


Women's Movement Against Patriarchy In *Monalisa Smile* Movie (2003): A Feminist Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Masalah utama penelitian ini adalah bagaimana sistem patriarki tercermin dalam *Mona Lisa Smile*. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah: 1. Untuk menunjukkan bagaimana patriarki sebagai sistem sosial digambarkan dalam film *Mona Lisa Smile*. 2. Untuk menunjukkan bagaimana karakter wanita bergerak melawan sistem patriarki dalam film *Mona Lisa Smile*. 3. Untuk mengungkap alasan mengapa Mike Newell membahas sistem patriarki dalam film *Mona Lisa Smile*. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif. Objek penelitian ini adalah film *Mona Lisa Smile* dan objek formalnya adalah gerakan melawan patriarki. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini diperoleh dari film *Mona Lisa Smile* dan dari artikel, situs web, dan blog yang terkait dengan film *Mona Lisa Smile*. Peneliti mengambil beberapa langkah untuk mendapatkan data kualitatif. Langkah-langkah tersebut adalah menonton film *Mona Lisa Smile*, mengamati setiap karakter, mencatat adegan-adegan penting kemudian mencocokkannya dengan naskah film *Mona Lisa Smile*, membaca referensi dan mengelompokkan data. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa ada lima indikator patriarki dalam film *Mona Lisa Smile*, yaitu marginalisasi, subordinasi, stereotip, kekerasan dan beban ganda.

The main problem of this research is how the patriarchal system is reflected in Mona Lisa Smile. The objectives of this research are: 1. To show how patriarchy as a social system is depicted in the film Mona Lisa Smile. 2. To show how female characters move against the patriarchal system in the film Mona Lisa Smile. 3. To reveal the reasons why Mike Newell discusses the patriarchal system in the film Mona Lisa Smile. This research uses a qualitative research design. The object of this research is the film Mona Lisa Smile and its formal object is the movement against patriarchy. The data sources in this research were obtained from the film Mona Lisa Smile and from articles, websites, and blogs related to the film Mona Lisa Smile. The researcher took several steps to obtain qualitative data. These steps are watching the film Mona Lisa Smile, observing each character, noting important scenes then matching them with the film script Mona Lisa Smile, reading references and grouping the data. This research concludes that there are five indicators of patriarchy in the film Mona Lisa Smile, namely marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence and double burden.



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INTRODUCTION

Women have a big role in life. In a family, women act as wives and mothers. According to the traditional view of society, women are only tasked to serve their husbands and take care of household chores. Women do not have the right to get higher education and work outside the home. This happens because traditional society still adheres to the Patriarchal system. Patriarchy is a social system that considers men to have power and authority in society. Patriarchy places men as the main figure in society. Various aspects of life are dominated by men, such as in the family, community organizations, offices to government and politics. Patriarchal culture has occurred since ancient times and still exists today. Patriarchy places men in a higher position than women in all aspects of social, cultural and

economic life (Pinem, 2009). This results in women not having the same rights and opportunities as men, such as the right to education and the right to work. Therefore, patriarchal culture is considered detrimental and demeaning to women. This is one of the reasons for the feminism movement.

Feminism is often associated with gender equality and the movement against patriarchy. The patriarchal system makes women experience gender injustice, discrimination, and physical, emotional, and sexual violence. The feminism movement is the answer to the anxiety of women who are bound by patriarchy. Feminism is a movement that fights for women's rights. Feminism makes a woman get the same rights as men, have the same life opportunities, and choose her own role. With the feminism movement, the position of women is increasingly recognized by society. A woman can get an education, a job, a position in a community organization, and even a position in the government. The feminist movement has one common goal, which is the achievement of gender equality. Gender equality applies to economic, political, and socio-cultural issues as well as personal interests.

