



# Breaking Patriarchal Culture in *Damsel* (2024) Movie: A Semiotic Analysis using John Fiske's Theory

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**ABSTRACT:** This research aims to analyze how the *Damsel* (2024) movie breaks down patriarchal culture. It used John Fiske's semiotic theory, which focuses on three levels: reality, representation, and ideology. The method of this research is qualitative methods, and data card techniques were used as a tool to obtain valid data. By taking from scenes and dialogue in the *Damsel* (2024) movie, which contained depictions of patriarchal culture and efforts to break it from beginning to end, the result was. The results of this research are to show how patriarchal culture is represented in Elodie's family and environment, and her responses, including the arranged marriage by her parents. The ideology presented here is feminist ideology, as informed by John Fiske's theory. Elodie's character successfully challenges the existing patriarchal culture and demonstrates a feminist ideology, supporting John Fiske's theory. The movie served as a medium for feminism and the defense of women's rights, both in fictional narratives and broader societal contexts.

**Keywords:** *Damsel*, Feminism Ideology, John Fiske, Patriarchal Culture, Semiotic Analysis.

## 1. Introduction

Movies over the past few decades, especially in genres such as fantasy and historical drama, often rely on the archetype of the "Damsel in Distress." In these narratives, female protagonists are frequently depicted as being in perilous situations, necessitating the intervention of a male hero to ensure their safety and resolve the conflict. This is particularly common in movies set in royal courts, where the fate of a princess often depends on a prince or knight. However, a significant shift has occurred in contemporary cinema. Movies usually depict scenarios that are both appealing and relatable to real-life situations (Noviana & Simanjuntak, 2022, p. 73). Increasingly, movies are actively challenging traditional stereotypes by featuring female protagonists who are independent and capable of overcoming their own challenges. These characters are self-reliant, intelligent, and do not require male assistance to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. Movies can provide a social and historical critique by analyzing social structure, power, politics, and agency (Bina et al., 2017, p. 6).

In recent years, movie makers have increasingly addressed contemporary issues such as systemic inequality, environmental crises, and the complexities of identity in a rapidly changing world. In the modern era, movies have grown not just as a medium for storytelling but also as a way of constructing elements to convey symbolic significance (Syahriyani & Novikasandra, 2022, p. 2). Through storytelling, character development, and visual imagery, movies not only reflect modern-day concerns but also invite audiences to engage critically with the intricate layers of

social justice, cultural representation, and moral dilemmas that shape our lives today. By doing so, the movie acts as both a mirror and a catalyst for dialogue, encouraging viewers to reflect on their values and the prevailing ideologies that influence their societies (Rubi, 2023, p. 153). For example, *Parasite* (2019), directed by Bong Joon-ho, is a sharp critique of class disparity and social inequality issues in South Korea (Nichasuk, 2020, p. 17). It illustrates how the divide between the wealthy and the poor creates an environment of exploitation and desperation, all framed through a darkly comedic yet tragic lens. The criticism conveyed by the movie is expected to convey its message to the public who watches it. In addition to discussing social inequality, many movies have recently raised the issue of feminism, such as *Damsel* (2024), where women fight to break the societal stigma surrounding the unequal treatment of men and women.

In the movie *Damsel* (2024), the challenges faced by women are conveyed, highlighting the pressures, expectations, and social injustices often directed at women. This movie portrays how women can overcome these obstacles, despite frequently facing both blatant and subtle forms of oppression. By exploring these themes, *Damsel* (2024) not only highlights the personal struggles of its female characters, but it also serves as a powerful reflection of the ongoing struggle for women's rights and empowerment. By highlighting Elodie's tenacity and ingenuity, this movie challenges the audience to think critically about the stereotypes that limit female characters to submissive positions. Elodie subverts, challenges, and breaks the cliché of the *Damsel* in distress, usually being helped by the prince. Furthermore, by encouraging the audience to consider the social implications of this narrative, *Damsel* contributes to the broader conversation about gender.

