

THE RESISTANCE TO CHINESE SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS OF THE MAIN  
FEMALE CHARACTER IN ANIMATED FILMS:  
MULAN AND MULAN II

A MASTER'S PROJECT

BY

SAENGDAO THINHANWONG

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts Degree in English  
at Srinakharinwirot University

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AN ABSTRACT

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This study aimed to examine Chinese social expectations presented in Disney's Mulan and Mulan II and analyzed how Mulan, the main female character, resisted these social expectations. This study also compared similarities and differences between these two films. The study on Chinese female roles, feminist criticism, and feminist film theory were applied to analyze the films.

Findings showed that Mulan and Mulan II reflected Chinese social expectations on Chinese women. Chinese women in these films were expected to do domestic works, have femininity, and be inferior to men. However, Mulan resisted these social expectations. Mulan was independent. She destined herself and strived for equality. Mulan also passed her thoughts to other women in order to resist these social expectations. In terms of similarity, these films showed Chinese social expectations and presented Mulan as a strong and independent woman. However, Chinese social expectations were not obviously shown in Mulan II.

การข้ดข้ึนต่อความคาคหวังของสังคมจ้ึนของตัวละครเอกหญิงในภาพยนตร์การ์ตูน  
เรื่อง มู่หลาน และ มู่หลาน 2

บทค้ดย่อ

ของ

แสงดาว ถ้ึนหารวงษ์

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา

ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ

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งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะศึกษาความคาดหวังของสังคมจีนที่ถูกนำเสนอในภาพยนตร์การ์ตูนเรื่อง *มู่หลาน* และ *มู่หลาน 2* และวิเคราะห์ตัวละครเอกหญิงในเรื่องว่าขัดขืนต่อความคาดหวังของสังคมจีนอย่างไร งานวิจัยนี้ยังได้เปรียบเทียบความเหมือนและความแตกต่างระหว่างภาพยนตร์ทั้งสองเรื่อง ผู้วิจัยศึกษาบทบาทของผู้หญิงจีนและแนวคิดของการวิจารณ์ทางสตรีนิยม และทฤษฎีภาพยนตร์ทางสตรีนิยมมาวิเคราะห์ภาพยนตร์ทั้งสองเรื่องนี้

ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า ภาพยนตร์ทั้งสองเรื่องสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงความคาดหวังของสังคมจีนที่มีต่อผู้หญิงจีน ตัวละครหญิงในภาพยนตร์ได้รับการคาดหวังให้ทำงานบ้าน มีความเป็นผู้หญิงและมีสถานะที่ต่ำต้อยกว่าผู้ชาย อย่างไรก็ตาม มู่หลานขัดขืนต่อความคาดหวังเหล่านั้น โดยกำหนดชีวิตของเธอเองและต่อสู้เพื่อความเท่าเทียมกันของผู้หญิง มู่หลานยังได้ส่งผ่านความคิดของเธอไปยังผู้หญิงคนอื่น ๆ ให้ขัดขืนต่อความคาดหวังของสังคม ภาพยนตร์ทั้งสองเรื่องมีความเหมือนกันที่แสดงให้เห็นถึงความคาดหวังของสังคมจีนและมีการนำเสนอ *มู่หลาน* ให้เป็นผู้หญิงที่เข้มแข็งและมีความเป็นอิสระ อย่างไรก็ตาม ภาพยนตร์เรื่อง *มู่หลาน 2* ไม่ได้แสดงให้เห็นถึงความคาดหวังของสังคมจีนอย่างชัดเจน

The Master's Project Advisor, Chair of the Master of Arts degree in English, and Oral Defense Committee have approved this master's project The Resistance to Chinese Social Expectations of the Main Female Character in Animated Films: Mulan and Mulan II by "Saengdao Thinhanwong" as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in English of Srinakharinwirot University.

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The Master's Project has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in English of Srinakharinwirot University.

..... Dean of the Faculty of Humanities  
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background**

Media play important roles in a society today. They are channels through members of the society to present what happen around people or in other parts of the world. Media are also major sources of entertainment. Some forms of media are produced for the purpose of entertaining or giving opinions to the public. The change of media and media industry over the past few years has affected individuals and the society. On individuals, media play important roles constructing and reflecting public opinion to individuals. Messages are sent through media such as television, radio and printed matters to reach the target audience. These messages affect people's feelings and decision making in a society. Media influences lead to imitation, such as dressing and behavior. On a society, media also have a strong social and cultural impact. The influence of media leads to changes in a society on attitudes and beliefs. However, one form of media that plays an important role in people's lives and society is film.

A film can be used as an ideological tool, which counteracts the stereotyped images of women presented by the male-dominated media and raises women's awareness of their inferior position in patriarchal society, where women generally take a subordinate role. For instance, in films, women have usually taken supportive roles rather than key, decision making ones (Nelmes 228). Many companies produce films and animations to entertain people and reflect social problems. One of these companies is Walt Disney.

The Walt Disney Company was founded on October 16, 1923 by brothers Walt and Roy Disney. It becomes one of the biggest Hollywood studios and has several television networks. Disney Company is able to place its products in the market of not only in America, but also around the world. It has considerable influence on children because children learn about humans and cultures around them through animations. The characters in Disney's animated films also teach children stereotypes and gender roles.

Many ideas on gender, race, culture, or society usually are portrayed through animations. There are many ideologies about what a man or woman should or should not do. Many films of Disney present social expectations on gender roles and American cultures. For example, in Disney's Snow White and Seven Dwarves, Snow White represents a naïve girl. This film presents different roles of men and women; a man's place is in the public while a woman's place is at home. While seven dwarves work outside, Snow White cooks, makes beds, washes, sews and knits, and keeps everything clean. In Cinderella, Cinderella is passive and powerless. She was presented as a perfect housewife. She does the same things as Snow White – cooking, cleaning, and so forth. She obeys her stepmother and does everything without defending her own rights. Moreover, Sleeping Beauty is not much different. Sleeping Beauty presents a beautiful girl who has a spell put on her that forces her to sleep in a tower. She represents a woman who has been waiting for a handsome prince to help her from the spell. These Disney's animated films represent women who are weak and need men to help them in difficult situations. Sylvan Barnet states that “in this patriarchal or male-dominated body of literature, men are valued for being strong and active, whereas women are expected to be weak and passive. Thus, in the world of

fairy tales, the admirable male is the energetic hero, but the admirable female is the passive Sleeping Beauty” (134).

Disney's animated films often present female characters as weak women who need protection. However, one female character is different from others. This female character is Mulan, the main female character in 1998 Mulan and 2005 Mulan II. These films are about a Chinese society in some period of the Chinese history in which Mulan is represented as an independent woman.

Mulan is the thirty-sixth animated feature of Walt Disney. It is based on the Chinese poem known as the Ballad of Mulan. Mulan is one of the new Disney heroines. She is a braver and more independent character than Disney's earlier animated female characters. Mulan represents Mulan, a strong woman who can save China in Chinese history. When the Huns invade China, traditionally one man from every family is called to join the army. Mulan's father, who is old and cannot walk properly, decides to fight for his country and the honor of his family. Mulan decides to prove her worth to her family, even though she is female, so she decides to replace her father in the Chinese army. At the army camp, Mulan meets Captain Shang and helps him from difficult situations. After Shang finds out that Mulan is female, he expels her from the army. However, Mulan knows about the plan of the Huns to kill the Emperor. So, she decides to risk her life in order to save her Emperor and China.

Mulan II is a sequel of Disney's animated film, Mulan. This film portrays arranged marriage, loyalty, choice making, and finding true love in the traditional Chinese society. In this film, Captain Shang proposes Mulan to marry him. On the other hand, Mushu, Mulan dragon's sidekick, tries to stop the wedding of Mulan and Shang (because he will lose his job as a guardian dragon and have to leave his place

of honor as a guardian, if Mulan gets married). However, before the marriage, the Emperor orders Shang and Mulan to escort his three daughters, Mei, Ting-Ting, and Su across the country to the kingdom of Qui Gong. The three princesses vow to get married to the prince of the Qui Gong kingdom so as to save their country. However, they fall in love with the three guardians, Chien-Po, Ling, and Yao. Mulan decides to go against the Emperor's order, and she proposes herself to marry the prince instead. Mushu realizes that Mulan will get married to the prince in order to help her country and the three princesses. So he decides to help Mulan and stop this arranged marriage. At the end, Mulan and Shang get married and the three princesses are released from their vows.

Both Mulan and Mulan II reflect the viewpoints of American on Chinese patriarchal society. Studying and analyzing Disney's Mulan and Mulan II can lead us to learn about Chinese's society. While Disney presents Mulan as a brave feminist, it also portrays the oppression of Chinese women. There are some studies on Mulan such as Liu Feng and Zuo Rui-fang's study, "Study on Cross-cultural Interpretation of Mulan" and Hoi F. Cheu's study in "Feminist Film Theory and the Post feminist Era - Disney's Mulan".

Although there are many studies on the characteristics of Disney's female characters including Mulan, the researcher has not found the study on both Mulan and Mulan II. Therefore, this study aims to study Chinese social expectations presented in Disney's Mulan and Mulan II and the resistance to Chinese social expectations of the main female character, Mulan, in these films. This study also compares Disney's Mulan to Mulan II. The study on female roles in China and the concept of feminist criticism and feminist film theory are applied to analyze these films.

## **Purposes of the Study**

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the social expectations on Chinese women presented in Disney's Mulan and Mulan II?
2. How does the female protagonist, Mulan, resist Chinese social expectations in Disney's Mulan and Mulan II?
3. What are the differences and similarities between Mulan and Mulan II in terms of the social expectations and the resistance of Mulan?

## **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study is as follows:

1. This study will help readers to better understand the social expectations on Chinese women presented in Disney's animated films: Mulan and Mulan II.
2. This study will help readers to better understand the resistance to Chinese social expectations of the main female character, Mulan, in these films.
3. This study will help readers raise an awareness of position of women in the patriarchal society. This further implies the status and equality between men and women.
4. This study can be used as a guideline for further studies on Disney's films.

