

# **AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN “BLACK WIDOW” FILM BY CATE SHORTLAND (A FEMINISM STUDY)**

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This research was aimed to analyze the women representation shown in the film as represented by Natasha Romanoff in Black Widow film.

This research was conducted at Slamet Riyadi University Library in 2024. To analyze the problem formulation, the researcher used a feminist approach. The researcher used feminism and impact role of women as race or ethnicity, and sexuality theories. In conducting the study, the researcher used method Miles and Huberman in analysis of qualitative data. The primary data is the Black Widow film written and directed by Cate Shortland. Secondary data is article, journal, book, and other previous research linked that could support the primary data.

The findings of this research indicate that women representation that show in Natasha Romanoff throughout the film. Natasha's concept of race, ethnicity, and sexuality is based on her Russian background, and Natasha's as women representation associated with Russian women. The part also touched on cultural stereotypes of Russian Women. Natasha embodies Russian traits, as seen in Natasha's actions and behavior throughout the film.

It can be concluded that Natasha has an amazing women representation. Natasha emerges as a complex character who navigates her past traumas and current challenges with courage, compassion, and determination. Natasha can prove that woman offers a nuanced exploration of gender dynamics, empowerment, and resilience, providing a refreshing perspective on women representation.

Keywords : Black Widow, Feminism, Gender Equality, Film, and Women Representation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The image of humans as special social figures is widely contained in literature, especially in literary works. Film is one of a literary work of moving images in which there are scenes that illustrate a storyline. Literature itself is the creation of writing of a beautiful language and the embodiment of the vibration of the soul in the form of writing. Film has become one part of literary works, film becomes a representation in human life. According to Effendy (1986: 134) film is an audio-visual 2 communication medium to convey a message to a group of people gathered in a certain place.

Literary work is a piece of human thought that was poured into a media. Literature can be categorized broadly into fiction and non-fiction. Fiction encompasses imaginative works

not rooted in reality, while non-fiction comprises literary pieces based on factual events. Examples of fiction include novels, short stories, poetry, drama, and film, whereas non-fiction encompasses genres such as personal essays, history, biography, and autobiography

Film is one of the popular literary works, also Film stands out as the preferred mode of both entertainment and educational media, offering a visual medium that aids audience comprehension. According to (Sapp, 1986) Films are moving images that are considered a source of entertainment or a form of art. It has become an important art form to learn various aspects through it.

Film as a medium for literature learning is very effective in providing socio-cultural education and moral values, in addition to providing information about literary works and their appreciation. Film media becomes a viable method after recognizing the lack of interest in reading literary works, especially among students.

Film not only present the author's creative process but also provide messages and motivate audience reflection on societal issues. A successful film has a clear beginning, middle, and end, with a balance of suspense and action. Motion pictures are powerful visual aids, combining pictures, movement, color, and sound. Klarer (2013, p. 14) states that fictional literature such as novels, films and dramas have important elements. These are character, plot, setting, and narrative perspective.

According to Freytag (1984), a German writer, plot is divided into several parts. Those are Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Denouement. Exposition is introduces the characters

, especially the main characters. Rising action starts with a conflict. In rising action the protagonist understands his or her goal and begins to work toward it. Climax is the highest point of the story. The protagonist make the single big decision that defines not only the outcome of the story, but also who they are as a person. Falling action is the phase consist of events that lead to the ending. Denouement is the phase the protagonist and antagonist have solved their problems and either the protagonist or antagonist wins the conflict.

Setting is the background is a description of the place, time and atmosphere of the occurrence of an event in a literary work. Brooks in Tarigan (2011) stated that the background is the physical background, the element of the place, and the space in a story. Therefore the setting is very supportive of the story plot. Besides that, the setting also greatly influences the atmosphere, events, issues in the story, and story themes.

Narrative perspective also known as point of view, refers to how a writer depicts the characters, time, and atmosphere within a story. Point of views categorized in three positions; first is omniscient point of view or as a third person point of view. Characteristically using the word "she" and "he". The second is first person narration or minor characters, using "I" or "we" perspective.

Black widow contains feminism aspect. Feminism is theory that men and women should be equal politically, economically, and socially. According to Tong (2009: 1), feminism

is women's suffrage movement. Indeed, feminists have used to explain for women's oppression, their purposed solution for it is elimination, and it may ultimately prove to be entirely unreflective of feminism's intellectual and political commitments to woman.

Feminism is a movement that has several branches all with the same focus on women's equality. Tong (2009) explained the variety of feminism theory, there are eight feminism of thought: Liberal, Radical, Marxist or Socialist, Psychoanalytic, Care Focused, Multicultural, Ecofeminism, and Postmodern or Third Wave.