In *Damsel* (2024), arranged marriages are perceived as a form of oppression of women as second-class citizens who are often used as property or negotiation tools in family or political relationships (Parkin, 2021, p. 3). Clearly demonstrate patriarchal behavior. This behavior reflects a more significant issue in society, which limits women's agency and upholds their status as subordinate to men. Arranged marriage is one of the actual manifestations of a patriarchal culture that has evolved in society to this day. Marriage is believed to be a solution to safeguard women from strangers (Inuq, 2022, p. 4). Patriarchal behavior that has always considered women inferior is reflected in this interaction. On the other hand, Elodie personifies the ideal of feminist theory of resisting patriarchal domination by rejecting forced marriage and fighting for her freedom to choose her own path in life.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that patriarchal culture is an aspect that we cannot separate in this life because these thoughts are deeply rooted. In this patriarchal culture, women are expected and indoctrinated from childhood to accept their subordinate roles and their obligations to the family, to accept the roles society assigns to them (Gupta et al., 2023, p. 7), instead of being seen as unique individuals with their own goals and desires. Over time, women's empowerment, as reflected in feminist ideology, has emerged as a crucial response to these inequalities, challenging and breaking patriarchal norms, and advocating for the recognition of women's rights and agency. One of the main aspects of women's empowerment is its critique of the patriarchal system, which thrives on rigid gender roles, by questioning and rejecting the social and cultural frameworks that subordinate women. Feminist ideology advocates the dismantling of these oppressive structures.

Particularly for women, empowering them has significant effects on both the individual and the larger socioeconomic structure of societies (Jagri et al., 2025, p. 33). Empowerment means allowing women to make independent choices, assert control over their lives, and challenge traditional expectations that confine them to specific roles, particularly in terms of marriage, family, and social obligations. A fundamental component of feminist ideology is the empowerment of women to assert their autonomy and combat systemic subordination (Mawa, 2020, p. 4). This is demonstrated in Elodie's capacity to question and challenge the patriarchal culture prevalent in the movie. Elodie's resistance can be seen within the feminist paradigm in

this situation. A more general critique of the patriarchal culture that supports arranged marriages is the idea that women are inferior.

According to (Bhandari, 2024, p. 2) The need for a feminist movement for equal rights and the destruction of societal structures that enforce gender inequality is aligned with the challenge of these established gender roles. Elodie's defiance of these conventions allows the movie to be interpreted as a feminist indictment of these beliefs, considering the need for women's freedom from repressive systems and demonstrating how women can restore authority within patriarchal cultures. This depiction is consistent with more general feminist theory, such as that expressed by Bell Hooks. Feminist movements to stop male aggression against women need to be extended into a movement to end all forms of violence (Biana, 2020, p. 16). Elodie's journey can represent the feminist movement's demand for liberation from patriarchal structures, transforming her from a victim of an arranged marriage to an active participant in her own narrative.

## 2. Method

This research uses a qualitative method, which is suitable for exploring "*Damsel* (2024)." A qualitative method, as its name implies, focuses on the quality of the information. Qualitative research uses open and non-numerical data collected throughout the data collection process, which is typically processed using non-statistical approaches (Hamilton & Finley, 2019, p. 1). Qualitative research has its foundations in social and cultural anthropology, philosophy, psychology, history, and sociology (K. Mohajan & Haradhan, 2022, p. 2). This method enables an in-depth examination of semiotic elements through John Fiske's theory, as well as an analysis of the feminist ideology that challenges patriarchal culture in the movie, providing a detailed understanding of how these aspects interact to convey meaning.

Building on this background, semiotic theory, as developed by John Fiske, is relevant to this research. According to Fiske, television is a cultural text that both reflects and questions the ideals of society (Fiske, 2010). His concept of three levels of reality, referred to as "social codes" by Fiske (2001) in *Television Culture*, helps analyze the layers of meaning in media texts, particularly those related to gender and power dynamics. Fiske came up with the idea of television codes, which are employed in the realm of television in the form of reality, representation, and ideology (Febryningrum & Hariyanto, 2022, p. 47). Fiske's "level of reality" refers to the surface-level representation of real-world elements in media texts. At this level, this research will analyze how visual elements such as costumes, makeup, settings, and character behaviors are portrayed to appear "realistic" or relatable to audiences. However, these representations are selective, shaped by cultural norms and ideologies.

