



Reclaiming Agency: Mulan's Empowerment in the Post-feminist Era

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استرجاع القدرة. تمكين مولان في عصر ما بعد النسوية

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Abstract:

The following paper presents a post-feminist reading of Disney's animation film Mulan (1998). It discusses how Mulan stands apart from other Disney princess films due to its Chinese origins and the potential appeal to viewers from that culture. It provides a comprehensive view of the three female characters in the film, including Mulan's mother and grandmother, expanding the analysis beyond the protagonist. The importance of the paper lies in its contribution to the understanding of post-feminist ideology in popular culture and its representation of female agency by focusing on Mulan, a character who defies societal expectations and challenges patriarchal norms. The key post-feminist concepts are post-feminist individualism, empowerment, and choice based on the theorists McRobbie and Grill. By exploring how Mulan handles her identity as a warrior and a woman in a patriarchal society, this study investigates how the film adheres to and challenges feminist ideals and the cultural shift from Chinese to American. Finally, this study highlights post-feminism as exemplified in Disney's Mulan. While the film depicts a progressive story of females being empowered, it also supports certain gender stereotypes and reinforces traditional understandings of femininity. The study contributes to the enduring debate about gender representation in popular media by investigating the relationship between feminist and post-feminist ideologies within the film. It additionally offers a comprehension of post-feminism in the context of Disney princess stories.

Keywords: Post-feminism, Disney's Mulan, post-feminist discourse, gender roles, empowerment, individualism.

المخلص:

تعرض الورقة البحثية التالية، قراءة ما بعد النسوية لفيلم ديزني الكرتوني مولان (١٩٩٨). كما تتناول كيف يتميز فيلم مولان عن غيره من أفلام ديزني الأخرى عن غيره من أفلام ديزني للأميرات بسبب أصوله الصينية وإمكانية جذب المشاهدين من تلك الثقافة. كما تقدم رؤية شمولية للشخصيات النسائية الثلاث في الفيلم، بما في ذلك والدة مولان وجدتها، مما يوسع نطاق التحليل إلى ما هو أكثر من بطلة الفيلم. أهمية هذه الورقة تكمن في مساهمتها في فهم أيديولوجية ما بعد النسوية في الثقافة الشعبية وتصويرها لقوة النساء من خلال تركيزها على شخصية مولان التي تتحدى التوقعات المجتمعية وتتحدى الأعراف الأبوية. وتتمثل المفاهيم الرئيسية لما بعد النسوية في الفردية ما بعد النسوية، والتمكين، والاختيار استنادًا إلى منظري McRobbie و Gill. من ناحية أخرى، تستكشف هذه القراءة كيفية تمسك الفيلم بالمثل النسوية وتحدياتها والتحول الثقافي من الثقافة الصينية إلى الأمريكية، وذلك من أثناء استعراض الطريقة التي تتعامل بها مولان مع هويتها كمحاربة وامرأة في مجتمع أبوي. وأخيراً، تلقي هذه الدراسة الضوء على ما بعد الحركة النسوية كما تتجسد في فيلم ديزني مولان. فبينما يقدم الفيلم قصة تتسم بالتقدمية عن تمكين الإناث، إلا أنه يؤكد أيضاً بعض المفاهيم النمطية الجنسانية ويرسخ المفهوم التقليدي للأنوثة. تسهم هذه الدراسة في إثراء النقاش الدائر حول التمثيل النسوي في وسائل الإعلام الجماهيرية من خلال استقصاء العلاقة بين أيديولوجيات النسوية وما بعد النسوية الموجودة في الفيلم. علاوة على ذلك، تقدم فهماً لما بعد الحركة النسوية في إطار حكايات أميرات ديزني، كما تقدم فهماً لما بعد النسوية في سياق قصص أميرات ديزني. الكلمات المفتاحية: ما بعد النسوية، مولان من ديزني، خطاب ما بعد النسوية، أدوار الجنسين والتمكين والفردية.