## **Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on Chinese social expectations presented in Disney's animated films: Mulan and Mulan II and the resistance to these expectations of the main female character, Mulan.

## **Procedures of the Study**

The procedures of this study consisted of:

1. Review of related literature in the following topics
  - 1.1 Female roles in China were studied.
  - 1.2 The concept of feminist criticism and feminist film theory were studied.
  - 1.3 Related research on Disney's female characters and Mulan were explored.
2. Information analysis
  - 2.1 The Disney's films, Mulan and Mulan II were analyzed focusing on Chinese social expectations.
  - 2.2 The main female character, Mulan, was analyzed.
3. Report of findings

The findings of the study were discussed.
4. Conclusion and suggestions for further study

A conclusion was drawn from the findings, and the suggestions were described for further studies.

## **Definition of Terms**

1. Social expectation refers to the expectation of the society on Chinese women.

It consists of domesticity, femininity, and inferiority.

1.1 Domesticity is the skill related to home and family life.

1.2 Femininity encompasses qualities that are considered to be typical of women, especially, being gentle, delicate, and pretty.

1.3 Inferiority is the position that women are expected to be less important than men.

2. Feminist criticism focuses on a type of literary criticism that studies the status of women, stereotypes, and ideology in literature.

3. Resistance is defined as the act of resisting or refusal to obey someone or something.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This study examines the social expectations on Chinese women in Disney's films, Mulan and Mulan II. It also aims to find out how the female protagonist, Mulan resist Chinese social expectations in both films. This chapter then reviews the related literature divided into three parts: Part I presents female roles in the Chinese society, Part II discusses the concept of feminist criticism and feminist film theory, and Part III reviews related research on female characters in Disney's films.

#### **Part I: Female Roles in the Chinese Society**

The status of women in the Chinese society differed from the status of women in the societies of other countries. Women in China were in the system of patriarchy. Before 1949, women were oppressed by Confucianism and lived in misery. The births of boys were welcomed while girls may be killed or sold. Judith Lorber stated that "in countries with overpopulation such as China, more infant girls are often abandoned in orphanages than infant boys" (25).

In the past, particularly in poorer families, daughters had not been valued. Inheritance was passed through the male line, sons performed religious rituals (such as ancestor worship), and it was sons not daughters, who were responsible for care of elderly parents. Daughters were the first to be sold or dumped in times of starvation and hardship. (Edwards& Roces 75).

Chinese women were treated by society in many ways. In Chinese traditional belief, women were identified by the Chinese cosmology or Taoism. From Taoism, it points out that everything in the world is really a mixture of the two. It can be identified with either yin or yang. Yin (the moon) originally meant shady, secret, dark, mysterious, and cold. Yin represents everything of the world that is dark, hidden, passive, receptive, yielding, cool, soft, and feminine. Yang (the sun) was associated with clear, bright, the sun, and heat, the opposite of yin. Yang represents everything of the world that is illuminated, evident, active, aggressive, controlling, hot, hard, and masculine. This points out the bias about men and women. Yin represented inferiority (of women) while yang superiority (of men). The receptive quality of yin and the expansive quality of yang are often taken to be the theoretical ground for the subordination of Chinese women, to patriarchal structure (Rosenlee 48).

In a Chinese family, the unhappy position of the daughter-in-law could be seen in three aspects: as a woman, as a member of the family by incorporation, and as a member of a junior generation (Skinner 245). Women were expected to be subordinate to their fathers, husbands, and sons according to the Three Obediences: obedience to father before marriage, the husband after marriage, and the son in case of widows. It was said that women passed through three ages: In the first she was under the authority of the father, then under her husband, and finally, if he died, she was subject to her son (Curtin 10). A traditional Chinese family was an autocratic organization. It was organized on two well-defined: the superiority of the older over the younger generation and the superiority of males over females (Li 359). Martin C. Yang also states "A girl has no status in the family of her own parents. Her father and

mother and brothers may love her very much, but it is recognized that she is not a permanent member of the family and can add nothing to the family fortunes, she is destined to become a wife and a daughter-in-law in another family for whom she will work and bear children” (104).

Chinese women were also qualified by the four virtues: chastity and obedience, reticence, pleasing manner, and domestic skills. Chastity and obedience is the primary moral virtue for Chinese women. In terms of chastity and obedience, women had to be pure in thought, manner, and body. They were not allowed to remarry. Even their fiancés died, they were supposed to remain chaste and not ever marry. They also had to obey their parents and husbands. For reticence, Chinese women had to have soft voice. They had to be reticent in words, not to chatter too much and bore others. They should be quiet and agreeable in words. In terms of pleasing manner, women must be polite in gesture towards men and adult women. Their manners should be neat, gentle, patient, and so on. They should be restrained and perfect in movement. Chinese women also had to learn domestic skills. Chinese girls can learn only the technique of silk industry, sewing and other household work from their mothers (Fei 38). Women must learn to do household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, and caring for their children and family. They should not avoid their household duties. While it is true that men are the sole members of the joint person that owns the estate, women are not so empowered. When they get married, they can take with them a minimum of household equipment, clothing, and jewellery to take to their new home (Skinner 258).

In education, girls were not expected to be educated. This was because they must look after their family and children. It was boys who had to study and work for

their families. Louise Edwards and Mina Roces stated that “there is evidence that girls face greater difficulties gaining access to schooling than boys” (77). Women were also excluded from the public sphere. They were not allowed to participate in the government. The place for women was at home.

In addition, Chinese women had to accept an arranged marriage. The marriage was a rite that women could bring honour to their family but they had no choice to choose their husband. It was the duty of matchmakers. Katie Curtin stated that “marriages were not based on love or even mutual consent. Rather they were arranged by the parents through matchmakers. Often the couple had never laid eyes on each other before the wedding day”(10). The bride and groom were not allowed to meet each other until the wedding night. When women got married, they had to move from their families to their husband’s families, where they had no right to speak. They could speak and were a valued wife when they bore sons. Curtin stated that “a woman’s role in life was to bear male children to perpetuate the family name and aid in work. If she did not fulfill this task, she could be cast out of her husband’s home, disgraced, and socially ostracized. It was only in her function as a breeder that she attained status in society”(11). From the day of her marriage, she must begin to think of her interests as being inevitably involved in those of her husband and the member of his family (Skinner 245). Chinese women shared in the housework under the supervision of their mother-in-law, who has authority over them. They must treat their father-in-law with respect but not with intimacy (45). In addition, if they felt unhappy with their marriage, they could not divorce. The only way to solve this problem was they had to kill themselves while men could remarry and had more than one wife. Besides, women had no right in the property of their husbands. Even though their

husbands died, the properties would be in the male line, the eldest son. Moreover, women did not have the chance to engage in religious worship or be community leaders.

In conclusion, in the past, Chinese women were less important than men in many ways. They were not welcomed by their family. They were expected to follow their fathers, husbands, and sons. They were not allowed to speak in their own defence. They also were not educated. Moreover, they were defined by the philosophy of the Chinese cosmology-Taoism (Yin and Yang). It seems that Chinese women had difficult lives because they could not do everything as men did and they had less equality. These reasons show that Chinese women's lives were disadvantaged. These Chinese female roles and status can be applied to analyze the social expectations on Chinese women in Mulan and Mulan II.

## **Part II: The Concept of Feminist Criticism and Feminist Film**

### **Theory**

#### **Feminist Criticism**

Feminism began as a general social and political movement. It is grounded on the belief that women are oppressed or disadvantaged. Feminism points out the belief of equal rights for women based on the idea of the equality of sexes. Many viewpoints on women show that women are oppressed by men and society. Therefore, feminists seek to reject standard gender roles and women oppression. They try to reject inequality and all oppressions. The woman's movement of the 1970s led to feminist criticism, a study on the status and representation of women in

literature. Feminists choose to strive to represent diversities as well as commonalities among women, especially in regard to the parameters of race and class (Pearsall 7).

At first, feminist criticism focuses on how women and men should be treated equally. Later, feminist criticism emphasizes on the differences between men and women. Feminists in 1970s and early 1980s began to analyze texts and examine the attitudes and traditional belief, characters in the patriarchal ideology, and the portrayal of female. In general, feminists examine to eliminate the traditions and conventions of patriarchy, the ideology, and superiority of men over women in both private and public contexts. Important topics for feminists include the body, class and work, family, human rights, culture, race and racism, and sexuality.

Based on the assumptions that men are superior to women, and women should be relegated to subordinate roles, feminists seek to strive for equality of women based on social class, race, culture, and religion. Most feminist social movements promote women's rights, interests, and issues. Other feminist critics have concentrated on examining works that, in their view, portray women in a more positive, truthful way (Vesterman 85).

Feminist literature often focuses on the struggles of women to achieve and maintain equality in a male-dominated society. The focus of a feminist scholar has also changed from a dominant emphasis on the material inequalities between men and women in different parts of the world to a new convergence of interest on language, symbolism, representations and meaning in the definition of gender, and on questions about subjectivity, identity, and sexed body (McDowell 7). Feminist writers are creating more female protagonists who are autonomous, ambitious, and adventurous.

The image of a “sleeping beauty” waiting for her prince is fading (Hunter College Women’s Studies Collective 600).

The Second Sex was written by Simone De Beauvoir in 1949. It is one of the earliest attempts to confront human history from a feminist perspective. Beauvoir’s primary thesis is that men fundamentally oppress women by characterizing them, on every level, as the Other, defined in opposition to men. Man occupies the role of the self or subject whereas woman is the object, the Other.

Beauvoir argues that men set standards and values whereas women are the “Other”. Men are the actors and women are the reactors. Men always are the first sex and women are the second sex. Women’s subordination is not only biology, but also society. Men even demand play-acting: they want women to be the Other, but all existents remain subjects. Men want women to be objects and women often make themselves objects (647). “When man makes of woman the Other, he may, then expect her to manifest deep-seated tendencies toward complicity. Thus, woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the Other” (1). According to Beauvoir, being female would mean to be the object. Woman pleases with her role as the Other, so she has to accept the subordinate roles given by man.

