

**Representation Value of Feminism in The Film: Jane Eyre (2011) by
Charlotte Bronte**

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze and represent the themes of feminism, abuse, and the struggles faced by women as depicted in the film Jane Eyre. The central object of this study is the main character, Jane Eyre, whose experiences reflect significant issues related to gender inequality, patriarchal oppression, and personal empowerment. As an adaptation of the classic novel Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë, the film provides a powerful visual narrative that illustrates the resilience and determination of a woman living in a male-dominated society. The study focuses on several key themes such as male domination, the restriction of women's educational rights, psychological and emotional abuse, and the journey of self-identity and independence. By using a qualitative research method, this study analyzes the film as a literary and cinematic text. The researchers interpret the dialogues, character development, setting, and plot progression to reveal the underlying messages related to feminist ideologies. This research also explores how the film adaptation preserves and amplifies the original novel's feminist message while making it accessible to modern audiences. Jane's resistance against social injustice and her struggle for autonomy are examined as acts of feminist resistance. The portrayal of abuse is also analyzed to understand its role in shaping Jane's identity and empowering her voice. Overall, this study contributes to the discussion of gender representation in literature and film, highlighting how classic works like Jane Eyre continue to influence contemporary feminist thought and encourage critical engagement with issues of power, identity, and liberation.

Keywords: Representation; Feminism; Film; Jane Eyre

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a fundamental and enduring form of artistic expression that reflects the complexities of human life, emotion, and intellect. As both a creative activity and a product of art, literature serves as a powerful means of communication, combining emotional and intellectual elements to touch the heart, provoke thought, and provide

pleasure. It transcends mere entertainment by offering profound insights into the human experience, conveying cultural values, historical contexts, and personal journeys. Through its diverse form such as poetry, prose, drama, and narrative fiction literature captivates readers and invites them to explore the depth and beauty of language and imagination. It fosters empathy, critical thinking, and moral awareness, enabling readers to understand perspectives that may differ from their own.

Literature also plays a crucial role in shaping identity and consciousness by portraying social realities, challenging dominant ideologies, and amplifying marginalized voices. Among the many mediums used to express literature, film has emerged as one of the most dynamic and accessible tools for storytelling. The cinematic adaptation of literary works enhances their reach and impact, offering audiences a visual, emotional, and auditory experience that reinforces the narrative's core messages. Film translates the written word into a multisensory format, combining spoken language, imagery, sound, and performance to create a compelling artistic expression.

Moreover, films are increasingly recognized not only for their entertainment value but also for their educational and sociocultural significance. Contemporary filmmakers often use cinema as a platform to address moral, social, and political issues ranging from poverty and injustice to gender inequality and identity. This makes film a powerful medium for societal reflection and transformation. As a modern extension of literary expression, film retains the essence of storytelling while incorporating innovative artistic techniques that resonate with today's audiences.

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, the term "film" can refer both to the physical medium namely, a thin layer of celluloid used to capture images and the artistic work itself. Danesi (2012) emphasizes that film is a highly aesthetic art form due to its integration of dialogue, music, visual composition, and narrative structure. Through this synthesis of artistic elements, film becomes a medium capable of moving viewers emotionally and intellectually, much like literature.

In recent years, films that explore feminist themes have gained increased attention and acclaim. These works highlight issues of gender inequality, women's empowerment, and the quest for equal rights, especially when adapted from novels that reflect historical or social struggles. Such films not only entertain but also educate, serving as a vital tool for advocacy and awareness in a world that continues to grapple with gender-based injustice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature's educational and cultural value has been affirmed by scholars. Collie and Slater (1987, as cited in Fadilah, 2014) argue that literature contains enduring human concerns, offering beauty and meaning across time. Florack (2014) supports

the integration of film in literature education, stating that it enhances literacy and fosters critical engagement, emotional awareness, and communication skills. The interplay between literature and film makes thematic exploration more accessible and impactful, offering broader insights into social phenomena.

One prominent literary theme that continues to gain traction is feminism. According to Brooker, Selden, and Widdowson (2005), feminism refers to the struggle against patriarchal culture in pursuit of gender equality. Saha (2023) highlights that feminist researchers challenge traditional social science perspectives on gender, and Angelides (2004) emphasizes the importance of introducing feminist values early to combat potential abuse and inequality. Feminism arose to defend women's rights as cultural developments reinforced unequal treatment and gender-based discrimination.

Victoria (2023) describes feminism as a political and social movement addressing gender inequality. It emphasizes respect, equal opportunity, and liberation from rigid gender norms. Feminism benefits both women and men, encouraging more flexible and inclusive understandings of identity. Monika (2022) points out that feminist literary criticism doesn't focus solely on female critics or women authors but seeks to analyze how literature portrays gender and contributes to feminist discourse. Writers and poets have increasingly embedded feminist ideologies in their works, offering advocacy, reflection, and new narratives that challenge societal norms.