One movie that talks about the feminist movement against patriarchal culture is *Mona Lisa Smile*. The film was released on December 19, 2003 and directed by Mike Newell. *Mona Lisa Smile* tells the story of a lecturer named Katherine Watson, played by Julia Roberts. *Mona Lisa Smile* is produced by Revolution Studios and Columbia Pictures with a duration of 1 hour 59 minutes. The theme of this movie is drama. This movie also contains romance and comedy. Many aspects of life are discussed in the movie *Mona Lisa Smile*, such as social issues about patriarchal culture, opposition to the conclusive traditional order and the struggle for women's rights. The audience will be presented with an unexpected storyline, captivating cinematography, the uniqueness of the characters, and the beauty of the 1950s atmosphere, such as historical buildings, fashion, and traditions.

The main character of the movie *Mona Lisa Smile* is Katherine Watson. Katherine Watson hails from California and is a first-year teacher at Oakland State. She is a modern woman who has a forward-thinking and open mind and has high ideals. Katherine's only wish was to teach at Wellesley Collage. The most conservative university in the country. Katherine's dream achieved; she officially became a lecturer in the art history department. A modern woman, Katherine doesn't fit in with the rules and traditions at Wellesley College, the college where she teaches, and she intends to change the traditions and mindset of her students. Meanwhile, Wellesley College is a conservative university. The education system there is very old-fashioned and adheres to traditions passed down from generation to generation. The tradition states that a student will be judged on her success based on who she will marry. The higher the position of the prospective husband, the more successful the student would be. Katherine strongly opposed this tradition because many students missed classes and exams because they were busy taking care of their husbands and homes. She also opposed the fact that wives should take care of all the household chores so that their husbands could work.

The movie *Mona Lisa Smile* received a pretty good response. This is evidenced by the IMDb score of 6.6/10 and Cinejour with a score of 3.5/10. The movie *Mona Lisa Smile* received mixed responses from the audience, both positive and negative responses. Movie critics also gave their opinions about the movie *Mona Lisa Smile*. One of the critics who commented on the movie *Mona Lisa Smile* was Claudia Puig, a critic from USA Today. Based on the article she wrote on December 12, 2003, she gave a review that the film *Mona Lisa Smile* was an ordinary film, even deserving a C grade. Roger Ebert posted a review of *Mona Lisa Smile* on his website Roger Ebert.com on December 19, 2003. He gave a score of 3/4 for the movie *Mona Lisa Smile*. According to him, *Mona Lisa Smile* is an observant and attentive movie. He also praised Julia Roberts as a very talented actress.

The movie *Mona Lisa Smile* received many positive responses, such as Gemma Park who gave it a score of 5/5. Gemma thinks that *Mona Lisa Smile* is a smart and touching movie. She came to understand that we can live the life we want and not conform to the wishes of others or the standards that exist in society. Because according to her, everyone is different and wanting different things is okay. There are things in the movie *Mona Lisa Smile* that Gemma does not like, namely there is a plot that is actually less important and unnecessary. Despite getting a lot of positive responses, *Mona Lisa Smile* cannot avoid negative responses. Aga who felt disappointed with the movie *Mona Lisa Smile* gave a score of 3/5. According to her, *Mona Lisa Smile* was good at the beginning but the more Aga watched it, she felt that the plot became uninteresting. She also disliked how the characters became bad characters, such as Joan Brandwyn who chose not to study law even though she wanted to and Giselle Levy who became a home wrecker.

Mona Lisa Smile is a movie that raises a sensitive topic. When this movie was released in 2003, feminism and patriarchy were still quite foreign to society. Mike Newell as the director should be appreciated for successfully presenting a slick movie that is full of messages, especially for women. This is evidenced by the various nominations received by the movie *Mona Lisa Smile*. The Critics Choice Award held annually by the American Critics Choice Association (CCA) gives nominations in the best song category. The Golden Globe Awards, which have been held since 1944, gave a nomination in the best original song category. Another nomination was given by the Teen Choice Award in the Choice Movie Actress category received by Julia Stiles who played the character Joan Brandwyn. The nominations obtained by the film *Mona Lisa Smile* prove that this film can be well received by the public and leave a good message, such as the existence of a patriarchal system that harms women must be eliminated. *Mona Lisa Smile* also gives a message to women to dare to fight against harmful traditions and dare to choose their own path.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research design. According to Kirk and Niller (1988), the term qualitative research was originally based on qualitative observations as opposed to quantitative observations. The purpose of research with qualitative methods is to facilitate researchers. Another goal is to understand the topic or phenomenon raised by the researcher. The results of research with qualitative methods are arranged naturally and in accordance with the facts found by researchers in the field