The level of representation examines how media makers arrange and structure reality, going beyond appearances. This includes looking at dialogue selections, editing, camera angles, and story frameworks. At this level, Fiske highlights how the media actively creates reality by highlighting some points of view and marginalizing others, rather than merely "reflecting" it. For instance, by portraying male characters as active decision-makers and female characters as passive supports, gender roles in movies frequently uphold traditional male dominance and female submission. The deepest level, according to Fiske, is the ideological level, where the media is analyzed for its role in promoting or challenging dominant social and political ideologies. Fiske supports the idea that large audiences are "critical" when embracing media items (Hakim & Kurnia, 2023, p. 25). This level reveals how the media serves to normalize patriarchal values, such as male authority and female submission, through repeated representations.

Understanding ideology inevitably leads to a consideration of patriarchy itself, since patriarchy is one of the most pervasive systems shaping gender representations in media. The

term "patriarchy" describes a societal structure where men dominate in positions of political leadership, moral authority, and property control (Öztürk, 2020, p. 5). In patriarchal culture, women are regarded as having a low status in society (Rosida & Rejeki, 2017, p. 8). However, patriarchy is a socio-political system where men hold primary power, influencing laws, social norms, and cultural expectations (Sayogie, Farkhan, et al., 2023, p. 4). In ways that sustain gender inequity, this system molds social norms and institutions. Patriarchy never stands alone and always exists in a complicated confluence with other forms of power (Ortner, 2022, p. 307). Patriarchal ideas are frequently ingrained in narrative and visual depictions in the media, which give preference to male viewpoints, minimize female autonomy, and reduce women to objects of desire or supporting roles. The plot of many Hollywood movies, for example, is driven by the journeys, choices, and actions of the male protagonists; female characters are frequently relegated to supporting roles to reinforce the male narrative arc. This is a clear manifestation of patriarchal ideals that diminish female autonomy and elevate male experiences.

Feminism is dedicated to the eradication of oppression, exploitation, and misogyny (Hooks, 2019, p. 8). The standard definition of feminism is a movement that stands for more options for women in their daily lives (Sayogie, Amalia, et al., 2023, p. 1). Feminism is an ideology that advocates for equal rights for men and women in politics, decision-making, and employment. It is comprised of several political, social, and cultural groups that aim to provide men and women with equal rights (K. Mohajan & Haradhan, 2022, p. 2). Feminism is both a political movement and a theoretical framework that seeks to address and dismantle the inequalities between men and women, particularly those rooted in patriarchal systems (H. Mohajan, 2022, p. 2). In media studies, feminism critically examines how media representations reinforce or challenge gender norms and power dynamics. Feminism in media analysis aims to uncover how women and marginalized genders are portrayed, often objectified or marginalized, and advocates for more complex, diverse, and empowering representations.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

This section elaborates on the research findings obtained through a semiotic analysis of selected scenes from the movie *Damsel* (2024), applying John Fiske's three levels of semiotics: the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology. By employing this framework, the analysis aims to uncover the complex layers of meaning encoded within the cinematic elements, such as character behavior, dialogue, *mise-en-scène*, and narrative structure. Each scene is examined not only in terms of its literal content but also in relation to the cultural codes and ideological messages it conveys. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of how the movie constructs meaning and conveys specific values, beliefs, or critiques through visual and narrative strategies. The findings are presented thematically, highlighting how the movie reinforces or challenges dominant cultural narratives through its use of semiotic code.