The integration of feminist discourse into literature and film is evident in *Jane Eyre*, a novel by Charlotte Brontë. First published in 1847 under the male pseudonym Currer Bell, *Jane Eyre* explores themes of female independence, romantic autonomy, and gender inequality within a rigid Victorian society. The Brontë sisters' choice to use male pen names reflects the systemic obstacles faced by women in literature. Their works critique societal expectations and paved the way for future generations of female writers. *Jane Eyre* critiques the constraints placed on women's autonomy and advocates for justice and empowerment. Set against the backdrop of Victorian England, the story of Jane Eyre critiques patriarchal values and explores the protagonist's journey toward self-respect, independence, and love on her own terms. The continued relevance of this narrative in literary and cinematic studies reflects the enduring power of feminist literature to inspire, challenge, and promote gender equality.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employs a descriptive qualitative methodology. Qualitative research primarily focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. It seeks to interpret participants' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions of reality. As Lê and Schmid (2022) note,

qualitative research often balances methodological diversity with the push for standardization, acknowledging innovation while preserving depth and authenticity. Specifically, this research uses qualitative descriptive research, a type of qualitative approach that aims to answer questions related to the “who, what, and where” of events or interactions. This approach is well-suited for gaining detailed, straightforward descriptions of participants’ perspectives and lived experiences within a given context. The sample in this study consists of selected participants (e.g., film content, characters, or dialogue scenes) based on purposive sampling. This method ensures that the data collected are rich in information relevant to the topic, particularly concerning feminist representation and gender struggles in the selected film.

Instrument and Procedures

The data in this research are gathered through documentation techniques. The primary data source is the film *Jane Eyre*, including specific scenes, dialogues, character interactions, and visual elements that portray feminist themes and gender dynamics. The researchers carefully watch and analyze the film multiple times to identify and record relevant data. Supporting materials such as the original novel by Charlotte Brontë and scholarly references on feminism and film analysis are also used to deepen interpretation and context. The procedures follow a systematic approach: selecting the film, identifying key scenes, transcribing relevant dialogues, and coding significant moments that represent themes such as patriarchal domination, female resistance, and empowerment. These steps are designed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the narrative elements and their alignment with feminist theory.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involves content analysis with a descriptive focus. The researchers analyze the transcribed and coded data thematically, identifying patterns and recurring motifs related to feminist struggles and character development. Themes are interpreted based on feminist literary criticism and relevant theoretical frameworks. The findings are then described in narrative form, providing a rich and coherent explanation of how feminist issues are portrayed in the film. This analytical approach allows for a nuanced understanding of social context, character agency, and ideological messages embedded in the film’s storyline.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Types of Feminism Portrayed in *Jane Eyre* (2011 Film)

The film adaptation of *Jane Eyre* presents several feminist themes, primarily centered around Jane’s resistance to male domination and her pursuit of self-

autonomy. The feminist portrayal in the film can be analyzed through the treatment Jane receives from four dominant male figures in her life, each of whom represents different forms of patriarchal control and abuse:

John Reed (Cousin)

John Reed, Jane's cousin, embodies physical and emotional abuse. As a child, Jane suffers harsh treatment from him simply because she is an orphan and considered socially inferior. John regularly hits her and asserts his dominance within the household. This early experience introduces Jane to gender-based oppression and social injustice.

Mr. Brocklehurst (School Authority)

Mr. Brocklehurst, the authoritarian head of Lowood School, exercises control under the guise of religious morality. He imposes harsh rules on the girls, including forcing them to wear plain clothing and cutting off their naturally curly hair to suppress vanity. His treatment symbolizes institutionalized misogyny, where girls are subjected to suffering in the name of virtue and discipline.

Edward Rochester (Lover)

Although Rochester appears to treat Jane with more respect than others, his actions still reflect patriarchal dominance. He deceives Jane by hiding his existing marriage, thus undermining her autonomy and ability to make informed decisions. Despite claiming love for her, Rochester's manipulation reflects how male figures often attempt to control women emotionally and psychologically.

St. John Rivers (Cousin and Suitor)

St. John offers Jane a marriage devoid of affection, viewing her as a partner for missionary work rather than as a beloved companion. His proposal is based on duty rather than love, reinforcing the idea that women's roles should align with men's religious or societal missions. Jane rejects this view, asserting her right to choose a life based on personal conviction and emotional truth.

These four figures collectively highlight the various ways women experience subjugation and how Jane's resistance to each form represents a feminist stance against patriarchy.