In this research, the used of liberal feminism is applied to the film "Black Widow." The film's plot and conflict focus on the oppression of women by men, offering a new perspective on the role of women. It emphasizes that women must assert their existence to make men realize their essential role. Women are often marginalized, starting from their immediate environment, due to societal limitations on their actions, such as not engaging in physical strength games.

Black Widow is only a fictional character in the world of comics and films Marvel, but the character have become packaging for expressing the values of feminists who represent women in terms of strength and sexism. In the context of identity, the character of Black Widow is proof that the representation of women is often still in double standard of femininity. In Brooks' view that stereotypes of women used by the film that appears is a white woman, dress for men who identify as heterosexual, competitive, aggressive, materialistic, individualistic, and reverses roles towards men (Brooks;, 2011).

Black Widow is a representation of a woman which is a human being completely a mixed of positive feminine and masculine traits. The representation of Black Widow is a combination of feminine and masculine elements, on one side is a tough figure, good at fighting, strong and firm who represents nature masculine, but also beautiful physically (sexually) 30 and a sympathetic representative feminine nature. This representation is always represent with the character Black Widow in every appearance in all scenes in the Black Widow film.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research conducted in the library of Slamet Riyadi University that located at Gunung Kawi 2 street, Kadipiro, Banjarsari, Surakarta, Central Java. This research was conducting in September 2023 – February 2024.

The researcher used qualitative research methods which describe information and cannot be measured or calculated. Data analysis was considered as the key component of research since it allowed the study findings to be discovered as scientific reports that could be used correctly. The figure above depicts the model of data analysis as well as data collection in qualitative research according to Mathew B. Miles and A. 36 Michael Huberman. They divided the process of analysis into three phases, consisting of Data Reduction, Data Displays, and Conclusion Drawing or Verification.

The researcher watched movie, analyze film script of the film entitled "Black Widow" and categorize the dialogue that contains women representation and feminism, display the data

in the form of dialogues and pictures that related to women representation and feminism, the conclusion based on the data analyzed to get the best conclusion about the women representation and feminism. The process analysis data using the Miles & Huberman data source was analyzed in four steps as well as the analysis of the data: 1) data collecting, 2) data reduction, 3) data display, and 4) conclusion drawing.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### a. Results

#### 1. The Women Representation Are Shown In The Film Black Widow Represented by Natasha Romanoff

The Representaion of Natasha Romanoff in the Film Entitled Black can be displaying into four several methods. There were physical appearance, social status, social relationship, and the primary character's personality.

##### A. Personality of Natasha Romanoff

In the Black Widow film women representation can be concluded that there are several types of Natasha's personality, there are: brave, caring, ambitious, independent, and tough.

The brave personality of Natasha Romanoff can be seen from scene in the dialogue below:

Natasha : Mom! (GRUNTING)

**Melina : I need you up here.**

Natasha : Okay.

Melina : I need you to pull right.

Natasha : Mom, you've got blood on you

From the dialogue above can see how brave Natasha was when her mom drive the helicopter suddenly her got shoted by the police, so her mom asked Natasha to take over the helicopter.

The next personality of Natasha Romanoff is caring. The caring personality of Natasha Romanoff can be seen from the dialogue below:

(GROANS SOFTLY)

**Natasha : Hey. Don't move. You're hurt. Let me help you.**

(BREATHING SHAKILY)

From the dialogue above Natasha tried to help Widow (the name of dreykov's army) after she fell from a height and asked Widow to not move because it will hurt her, but Widow decided to committed suicide. From the conversation above, it can be concluded that Natasha still care about other people.

The third personality of Natasha Romanoff is ambitious. The ambitious of Natasha Romanoff can be seen in the dialogue below:

Dreykov : **That one, she has fire in her. What was her name?**

Alexei : Natasha.

Dreykov : Ah... Natasha.

From the dialogue above can see how ambitious Natasha when Dreykov saw Natasha fight against the army, Dreykov concluded that Natasha was ambitious in doing what she want to do without hesitation.

The fourth personality of Natasha Romanoff is independent. How independent of Natasha can be seen from the dialogue below:

Yelena: (LAUGHS) Oh, come on. I mean, they're great poses, but it does look like you think everyone's looking at you, like, all the time.

**Natasha: All that time that I spent posing, I was trying to actually do something good to make up for all the pain and suffering that we caused. Trying to be more than just a trained killer.**

Yelena: Well, then you were fooling yourself because pain and suffering is every day and we are both still a trained killer. Except I'm not the one that's on the cover of a magazine. I'm not the killer that little girls call their hero.

From the dialogue above can be conclude that Natasha is an independent woman because she wants to fight alone in the war field, because she feel that her sister is not yet capable of fighting.

