

# THE RESISTANCE TOWARD PATRIARCHAL PERFORMED BY ANNE BOLEYN IN THE OTHER BOLEYN GIRL FILM BY JUSTIN CHADWICK

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## ABSTRACT

This research paper describes the portrayal of woman struggle against the patriarchal ideology in the historical fiction film entitled '*The Other Boleyn Girl*' (2008) by Justin Chadwick that presents woman as secondary sex. The research paper discusses the extent to which Anne Boleyn as the female main character struggles in resisting the patriarchal system occurred in 16<sup>th</sup> century of England monarch. It shows that women are placed on the secondary level and they are stereotyped through the significant conception of beauty notion constructed by society. The implications of woman as the other and on the secondary level are discussed by using second wave feminism theory by Simone de Beauvoir and beauty myth by Naomi Wolf as a supporting theory. The methodology that is used is qualitative textual analysis. Thus, the film is analyzed by using narrative concept from Todorov. Nevertheless, the non narrative is also analyzed to convey the ideology within the film. The aim of the analysis is to portray the characteristics of Anne Boleyn in challenging male domination. The traditional gender stereotype and dichotomy of "The Self" and "The Other" victimize woman as sexual object of man. Women are mistreated because of this condition. However, on the other hand, the male domination is the cause of woman struggle. Due to the forceful patriarchal society, that struggle does not change the situation of woman although it is successful in showing women's strength.

**Keywords:** Beauty Myth; Gender Inequality; Patriarchy; Second Sex; Second Wave Feminism.

### 1. Introduction

Gender issue is one of the emerging issues becoming a specific interest of conducting research as it plays significant part in every aspect of human life. The concept of "gender" is socially constructed in determining both men and women's role and behavior within the society. Gender differentiates the role of man and woman not only by looking at their biological aspects, but also their behaviors that are considered as being well appropriated in society (Jenainati and Groves 2007, p.5). This concept emerges as a consequence of gender construction (male-masculine, female-feminine) which is created by the society as well. The stereotyping of traditional gender roles based on patriarchy implicitly perceives the domination of man over woman due to the natural defectiveness of woman.

The description above is an example of how women are considered as "second sex" compared to men. It is a term established by Simone de Beauvoir that perceives women as less essential and in the secondary level to men (Beauvoir, 2003). Women are considered to be functioned as satisfactory sexual object for men. This condition is the result of patriarchal system which controls and creates the standard demand of women's role. Due to this standard, it establishes the beauty myth which is believed to be a system that keep maintaining the power of male domination in society that still exist nowadays (Wolf 2002, p.14)

The beauty myth constructs the notion of beauty that merely sees women in terms of their physical appearance and fertility. Women's beauty must be related to their fertility, and since this system is based on sexual selection, it becomes inevitable and changeless (ibid, p. 11) Women's fertility is an important thing which determines their capability of giving birth to the family descendants. Moreover, the notion of beauty creates the anxiety of women to reach the demand of ideal concept that concerns on physical obsession, terror of aging, and dread of losing control. Women have always suffered for beauty and the power of male domination uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement (Wolf 2002, p.10).

The patriarchal system that dictates our life triggers the women's struggle against male domination namely feminism. The ideology of feminism aims to change the condition and promote women's attempt to increase their power. The feminists classified in the second wave feminism attempt to abolish the widespread sexism and gender. In addition, the rebirth of the second wave feminism period broadened a wider-range of issues concerning on sexuality, in which women tried to gain legal and reproductive rights, pursue the higher education, and reverse beliefs regarding their social life (Wolf 2002, p.7).

Unfortunately, the issues of gender discrimination experienced by women are still experienced in most countries, including England. The equality right has been already achieved since the feminist movement arose in the context of industrial society and liberal politics and connected to both the liberal women's right movement and early socialist feminism started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States and Europe (Krolokke, 2005). However, the gender inequality still becomes the developing problem in England. This is proven by the establishment of the ministerial unit of women and equality in United Kingdom in 2007 which is responsible for prioritizing women's issues that emphasize on the gender inequality (Abrams 2011, p. 1 of 1). This ministerial unit will try to ensure that all governmental departments work together to address issues affecting women which are still thriving in England.

The depiction of gender inequality existing within the patriarchal system in England can be observed from one of the historical fiction films released in 2008, entitled "*The Other Boleyn Girl*" by Justin Chadwick. The film is made based on the England history especially the 16<sup>th</sup> century England monarch ruled by King Henry VIII. Since its parliamentary system was stick on traditional gender roles, there are many gender issues against women that can be discussed.

The issue of woman's function as men's sexual object in England 16<sup>th</sup> century gave an overview of gender discrimination that disparaged women's role in the society. This condition is called domestic public dichotomy. As mentioned by Rosaldo (1974, cited in Hanami 1974), "the term of the domestic public dichotomy distinguishes the sexes by stating the world wide asymmetry of gender identified activities: women's activities tend to be more undervalued than men, while men's activities have culturally legitimated authority over women". Men depicted in *The Other Boleyn Girl* film participate more in warfare and politics. On the contrary, women take part in both childbearing and satisfying men's sexual desire.