#### 3.1 John Fiske's Analysis

Datum 1



(00:04:00 – 00:04:04) Elodie and Floria Scene  
(Source: *Damsel* (2024) Movie from Netflix)

Elodie is seen holding an axe and chopping wood. In terms of reality, this activity is usually done by men, but Elodie does it here. In addition, Elodie is also talking to her sister, Floria, about their people being hungry and cold. Elodie told Floria to give her curtains to the cold people. Here we can see that Elodie feels responsible for her people. The dialogue "Floria, our people are freezing" reflects Elodie's responsibility for the cold. In reality, men are usually the ones who feel responsible. However, Elodie feels a sense of responsibility here. Moreover, this situation in this scene reflects the reality of the actual conditions faced by marginalized populations in harsh climates, where access to food and water is severely limited. This depiction goes beyond mere fiction to become a mirror for social issues such as inequality, scarcity, and shared concerns. Moreover, the presence of two female protagonists in this context places women at the center of the narrative, which is often dominated by male characters, subtly suggesting a redefinition of gender roles within a realistic social framework.

At the level of Representation, the use of visual and symbolic elements creates layered meanings that support feminist interpretations. Including the use of costumes in this scene, the costumes worn by Elodie and Floria are not only functional for their environment but also signify durability and adaptability. Visually, their outfits are unlike those of women who usually wear beautiful dresses. Their clothes here have been modified for the situation they are in. It communicates their readiness to face environmental challenges head-on, which contrasts with stereotypical depictions of women as fragile and dependent. In addition, the axe wielded by Elodie is a traditionally masculine tool, acting as a potent signifier of empowerment and independence. It subverts gender expectations that often assume female characters are lacking in physical abilities. The choice of medium shot further reinforces this by placing the characters as central figures, emphasizing their emotional strength and determination without isolating them from their surroundings. This framing technique invites the audience to engage with the characters' personal determination as well as their broader social mission. From the representations this scene displays, it challenges dominant patriarchal narratives and advances a narrative where women embody strength, leadership, and active participation in collective survival.

At the Ideological level, this scene portrays a clear feminist stance by highlighting women's empowerment and social activism. The portrayal of Elodie and Floria as women who take the initiative to help their suffering people challenges the patriarchal culture that marginalizes the role of women in public contexts and crises. Their actions embody feminist principles of autonomy, resilience, and solidarity, which challenge the portrayal of women as passive or victimized. This ideology criticizes power structures that systemically restrict women's movement and instead presents them as essential contributors to community well-being and survival strategies. The narrative contained in the scene implicitly advocates for gender equality by recognizing women's capacity to lead, make important decisions, and effect change in the



face of adversity. As such, the scene aligns with broader feminist discourses that encourage the deconstruction of oppressive patriarchal norms and the assertion of women's rights and visibility in all aspects of life, especially in situations of social and environmental crisis.

#### Datum 2



(00:06:12-00:06:18) Elodie and Lord Bayford Debate Scene  
(Source: *Damsel* (2024) Movie from Netflix)

In this scene, Elodie and her father argue about an arranged marriage involving Elodie and a Prince. At first, Elodie's father tries to convince her with the prince's wealth, saying that the prince has many ship docks, chests of gold, and that Elodie can travel the world on the prince's ship. However, Elodie refuses if the reason is wealth. After that, her father tries to convince her again that their people need this arranged marriage to be saved. Elodie thinks hard and eventually feels that it is her responsibility as a noblewoman. In the end, Elodie agreed based on her commitment to the people, not because of the prince's wealth. At the level of reality, this scene captures the family dynamics embedded in a broader socio-historical context where arranged marriages are perceived as a form of oppression of women as second-class citizens who are often used as property or negotiation tools in family or political relationships (Parkin, 2021, p. 3). Lord Bayford's reference to Elodie's mother and her desire to travel places the argument within a generational narrative, implying continuity and hope. Elodie's father's objection to her marrying a man "with a fleet of ships" is not merely a personal preference but a social reality where marriage is intrinsically linked to economic power, social status, and patriarchal authority.