However, to liberate woman from being the Other, Beauvoir proposes that, Woman is oppressed by virtue of “Otherness”. Woman is the Other because she is not man. Man is the self, the free determining being who defines the meaning of his existence, and woman is the Other, the object whose meaning is determined for her. If woman is to

become a self, a subject, she must, like man, transcend the definitions, labels, and essences limiting her existence. She must make herself be whatever she wants to be. (qtd. in Tong 6)

In the Second Sex, Beauvoir also argues that the emancipated woman, on the contrary, wants to be active, a taker, and refuses the passivity man means to impose on her. The 'modern' woman accepts masculine values: she prides herself on thinking, taking action, working, creating, on the same terms as men; instead of seeking to disparage them, she declares herself her equal (753).

As above, feminists try to strive for the equality between men and women. Women's movement led to change in developing female characters in literature. These female characters are changed to be more independent and equal to men. Female characters can play important and successful roles in family and society. These changing images of female characters can be seen in both literature and film.

### **Feminist Film Theory**

The development of feminist film theory was influenced by the second wave of feminism and the development of women's studies within the academy. During 1960s, the women's movement was related to the portrayal of women in the media. The year 1972 was an important year for the women's film movement and the development of a feminist film theory. Issues of representation and spectatorship are central to feminist film theory. Early feminist film criticism focused on representation and sexuality and its relation to the dominance of the male power structure within a patriarchal society. Critics employ various critical perspectives in order to analyze how a film represents gender, race, class, and sexuality. Feminist theorists emphasize

the social content of representations, seeking positive images of women, and emphasize the formal innovations of a film text.

Feminists generally believe that the media is a contributory factor in perpetuating a narrow range of stereotyped images of women. How women are represented in the media may encourage particular expectations of women that are extremely limiting; for instance, women are always based in the home, that they are inferior to men, that they like men who are violent, these are just a few of the myths that are arguably perpetuated by the media ( Nelmes 227).

The feminist film criticism tends to assume two forms. The first is an analysis and description of the images of women in films created by men. The feminist critics focus on how the films present women for male audience. Women in films are often limited in a family role. They are presented to be in their house, doing housework, while men are working outside the home. The roles of women in films in the past were portrayed as glamorous girls and emotive women. Laura Mulvey argues that woman has two roles in film: erotic object for the characters in the story and erotic object for the spectator (qtd. in Nelmes 231).

However, nowadays, many films present women as independent women (the liberated women who are free and can play the roles as men do). Since the middle 1970s, Hollywood films made central characters who are not attractive and glamorous women in the conventional sense. Narrative, moreover, are frequently organized around the process of a woman's self-discovery and growing independence (Newton 271).

The second form of feminist film criticism is closely related to the first form. It is the discovery of alternative feminist forms of filmmaking and images of characters. It examines what differences there are, if the writers or directors are female. After the mid 1960s and early 1990s, the presentation of women in television and films in position of greatest status increased dramatically. Many feminists point out that because so few women hold key positions in the media hierarchies, the presentation of women is bound to be from a male perspective (Nelmes 228). The importance of the creation of a female subject and the development of a new language is central to early feminist film theory which argued that spoken, written and visual language placed women in a subordinate position and reflected a patriarchal ideology (Nelmes 232).

In conclusion, after the women's movement, feminists try to strive for their rights in the society. They seek to resist social expectations and women oppressions. The views on women's oppression, equality, and independence can be seen both in literature and media. The female characters in writings or media in the present are often portrayed as strong and independent women more than the past. The viewpoints that women should stay at home and look after their family, husband, and son have been changed. Now, women can play the roles as active women.

### **Part III: Related Research on Female Characters in Disney's Films**

There have been many previous studies on women in Disney's animated films. In the article "Body Image and Sexuality in Disney Princesses", Heidi Herberich discusses about the changing body image of Disney's princesses. In the past, the princesses' bodies were described as childlike and innocent. However, their bodies

were not thin. There are two main trends that influence the changing body image of these princesses: the trend towards thinness and the trend towards sexiness. The trend of thinness began early. Snow White and Cinderella were slender. Later, Belle, Ariel and Jasmine were a more realistic image of women. The trend to sexiness was raised later and young age was focused as a preference. The princesses seem to be in their mid-teens, not over eighteen. It is the trend emphasizing on the sexuality of young teens.

Herberich also writes about gender and stereotype in his article “Disney Princesses and Gender Stereotyping”. He remarks that Disney animated films emphasize on stereotypes. The genre of fairy tales depends on these stereotypes. The stereotypes may affect the impression of one group because the identities of harmful stereotypes can bring change. Disney tried to think how to present princesses after the movement of feminists. The early princesses were portrayed as sweet, naïve, romantic, and innocent and ended with marriage to handsome princes. However, Disney presents princesses who were stranger than in the past because of the changing views of women. Belle, Jasmine, and Mulan are described as confident, adventurous, and independent.

In addition, Angela Chiders, in “What happens When a Fairy Tale is Disney-field?,” focuses on how Disney’s Beauty and the Beast differs from the Beaumont’s original French tale. She proposed that Disney often places traditional fables into its consumer culture model. In Disney’s Beauty and the Beast, Belle, the main female character, values imagination and adventure, whereas Beaumont’s Beauty values family, virtue, and harmony. There are different social relationships in both versions. For the original version, Belle is beloved for her exceptional strengths. In Disney’s

version, Belle is beloved for her physical appearance. Belle is also free from gender constraints. She has freedom to spend her time on her books. However, the dream she desires is love, the romantic love that will help her from her community.

Vincent E. Faherty, in “Is the mouse sensitive? A study of race, gender, and social vulnerability in Disney animated films”, attempts to answer how Disney’s films reflect society in terms of gender, race, and social vulnerability. This study aimed at studying status or roles of different characters presented in each film. The data were collected by using quantitative content analysis of a purposive sample of the 19 Disney animated films. The results showed that there were 334 distinct characters portrayed in the 19 Disney films. Male characters were the most frequently found. European and European-American characters were the most dominant group. This pointed out that Disney films are based on Western European folk tales. There were 135 examples of social vulnerabilities expressed by the characters. Faherty pointed out that there were some inappropriate issues for young children. However, the films presented these issues creatively, by using Disney magic. The female characters did not appear to be disadvantaged or suffered. The 19 films showed that women were not more likely to experience a social vulnerability and that women tended to be placed less often in villainous roles.

Courtney Fiske, in “The Disney Spell: A Sexist Spin on Classic Fairy Tales”, describes the history of Walt Disney and the presentation of female characters in Disney films. Disney films still show the female status as subordinates in a male-dominated society although there was progress of the feminist movement. Disney often presents the female characters appropriately in male-dominated society. They have duties to force the change in both good and bad. For the good side, women are

presented as beautiful young girls or angels who are connected to kind-hearted women. On the contrary, female characters on the bad side are portrayed as witches, step mothers with ugly appearances, or cruel animals. Disney films always portray the female characters as homeless and poor or have to be satisfied with doing the right things whereas male characters are described as strong and skilful people. However, the male characters always have to learn and understand from the women, how to solve their problems in dangerous situations.

Although there are many studies on the female characters of Disney's animated films, a few studies focus on Disney's Mulan. Liu Feng and Zuo Rui-fang, in "Study on Cross-cultural Interpretation of Mulan", aim at studying cultural integrations and differences between China and America by analyzing Mulan's images in the Ballad of Mulan and Disney's Mulan. This paper also illustrates the trend of cultural globalization. Liu Feng and Zuo Rui-fang propose that Mulan's images in the Ballad of Mulan are presented as a filial daughter. Mulan shows the duties of a daughter in order to look after her family. Mulan in the ballad is presented as traditional woman who likes peace and needs to come back home. In Disney's version, Mulan is presented as a dutiful daughter and a brave soldier, an independent individual, and a competent female. Mulan disguises herself to replace her father because she loves her father and takes a risk to protect her country. However, Mulan is presented as a person who wants to prove herself a competent person. The film also presents an example of female empowerment. For cultural globalization, Disney makes efforts to learn about Chinese's tradition while aiming at placing its films in the Chinese film market. Thus Disney creates the main female character to be an independent individual and a competent female.

Finally, in “Feminist Film Theory and the Postfeminist Era-Disney’s Mulan”, Hoi F. Cheu describes the differences between the Ballad of Mulan and Disney’s Mulan. In constructing Disney’s Mulan, Disney employs one basic element from the tale: Mulan takes her father’s place to fight in the army. The character of Mulan in Disney’s version is presented as the heroine; she leads the Chinese’s army to victory without military skills and strategies. In the Chinese version, Mulan is depicted as a survivor, not a superhero. It brings up the gender issues; Disney’s Mulan brings up Mulan returns to her home with her comrades, puts on women’s clothing and powders her face. Disney’s Mulan shows the conflict between the demands for strong female figures in media presentation and the desire to restore patriarchal social order. Mulan is a typical cultural product of the post feminist age. It is a prime example of feminism without women. Although Mulan may seem to rebel against ancient Chinese patriarchy, she is a feminist figure constructed to prevent any feminist consciousness of the present. However, the movie follows one general rule of Hollywood films: the good, strong woman always returns to the man’s world.

Even though there are some studies on Disney’s Mulan, these studies focus on Mulan’s image and aim to compare Disney’s Mulan and the Ballad of Mulan. The Chinese social expectations and the resistance of the main female character, Mulan, in both Disney’s Mulan and Mulan II have not been studied. Therefore, the researcher intends to study Chinese social expectations presented in Disney’s animated films, Mulan and Mulan II and the resistance to Chinese social expectations of the main female character, Mulan. This study also aims to compare these films. The study on Chinese female roles, the concept of feminist criticism and feminist film theory, and

related literature on female characters in Disney's films are applied to analyze these films.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **AN ANALYSIS OF MULAN**

Mulan is the 36<sup>th</sup> animated film of Walt Disney. It is based on the Chinese poem known as the Ballad of Mulan. This film presents the story of Mulan, a young Chinese woman who disguises herself as a man to join the army to save her father and country. Mulan portrays Chinese society and the social expectations on women. In this film, Mulan, the female protagonist, does not look like any of the other Disney heroines. She does not follow the expectations of her society. Therefore, the researcher analyzes Mulan in terms of Chinese social expectations presented in the film and discusses how Mulan resist these social expectations.