This research has two research objects, namely material objects and formal objects. The material object of this research is the movie *Mona Lisa Smile*. The formal object of this research is the movement to fight against patriarchy in the movie *Mona Lisa Smile*. The types of data and data sources in this study are divided into two types, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data used in this study is the film *Mona Lisa Smile*. Secondary data in this study were obtained from articles, websites, blogs, related to the film *Mona Lisa Smile*. There are three steps to collect data, namely, data reduction, data presentation/data display and conclusion/data conclusion. To understand the topic to be discussed using the qualitative description method. The purpose of descriptive qualitative research is to reveal events or facts, circumstances, phenomena, variables, and circumstances that occur at the time of the research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Indicators of Patriarchy in the Film *Mona Lisa Smile*

1. Marginalization

One form of marginalization is separation or exclusion. An ostracized individual or group cannot participate in community activities. The character ostracized in the film *Mona Lisa Smile* is Amanda Armstrong. Amanda Armstrong served as the school nurse at Wellesley College. She was expelled after being found to have provided contraceptives to students. This was discovered after Betty Warren wrote a story in the campus newspaper titled "Contraception Now Available on Campus: School Nurse Encourages Promiscuity." Amanda Armstrong was expelled because she was considered to have damaged the image of Wellesley College, which has long upheld values of manners. She was also accused of promoting promiscuity among students. This was evidenced by the remarks made by Wellesley College president Jocelyn Carr to Amanda Armstrong.

Dialogue (00:25:27 – 00:26:00)

Jocelyn Carr : We cannot appear to promote sexual promiscuity.

Dialogue (00:26:20 – 00:26:31)

Jocelyn Carr : I spent the better part of Friday afternoon convincing the alumnae that your record was impeccable that you would no longer provide contraceptive devices and you'd make a public statement to that effect.



Picture 1. Betty Warren's writing in the dictionary newspaper. (00:23:46)

2. Subordination

Gender subordination is the assumption that women's position is inferior to men. Women only have the right to take care of the family and household. Nancy Abbey teaches how to be a good wife. Nancy gives an example: if there is a banquet at home, it is a wife's duty to ensure that the event runs smoothly.

Dialogue (00:28:29 – 00:28:33)

Nancy Abbey : Your carefully planned your meal, set your table and arranged for a babysitter.

Nancy continued the case. The banquet had invited the boss and his wife, meaning it would determine her husband's career. However, there was sudden news that two of her husband's coworkers were also attending at the boss's request. Nancy asked what a wife should do when she received additional guests. Giselle Livy replied that she would file for divorce. Hearing this, Nancy became furious.

Dialogue (00:29:08 – 00:29:22)

Nancy Abbey : That's very funny. But the thing is, it's not a joke. a few years from now your sole responsibility will be taking care of your husband and children.



Picture 2. Nancy Abbey teaches about ethics. (00:28:35)

3. Stereotype

A stereotype is an exaggerated view of a person or group. Stereotypes can be positive, negative, or neutral. In the film *Mona Lisa Smile*, Katherine Watson is the most frequently stereotyped character. Rumors spread at Wellesley College that she was undesirable, that she would never marry, and that she never wanted to have children. Katherine was also described as a liberal. This stereotype is negative because the rumor is untrue and could damage Katherine Watson's reputation. Katherine Watson also faces a positive stereotype. This is what Bill Dunbar said when they met at a bar. As in the dialogue below:

Dialogue (00:30:06 – 00:30:15)

Bill Dunbar : They say you're progressive. A forward thinker. Are you?