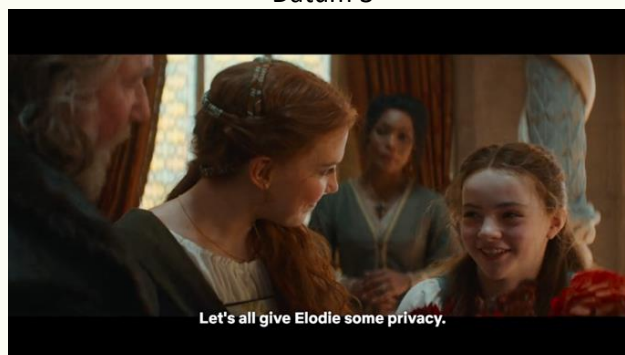
At the level of reality, the dialogue reflects historical and cultural practices where women's choices, particularly regarding marriage, are constrained by patriarchal structures prioritizing alliances, property, and control. The father's argument that traveling and marrying a wealthy man aligns with family heritage highlights the persistent socio-economic function of marriage, often at the expense of women's autonomy. Thus, the reality depicted is one where Elodie's personal desires are subjugated by patriarchal expectations rooted in wealth, lineage, and male authority.

At the level of representation, the visual and linguistic codes of this scene convey ideological conflict through cinematic and dialogic strategies. The alternating close-ups focusing on Elodie and her father intensify the emotional stakes and highlight the clash between two conflicting worldviews. Close-ups in cinema are often used to emphasize internal subjectivity and psychological tension; here, they underscore the confrontation between Elodie's individual agency and Lord Bayford's patriarchal power. The father's calm demeanor and commands contrast with Elodie's firm yet emotionally charged refusal, visually and verbally dramatizing the power imbalance. Linguistically, Lord Bayford's words frame the journey and marriage as interconnected destinies, reinforcing the traditional narrative in which women's aspirations are often channeled through marriage. His phrase, "Go. See the world," paradoxically appears as an

offer of freedom but is immediately tempered by the condition of marriage, revealing the paternalistic constraints disguised as kindness. Elodie's response, "That's not a reason to marry," functions as a critical counter-narrative. It disrupts the symbolic logic that economic wealth or social status justifies marriage, challenging the commodification of women and patriarchal views of marriage as a transactional agreement. This dialogue thus constructs a field of representation where two ideologies confront each other, visible and felt through editing choices and linguistic contrasts.

At the ideological level, this scene functions as a site of resistance and rejection of patriarchal cultural norms. Lord Bayford's argument represents the patriarchal ideology that defines women's roles primarily through marriage and economic alliances, reflecting a historically dominant worldview that limits women's autonomy and positions them as dependent within a male-centered social order. In contrast, Elodie's refusal articulates a feminist ideological position, emphasizing personal autonomy and criticizing the instrumentalization of marriage. By refusing to accept marriage as a means to an end, economic security, or social mobility, Elodie asserts her right to self-determination and challenges the patriarchal imperative to conform to prescribed gender roles. Although she agrees, her motive is not due to her father's coercion but rather a moral responsibility toward the people facing hardship. Additionally, this scene implicitly critiques the gender power dynamics embedded within family structures. The father's control over Elodie's choices reflects patriarchal authority that regulates women's bodies and destinies through family expectations. Elodie's refusal disrupts this authority, symbolizing feminist resistance to such domination. The ideological significance of this scene is deepened by its cinematic form: the close-up not only highlights individual subjectivity but also democratizes the space of representation, giving voice to the female perspective.

#### Datum 3



(00:12:10 – 00:12:19) Elodie Family Scene  
(Source: *Damsel* (2024) Movie from Netflix)

This scene shows Elodie and her family members gathered in one room, sharing the same frame, signifying their closeness as a family. They discuss giving Elodie some privacy. Lord Bayford's request to "give Elodie some privacy" can be interpreted as a moment of respect for her personal boundaries. In terms of reality, in many patriarchal environments, their conversation might be considered unusual or noteworthy. The emphasis on privacy shows recognition of Elodie's need for space to "adapt," implying a moment of transition in which her autonomy is slowly being acknowledged within the collective family environment.