1. Introduction to Disney's *Mulan* (1998)

Films convey significance by arranging visual and verbal signals. These textual structures require analysis because meaning is produced here, not through deliberate manipulation. Movies are carriers of ideas. Ideology is a representational system that shapes our perception of the world, appearing universal or natural but is influenced by the power structures of our society. These symbols of woman gain their significance inside a sexist or patriarchal belief system. Its significance is based on the structure and the meanings it produces. Comparing film clichés of women with the reality of women's lives is pointless because both exist inside the same ideological matrix. It is important to analyze how these women function in the film text, its meanings, and the wants and dreams it represents. Commencing the transformation process necessitates this critical detachment(Gamble, 2011, 89)

Disney's *Mulan* (1998) is a tale of a young Chinese woman who, disguised as a man, joins the army to protect her ailing father. With Mushu, her dragon companion, she becomes a skilled warrior under Captain Li Shang. Their mission to stop the Huns takes a dark turn when they find China's army defeated. Mulan reveals her identity, but Shang spares her for her bravery. She warns of the Huns' attack on the Imperial City, aids in their defeat, and defeats the Hun leader, Shan Yu. " The Emperor of China: I have heard

much about you, Fa Mulan. You stole your father's Armor, ran away from home, impersonated a soldier, deceived your commanding officer, dishonored the Chinese Army, destroyed my palace, and... you have saved us all." "The Emperor recognizes her heroism, but she returns home, where she and Shang share a promising romance: the story celebrates Mulan's courage, journey, and triumphant return.



Picture 1: Mulan's Adaptation of masculine and feminine identity

According to Johnston (2002), "Films are *texts*—complex structures of linguistic and visual codes organized to produce specific meanings. They are not merely collections of images or stereotypes. To evaluate cinematic images of women in terms of their greater or lesser degrees of "distorting" " 89). Despite Disney Company's global distribution, notoriety, and popularity of the animated film *Mulan* (1998), they were not the first nor the first production company to attempt such a project. During the

1990s, several animated direct-to-video films in the United States were based on the mythology of Mulan. *The Secret of Mulan* is a 1998 feature animation by United American Video Entertainment Theatre that imagines Mulan's story with characters depicted as six-legged caterpillars. The film portrays Mulan defending her kingdom in a war against invading troops led by the villainous Mala Khan (Dong,2011: 59-160).

The war scene in this fifty-minute film depicts a sanitized version without displaying direct bloodshed and violence, catering to youngsters aged four to nine. Aside from her physical abilities, the film emphasizes Mulan's knowledge and courage, leading to her military success and the imperial army's ultimate triumph. Mulan devises a strategy to surprise the enemy troops and catch them unprepared. She and Liu Gang enter the rebels' camp, acquire their strategic plans, and lead a surprise attack to win the critical battle that concludes the war. As the film's plot progresses, the character Liu Gang transitions from being a friend and companion to becoming a love interest for Mulan on her military journey. Mulan explicitly states her desire to marry someone she loves and considers her best friend, hinting at her affection for Liu Gang and the potential for a future together. The movie concludes with Mulan experiencing a bittersweet homecoming, feeling both delight at reuniting with her family after years of absence and sadness at saying goodbye to Liu Gang. They both reject the

opportunity to serve as officials in the imperial court and depart for their own homes. Before parting ways, Mulan reveals her secret to Liu Gang by removing her helmet. The final scene suggests a future together for the two closest friends, resembling the "happily-ever-after" conclusion seen in Disney's *Mulan* (Dong, 2011,163)

The paper tries to answer the following questions :

1. How does Disney '*Mulan*'s (1998) represent a post-feminist hero?
2. What is the mother-daughter relationship between Mulan and Fa Li based on a feminist look?
3. How can Mulan, Fa Li, and Grandmother Fa be compared and compared according to post-feminist theory?