Katherine Watson : There are a lot of labels here. I've noticed.



Picture 3. Katherine Watson and Bill Dunbar chatting at a bar. (00:29:50)

4. Violence

The violence found in the film *Mona Lisa Smile* is verbal violence. This form of verbal violence includes swearing, insults, and slander. Swearing and insults are harsh words intended to demean others, while slander is false information that harms others. The verbal violence found in the film *Mona Lisa Smile* occurs when Betty Warren insults Giselle Livy because she is in a relationship with a married man. The dialogue below illustrates the verbal violence expressed by Betty Warren.

Dialogue (01:35:53 – 01:36:00)

Betty Warren : *Do you know what they say? They say you're a whore. Once they've all sampled you, they'll toss you aside like a used rag.*



Picture 4. Conflict between Betty and Giselle. (01:35:54)

5. Double Burden

A double burden means someone carries two types of workloads simultaneously: work outside the home and household chores. The double burden in the film *Mona Lisa Smile* can be seen in the conflict experienced by Joan Brandwyn. This double burden manifests itself when Joan informs Betty that she has been accepted into Yale Law School. Betty is shocked and disagrees with Joan's decision, as she thought Joan would marry, like herself. Joan says that she can stay married while continuing her education. As seen in the dialogue below.

Dialogue (00:51:03 – 00:51:11)

Betty Warren : *You're getting married*

Joan Brandwyn : *First of all, there's no ring on this finger. Second, I can do both. I can.*



Picture 5. Joan tells Betty about her plans to continue her studies. (00:50:50)

Depiction of Pathriarchy

1. Through Character

The character portrayal in the film *Mona Lisa Smile* shows both patriarchal and non-patriarchal characters. Hortense Warren, Betty Warren's mother, is depicted as patriarchal. She frequently tells Betty to be the perfect wife. This can be seen in the dialogue below.

Dialogue (00:25:27 – 01:25:31)

Hortense Warren: *A good wife lets her husband think that everything's his idea, even when it's not.*

The above dialogue occurs when Hortense is preparing for Betty's wedding. Betty mentions that Spencer Jones, her future husband, disapproves of poetry reading at their wedding. Betty doesn't mind, but Hortense insists that the poetry reading must go ahead.



Picture 6. Hortense Warren is scolding Betty Warren. (00:25:27)

The non-patriarchal character portrayed in the film *Mona Lisa Smile* is Katherine Watson, the main character. Katherine is a progressive and open-minded figure who opposes traditional and patriarchal systems.

Katherine Watson feels sad and disappointed by the treatment Amanda Armstrong received. She becomes concerned when she reads a news story in the campus newspaper about Amanda providing contraceptives to students. Although they have just met and don't know each other well, she consistently asks about Amanda's condition and ensures that she is okay.

Dialogue (00:24:21 – 00:24:28)

Katherine Watson : *Is Amanda going to get into trouble?*

Nancy Abbey : *Amanda needs to start minding her p's and q's.*

Bill Durban : *The trick to surviving Wellesley is never getting noticed.*

From the dialogue above, we can conclude that only Katherine Watson is concerned about Amanda Armstrong's fate. Nancy Abbey and Bill Durban appear unconcerned.



Picture 7. Katherine reads a story in the campus newspaper about Amanda Armstrong. (00:23:56)

2. Through Setting

The film *Mona Lisa Smile* is set at Wellesley College, specifically in the fall of 1953. Wellesley College is an all-women's college located in Massachusetts. Wellesley College is known as a conservative university. Its educational system adheres to a traditional system. This is evidenced by the dialogue spoken by Jocelyn Carr, president of Wellesley College, when she rebukes Katherine Watson's teaching methods.

Dialogue (00:48:39 – 00:48:40)

Jocelyn Carr : *We are traditionalists, Katherine.*



Picture 8. Jocelyn scolds Katherine's way of teaching. (00:48:30)

3. Through events

Wellesley College is a conservative college that prepares its students to become wives and mothers. This is achieved through a traditional competition. The competition has been held since the late 1980s. It determines who will marry first. The technique involves each student rolling a wooden wheel using a stick. The first student to reach the finish line wins and gets to marry first.