Another issue caused by the patriarchal system is the construction of beauty myth. Female characters possess the anxiety leading them to physical obsession, for they are required to achieve the concept of ideal beauty which is also associated to their fertility. The concept of ideal beauty in this film refers to the young women with healthy reproductive system. Hence, women in the film, particularly the female main character are obsessed to attain the demand of that concept in order to attract King Henry VIII's attention. This is an imperative situation which is considered and natural for women because the social construction: Strong men battle for beautiful women, and beautiful women are more reproductively successful. (Wolf 2002, p.11)

Anne Boleyn is one of the female main characters who become the symbol of woman's power in the film. If we look at the historical background, the second and the most well known wife of the King Henry VIII named Anne Boleyn, played significant role in the history of England. She had considerable power over government appointments and political matters in the 16<sup>th</sup> century of England. Therefore, she had been called as "the most influential and important queen consort England has ever had". According to Amolife (n.d), King Henry VIII bestowed upon Anne the Marquessate of Pembroke, making her the first English female commoner who has known to become a noble in her own right by creation, rather than through inheritance.

Gender stereotype construction is a power that supports the development of traditional gender role conceptions which strongly supports the existence of patriarchal system that disparages woman's position within the society. Both "The Beauty Myth" and the role of women that always have been marginalized lead to women's struggle to escape from any forms of oppression in order to achieve equality. Referring mostly to "The Second Sex" of Simone de Beauvoir, and Naomi Wolf's "The Beauty Myth", the writer attempts to find out issues of gender inequality through their perspective of the second wave feminism.

## **2. Research Methodology**

In particular, this paper will examine the representation of gender role stereotype through the particular scenes of *The Other Boleyn Girl* film. This implies that those particular scenes will be the data and the movie as the text. Text is considered as a product of culture that involves meaning. Therefore, the qualitative textual analysis will be used to dissect the portrayals and constructions of gender role stereotype by using the film itself as a primary data and other trustworthy materials as secondary sources

to support the data. Textual analysis can be defined as a way of collecting information about how other human beings make sense of the world (McKee, 2003).

Several steps of technique of data collection were done. First, the writer captured particular scenes of the film which portray gender discrimination issue in England 16<sup>th</sup> Century experienced by women. Second, the writer categorized those scenes as portraying women as the second sex. Third, the writer transcribed the dialogues in order to support her arguments. The last step is analyzing them deeply by using narrative and non-narrative aspects to get the contextual meaning of the film.

This paper will scrutinize the film aspects, especially the narrative and non-narrative aspects, as the techniques of data analysis in order to reveal the meanings embedded in *The Other Boleyn Girl* film. Narrative aspects in this chapter will use Todorov theory of narrative. Todorov suggested that conventional narrative is structured in the three different stages. The first stage is called as initial situation that will examine the state of equilibrium at the beginning. It covers the beginning situation of the film that portrays the construction of gender stereotype that will bring up the issue of gender discrimination experienced by women.

The second stage is disruption that generates the disruption of the equilibrium, and the recognitions if there have been problems or disruptions. Women struggle against the resistance toward the patriarchal system that performed by Anne Boleyn become the main issue which develop the story. And the last stage is resolution that attempts to repair the disruption and has the similarity with the beginning of the film that will bring the reinstatement of the equilibrium. This last stage will convey the ideology of the film that gives deeper understanding about the situation and the contextualization beyond the film. Meanwhile, non-narrative aspects will be analyzed from the elements or what so called as *mise-en-scene* that appear in the film such as camera shot, camera angle, costume, and setting.

### **3. Discussion**

#### **3.1 Narrative Aspects**

##### **3.1.1 Initial Situation: The Existing Portrayal of Gender Stereotype**

The construction of gender stereotype is believed and has been promoted in the family sphere as a normative value that stereotypes man and woman into two terms conflict or called as binary opposition (De Beauvoir 2003, 29). Family plays significant roles in promoting gender roles concept to construct the guidelines to behave properly in the society. Gender constructions have always been very successful to justify inequities that are believed if such inequities are a thing of the past because anti-discriminatory laws have been passed and frequently side-stepped (Tyson 2006, p. 85).

The portrayal of gender stereotype can also be seen in the term of occupation that determines women as the weak creatures and thus always in the domestic field taking care of their family. Women's occupation in the film is adjusted with the traditional occupational classification. The occupational classification between men and women in the film obviously states that men's job are always related to the public sphere such as judges and guardsman (01:38:57). These kinds of job demonstrate the belief of the strength and the intelligence of men compared to women. Women are still bounded by patriarchal gender roles that require women to be able to do their obligation toward their family and please their husband in bed. On the contrary, the occupational classifications of women seen in the film (26:16) are categorizing those who are in the field of domestic sphere that will be referred to term of true womanhood.

