the baby Ohm, Nausicaa walks to the baby and apologizes while crying. However, the wounded baby Ohm insists on returning to the herd of Ohm, which is advancing to attack the Tolmekian soldiers in the Valley of the Wind. Nausicaa holds the baby Ohm back because it is bleeding heavily and she does not want it to pass through the toxic lake, causing her legs to be submerged in the water. Seeing Nausicaa scream in pain, the baby Ohm stops moving, and they embrace each other.

Figure 4. Nausicaa holds baby Ohm
(Source: Nausicaa of The Valley of The Wind film, 1984)

5. Alongside the baby Ohm, Nausicaa lands in the middle of the battlefield between the Valley of the Wind and the Tolmekian soldiers, who are about to be overrun by the enraged herd of Ohm. She is hit and thrown aside. The villagers panic and are terrified.

Figure 5. Nausicaa landed in front of the enraged herd of Ohm.
(Source: Nausicaa of The Valley of The Wind film, 1984)

After determining the five segments for analysis, the researcher identifies the design of the main character in each segment.

Tabel 2. Nausicaa's Explicit Trait Identification

Segmen	Explicit Trait	Identification Result	Figure
1	Body shape	Triangle (pear-shaped)	
	Costume	Blue long-sleeved dress, cream pants, gloves, boots	
	Attribute	Long hammer, sword, green pouch	
2	Body shape	Round (apple-shaped)	
	Costume	Pink dress, pink round hat, pants, boots.	
	Attribute	-	-
3	Body shape	Triangle (pear-shaped)	

	Costume	Pink long-sleeved dress given from a Pejite villager, pants, boots	
	Attribute	Belt	
4	Body shape	Triangle (pear-shaped)	
	Costume	Blue long-sleeved dress, blue pants, boots.	
	Attribute	Belt, earrings	
5	Body shape	Triangle (pear-shaped)	
	Costume	Blue long-sleeved dress, blue pants, boots.	
	Attribute	Belt, earrings, Teto (her pet)	

Nausicaa is the main character in the film *Nausicaa of The Valley of The Wind* (1984) with visuals that undergo several changes throughout the story. Nausicaa has a pear-shaped body for most of the film and a round (apple) body shape in flashback segments when she was a child. The costumes worn by Nausicaa also vary, starting with a light blue long-sleeved dress, white pants, blue gloves, and boots, to a different outfit after she escapes using clothes from the Pejite citizens who save her in the third segment: a pink dress, pants, and boots. This costume changes color to blue in the fourth segment when she rescues the baby Ohm. In the flashback segment, Nausicaa appears in a different outfit as well: a pink dress, round hat, pants, and boots.

Regarding the issue of feminism in media, Nausicaa's body shape and costumes do not portray her as a sexual object. Nausicaa's body shape does not emphasize her chest and waist, which is common in female character designs with an hourglass figure. In the second segment, Nausicaa is depicted with a round body shape appropriate to her age as a child. The costumes she wears do not cling to her body shape; her knee-length dress with pants shows an active feminine side. Nausicaa's costume changes symbolize her journey through various situations, with all these changes leading to the final moment when she bravely faces the herd of Ohm. At this point, her costume turns blue, representing her original outfit's color at the beginning of the story. When she successfully returns to the Valley of the Wind and allows herself to be hit by the herd of Ohm, she has gained confidence in herself, illustrated by the blue color of her clothing in the beginning.

The attributes used by Nausicaa also changed. In the first segment, Nausicaa carries a sword, a long hammer, and a green pouch. The hammer signifies that she actively reacts in a threatening situation after seeing her father get killed. However, the hammer is no longer visible as the story progresses, leaving only the green pouch. In the final segment, when Nausicaa confronts the herd of Ohm, she is seen with her pet, Teto, on her shoulder. This is related to Nausicaa's character, who learns not to harm others and focuses on protecting the environment.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to understand the representation of feminism in the explicit characteristics of the main female character design in Studio Ghibli films. The results show that the main character design of Nausicaa in the film *Nausicaa of The Valley of The Wind* (1984) represents third-wave feminism. This is because the character demonstrates a pattern of discovering purpose and self-confidence after enduring pressure in various situations. Each explicit characteristic design of Nausicaa represents a young girl with visuals, costumes, and attributes that change to illustrate the process and outcome of the learning experiences she undergoes. The visual body shape of the character does not emphasize sensuality but portrays an active female side, Nausicaa's body has shown the growth of a girl's breasts and waist but it was not sexualized. The change of the dress' color using pink and blue borrows the logic of femininity and masculinity. The pink dress showed when Nausicaa was in her sorrow state, meanwhile the dress was blue when she was in a fighting state.

The study indicates that the feminism represented relates to the struggle of Japanese women in the 1980s to gain access to education and free themselves from the obligation to marry. Consistent with the feminist representation message in *Nausicaa of The Valley of The Wind*, Japanese women at that time were fighting for their belief in obtaining personal autonomy. Nausicaa's character design represents a non-monotonous depiction of feminism, providing a reference and lesson for audiences and filmmakers in creating female characters.

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