At the representational level, the analysis examines how visual and linguistic elements of the scene work together to construct meaning. The decision to keep all characters within a single frame not only highlights physical closeness but also underscores the interconnectedness of their emotional and social lives. However, the dialogue introduces a dynamic of difference: Elodie is highlighted as a figure in need of privacy, temporarily separating her from the collective

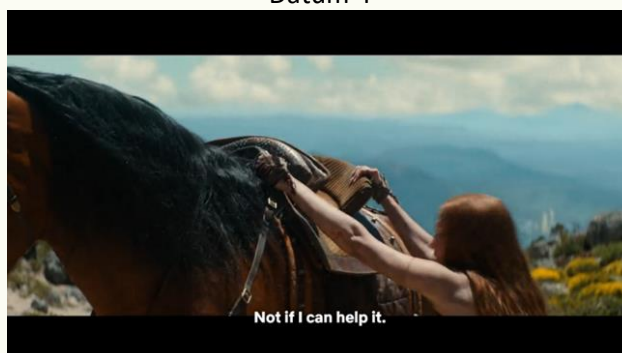
activities or attention of the group. The setting implies a private and domestic space, a context traditionally associated with family roles and gender expectations. Elodie's position in this scene can be read as central yet simultaneously constrained by her family's presence, highlighting both her sense of belonging and the limitations she may face within that social group.

Lord Bayford's statement, "She can use this time to adjust like the rest of us," serves as an explicit acknowledgment of Elodie's subjectivity and individuality. This expression conveys the hidden meaning that Elodie, like others before her, requires personal time to adjust to her new environment, underscoring her experience as more profound than her role within the family. Elodie's representation here shifts from a passive recipient of family norms to an agent whose needs are acknowledged. Additionally, the polite and respectful tone of the dialogue contrasts with the authoritarian patriarchal language or commands often seen in traditional family representations. Lord Bayford's invitation to "Come" serves as a subtle cue for others to step back and respect Elodie's privacy, implying that the use of patriarchal authority is consciously tempered with sensitivity. Lady Bayford's approval, "Oh, indeed," reinforces the collective decision to respect Elodie's boundaries, demonstrating a family dynamic that values cooperation and mutual respect.

At the deepest ideological level, the content and tone of this conversation complicate the image of patriarchy. Lord Bayford's willingness to grant Elodie privacy challenges the conventional image of the patriarch as a controlling figure who regulates and limits women's autonomy. Instead, he appears as a protector or facilitator of Elodie's personal space, suggesting ideological openness in acknowledging women's need for independence and self-determination. This nuanced portrayal can be interpreted as a gesture of early feminism within the framework of patriarchy. Although formal titles and family hierarchy are maintained, the characters' actions and words subtly challenge rigid patriarchal control by prioritizing Elodie's subjectivity. The family's willingness to respect Elodie's privacy can be seen as an ideological shift toward recognizing feminine agency in the domestic space, which has traditionally been dominated by male authority.

However, this does not mean a complete dismantling of patriarchal culture. The structure of the scene remains centered on Lord Bayford's role as the decision-maker, and the granting of privacy is framed as an act permitted by patriarchy rather than as an inherent right. This indicates that feminist ideology is present but mediated, reflecting a developing social consciousness that respects women's autonomy without entirely overturning the established gender hierarchy.