#### **Chinese Social Expectations**

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, “expectation” means the belief that something will happen; the action of expecting something (404). The Chinese social expectations in this study refer to the expectations of Chinese society on women. In Mulan, the viewpoints about Chinese social expectations can be seen clearly in many scenes. Chinese women are oppressed by men and the society. This animated film presents the expectations of Chinese society on women about domesticity, femininity, and inferiority.

Many scenes in Mulan show that Chinese women should be good at domesticity. Domesticity is one of the social expectations that Chinese women are expected to do. When they are born to be Chinese women, they have to learn about

domestic work. Girls in China are trained for this work. Martin C. Yang in A Chinese Village also states that a Chinese girl starts helping her mother to look after younger sisters or brothers. By the time she is thirteen, she begins to learn to sew, cook, spin, and many things (59-60). This value can be seen in the beginning of the film, Mulan. Mulan, the main female character, must do her housework. She has to get up early. When the rooster crows, Mulan has to feed her chicken. When Mulan meets the matchmaker, she is asked to recite the Final Admonition for women, rules which women have to follow. Mulan says “fulfill your duties, calmly and reflect before you snack. This shall bring you honor and glory.” This admonition includes the duties in the family. Chinese women have to remember this admonition and fulfill their duties in their houses.

The issue of domesticity can also be seen again in the arranged marriage scene. An important goal for Chinese women is a marriage. Chinese society expects women to stay at home and get married. Katie Curtin in Women in China states that marriages are not based on love or even mutual consent. Chinese women’s marriage is arranged by parents, through matchmakers (10). It is a duty of the matchmaker to train women to be good brides. Therefore, the marriage for Chinese women depends on matchmaking. They have no right to choose their own husband. This happens to Mulan too. At the beginning of the film, after doing housework, Mulan prepares to meet the matchmaker. She confirms her father that she will pass the bridal test and bring him honor. The lyric “Honor to Us All” in the film, also emphasizes the importance of marriage. The choruses sing:

“A girl can bring her family  
Great honor in one way  
By striking a good match  
And this could be the day”

These lines emphasize the social expectation on domesticity of Chinese women. They show that marriage is an important thing for women. Louise Edwards and Mina Roces in Women in Asia Tradition, Modernity, and Globalisation state that Chinese daughters have not been valued, particularly in poor families (75). Therefore, one way for Chinese women to bring honor to their family is “having a good match”. For Mulan, she also needs to meet the matchmaker to prove whether she can be a good bride. If she cannot, she will dishonor her father and family.

In order to be a good bride, Chinese women have to prove to the matchmaker that they can do the domestic work, including pouring tea. Chinese women have to practice serving tea to please their father and their husband. This appears when Mulan is asked to perform the tea pouring ceremony to the matchmaker. The matchmaker says “This way. Now, pour the tea. To please your future in laws, you must demonstrate a sense of dignity and refinement. You must also be poised”. The speech of the matchmaker shows one of the duties of Chinese women, serving their husband and their husband’s family. Hsiao Tung Fei in Peasant Life in China states that Chinese women share in the housework under the supervision of their mother-in-law, who has authority over them. They also must treat their father-in-law with respect (45). The matchmaker represents a person who is strict with traditional rules. She is meticulous and precise. The matchmaker’s speaking reflects the social expectation that Chinese women have to be skillful in domestic work to please men. This value

can make them worthy to be good brides. Therefore, Mulan is asked to demonstrate how to pour tea at the bridal test.

The expectation on Chinese women about domesticity is revealed again when Chien-Po (Mulan's comrade) shows his opinion about the girl he wants to marry in the lyric, "A Girl Worth Fighting For". He says "I couldn't care less what she'll wear, or what she looks like! It all depends on what she cooks like!". His words show that men like women who are good at cooking. If they are good at the domesticity, they are worth for fighting for. Women should stay at home and cook to please their husbands.

Moreover, one thing that Chinese women should do is bearing a son. The lyric "Honor to Us All" also points out that men want girls not only "work fast-paced" but also be "with good breeding and a tiny waist" to bear sons. Joyce Lebra and Joy Paulson in Chinese Women in Southeast Asia argues that "on marriage a woman left her own family and entered her husband's, where her position was extremely insecure until she fulfilled her primary function as a wife, which was the bearing of a male heir to carry on the patrilineal line and ancestor worship" (10). Katie Curtin in Women in China also states that a woman's role in life is to bear a son to continue the family name and aid in work. If a woman does not fulfill this task, she can be cast out of her husband's home and disgraced (11). The line "with good breeding and a tiny waist" from the lyric presents that men want appropriate women to bear sons. Chinese women should be healthy and have a tiny waist for bearing son. When Mulan prepares to meet the matchmaker, she is dressed by the assistants. They tie her waist tightly to show her tiny waist. However, the matchmaker says "Too skinny... not good for bearing sons" to Mulan. Because of her body, the matchmaker complains

that Mulan is skinny. Chinese women should be healthy, but Mulan is very skinny, so her body is not suitable for bearing sons.

Mulan emphasizes the view that women should stay at home. It suggests that a good and strong woman always returns to her family. At the end of the film, Mulan returns to her family after she can save the Emperor from the Huns. She puts on women's clothing and powders her face. This scene shows that her father and family give meaning to her existence. Mulan returns to her family alone but Granny Fa (Mulan's grandmother) hopes Mulan will go back home with a man to marry her. She says "Huh. She brings home a sword. If you ask me, she should've brought home a man". This emphasizes that the important thing for Chinese women is not bravery, because they should have men to support them. Even though Mulan is a heroine for China, she is expected to have a man to be beside her. The goal of a woman is marriage.

Besides domesticity, Mulan also shows Chinese social expectation about femininity of Chinese women. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, "femininity" is defined as qualities that are considered to be typical of women, especially qualities that are gentle, delicate, and pretty (509). In short, "femininity" refers to qualities and behaviors that are considered to be female. In Mulan, this value is expected through women's appearances and clothing, voice, and good manners.

Women's appearances and clothing are related to femininity. Chinese women are expected to be beautiful both in their faces and clothes. Their beauty on their faces can present their femininity. Women should have long hair and make up their faces. This idea is also shown in Mulan. When Mulan prepares to meet the matchmaker, she

has to clean herself, polish and powder her face. This scene shows how Mulan tries to impress the matchmaker in order to make an impression on her.

The lyric “Honor to Us All” also reflects the social expectation on women’s beauty. When the choruses sing “Boys will gladly go to war for you with good fortune and a great hairdo”, this shows that women can impress men by their beauty. If Chinese women are perfect in their faces and hairdos, they can interest men who will fight for them. In order to impress the matchmaker, Chinese women have to show their femininity. Therefore, before meeting the matchmaker, Granny Fa gives Mulan a pendant for balance and beads of jade for her beauty. Ling (Mulan’s comrade)’s opinion about his future bride in the lyric “A Girl Worth Fighting For” also emphasizes the need of men on women’s beauty. Ling wants a girl who is “paler than the moon, with eyes that shine like stars”.

A woman’s voice is also related to femininity. Chinese women must be careful about their voice, and they cannot speak without permission. In Chinese society, women are not expected to speak in public. Li fu Chen in Eastern and Western Cultures: Confrontation or Conciliation states that the low status of Chinese women leads to the submergence of their voices (30). According to Li, Chinese women have to be reticent in words. They should be quiet and agreeable. In Mulan, when the matchmaker calls Mulan’s name, Mulan answers suddenly to the matchmaker without permission. This makes the matchmaker annoyed. She says “Speaking without permission”. This scene shows that Chinese women’s voice is controlled. They can speak only when they are allowed to speak.

Moreover, Chinese women should have good manners. In order to be a good bride and to interest men, women have to please men by their manners. These

manners are being calm and neat. In the beginning of the film, Mulan writes what Chinese women should be on her arm. This includes being delicate, refined, and poised. This scene shows that Chinese's women should have these qualities. When Mulan meets the matchmaker, the matchmaker also expects Mulan to be calm and have good manners.

In Mulan, women's inferiority is also presented in many scenes. According to Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, "Inferiority" is defined as the fact that someone or something is not as good, important, intelligent etc. as someone or something else (734). For an analysis of Mulan, "inferiority" refers to the expectation on the state of being inferior to men for Chinese women.

In terms of inferiority, Chinese women are expected to follow the Three Obedience: being obedient to their father, their husband after marriage, and their eldest son in case of widows. Chinese women are expected to be obedient daughters. Katie Curtin in Women in China states that woman passes through three ages: firstly she is under the authority of the father, then under her husband, and finally, if her husband dies, she is subject to her son (10). Because of this value, Chinese women are expected to be inferior and subordinate to men. In the case of Mulan in this film, she has to obey and serve her father who is the head of her family. Mulan has to look after her father because he is sick and cannot walk properly. At the beginning of the film, Mulan's father prays to the ancestors to help Mulan impress the matchmaker. Mulan serves tea to him. When her father is worried about her meeting with the matchmaker, she says "Uphold the family honor. Don't worry, Father. I won't let you down. Wish me luck!". Mulan shows that her life depends on her father; she has to do everything to bring honor to her father and family.