The paper is divided into five sections: Section one is an introduction, section two deals with the theoretical frame of post-feminist theory and its critics, section three is the application of post-feminism to *Mulan*. Section four presents a post-feminist analysis of Fa Li and Grandmother Fa, and finally, yet importantly, a conclusion sums up the paper's main findings.

2. Post-feminism

As a reaction to the post-modernism of Western nations, post-feminism, also known as the third wave of the feminism movement, originated in the early 1990s (Li, 2005:14). Prominent

members of this group include post-feminist Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Angela McRobbie, and Rosalind Gill. Third-wave feminism has put forth a poststructuralist framework for analyzing these concealed political manifestations of sexism and misogyny. The collection comprises critical analyses of power and discourse relations, essentialist social construction theory, dualism, and grand theories (Gillis et al., 158-177). Additionally, it deconstructs the cultural conflict between males and females, including an aversion to labeling, contradiction, contrast, and anti-essentialism and non-judgmentalism, welcoming a variety of identities both among and within people" (Cocca, 2014: 98).

McRobbie (2004a: 256) discusses the concept of post-feminist inquiry, which refers to the transition in feminist academic theory towards postcolonial and poststructuralist methodologies. According to McRobbie, the year 1990 represents a significant shift in feminist scholarship, characterized by a critical examination of second-wave feminism's failure to address issues of race. According to McRobbie (2004a: 256), there was a rise in the study of post-feminist inquiry, which coincided with a greater recognition and portrayal of feminist topics in mainstream media. Conversely, McRobbie describes post-feminist as a "cultural space" where feminism is strongly criticized (2004a: 257). She posits that popular culture depictions depict feminism as

obsolete, delineating two forms of post-feminism: academic and popular.

McRobbie identifies a notable challenge in establishing a theoretical framework for post-feminism while examining the connections between post-feminism and popular culture (McRobbie, 2004b). Post-feminism refers to the situation where feminist discussions advocating for women's freedom align with neoliberal discussions centered around personal decision-making. Despite the widespread emphasis on individual freedom in modern society, there are still reactionary inclinations that want to undermine the progress achieved by women. Post-feminism, which refers to the idea that feminism is no longer necessary, can be utilized to endorse this conservative objective.

According to McRobbie (2004b), post-feminism can be examined by considering the simultaneous presence of neo-conservative beliefs regarding gender, sexuality, and family life with the influence of liberal feminism. In her argument, she contends that it is challenging to select a specific feminism that pertains to domestic and kinship connections. Additionally, she observes that feminism has evolved into a widely accepted belief system influenced by Gramscian ideology while simultaneously being vehemently rejected. McRobbie views post-feminism as problematic due to its association with the marginalization of feminists. According to her argument, feminism is marginalized

and considered outdated by presenting feminist ideas as something that is widely accepted and unquestionable. Once feminism is considered in this manner, it rapidly becomes replaced and declared obsolete.

Examining the feminist discourse on individualism is a recurring theme in numerous post-feminist dialogues. The prevalence of individualistic discourse in post-feminist understandings has positive and ominous implications for advancing feminist goals. McRobbie (2004a) contends that using persuasive language promoting freedom and choice among young women has resulted in the perception that feminism is superfluous. Post-feminism, which refers to a belief in individuality, is a significant topic in the discussions about the feminist generation. It perpetuates the issue of promoting neoliberal dominance while disregarding feminist discourse.

In her work, Mary Varus (2000: 413) argues that post-feminism has solipsistic tendencies and primarily caters to a privileged minority of women. Varus (200) defines post-feminism as a media-created concept representing a "middle ground" between extreme feminism and pre-feminism. It is characterized by an essentialist philosophy that prioritizes individualism and caters to the demands of privileged women who are white, straight, and of a lighter social status while disregarding the collective needs of other women.