#### Datum 4



(01:21:29 – 01:21:31) Elodie Riding a Horse  
(Source: *Damsel* (2024) Movie from Netflix)

In this scene, Elodie is shown struggling to lift and secure a heavy saddle onto a large brown horse, with the vast mountains of the backdrop behind her. Historically, saddling a horse



has been associated with masculine actions. In traditional visual narratives, especially in Western or adventure genres, it is usually men who are depicted preparing for battle, escape, or rescue. At the same time, women are more often shown as the protected, waiting, or abandoned party. Here, those expectations are explicitly reversed. Elodie is not preparing to flee from danger; she is preparing to head toward it, for the sake of others. Elodie does not act out of selfishness or rebellion, but out of a sense of moral urgency and personal responsibility. She has lost her father, a figure who in many narrative structures typically occupies the role of protector. In his absence, Elodie is forced to take on that role, not as a replacement for a man, but as herself, a woman reclaiming the role of protector and caregiver. This gesture challenges the deeply ingrained social assumption that care and courage are attributes typically associated with one gender. While it is often expected that men protect and women care, Elodie's actions shatter this.

On a representational level, this scene offers a stark contrast to conventional portrayals of women in movies. Rather than depicting her as weak, fragile, or dependent, the camera shows Elodie as physically engaged, driven by emotion, and determined. Her struggle does not show helplessness; instead, it shows resilience and effort. The accompanying line, "Not if I can help it," spoken at that moment, crystallizes her determination. It is a line of resistance, a quiet but firm rebellion against any internal or external forces that might seek to weaken her. The use of landscape in this scene also adds another layer of meaning. The vast, open land suggests freedom, but also isolation. Elodie is alone in this moment; no one comes to her aid. However, this solitude is not depicted as a weakness, but rather as a space for self-determination and autonomy. There are no helpers, no guiding hands, only her will and her body. This makes the representation more realistic, human, and relatable, especially for viewers familiar with the silent burdens women often carry without recognition or praise.

On an ideological level, this scene actively challenges the patriarchal culture that has shaped how women are portrayed in movies and media for decades. By positioning Elodie as a figure who takes initiative, physically prepares herself, emotionally strengthens herself, and articulates her refusal to be passive, the scene subverts stereotypes of female weakness or victimhood. Instead, it presents a complex and empowered portrayal of women who are capable of protecting themselves, surviving, and making choices. Additionally, the act of mounting the horse serves as a metaphor for taking control. The horse, as a symbol, often represents freedom, wildness, and strength. By preparing to ride the horse, Elodie is literally and symbolically preparing to claim control over the direction of her life. Her refusal to be passive is reflected in her dialogue; it is a spoken rejection of helplessness. This is a powerful statement about feminist ideology, emphasizing the importance of taking action even in the face of extraordinary obstacles, and acknowledging that every act, no matter how small or complex, is a form of resistance.

#### Datum 5



(01:39:36 – 01:39:38) Family Scene

Source: *Damsel* (2024) Movie from Netflix

This scene depicts Elodie walking with her sister and stepmother on a stone bridge, set against a backdrop of magnificent architecture and lush mountain scenery. Elodie discusses the available resources and suggests that her mother manage them together. In reality, it is usually men who manage resources, but in this movie, Elodie and her stepmother do so. At the level of reality, this scene breaks with the existing patriarchal culture. In many traditional societies, especially those with monarchical or feudal systems as depicted visually here, power is concentrated in the hands of men, whether fathers, kings, or husbands. Women are often excluded from governance, decision-making, or shared leadership. However, in this scene, we witness three women openly expressing a shared vision of collective governance or shared responsibility. The dialogue “We’ll run it together” reflects a radical reimagining of power, where leadership is collaborative, inclusive, and no longer limited by gender hierarchies. This not only implies a redistribution of power but also the dismantling of patriarchal dominance that has long separated women from institutional control.

At the level of representation, in a movie set in a royal context, women are typically portrayed in static or supporting roles, present but passive. The use of medium-long shots allows the audience to see the entire bodies of the three characters as well as their surroundings. This shows that they are moving forward together, not in a confined or closed space, but in a vast and beautiful open space. Semiotically, this reinforces the idea of freedom, self-control, and agency. The open road ahead of them becomes a narrative symbol that the future and power are in their own hands. Clothing also plays a role in visual semiotics. Each woman wears a distinct color palette and cuts, implying individuality, but they are united in their actions and speech. The woman in the center, who seems to be leading the conversation, does not overshadow the others; instead, the dialogue reinforces the collective “we.”