In addition, Mulan's speaking in the lyric ("Honor to Us All") emphasizes that Chinese women have to obey and do everything to bring honor to their fathers. When Mulan has to meet the matchmaker, she is worried that she cannot be a good bride and will dishonor her father. Therefore, in the lyric "Honor to Us All", she asks her ancestors to help her:

"Ancestors, hear my plea  
Help me not to make a fool of me  
And to not uproot my family tree  
Keep my father standing tall"

Chinese society also believes that women are weak. Women have no right in the government and cannot participate in the army. Soldiers must be men. Men have responsibility to protect their country while women should stay at home because of their weakness. This view can be seen from the lines in the lyric "Honor to Us All". The choruses sing:

"We all must serve our Emperor  
Who guards us from the Huns  
A man by bearing arms  
A girl by bearing sons"

From these lines, it shows that Chinese society expects that men's place is at the battle while women's place is at home. A Chinese woman is not expected to be a soldier. Therefore, when Mulan decides to replace her father in the army, she cannot reveal her female identity. Mulan will be killed if someone knows she is female. This is why her father cannot follow her when Mulan leaves her home to join the army.

Because Chinese women are expected to be inferior to men, Chinese society does not want to have clever women. They should not express their ideas. Chinese girls can learn only the technique of the silk industry, sewing and other household work from their mother (Fei 38). Chinese men do not like women who are smart and independent. When Mulan asks Yao, Ling and Chien-Po (her comrades) about the girls they should fight for, she says “How’bout a girl who’s got a brain, who always speaks her mind?”. The Gang of three says “Nah!” right away. This shows that Chinese men spurn intelligent girls; in contrast, they want women who can do household chores and obey them.

Chinese women are also not allowed to speak in public. This can be seen when Huns invades China, one man from every family has to serve in the imperial army. In Mulan’s family, there is only one man, her father. Chi Fu, the Emperor’s council, comes to Mulan’s house, and Mulan is asked to stay inside. Chi Fu reads the proclamation to all families. When Mulan’s father receives the conscription from Chi Fu, Mulan realizes that her father will die in the battle, so she runs to face Chi Fu immediately and shouts out “Please, sir, my father has already fought for...”. Chi Fu says to Mulan’s father that “Silence! You will do well to teach your daughter to hold her tongue in a man’s presence”. Chi Fu’s speaking illustrates how Chinese women do not have the right to speak in public. This shows that women cannot place themselves in the men’s places and do not have the right to speak in public. When Mulan disguises herself as a man, everyone in the army accepts her. However, when she returns to be female, she tries to warn everyone about the danger. Nobody pays attention to her words. Mushu (Mulan’s sidekick) also says “Hey, you’re a girl again, remember?”. When Mulan can rescue the Emperor, he offers her a member of his

council. Shang also accepts her as a hero, but Chi Fu says “She is a woman. She will never be worth anything!”. Chi Fu’s speech also emphasizes that the role of Chinese women are inferior to men.

In addition, Chinese society believes that women are less important than men. This is because Chinese society prefers sons, not daughters. Women are in subordinate roles. Joyce Lebra and Joy Paulson in Chinese Women in Southeast Asia state that in Confucian Chinese women are weak, subordinate and subservient (1). This belief can be seen when Mulan discovers that Huns are trying to kill the Emperor. She tries to warn everyone at the palace including Captain Shang about this plan. Unfortunately, they do not listen to her. Nobody cares for her. Nobody believes her because she is female. Shang (Captain) can trust Ping (male version of Mulan), but he does not believe in Mulan. He also tells her to go back home. He says “You don’t belong here, Mulan. Go home”. This shows that Mulan is considered not worthy when she is a woman.

Obviously, the events discussed above show how society expects Chinese women to be. The characters and scenes in the film point out all the social expectations on Chinese women. Chinese women are oppressed by the society in many ways. They are inferior to men and are treated less important. They cannot express their opinion in public. If they give their opinions in public, no one listens to them. Their place is at home where they have to do housework and look after their children. Their lives do not belong to them. Chinese women cannot choose their own destiny. Their marriage also becomes duty of the matchmaker and depends on parents. In Mulan, the social expectations are presented throughout the film. However, Mulan,

the main female character, does not follow these expectations. She leads her life her own way and resists all social expectations.

### **The Resistance of the Main Female Character**

Although Chinese society expects Chinese women to stay at home and be subordinate to men. Mulan is unlike a traditional Disney heroine. She is independent and brave. She is a girl who tries to reject social expectations. In Mulan, Mulan can be identified as a feminist who strives for her independence and proves that she can do everything that a man can do. She can seek and choose her own way. Disney's Mulan promotes a positive image of women and advocates feminism through the female character, Mulan. Mulan begins the film as an ordinary woman who has to be a good bride and tries to find a good husband to bring her family honor. In contrast, she ends this role to replace her father in the army to save her father and save China from the Huns.

The main female character, Mulan, resists social expectations and shows her resistance. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "resistance" means dislike of or opposition to a plan, an idea, ect.; refusal to obey (1131). In short, "resistance" is defined as the act of resisting or refusal to obey something. In Mulan, many scenes in this film show that Mulan does not follow the Chinese social expectations.

Mulan cannot do well in domestic work. Domesticity is one of the qualities that Chinese women are expected to perform. On the contrary, Mulan shows her resistance to this value through her performances. Her actions reject the norms of society that women should be good wives, stay in their houses, do domestic work, and

look after their children. In the beginning of the film, Mulan is assigned to do her domestic duties. She has to feed the chickens. However, Mulan cannot do this duty well. Even though she has to feed the chickens, she does the task in her own way. She ties the chicken's food with the Little Brother (Mulan's dog), and she lets him run around to feed the chickens. However, this troubles her father because her father feels worried about her manners.

Mulan fails the bridal test. After doing her duties in her house, Mulan has to meet the matchmaker in town. Mulan is almost late. The matchmaker expects her to do well in household works. She asked Mulan to pour tea. However, Mulan cannot do this. Unfortunately, Mulan causes the burning of the matchmaker's dress, so the matchmaker runs around and screams. This demonstrates that even though she meets the matchmaker, her performances cannot impress the matchmaker. The matchmaker expresses her opinion to Mulan that "You are a disgrace! You may look like a bride, but you will never bring your family honor!" From these words, it underlines the point that marriage and good manners can make Chinese women bring honor to their family. Actually, Mulan does not want to be a good bride. She can bring honor to her family by doing the male duty in a war, not by marriage. Although everyone wants to change her to be a conventional woman, she stands her ground.

Mulan decides to leave domestic work to be a soldier. Chinese women are expected to stay at home and look after their parents and husbands; this means that Mulan does not do her duty of domesticity. When Huns invades China, the Emperor orders Chi Fu to read the proclamation to one man from every family who has to serve in the imperial army, including Mulan's father. Mulan realizes that her father cannot complete this mission, so she decides to replace her father's place in the army.

Instead of being at home, Mulan leaves her home to replace her father in the war. Having decided to replace her father in the army, shows that she resists expectations of the society.

According to Beauvoir, “woman is oppressed by virtue of “Otherness”.

Woman is the Other because she is not man. Man is the self, the free determining being who defines the meaning of his existence, and woman is the Other, the object whose meaning is determined for her” (qtd. in Tong 6). Beauvoir's primary thesis is that men oppress women by characterizing women as the Other. Man holds the role of the self, or subject; woman is the object, the Other. Because of this belief, women are oppressed and are considered less important than men.

For Chinese women, they are in subordinate roles, and they do not have any privileges like men. Men can be soldiers and are important in public. In contrast, women should stay at home to please their fathers and husbands. They have to keep their thoughts and words to themselves when they are in public. Mulan is a woman. She is placed to be the Other. Therefore, she does not have any privileges in the public and cannot do as she wishes. Mulan wants to be a soldier to replace her father. However, she cannot reveal her female identity. In order to replace her father, Mulan needs to pass from these subordinate roles to dominate roles. The term “passing” is used to assume a new identity by escaping the subordination and oppression to access freedom and privileges. It can be concluded that passing is applied to disguise other elements of an individual's presumed “natural” or essential identity, including sexuality, gender, physical appearance and behavior or cross-dressing (Ginsberg 3). Mulan is expected to be passive and oppressive because of her femininity. She needs to escape from subordinate position that she faces. If Mulan wants to have a chance to

help her father and be in a dominant role, she has to pass from what she is. Therefore, Mulan has to pass from a female to a male by changing physical appearances and behaviour to gain the privilege status.

To do this, Mulan decides to dress like a man. Mulan realizes that her father will die in the battle, so she decides to cut her hair. This means Mulan resists social expectation. When Mulan cuts her hair, she changes her feminine role and plays the role of the male in order to save her father and China. She does not express any sad feeling about her hair because she can help her father and the country. Cutting hair shows that Mulan resists all social expectations that women should do; doing domestic work, staying at home, pleasing her father, or being feminine.

Moreover, Mulan leaves her feminine clothes and wears a Chinese soldier uniform; this means that she rejects traditional femininity. Mulan resists the role of an adult female. Before Mulan leaves her home, she leaves her comb which her mother gave her when she had an appointment with the matchmaker. She takes her father's conscription instead. This scene shows that Mulan denies her femininity (leaving her comb) to play the role of a man (taking conscription).

In terms of a woman's voice, Mulan tries to imitate male voice. When Mulan leaves her home and joins the army, she tries to speak in a deep voice to show that she is male. Speaking in a male voice, Mulan can hide her female identity. When she speaks in a deep voice, everyone believes that she is a man, not a woman. Chinese women are expected to be silent and follow men. They are not allowed to speak without permission. On the other hand, Mulan speaks when she has to and wants to speak when she assumes male identity.

Mulan does not have good manners when she tries to act as a man. When Mulan arrives at the camp, she has to be like a man. Mushu advises her to walk as a man. He says “Okay, this is it! Time to show them your man-walk. Shoulders back. Chest high, feet apart, head up, and strut! Two three, break that bone, two, three, and work it!”. At the camp, Mulan hides her identity and her manners and makes everyone believe that she is a man and gains privileges like men.

In Mulan, Mulan also shows that women have the capacity of doing work like men. Mulan is equal to men. She proves that a woman can do everything as a man can. Her actions reject the social expectation of women’s weaknesses. When Mulan arrives at the camp, she is weak and cannot do the training. When Shang complains to Mulan (or Ping) about her weakness, she tries hard to train herself. At the camp, Mulan tries to do everything as other men do. She practices running and arrow shooting. Soon, she is successful and is accepted among men in the army. Although Chinese women are expected to be inferior to men, Mulan does not follow this social expectation. Her characteristics and manner show that no one can oppress her.