The last personality of Natasha Romanoff is tough. Natasha was a tough women. The tough personality of Natasha can be seen from the dialogue below:

**Yelena: (SCOFFS) Bullshit. You just did not want your baby sister to tag along, whilst you saved the world with the cool kids.**

Natasha: You weren't really my sister.

Yelena: And the Avengers aren't really your family. Why do you always do that thing?

From the dialogue above above it can be concluded that Natasha is a tough person, she feel capable of fighting alone so that her sister does not get hurt and does not feel the same pain as she does.

## 2. The Impact Role of Women as Race or Ethnicity and Sexuality

Humans were created with different physical characteristics and appearances, leading to classifications often referred to as racial terms. NatashaRomanoff, also known as Black Widow, was often depicted with a Russian background. Russia was an incredibly diverse country with a rich tapestry of ethnicities and cultures. Ethnic relations in Russia had evolved over centuries of coexistence,migration, and historical events.

Natasha's physical appearance was similar to that of many Russian people, including

features such as a broader nose, dark blond eyebrows, fair skin, and a round face. Russian cultural stereotypes often included being collectivist, hardworking, and independent.

The aspect of Russian culture could be seen in Natasha's actions, such as when she and her family worked together to deceive and fight Dreykov. For instance, Natasha disguised herself as her foster mother, who worked for Dreykov, to infiltrate his office. Natasha's hardworking nature was evident in her relentless pursuit to destroy Dreykov and his base. Her independence as a Russian woman was showcased in many scenes, reflecting her ability to overcome challenges and carry out missions with skill and courage without relying on others. Despite her difficult past, Natasha possessed a strong sense of emotional freedom, managing her internal conflicts without excessive support from others.

## **b. Discussion**

The results indicated in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Natasha Romanoff as portrayed in the film "Black Widow", is a complex personality whose women representation shine through her multifaceted traits. Based on the result findings, the researcher found that Natasha Romanoff was an brave, caring, ambitious, independent, and tough. Her all personality can be seen from the Black Widow scenes.

In this "Black Widow" movie Natasha Romanoff were reflected feminism. The researcher used liberal feminism theory by Tong (2009: 1). According to Tong (2009: 1) feminism is women's suffrage movement. Indeed, feminists have used to explain for women's oppression, their purposed solution for it is elimination, and it may ultimately prove to be entirely unreflective of feminism's intellectual and political commitments to woman. Liberal feminism can be seen when portrayal of women's sexuality in "Black Widow" contributed to a nuanced exploration of gender dynamics, empowerment, and resilience, offering audiences a refreshing and empowering perspective on women representaiton in the action genre.

Natasha Romanoff experiences within the Red Room shaped her character's backstory and motivations. Although her specific racial or ethnic background beyond her nationality as Russian was not consistently emphasized in the comics or films, it could be concluded that Natasha's physical characteristics were similar to those of typical Russians. Culturally, Russian people were often stereotyped as collectivist, hardworking, and independent.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings and discussion about Black Widow film : In the film "Black Widow," Natasha Romanoff's character is explored through both her physical appearance and personality traits. Her physical appearance evolves throughout the movie, with her hair color changing three times to reflect her shifting identities and circumstances. As an adult on the run, she adopts red hair to signify her new identity. By the film's end, she changes her hair to blonde to evade capture, showcasing her adaptability.

Natasha's personality is revealed through various traits. She is brave, taking control in dangerous situations, such as when she pilots a helicopter after her mother is injured and faces threats to protect her sister, Yelena. She also shows caring personality, especially when trying

to help the wounded Widow after her mother is shot. Natasha's ambition and determination are highlighted by Dreykov during combat, and her foster mother describes her as relentless, similar to her biological mother. Her independence is evident in her quest for redemption and her decision to fight alone, believing Yelena isn't ready for battle. Lastly, Natasha's toughness is portrayed through her physical scars and her willingness to reject her sister's plan to save the world. These traits collectively depict Natasha as a complex character who confronts her past traumas and present challenges with courage, empathy, and determination.

In "Black Widow" women's sexuality is a crucial element shaping the personality and their interactions. The film portrays women's personality, led by Natasha Romanoff, as agents of their own sexuality, not objects of male desire. They challenge traditional gender stereotypes by being multifaceted individuals with motivations beyond romance. Despite their strength, they're depicted as vulnerable, adding depth to their personality. Natasha's bond with her sister Yelena highlights the importance of female solidarity. The film critiques the exploitation of women's bodies by those in power, emphasizing the need for agency over one's sexuality. Overall, "Black Widow" offers an exploration of gender dynamics, empowerment, and resilience, providing a refreshing perspective on women's representation in the action genre.

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