On an ideological level, this scene directly challenges patriarchal culture. The statement “We’ll run it together” does not merely imply operational cooperation; it symbolizes the emergence of governance rooted in feminist ideology, where care, consensus, and justice are prioritized over control, domination, or hierarchy. The presence of a Black woman in this leadership trio also signifies a shift toward intersectionality, acknowledging that true empowerment must include women of various races and social backgrounds, not just white and aristocratic figures. The ideology embedded in this scene reclaims authority not as something inherited through bloodlines or granted by male rulers, but as something built through trust, unity, and collective vision. Instead, it adopts a feminist, inclusive, emotionally intelligent, and profoundly human model of leadership. Additionally, the language used is simple yet profound, reflecting principles often emphasized in feminist leadership theory. This scene conveys to the audience that leadership does not require sacrificing empathy or solidarity. Instead, it thrives on both.

### 3.2 Elodie’s Characters

Elodie's character in the *Damsel* (2024) movie is depicted as a resilient and independent figure. This depiction is indirectly demonstrated through the scenes and dialogues analyzed above. Initially, she willingly marries to save her kingdom from poverty, but the harsh reality is revealed when the marriage is merely a ruse to sacrifice her to a dragon. Instead of giving up, Elodie rises with extraordinary courage and ingenuity, utilizing minimal resources to survive in a cave. This journey turns her role from victim to savior for herself.

Elodie's character is also shaped by emotional complexity, particularly in her role as a role model for her sister, Floria, as well as her warm relationship with her stepmother, Lady Bayford, which breaks classic stereotypes. She finds solidarity with previous victims through the signs they leave behind, strengthening her determination to fight against oppressive patriarchal traditions. The symbolism of feminism in her character is powerful, as she not only survives but



also exposes the kingdom's lies, frees the enslaved dragon, and overthrows the corrupt regime. Her character and stance are strong from the start and unwavering, despite facing various obstacles and temptations. Overall, Elodie is a powerful representation of female empowerment, courage, ingenuity, and solidarity, despite being hampered by the limitations of the narrative.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the data analyzed in the research findings, which utilize John Fiske's semiotic theory in the movie "*Damsel*" (2024), the researcher can answer the research questions. By applying John Fiske's theory, specifically the concepts of the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology, this research concludes that Elodie's character successfully challenges the existing patriarchal culture and embodies feminist ideology.

In this movie, patriarchal culture and feminist ideology are represented through dialogue and scenes. The data obtained were then analyzed using qualitative methods, which describe the findings in a descriptive manner. At the level of reality, the analysis reveals that elements of costume, dialogue, and location are carefully chosen to reference the real world. For example, Elodie uses an axe, which is typically used by men, to reinforce that women can also do what men usually do. It can be concluded that the movie successfully breaks patriarchal culture.

At the representation level, the presented reality is shaped and mediated through cinematography to create more specific meanings. This research found that the use of camera techniques, such as medium-long shots, allows the audience to see the entire bodies of the three characters, as well as their surroundings. Close-ups in the cinema are used to emphasize internal subjectivity and the psychological tension between Elodie and her father.

At the ideological level, it was found that the reality and representation in *Damsel* (2024) display feminist ideology. Through analysis at the levels of reality and representation, this movie subtly represents feminist ideological views. This ideology is manifested through the depiction of Elodie, who firmly questions her father's decision regarding an arranged marriage, takes responsibility for herself without expecting help from men, and strives to uphold justice not only for herself but also for others.

Overall, this study concluded that the movie *Damsel* (2024) is not simply a form of entertainment, but rather a complex means of cultural critique. Through Fiske's three levels of analysis, it is evident that Elodie can break through the social reality of patriarchal culture that has been reconstructed over generations, and through representation, Elodie conveys ideological messages of feminism to society. The meaning in this movie does not arise naturally but is instead generated through research using John Fiske's Semiotic theory.

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