Mulan shows her intelligence in order to cope with a difficult situation. At the camp, Captain Shang asks the soldiers to get the arrow from the top of the high pole in the middle of the camp to show their strengths. They also have to tie two giant medals around their wrist. Nobody including Mulan can do this task. This is because they only use their strength. Later, Mulan uses her observation and intelligence to reach the arrow successfully by tying two medals together and climbs to the top. Traditionally, Chinese women are not expected to be intelligent. They should follow their father and husband, but Mulan is different. When men faced problems, they always rely on their strength. However, Mulan convinces that she is stronger and

more capable than any men. She uses her observation and knowledge to handle many problems throughout the film.

In addition, Mulan shows her bravery when the Huns invade the Chinese army. Chinese soldiers fight with the Huns until they have only one cannon. They are ready to die for honor. Shang says to his soldiers “Prepare to fight! If we die, we die with honor”. However, Mulan does not give up. She tries to solve the problem. While Mulan is glancing at her sword, she notices a glacial overhang. So she grabs the cannon and runs toward the Huns. She decides to shoot off the last cannon toward the overhang. The last cannon hits the overhang with a bang and causes an avalanche that rains down on the Hun army. It buries the Hun soldiers. This scene shows that Mulan dares to fight enemies and she succeeds. Mulan uses the last cannon to kill the Hun soldiers and also rescues Captain Shang from being swept away by the snow. It shows that she is braver than men. Captain Shang represents a perfect man at that time. He is strong and brave. He is the captain of the army. However, without Mulan, he cannot solve many problems when he faces dangerous situations. It proves that Mulan is brave and can save men even though she is in a dangerous situation.

In addition, Mulan chooses her own destiny. After Mulan shoots the last cannon, Shan Yu (captain of the Huns) hits Mulan in the side with his sword blade. Mulan is wounded. However, she can save Shang and kills the Hun soldiers. At the camp, the doctor looks at Mulan’s wound; this causes her true identity to be revealed. The doctor reports this to Shang and it causes her to be expelled from the army. Mushu (Mulan’s sidekick) offers her to go back home, but she says “Maybe I didn’t go for my father. Maybe what I really wanted was to prove that I could do things right. So that when I looked in the mirror I’d see someone worthwhile...”. This scene

signifies that Mulan is independent and decides what she should do. Therefore, at the beginning, she makes her decision to replace her father in the Imperial army without consulting her parents. It seems that she hides her identity and acts as a man because of her father. However, she also wants to prove that she is worthy like men. As a result, Mulan can save her father, Captain Shang, and also China.

Mulan chooses her own destiny again when Shan Yu and his soldiers are alive and they plan to kill the Emperor. Mulan decides to stop this plan. Mushu asks her to go home, but she decides to risk her own life to save the Emperor's life, even though her femininity is revealed. Mulan goes to the palace and warns Shang about the Hun's plan, because she is a woman, everybody ignores her warning. Shang asks her to go back home; however, she does not. Mulan decides to help the Emperor even when nobody believes her. When the Huns catch the Emperor in the hall, they close the main door, and nobody can open it. Mulan uses her intelligence again; she tells the Gang of Three (Yao, Chien-Po, and Yao) to dress as women and use their cloth that anticipates their waist to climb the pillar to get into the hall. They also use their appearances as women to deceive the Huns. As a result, they can get into the hall. Mulan tries to help the Emperor and she succeeds. She saves the Emperor and kills the Huns.

Cross-dressing of the Gang of Three shows the fluidity of gender that men can pass as women to gain some privileges and advantages. In the case of Mulan, she wants to help her father, prove herself, and save the Emperor and China, so she disguises herself as a man to join the army. It shows that women can change to be men to gain some privileges. In the case of the Gang of Three, they pass as females to deceive the Huns to save the Emperor also.

Mulan can place herself in men's situations. Because of her intelligence and bravery, Mulan can save the Emperor and China. This makes Mulan can now place herself in public. Her courage makes everyone, especially the Emperor, accept her as a hero of China. After the Emperor knows that Mulan has saved his life, he bows to her, and the Chinese citizens also bow to her. Mulan receives the praise from the Emperor, and he gives her his pendant and the sword as a symbol of honor. Mulan can change the expectation that Chinese women cannot participate in the government. When the Emperor offers her a member of his council, Chi Fu says "What? There are no council positions open, your Majesty!". So, the Emperor said that Mulan can have Chi Fu's job, the Emperor's council. This scene shows that the Emperor accepts her even though she is female. No one can talk with the Emperor without permission, but Mulan can. The Emperor also says to Shang "The flower that blooms in adversity is the rarest and most beautiful of all"... "You don't meet a girl like that every dynasty!". This speech points out that Mulan is accepted by the Emperor. She is special and worthy and a woman like her is hard to find in every dynasty.

In conclusion, although Chinese social expectations can be seen in the film, all Mulan's actions present feminist's perspectives. Mulan is different from traditional women. She resists all social expectations. Mulan decides to hide her identity (hair style, clothing, voice, and female manners). She passes as man by cutting her hair, dressing in men's clothes, and acting in a male way. As a result, Mulan can hide her identity and live as a man. She can convince everyone that she is a man and they accept her abilities. When she passes as man, she can do what she wants to do and save her father and the country. She destines her own life and does not have to depend on men. Mulan is a good example of a strong woman who strives for her

independence and destiny. She proves to us that she can do everything that a man can, and she is independent. Disney's Mulan promotes the independency of the female character, Mulan. She can be the "Self" not the "Other" for the public. This film is a good example of women's resistance to the social expectations. The female characters can be independent and strive for their equality. Female characters can play important and successful roles both in family and society as Mulan does.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **AN ANALYSIS OF MULAN II**

Mulan II is a sequel of Mulan. Disney produced Mulan II as a video without being released in movie theaters. In this film, Mulan and Captain Shang are going to get married. However, before they can get married, the Emperor has a mission for them. He assigns them to do a secret mission, escorting the three princesses to marry the prince of Qui Gong Kingdom. After the princesses unexpectedly fall in love with the Gang of Three (Yao, Chien-Po, and Ling), Mulan decides to help them escape the fate of marrying men they do not love. Overall, this film deals with arranged marriages, loyalty, relationships, making choices, trust, and finding true love. In Mulan II the social expectations are not obviously shown; however, if we look at the film closely, the expectations of Chinese society can be seen again in many parts.

#### **Chinese Social Expectations**

Like Mulan, Mulan II presents the inferiority of Chinese women. They are expected to be inferior to men as shown through the three princesses' lives. This expectation is the belief of Chinese society. From Taoism, the idea of yin and yang points out the bias about men and women. Yin represents everything about the world that is dark, passive, receptive, cool, soft, and feminine. Opposite to yin, yang represents everything about the world that is illuminated, active, controlling, hot, hard, and masculine. Yin and Yang represent the inferiority of women and superiority of men. Men are assumed as yang, being active and bright, whereas women are yin,

being passive and dark. According to Rosenlee, the receptive quality of yin and the expansive quality of yang are often taken to be the theoretical ground for the subordination of Chinese women, to patriarchal structure (48). Like Rosenlee's idea, the subordination of the three princesses in Mulan II is also based on the quality of yin and yang.

In terms of inferiority, an arranged marriage is a good example to show the status of Chinese women that they cannot destine their lives. On the contrary, their lives depend on their parents. Hsiao- Tung Fei in Peasant Life in China states, "in the village, sons and daughters give their parents a free hand in arranging their marriage affairs and will obey accordingly" (40). This also reveals that a duty that Chinese women have to do is marriage. However, the marriage does not depend on love between men and women, but depends on their parents. As in the beginning of "Mulan II", Mulan's family expects Mulan to get married. Her parents are worried whether Shang will propose Mulan to marry him or not. Granny Fa says "According to this chart, I put the coins here. Relax, child. The spirits tell me Shang will arrive and propose Mulan before the sun sets". These words point out the social expectation that women should get married and look after their families. Although Mulan is a hero of China; she is like other women who are expected to get married. In the case of China, the Emperor plans to force China so strongly that the Mongol troops won't dare to attack. To do this, the three princesses are sent to the Qui Gong Kingdom to marry for peace. They are destined to marry by their father, the Emperor. They have to marry a prince whom they have never seen before. The three princesses cannot choose their own lives.

Chinese women are expected to be under the superior person, their father. According to Li, a traditional Chinese family was an autocratic organization. It was organized on two well-defined, unwritten rules: the superiority of the older over the younger generation and the superiority of males over females (359). Like Li's idea, Mulan II presents a traditional Chinese family that is an autocratic organization. At this point, the superiority of the Emperor over the three princesses is seen. The Emperor is a father of three princesses. The three princesses are expected to be inferior to him. They are the same as other women who are oppressed by their father. The princesses' lives depend on their father's decisions. According to Li, when the head of a family makes a decision that affect each member, he takes into consideration the family interest as a whole, and it is absolute that each member has to obey without complaint (360). Like the idea of Li, when the Emperor, the head of a family, makes a decision, the three princesses have to obey him without complaints. In this case, the Emperor decides to send the three princesses to marry the prince of Qui Gong. The three princesses have to accept the decision of their father. When their father orders them to get married for peace, they have to follow his order with obedience.