While the idea of individualism poses challenges due to feminism's origins in communal action, it is crucial to analyze how individualist discourse overlaps with feminist ideals and influences a post-feminist cultural environment. Individualism is a prominent aspect of the post-feminist environment in which young women are maturing. It should be scrutinized with discussions about different generations rather than being disregarded as being against feminism. It is imperative to acknowledge the impact of the advancements achieved by second-wave feminism on contemporary young women.

Shelley Budgeon's (2001) utilization of post-feminism offers valuable insights into the convergence of feminist and individualist ideologies. Her objective is to investigate the comprehension of young women on the range of options accessible to them, with a specific focus on their perspectives on gender. Budgeon interviewed women between 16 and 20 in 1997 and 1998. She contended that feminism utilizes individualistic language while asserting that feminist principles heavily influence these women's perspectives. She discovered a conceptual framework that merges the principles of equality with discussions on individualism (Budgeon 2001: 20). Feminist discourses serve as the conceptual framework through which they comprehend the world. Therefore, Budgeon might counter the unfavorable evaluation of post-feminism as the demise or obsolescence of

feminism by proposing how feminist discussions remain pertinent to young women.

Budgeon (2001: 25-26) contends that employing the concept of post-feminism to comprehend the experiences of young women is beneficial in the sense that post-feminist is seen as a means of critically examining the constraints of second-wave feminism and allowing for an exploration of the diverse manifestations of feminism.

Rosalind Gill (2017) argues that the makeover paradigm is prevalent in modern popular culture (239). It emphasizes the importance of appearance, particularly when single women desire to get married. For instance, numerous television shows focus on transforming the appearance of regular people (256). To better comprehend the various interpretations of the broad and elusive concept of feminism, Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff (2011) have categorized its applications into four distinct ways: post-feminism as a departure from traditional feminist knowledge, as a historical transition following the second wave of feminism, as a form of feminism that goes beyond traditional feminist ideologies, and as a particular mindset or sensibility (3). The epistemological break refers to a shift within feminism that involves the convergence of feminism with postmodernism and postcolonialism. The prefix "post" signifies a critical examination

of the prior feminist perspective, indicating that the previous notion of feminism has been surpassed and substituted (Brooks).

According to McRobbie (2009) and Gill (2017), post-feminism should not merely be a reactionary response to the feminist movement. They argue that this perspective fails to acknowledge the presence of contradictions or disruptions within post-feminist discourses. According to Gill, "sensible" is a cultural artifact that is the subject of investigation rather than being only a descriptive concept or an active aspect of post-feminist thought. The number is 607. An in-depth analysis of post-feminism in popular culture and society reveals it as a sensibility highlighting the conflicting character of post-feminist discourses and the intermingling of feminist and anti-feminist elements within them (Gill, 147).

3. A Post-feminist reading of Mulan

In the film's initial scenes, Mulan consults the local Matchmaker for counsel concerning prospective spouses. The film portrayed the conventional societal demands imposed on women as they readied themselves to enter matrimony and settled into the domestic sphere. The optimal course of action for women to maintain family honor is to adhere to conventional values and satisfy societal demands. Mulan's experience with the matchmaking service was a dismal failure, as the Matchmaker

vehemently critiqued her and asserted that her bumbling and tomboyish demeanor would never merit honor for her family. Following the Matchmaker's reprimand, Mulan contemplated the possibility that she could no longer defend her family's honor. Mulan's forceful rendition of "Reflect" as Mulan prepares to meet with the Matchmaker is one of the film's most memorable moments. In contemplating the societal expectations placed upon her, Mulan demonstrates her profound introspection and shrewd self-awareness in this scene. Her ability to analyze her ambitions and reasons demonstrates her exceptional intellectual ability. During the film, Fa, Mulan's grandmother, publically questions the matchmaking process and how to find suitable partners, thus challenging the social norms.