Jane Eyre's Struggles as a Representation of Feminist Resistance

The film illustrates Jane Eyre's journey as one of constant struggle against societal expectations and male dominance. Her resilience and self-determination showcase a powerful feminist narrative.

Struggle for Education and Intellectual Independence

Jane's fight begins with her determination to obtain an education. Despite being mistreated and ignored at Gateshead, Jane finds comfort in books and learning. Eventually, her aunt sends her to Lowood School, where she experiences both oppression and growth. Jane's thirst for knowledge symbolizes the broader feminist call for equal educational opportunities. Unlike male characters such as John Reed—who is expected to receive education and support his family—Jane must struggle for the right to learn and grow.

Struggle Against Male Domination

Jane's resistance to male control is evident throughout the film. From John Reed's physical abuse in her childhood to the emotional manipulation of Rochester and the cold expectations of St. John, Jane continually asserts her independence. She refuses to be defined by others or reduced to a submissive role. Her decision to leave Rochester upon discovering his deceit, and her rejection of St. John's loveless marriage proposal, reflect her insistence on personal agency and moral integrity.

Struggle for Identity and Self-Worth

Throughout her life, Jane battles societal structures that seek to silence or diminish her. She is constantly reminded of her low status and gender-based limitations. Yet, she retains a strong sense of self-worth, choosing to live by her principles rather than conform to oppressive norms. Her story exemplifies the feminist belief in self-empowerment, as she navigates life with courage, intellect, and integrity.

The findings of this study align with and extend earlier feminist literary and film analyses, revealing that Jane Eyre's resistance against male domination, pursuit of education, and desire for autonomy are central elements reflecting a feminist consciousness consistent with Brontë's original work and its contemporary interpretations. Previous research has emphasized Jane Eyre as a pioneering feminist text that places a woman at the center of moral and intellectual authority (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000). This study finds that the film adaptation preserves and dramatizes these themes by portraying Jane not as a passive victim but as a woman who consistently exercises agency even under oppressive circumstances. As Hoeveler (2016) notes, feminist readings of Jane Eyre critique Victorian gender norms by presenting a heroine who demands love and respect without sacrificing her independence.

The abuses inflicted by John Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, Rochester, and St. John Rivers highlight different forms of patriarchal control, ranging from physical violence and religious authoritarianism to emotional manipulation and moral coercion. Tandon (2018) argues that each male character reflects broader social structures restricting women's autonomy, and Jane's ability to recognize and reject

these forms of control positions her as a feminist figure. The film also brings to light the gendered barriers to education, echoing Showalter's (2014) observations that Victorian women were denied formal intellectual development and relegated to the private sphere. Jane's relentless quest for knowledge symbolizes a rejection of this norm, illustrating a key feminist argument that education is essential for women's emancipation and empowerment.

Furthermore, her decisions to leave Thornfield and reject St. John's marriage proposal reflect a deep assertion of selfhood, echoing Spivak's (1985) postcolonial feminist critique that Jane Eyre articulates a woman's right to define her own moral and existential values, even when these choices challenge social conventions. The 2011 film adaptation accentuates Jane's emotional and psychological struggles through its visual narrative, contributing to feminist discourse by translating themes of silence, resistance, and inner strength into cinematic form. As McFarlane (1996) explains, film adaptations can offer new dimensions of interpretation through techniques such as lighting, framing, and music, which this film employs effectively to express Jane's internal conflicts and evolving self-awareness.

Overall, this study contributes to feminist literary and film scholarship by demonstrating how classic feminist themes remain relevant and can be recontextualized in contemporary cinematic adaptations. For educators and curriculum developers, these findings suggest that pairing classic texts like Jane Eyre with their film adaptations may enhance students' understanding of feminist theory, historical gender norms, and the evolution of women's roles in society, while also promoting critical thinking through comparative media analysis.

CONCLUSION

In the movie Jane Eyre, the main character portrays a woman who reflects the values of feminism. She shows resilience in maintaining her independent identity, as well as striving to gain freedom in expressing opinions and making choices, just as men can do. Jane Eyre strives to achieve independence, even at a young age, without relying on others, even though she is unmarried. From childhood, Jane Eyre experienced demeaning treatment from her aunt and uncle's wife family, who looked down on her because of her status as an orphan. Despite facing various challenges, she did not give up and continued to strive to improve her quality of life. Through education, she managed to become a teacher, which was an important step in her quest to be independent and provide for herself. Jane Eyre shows courage and determination by accepting every job offer that comes her way. This proactive attitude reflects her passion to not only survive, but also to carve her own path in life. Thus, the movie not only depicts a woman's journey to independence, but also highlights important themes about women's struggles and rights in society.

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