Because the society believes that men are superior, the princesses, as women, must serve the Emperor and do everything to protect their country. Katie Curtin in Women in China states women pass through three ages: firstly she was under the authority of the father, then under her husband, and finally, if he died, she was subject to her son (10). Like Curtin's idea, the three princesses are expected to be subordinate to their father. They are expected to be under the authority of him. In Mulan II, when Mulan has been given a special mission, escorting the three princesses to marry the

prince of Qui Gong Kingdom, she talks to the Emperor about this arranged marriage. The Emperor replies that “My daughters know exactly what they’re doing. They consider it an honor to marry in the cause of peace.” These words demonstrate that the Emperor dominates the three princesses. He has the right to command his daughters. Even though princesses are born in a high position; they have to obey their father, the Emperor, and do everything, including marriage for the peace of their country. When Mulan asks the three princesses about this arranged marriage, Ting-Ting (one of the princesses) says “It’s our honour to serve the emperor”. Her speaking shows that she obeys and serves the Emperor. During the journey to the kingdom of Qui Gong, the three princesses fall in love with the Gang of Three (Yao, Chien Po, and Ling). However, they cannot express their feelings to them. They have to remind themselves that they have a duty to marry even though they love other men. Mei (one of the princesses) falls in love with Yao (the guard). So she is confused with her duty and her heart. However, she has to think that her duty comes first.

Mulan II also presents that Chinese women are an object. According to Beauvoir in The Second Sex, men set standards and values whereas women are the “Other”. Men want women to be the Other, unimportant person, whereas they remain subjects. Men want women to be objects and women often make themselves objects. Like the idea of Beauvoir, the three princesses are set to be object for their country. In Mulan II, they are sent to the Qui Gong Kingdom to marry for the peace of their country. They are like tributes given to Qui Gong to maintain the countries’ relationship and to remain China. The three princesses seem to be the object given by their father and they accept this role. They do not have a choice. Being female would mean to be an object. They have to accept the subordinate roles given by the Emperor.

Being a female, the three princesses are expected to sacrifice themselves for their country. Ting Ting emphasizes this social expectation when she discovers that Mei is writing a letter to the Emperor to tell him that she cannot fulfill her duty to marry the prince because she loves Yao. Ting Ting says, “We've discussed this. A princess must make every sacrifice for her country. It's our duty”. Ting-Ting's speaking shows that the society expects princesses to uphold their duties for the country. According to Li, the inferiority of the female sex makes the female role the least enviable, especially females of younger generation (361). Like Li's idea, although the three princesses are born in a high position, they are not enviable because they are still females who are expected to be inferior to men. The expectation about the life of a princess can be seen in the lyric, “Like Other Girls”.

“The life of a princess  
 From her birth is well-defined  
 She must humbly serve her country  
 Play the part she's been assigned  
 She guards the hopes of her people  
 Weak and mighty  
 Rich and poor”

Although the three princesses want to be like other girls, they cannot be like them. In other words, they have to fulfill their duties. From the above lyric, it can be said that the princesses have to sacrifice themselves for their country since they were born. Definitely, the princesses must serve the emperor and their country. From the lyric, when the princesses were born, they were born with their citizen's hopes, all poor and rich people. When they have a mission to do, they have to accept and serve

their country. Therefore, when the princess receives the order from the Emperor, they cannot avoid this order. Even though the three princesses want to follow their hearts, they have to keep their responsibilities because of their people's hopes.

Shang's statement reminds the three princesses to realize that their lives are inferior to the Emperor and they must follow his order. When the three princesses and the Gang of Three love each other, they run from their tents to visit the fair in the village. Later, Shang knows that they are not in the tent. He follows them to the village. Shang warns the three princesses about their duty and emphasizes the vow of the three princesses. He says "Your Highnesses, you swore a vow to be married in Qui Gong. If your father saw you now, breaking that vow, what would he say?". This points out that the lives of princesses depend on the Emperor. The Gang of Three also has to know the duties. Shang says "You three are to escort their highnesses back to their tents immediately. You are to guard them. You are not to enter their tents or speak to them". This scene shows that everyone has to follow the Emperor's order and cannot object to this mission. General Shang is presented as a follower of the rules and all expectations. So he tries to remind everyone that everyone has his/her own duty. The duty is more important than the heart. The three princesses have to get married following the Emperor's order. The Gang of Three also has to guard the princesses to Qui Gong Kingdom.

To sum up, the expectations on Chinese women is still presented in this film. In Mulan II, it shows that Chinese women's status is expected to be inferior to men. The society expects that all Chinese women must serve the Emperor and do everything to protect their country. It reveals that the three princesses have to get married to serve their father and the country. Although the society expects women to

obey and serve their fathers and husbands and follow their assigned duties, Mulan and these women continue to resist these expectations.

### **The Resistance of the Main Female Character**

Like Mulan, Mulan, the main female character in Mulan II, continues to resist what the society expects Chinese women to do. Mulan is confident and she is not under the control of anyone. Usually, women in films are presented to be in their house, doing housework, while men work outside the home. The roles of women in films are portrayed as glamour girls and emotive women. As Laura Mulvey's idea, women have a role of erotic object for the characters in film. However, Mulan is a character who is different from conventional female characters, glamour girls and emotive women. She is an independent and confident woman. In Mulan II, it is obvious that Mulan rejects what the society expects women to be.

In Mulan II, Mulan resists an arranged marriage. Like the feminist perspectives, Mulan seeks to strive for the equality of women. Mulan struggles to achieve and maintain equality in a male-dominated society. Mulan believes in equality of women. She thinks the three princesses should not have an arranged marriage. They should select their own husbands by themselves. The three princesses should not be treated like objects given to Qui Gong. Therefore, she talks with the Emperor about this. The Emperor is in the highest position. Not everyone can talk to him, especially women; however, Mulan can do this because she is accepted by everyone in China as a hero. The Emperor calls Mulan to talk to him privately. He says "I know that face, Fa Mulan. What troubles you?" Mulan does not agree with this mission. She dares to ask the Emperor "Your Majesty, an arranged marriage?".

This shows that she is not passive. She is not reticent in words and speaks what she thinks. Her voice is not controlled. When she believes that something is correct, she relies on and follows it even though the society does not expect her to do. She is confident and she tries to tell her thoughts to others. When something is wrong, she speaks up. Mulan tries to say that the three princesses should not have an arranged marriage. She also asks the three princesses to make sure that they agree with this marriage. When the three princesses get in the carriage, she says to them “So, you're getting married/I'm not sure I could go through”. This points out that Mulan does not agree with the marriage, so she asks the three princesses about this. During the journey to the kingdom of Qui Gong, Mulan shows that she feels unhappy again about this arranged marriage. Shang knows that Mulan has something on her mind; he says “What's wrong?” to Mulan. Mulan replies to Shang “I realise our duty is to the mission. But I have another duty, to my heart”. Mulan’s speech shows that she does not want to follow social expectations. Even though Mulan realizes that this mission is her duty, she also has another duty: following her heart. She thinks that women should destine their own lives.

Mulan resists the inferiority of Chinese women by destining her life. She is independent, and no one can control her. She can choose her own destiny. According to Judith Newton, since the middle 1970s, Hollywood films made central characters not attractive and glamorous women in the conventional sense. Narratives are frequently organized around the process of a woman’s self-discovery and growing independence (271). Like Newton’s idea, Mulan II presents Mulan as an independent woman who is free and can play the roles as men do. She liberates herself from Chinese social expectations. She is not an attractive and glamorous woman in the

conventional sense. She has a process of a woman's self-discovery and growing independent. Mulan proves to us that she is equal to men, and she can make her own decision.

In addition, in Mulan II, Mulan passes her thoughts and her resistance to social expectations to other women. According to Beauvoir, the emancipated woman wants to be active, a taker, and refuses the passivity man means to impose on her. The 'modern' woman accepts masculine values: she prides herself on thinking, taking action, working, creating, on the same terms as men; instead of seeking to disparage them, she declares herself their equal (753). Like Beauvoir's idea, Mulan is a liberated woman. She takes pride in her thinking. She is not under the control of men but she declares the equality. Mulan is also eager to be active and refuses the passivity that is imposed on her. Mulan proves to us that she is a woman who tries to transcend social expectations. Her resistance to social expectations is passed to other women in China.

Mulan can make Chinese girls in the villages accept her resistance and want to be like her. They think that Mulan is a model for them because of her bravery. In Mulan, Mulan can place herself above the social expectations by replacing her father's place in the army and save China. In Mulan II, she can make everyone accept her as a hero of China. The young generations want to fight as Mulan does. Sha-Ron, a girl in Mulan's village says "We want to be like you, Fa Mulan". In the film, when Mulan is working, many girls in the village request Mulan to teach them how to fight. It shows that everyone accepts her as a hero and wants to be like her because Mulan is strong and brave.

Mulan persuades the three princesses to follow their hearts. They should not marry because they have to. Mulan is strong in her thought. She shows that she is different from other women. In Mulan II, Mulan does not agree with her mission, escorting the three princesses to Qui Gong Kingdom. She strongly believes that even though marriage is an important duty of the three princesses; one thing is more important, following their hearts.

Mulan shows the three princesses that the rules and expectations are meaningless if they destine themselves. According to Beauvoir, man is the Self who defines the meaning of his existence, and woman is the Other, the object whose meaning is determined for her (qtd. in Tong 6). Like the idea of Beauvoir, Mulan and the three princesses are set as the Other because they are not men. To become a Self, they must be like men, transcend from the social expectations that limits their existence. They must make themselves be whatever they want to be.

In Mulan and Mulan II, Mulan actions can make everybody believe that Mulan is the Self, not Other. She is over the expectations that limit her existence. So she tries to pass her independence to the three princesses. In the case of the three princesses, Mulan realizes that princesses' lives should not be controlled. She tries to tell them to do as they wish. Three princesses must transcend from the social expectations and the Emperor's order to be free and choose their own lives. Mei knows she loves Yao, and she feels confused between duty and her own heart. So, she talks to Mulan and says "I just wanted to compliment you. You were so brave to take your father's place in the army. Your duty was to stay home, but your heart told you to break the rules. How did you decide between woman's duty and heart?". Mulan replies that "Well, it wasn't easy. But, by following my feelings, I wound up doing the

right thing. I guess I learned that my duty is to my heart.” Mulan’s speaking makes Mei know what she should decide, so Mei says “Yes. That makes sense. That’s marvelous. Thank you, Fa Mulan”. Mulan passes her thought to Mei. As a result, Mei and her sisters decide to resist the Emperor’s order and follow their hearts after hearing Mulan’s advice.