Picture 2: Mulan's failure with the Matchmaker

According To Dong (2011), *Mulan* (1998) emphasizes a feminist perspective by portraying the main character's internal battle between her individuality and society's expectations of young

women. As the sole daughter, Mulan must make a favorable impression on the Matchmaker by presenting herself as a well-groomed maiden to secure a suitable betrothal and uphold her family's honor. The protagonist's initial on-screen presence suggests she does not adhere to the expected behavior norms and looks for a young woman seeking a marriage proposal(190). The paper studies the cultural standards and expectations of women's importance as not only restricted to martial positions. Grandmother Fa shows her strength and self-confidence in her thoughts and actions. Her interaction with the Matchmaker clearly stated that she questions the traditional idea of women's beauty and marriage. She also advises Mulan to remain authentic despite the social expectations imposed on her. Mulan's choice to join the army and then return home while frankly changing the social responsibilities of women by limiting her to housewife issue is admired by her grandmother.

In one of the scenes, Mulan says," Maybe I did not go for my father. Maybe I wanted to prove I could do things right so I would see someone worthwhile when I looked in the mirror" (Mulan, 1998). When Mulan decides to join the army without revealing her identity as a woman, it is a significant point in the film, which, although fictional, still has a timeless reality that links to folktales. Mulan adapts a masculine disguise to enter the male environment and improve her adaptability. Hiding her identity gives her access

to desirable opportunities and experiences that exceed her previous limitations due to being a woman limited by social expectations and norms. Mulan's talent for strategic thought and methodical decision-making is evident in her pursuit of objectives. Mulan courageously gives up her life to protect the lives of other empire's allies. Mulan recruits highly skilled troops to strengthen the kingdom by anticipating and countering the enemy's tactics. Considering the probability that Mulan's men have not yet developed a strategy, the enemy could potentially have an advantage in this situation.



Picture 3: Mulan's as the post-feminist warrior.

The examples mentioned earlier exemplify Mulan's exceptional intelligence and proactive demeanor. An adept fighter must utilize the most effective tactic available to him. Mulan's rationality in contemplating deception during emergencies highlights their aptitude for logical thinking and unwavering commitment to supporting their comrades in arms. Mulan skillfully employs a

tactical maneuver with great courage to divert the enemy's attack and protect the men in dangerous circumstances. Mulan is portrayed as a powerful female character in the context of post-feminism.

While watching the training part of "I Will Make a Man Out of You," she quickly recognizes the unique qualities that her teammates possess. Through her sharp perception and strategic expertise, she helps her companions succeed by maximizing their strengths. For example, she encourages Ling to maximize his agility and uses weight training to improve Yao's balance—this situation exemplifies Mulan's ability to employ creative problem-solving techniques and overcome challenges. Mulan's strategic coordination of an avalanche during the crucial clash with the Huns on the mountain culminates in their forces being thwarted. She meticulously analyses the terrain and identifies her mountain's vulnerability. Using her extensive knowledge and sharp thinking, she skilfully plans a clever operation that lures the Huns into a risky trap. The action highlights Mulan's exceptional ability to analyze situations, identify vulnerabilities, and develop strategic plans, all contributing to her eventual victory. Wang (2022) states "Mulan does not simply fantasize or dream about a young woman's life filled with adventure, excitement, and freedom; instead, she moves to the level of action to protect her family's

honor and, in the process, achieves extraordinary success and outshines her male contemporaries (177).”

Mulan astutely employed the hats of fallen soldiers and capitalized on the turbulent battlefield conditions to secure the Snow Mountain's capitulation and deceive the enemy. As a result of the unforeseen snowstorm, her colleagues were able to escape unscathed. Mulan, who is of profound deliberation in her decision-making, demonstrates a remarkable intellect. After thoroughly evaluating the opponent's situation and condition, Mulan proactively formulated a strategy for an early morning assault. Mulan valiantly risks his life and personal property to provide intelligence on the intended target and possible defensive strategies of the adversary. Mulan's portrayal as an erudite individual transcended that of her comrades in arms, solidifying her position as the progenitor of the imperial empire. It is considered unacceptable due to a limited viewpoint that undervalues the capabilities of women. Throughout history, there has been a societal expectation that women should assume the role of homemakers and be accountable for the upkeep of the household.