Dialogue (00:23:05 – 00:23:30)

Nancy Abbey : Go, go, go! Go, go. It's been going on since the late '80s. Whoever wins is first to marry!

Katherine Watson : Do the girls take it literally?

Miss Albini : Only the girl with the winning hoop. Oh, look, it's Phyllis Naylor!



Picture 9. The students are competing. (00:23:04)

Reason of Addressing Patriarchy

The film *Mona Lisa Smile* was directed by Mike Newell, a British director and producer. In *Mona Lisa Smile*, Mike Newell draws on women's struggles and shifts in political culture after World War II. He shows how women fought for rights and freedoms, and broke free from a social system that restricted women's freedom of movement, namely patriarchy.

Mona Lisa Smile provides a concrete example of how patriarchy, as a social system, impacts women. Patriarchy assumes that women are only entitled to care for the family, such as serving their husbands' needs, raising children, and doing housework. As wives, women must uphold their husbands' good name. This mindset is passed down from Wellesley College to its female students. As a conservative college, Wellesley College educates its female students to be good wives and mothers dedicated to their families. A student's success is also determined by who they marry.

Katherine Watson is a symbol of a feminist woman who fiercely opposes the patriarchal system. She is intelligent, open-minded, and visionary. Katherine opposes the conservative culture at Wellesley College. As a teacher, Katherine does not want her students to be constrained by traditional and conservative culture. Therefore, she strives to foster forward-thinking and open-mindedness. One of Katherine's efforts is to provide material outside the syllabus, with the aim of encouraging her students to think critically and express their opinions about works of art. However, Katherine was ultimately reprimanded by the Wellesley College President for her unconventional teaching methods.

The film *Mona Lisa Smile* teaches us to care for other women and makes us aware that women have the same rights as men. We must recognize that the patriarchal system only harms women. Therefore, women must be strong-willed, have strong convictions, and be able to defend themselves against injustice caused by the patriarchal system. Women must also fight for the right to education and careers. Because with education, women can become more superior and empowered individuals. Therefore, women will not be oppressed by the patriarchal system.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion in chapter four, the research on the depiction of patriarchy in the film *Mona Lisa Smile* can be summarized into three points.

The first point is that this study found five indicators of patriarchy in the film: marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and double burdens. Marginalization is a form of separation and exclusion. In the film *Mona Lisa Smile*, the character who experiences exclusion is Amanda Armstrong. Gender subordination is the assumption that women have a lower position than men. Stereotypes are exaggerated views of a person. Katherine Watson is the character most frequently stereotyped. Verbal

violence can take the form of swearing, insults, and slander. The characters in the film *Mona Lisa Smile* who engage in verbal abuse are Betty Warren and Hortense Warren. The Double Burden is when someone simultaneously carries two burdens. A woman must work or study, while at home she must care for the family.

The second point, the depiction of patriarchy in the film *Mona Lisa Smile*, can be seen in three ways: characters, setting, and events. The depiction of characters in *Mona Lisa Smile* is shown in both patriarchal and non-patriarchal characters. Hortense Warren is a patriarchal character, while Katherine Watson is a non-patriarchal character. The depiction through setting can be seen in the setting of *Mona Lisa Smile*, which is Wellesley College. Wellesley College is a women's college known for its conservative nature. The depiction through events can be seen in the tradition of a contest at Wellesley College. The contest determines which student will have the right to marry first.

The third point concerns the reasons for the depiction of patriarchy in the film *Mona Lisa Smile*. Mike Newell, the director of *Mona Lisa Smile*, refers to the struggles of women and the shift in political culture after World War II. Through the film *Mona Lisa Smile*, she showcases women's struggle to gain rights and freedom, freeing them from the patriarchal system. *Mona Lisa Smile* reminds us to care for other women, and those women have the same rights as men. Women must also care about education and careers to avoid being oppressed by patriarchy.

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