Mulan destines her life again by helping the three princesses. During the journey to Qui Gong, they have to pass the mountain where the bandits hide. Expectedly, Mulan and Shang face and fight with them. After the fighting with the bandits, Shang falls to the bottom of the hill. Mulan is terribly sad. She thinks that Shang has died. Losing Shang makes her decide to replace the three princesses’ place by offering herself to marry the prince. When the three princesses are ready to go to Qui Gong for marriage, she says to them “Your orders are to take care of each other. But...Losing Shang will not be meaningless. No matter what it takes, I’m finishing this mission.” She strongly believes that the three princesses should not have an arranged marriage. To make everyone happy and maintain an alliance to save China, Mulan decides to go to Qui Gong alone. When she arrives at Qui Gong, she says to Lord Chin (lord of Qui Gong) “I would be honoured to wed a prince of Qui Gong.”

Mulan is a female subject. She holds key positions in the film. She is from a male perspective that rejects to be subordinate. Like the feminist perspective, Mulan is a character who tries to eliminate the tradition and conventions of patriarchy, the ideology, and superiority of men over women. So, Mulan objects her mission to escort the three princesses to marry the prince whom they do not love. She proposes herself to replace the three princesses who are in subordinate position. In this way, she can

resist social expectations and can liberate the three princesses from the subordinate role.

Because of Mulan's bravery, she is accepted in Qui Gong Kingdom. It's not only China that accepts Mulan as a hero, but also the kingdom of Qui Gong. When she offers to get married to the prince of Qui Gong in the place of the three princesses, the lord's counselor says that "My lord, Fa Mulan, the hero of China. A jewel in your crown, far more dear than three mere princesses. This is not what was agreed". This scene presents that Mulan is more special than any women. She can place herself in the public. Her resistance to social expectations in Mulan and Mulan II is acknowledged. Lord (Chin The lord of Qui Gong) accepts her to marry his son and an alliance will still remain. He says "I will accept your offer. You will make a fine bride for my eldest son". This shows that Mulan, a woman, can take the three princesses' place. She can keep the agreement between Lord Chin and the Emperor and save her country.

However, like a fairy tale, Mulan II has a happy ending. Shang is still alive, and discovers that Mulan has gone to Qui Gong to take the three princesses' place. So, he says "Mulan was right. No one should marry someone they don't love." The three princesses, the Gang of Three, and Shang go to Qui Gong immediately to stop the marriage. At Qui Gong, Shang says to the lord "My lord, I love Mulan. I don't care what the rules say." This scene shows that Shang accepts that the rule is not more important than his heart. Because of the assistance of Mushu, Mulan does not have to marry the prince. In the end, Mulan marries Shang, a man of her own choice. She can also help the three princesses to be free from their fate.

## **The Comparison of Mulan and Mulan II**

There are similarities between these two films. Both Mulan and Mulan II reflect the social expectations on Chinese women. These films present American viewpoints on an oppression of women in Chinese society. In Mulan, it is obvious that Chinese women are expected to have domestic skills. It can be seen through Mulan, the main female character. Mulan has to practice these skills. She is expected to stay at her home and do domestic works. She also has to please and serve her father and all members in her family. Chinese women are expected to have femininity. Mulan is expected to show femininity when she meets the matchmaker. Her face and clothes must be beautiful. She should have good manners and be reticent in words. Mulan must be aware of her voice and her right to speak. Therefore, she cannot speak without permission. In addition, Chinese women are also expected to be inferior to men. In this film, Mulan is expected to be in a subordinate role. She is not expected to place herself in men's places. She also cannot join the government, especially the army. It is a place for men, not women.

Social expectations are not obviously shown in Mulan II. However, like Mulan, Mulan II also presents the inferiority of Chinese women through the three princesses' lives. In this film, the three princesses are expected to be inferior to their father, the Emperor. Their lives depend on him. They are destined to marry the prince of Qui Gong whom they do not love. The three princesses cannot choose their own destiny. They have to accept their father's order. This reveals that the status of the three princesses is in the subordinate role. They can be an object given to another country to maintain the peace of their country. Although the three princesses were

born in a high class, they are also in the subordinate role and are expected to follow the social expectations.

While Chinese women in the low and the middle classes are expected to do domestic works, the three princesses are not. The lives of the three princesses seem to be happy. They live comfortably and seem to have everything they want. However, like peasant women or women in a middle class, they cannot destine their own lives. In other words, their lives depend on their father, the Emperor, and have to follow his command.

Both Mulan and Mulan II also present the resistance of Mulan to Chinese social expectations. In Mulan, Mulan resists to do domestic work, show femininity, and be inferior to men. She decides to pass as a man and replace her father in the army. Although society expects women to stay at home, Mulan leaves her duties in her house and plays a male role in the army. She does not want to be like other ordinary women. Mulan chooses her own destiny. She is not under the control of anyone. Mulan passes as man to gain privileges and liberation limited to men. As a result, she can save her father, the Emperor, and also China because of her bravery. She can prove that women's place is not only in the house but also in the public.

Like Mulan, Mulan in Mulan II, continues to resist the social expectations on Chinese women. She shows that she is confident and independent. Mulan does everything that her heart and mind tells her to do. She makes her own destiny. She rejects the Emperor's order. Because of Mulan's bravery, she is accepted in the public and becomes a hero. She is recognized by the Emperor and Qui Gong Kingdom. More importantly, Mulan passes her experiences to other women, the three princesses and girls in the villages. Mulan tells them to be independent and live their own ways.

These women learn from Mulan what they should do, and they can also liberate themselves from social expectations.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

#### FOR FURTHER STUDIES

#### **Conclusion**

After studying Disney's Mulan and Mulan II, there are similarities between these two films. Both Mulan and Mulan II reflect the social expectations on Chinese women, and they also present the resistance of the main female character, Mulan. These films present an oppression of Chinese women. In Mulan, it is obvious that female characters are expected to have domestic skills, be feminine, and be inferior to men, whereas in Mulan II, female characters are still expected to be inferior to men.

Mulan reflects that Chinese women are expected to be domestic, feminine, and inferior to men. In this film, Mulan is expected to do well in domestic works. She has to do her housework and stay at home. In terms of femininity, Mulan has to show her beauty and be careful about her voices. She also should have good manners. In addition, Mulan is expected to be inferior to men. She has to be in subordinate roles. Because of this expectation, Mulan does not have a right to be a soldier or to be in the public. In Mulan II, the inferiority of Chinese women can be seen through the three princesses' lives. Although being in a high class, the three princesses are inferior to men; she has to depend on the Emperor. They have to follow his command and do everything to protect their country. Like Chinese women in the low and the middle classes, they are also in the subordinate roles.

However, in Mulan, Mulan resists Chinese social expectations. She does not follow the expectations on Chinese women. Mulan leaves duties in her house to be a soldier. She passes as man to gain privileges that men have. In this way, Mulan has chances to show intelligence and courage. In other words, she proves that she is equal to men, and no one can oppress her. Similarly, in Mulan II, Mulan continues to resist the social expectations on Chinese women. Mulan believes that men and women are equal. She thinks that the three princesses should choose their lives. Thus, Mulan tries to persuade them to follow their hearts and resist the Emperor's order to marry men they love.

Disney's other animated films often present female characters as weak women who need protection such as Snow White, Cinderella, or Sleeping Beauty. They are passive and powerless. In Heidi Herberich's viewpoint, the female characters in Disney's films are portrayed as sweet, naïve, romantic, and innocent and they end up with marriage to handsome princes. In addition, according to Courtney Fiske's idea, Disney films always portray the female characters as homeless and poor or have to be satisfied with doing the right things whereas male characters are described as strong and skilful people. Disney shows the women's lives are shaped by male influences. For example, Snow White, the female character in Snow White and Seven Dwarfs, is characterized as an innocent and perfect housewife who likes to cook and take care of the house. According to Jill Nelmes, women in films are always based in their homes and they are inferior to men. Snow White is also based in the house and waits for a handsome prince to marry her. Disney implies that doing house chores are part of a woman's role. The prince becomes as hero for the female character to live.

However, Mulan is different. Both Mulan and Mulan II promote feminism. These films present Mulan, the main female protagonist, as an independent character who resists social expectation. In Mulan, it displays feminist perspectives through her roles. Disney attempts to promote feminism in its animated films. Mulan is presented to be a woman who struggles to achieve equality for women in her society. Mulan's father situation drives her to dare to change herself. Mulan does not want to be a conventional woman. She makes everyone believe that she is equal to men. No one can oppress her. Mulan's characteristics show an admirable female. She begins as a normal Chinese woman who waits for her husband but decides to take her father's place in the war and saves China from the Huns. She goes against her father and Chinese social expectations to become unique and develops herself to be a free woman who does what she wishes and loves the man of her choice. Similarly, in Mulan II, Mulan is a woman who does everything by following her heart. Mulan makes her own decision and be independent to speak up her thoughts. In Mulan II, Mulan grows up. She is more confident, and she knows what she should do. She strives for the equality. Mulan can destine her own life and can adventure into the world of men. She chooses her own husband and is not under his control.

The study of Mulan and Mulan II reflects some social expectations on Chinese women in the past that Chinese women were submissive and lived in misery in their society. Nowadays, Chinese women have more freedom than at that period. However, the issue of equality of men and women is still problematic. Although women of today have more right, there are still some stereotypes, for example men are regarded as stronger and better while women are regarded as weaker. Actually, women can be strong and independent and live without assistance of men as Mulan does. The

researcher believes that women should not be limited only to stay at home and look after their children. They should be equally educated to get a chance to work like men.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

The following topics should be further studied:

1. an analysis of other films that reflect the resistance of female characters should be studied.
2. the impact of Disney's Mulan on young audience should be studied.
3. two female characters, Pocahontas in Pocahontas (1995) and Mulan in Mulan (1998) should be compared.
4. the change of female characters in Disney's animated films since 1998 to 2008 should be explored.

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