By challenging societal expectations and behaving in a manner that contradicted conventional wisdom, Mulan challenged societal norms. Mulan challenged prevailing societal norms by exemplifying the strength and tenacity of women when confronted

with obstacles. She conducted a thorough analysis of the concept of masculinity. Mulan's determination to prove her worth extended beyond her duties at home as she sought to demonstrate her capabilities. Mulan considered herself a fervent protector of her country, family, and integrity. Mulan, with the support of the Chinese army, gained a great victory over the Huns, gaining the emperor's admiration and bringing great honor to her family.

The film underscores the importance of breaking traditional gender conventions by highlighting men's and women's equal combat capabilities. After initially attempting to adhere to traditional norms, Mulan defies these conventions by joining the military instead of following her father's path. The film portrays a resolute protagonist who overcomes numerous challenges to shape her fate. However, this film also conveys a discouraging message about women, as Mulan fails to understand the significant repercussions resulting from her choice to fight, leading to a shift in society's perception of women. Mulan's narrative takes place in ancient China when women were subjected to severe restrictions outside their domestic spheres.

During that era, the roles and activities expected of women were limited to domestic duties and pursuits regarded as socially acceptable by their spouses. The day a woman was required to meet the Matchmaker and establish an enduring impact would be the most critical day of her existence. It was common for Chinese

women to consult a matchmaker before entering matrimony. McRobbie argues that" this ideological representation acts as a powerful force on the lives of its readers involving (among others) the search for (heterosexual) romance, finding the right boy and thus placing yourself in a competitive relationship with your girlfriends, and the code of feminism and popular culture fashion and beauty which instructs readers on how to dress and look in order to be able to meet the demands of this ideology (98-90". Three perspectives apply to analyzing the values associated with post-feminism: intellectual, positional, and decision-making. These viewpoints emphasize the assessment of an individual's intellect over gender. Individuals of all genders can determine their courses of action. Men and women hold positions of equality. While acknowledging the intrinsic distinctions between men and women, it is imperative to define success based on one's capabilities rather than their gender. Likewise, it is essential to have the capabilities of women to assume leadership roles and arrive at logical conclusions. In her capacity as the female protagonist, Mulan exemplifies the notion of post-feminism through her portrayal of the intrinsic distinctions between men and women.

Nevertheless, the community's viewpoint unequivocally demonstrates the existence of intrinsic distinctions between males and females, an essential element that Mulan's character adeptly

personifies. Absent from both genders are women who identify as feminists and men who exemplify traditional masculinity. However, everyone undoubtedly expresses their unique blend of femininity and masculinity. As an animated film, *Mulan* presents a captivating storyline that shows the female transformation of *Mulan's* bravery and empowerment by acquiring admirable worrying qualities, such as determination, courage, and a spritz of adventure linked to males. She successfully assumes the traditional role of man duties to symbolize her protection for her country and empowerment.

As Gill (2014) describes it, "post-feminist masculinity is personified "in the repeated depiction of men as somewhat hapless, bumbling victims or losers in the sex wars' alongside the presentation of feminism as extreme, old-fashioned, and unnecessary/superfluous" (p. 191). Concerning feminism, *Mulan's* ideas have a significant influence through mastering masculine traits like speaking, walking, and behaving like them, and she challenges social norms of gender and participates in women's empowerment. *Mulan* explores the confidence between female and male societies, illustrating the feminist perspective that male characters might express doubts about women limiting their participation in traditionally male-dominated activities and setting gender roles for men. However, men can fulfill specific social functions. *Mulan* disproves male preconceived notions regarding

the capabilities of women by highlighting her extraordinary vitality in numerous events. Its objective was to encapsulate the viewpoint of forward-thinking women, promoting absolute parity between the sexes. Like the critically acclaimed film *Mulan*, it distinguished itself by overtly endorsing feminist principles. However, a multitude of films subtly addressed women's issues.

4. Analyzing Fa and Grandmother from a Post-feminist Perspective

Mulan exemplifies the characteristics of a post-feminist persona, whereas her mother personifies the principles of conventional feminism. In the movie *Mulan*, Fa Li personifies the epitome of conventional femininity. The individual is a nurturing and supportive maternal figure who conforms to conventional gender roles and responsibilities, including managing the household and maintaining the family's reputation. Contrary to post-feminism, which focuses on personal agency and challenging the regular gender norms, Fa L' reflects conventional gender roles commonly associated with pre-feminist times. She stresses her family's happiness and reputation above other needs, showing selflessness. She is converted to post-feminism's conventional view of femineity that is contracted to the post-feminist perspective. She agrees with the boundaries placed on her due to her gender. Fa Li's

representation encourages the notion of a woman who puts her family and other priorities, needs, and desires above her own.

Compared to Mulan, Fa Li lacks personal empowerment or agency. Her central function is to support and encourage Mulan, highlighting that women could accomplish fulfillment by helping and inspiring others instead of focusing on their desires and goals. Fa Li's depiction emphasizes the lack of intersectionality and adversity of representation. Fa li understands the specific cultural norms and provides an educated perspective on gender. This limitation aligns with the post-feminist concerns, which fail to recognize the distinguished experience of women from diverse contexts. Consequently, gender roles and empowerment are interpreted in a narrow sense.

Though analyzing Fa Li from post-feminism, her depiction shows her significant insight into the female portrayal of women who resemble traditional feminism and explores its connection to post-feminist discourse. The film dives into the relationship of Mulan and her mother, showing acts of love, respect, and loyalty to cultural and societal values. Fa Li exemplifies the traditional Chinese principles and norms of culture in the basic form. She portrays a caring mother who sincerely wishes the best for her children. Mulan's desire to follow the traditional gender norms and cultural expectations indicates her determination to honor her family by marrying and obeying established roles.

As a mother and daughters, they express a strong sense of loyalty and devotion in Chinese culture, exhibiting filial devotion and obeying family. Milan genuinely appreciates her mother trying to fulfill her demands despite the struggles and difficulties of maintaining the norms of society, which require obedience and the fulfillment of the daughter's role. Because Mulan and Fa Li have different viewpoints and aims, misunderstandings and discord occur between the two. Mulan's rebellious spirit and yearning for independence and power clashed with Fa Li's constant commitment to tradition. Mulan recognizes her mother's disagreement with being disguised as a man as the source of bringing disgrace to the family when females join the army.

Mulan and Fa Li's relationship is governed by love, devotion, and respect following cultural norms, and conflict occurs due to their dissimilar views of the expectations imposed on them. Contrasted to Fa Li, who represents traditional feminism and cultural convention, Mulan's journey challenges these boundaries; finally, they create mutual understanding between them. Mulan's mother claims that Mulan's fundamental goal is to maintain the family's status through marriage; nevertheless, Mulan needs her own progress and rebels against societal standards. A conflict arises between them as Mulan strives to reconcile her aspirations with those of her mother. Upon Mulan's failure to meet the criteria of

an exemplary wife during the matchmaker situation, Fa Li undergoes feelings of sadness and shame.

Consequently, Fa Li expresses her fear and sentiments of disappointment. Fa Li is worried that Mulan's actions may risk the family's reputation; thus, the gap between the mother and the daughter widens because of stressing Mulan's real nature and the culture's norms and standards that enforce her. Mulan's heroic decision to join the army and accept the military responsibilities her father firmly carried out is a remarkable exhibition of suspense. Because of her mother's disapproval, she acts freely and carefully leaves without informing anyone. As a result, Fa Li is worried about her daughter's safety. The tension between Mulan's firm determination to continue her journey and her family's viewpoint can be seen in Mulan's departure on her horse.

The film's final scene solves the earlier miscommunication and misunderstanding between Mulan and her mother. Eventually, Mulan's mother accepted her identity as her daughter, symbolizing a shared understanding of each role. These examples illustrate the discord that results from Mulan's ambition to defy traditional gender roles in contrast with her mother's unwavering loyalty to traditional values. "Fa Zhou: The greatest gift and honor... is having you for a daughter". The film demonstrates how mutual understanding and respect can overcome these problems and reinforce relationships with others

5. Conclusion

Wang (2022) declares that "Mulan does not simply fantasize or dream about a young woman's life filled with adventure, excitement, and freedom; rather, she moves to the level of action to protect her family's honor and in the process, achieves extraordinary success and outshines her male contemporaries (177). Mulan's character exemplifies traits of agency and empowerment by courageously challenging the established role and assuming authority over her destiny. Gill defines "choice feminist" as an ideology emphasizing women being decision-makers according to their personal objectives and values and confirming post-feminism. Mulan investigates the complicated connection between physical beauty and femininity. She embodies a masculine persona, breaking the established gender roles, which raises questions about female representation in media. It fits with Gill's concept of femininity as a "post-feminist masquerade" in which women adopt diverse identities that contain the existing traditional roles.

At the same time, Mulan's mother represents the typical Chinese female. Grill's theories of "post-feminist sensibility" and "retrosexual" can be applied to Fa Li's focus on her daughter's success and allegiance to traditionality. Grandmother Fa conveys a unique combination of divergent viewpoints on feminism.

Despite her critical attitude towards gender stereotypes and organized marriage, she supports the conventional values of preserving family reputation. This dichotomy highlights the complex nature of post-feminism, whereby females reject and adopt specific old values at the same time.

Grandmother Fa advises Mulan by stressing the virtues of resilience, honesty, and individualism in a society that evolved from traditional feminism. This coincides with the present emphasis on empowerment and personal fulfillment. Feminist women's experiences may not be entirely reflected in the empowerment of Grandmother Fa, which is founded on traditional beliefs. Through continuing dialogues, Grandmother Fa's character skilfully integrates modern feminist views with conformist norms. By concurrently challenging and obeying traditional gender standards, she exemplifies the difficulties and conflicts that arise when opposed to standard expectations.

Mulan represents freedom of choice, individualism, and resistance to the traditional gender role. Fa Li represents the struggle and clash between the traditional feminist perspective and the growth of post-feminist ideologies, while Grandmother Fa represents the diverse perspectives on traditional feminism and empowerment in post-feminism. Together, they help define Mulan's complex depiction of gender. Mulan's representation is distinguished from other Disney princesses by exemplified traits of postmodernism.

Through challenging gender expectations, Mulan obtains personal success that aligns with her values. She illustrated bravery and independence by showing autonomy and rejecting standards and conventions.

By applying Gill's post-postfeminist concept to examine the three characters in Mulan, the paper compares the film's representation of post-feminist principles and customs of culture. Despite Mulan's journey questions gender norms and celebrating individual agency, it is critical to acknowledge the limitations and inconsistencies of post-feminism. Thus, the paper comprehensively investigates the film's representation of post-feminist ideologies and cultural conventions. Even though Mulan's journey challenges gender norms and celebrates individual agency, it is critical to acknowledge the limitations and inconsistencies of post-feminism. Mulan indicates the synthesis of diversity, the denial of male-dominated perceptions, and the beginning of post-feminism. The paper investigates the complications of navigating gender and cultural conventions while examining the interplay between her Chinese heritage and feminine identity. Mulan's depiction illustrates the complex interplay between cultural norms and independence; Mulan signifies the fundamental beliefs of post-feminism. Mulan contributes to broadening and diversifying the themes explored in Disney's productions (Canemaker 231). The film intentionally

maintains the Chinese cultural elements in the character Mulan and her story while adapting them to appeal to the global film industry.

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