##### **3.1.2 Women Considered as Second Sex**

The existing status quo of male domination makes women become marginalized due to their passivity. Beauvoir states that the problem of riveted to women's body made it possible for men to dominate them and keep patriarchal system intact (2002, p. 95). The portrayal of women as secondary sex is portrayed by the willingness of Marry Boleyn to be a sexual object of her husband. As a good wife, she must serve her husband well for the good of marriage life since women's final destination ends with marriage which means that they admit the domination of male.

Marry Boleyn and other female characters are functioned as a tool to satisfy the male sexual desire, and in this case are portrayed by King Henry VIII's sexual desire. The fulfillment of King Henry VIII's sexual desire is shown having sex with different women. This is considered as a normal situation for

King though he has legitimate bond of matrimony with the Queen. As stated in De Beauvoir's book, polygamy is approximately always been tolerated; a man is still considered reasonable if sleeping with the maid or mistress yet he is still required to respect the certain rights of his legitimate wife (2003, p. 228).

### 3.1.3 The Depiction of Beauty Myth Experienced by Women

The objectification of women in media, particularly in film has unconsciously influenced women in terms of appearance. This condition establishes the beauty myth which is believed to be the system that keep maintaining the power of male domination in society that still exist nowadays (Wolf 2002, p.14). The notion of beauty constructed by society determines the ideal concept of beauty mostly based on the appearance. According to Wolf, women's identity must be premised upon our "beauty myth" so that they will remain vulnerable to outside approval, carrying the vital sensitive organ of self-esteem exposed to the air (2011, p. 13).

Physical appearance of women plays significant role in assigning value to women. Most of female characters are concerned with their appearance, so that they are afraid of getting older and have insecure feeling toward younger women. This condition is depicted within the scene (26:16). This scene conveys the importance of always look young and beautiful in order to get the attention of King Henry VIII. The first scene portrays the insecure feeling of Queen Catharine of Aragon toward two Boleyn girls when they moved to the palace after appointed by the King Henry VIII as new lady-in-waiting.

The Queen	: Tell me what special talent is it that you have apart from your obvious youth and beauty.
The Queen	: Poetry perhaps? Or dress making?
Marry Boleyn	: No...
The Queen	: Singing then, surely?
Marry Boleyn	: No, Your majesty

From the conversation between The Queen and Boleyn girls above, it conveys anxiety feeling of the Queen when her position as a Queen will be replaced by younger women and the King will be lured by them. As the case explained above, youth seems to be a cycle to the standard beauty of women that women who turn to be older will be replaced; therefore men will look at younger ones.

The beauty myth is not only a matter of youth appearance but also women's fertility. Women's beauty must correlate to their fertility, and since this system is based on sexual selection, it is inevitable and changeless (ibid, p. 11). The importance of women's fertility as one of the products of beauty myth are shown in a scene depicting the anxiety feeling of female characters toward their fertility or reproductive system. The scene shows the importance of having male heirs in order to continue the leadership system of King Henry VIII. The importance of men's role is revealed (04:57):

The Queen	: was it a boy
Guard man	: yes, stillborn Your Majesty
The Queen	: (tell to her daughter) No brother for you to make this country safe. I'm sorry. Tell His Majesty.

From the scene above women are expected to be able to produce heirs in order to continue their descendent. When it is applied in the film, women especially the Queens need to produce male heirs so that their son will able to lead the country to replace the King. Otherwise, the King will find other women which are mostly younger and more beautiful to be served as sexual objects so that he still could satisfy his sexual desire. The connection between women's youth and fertility as a result of beauty myth gives a description that women always suffer for beauty.

### 3.1.4 Disruption: Women Struggle against Patriarchal System

The second stage is the disruption of the equilibrium which recognizes problems or disruptions. This stage portrays the struggle of female main character, Anne Boleyn, in resisting against patriarchal system of England 16<sup>th</sup> century. Women are considered as powerful when they are not letting themselves being the determination of gender role concept, and attempt to break the conservative value of women (Hartsock 1983, p. 224). Therefore, this resistance is considered as the disruption of equilibrium which builds the

conflict of the film since it creates the conflict that have different situation as the previous scenes (Todorov, 1969)

Anne Boleyn performs the resistance through the self—assertion within her freedom and independency toward the patriarchal system under the control of King Henry VIII. Anne Boleyn shows her existence right after she got lessons from the French Queen. The resistance toward patriarchal system done by Anne Boleyn is depicted through her struggle in obtaining the equality right for education. At that time, women rarely have the opportunity to be educated. She gets the opportunity to learn knowledge in France after being encouraged by her mother. She has a power to attract King's attention by her ability to console and to offer new thought that given by the Queen of France.

Patriarchal system put women as the side that have always to be purified that should be bounded in the marriage as what conservative values said, while men have more sexual freedom (Jeannette 2005, p. 4). Any sexual activities not based on the marriage are considered as breaking the norm and failure since women are supposed to maintain their purity and virginity. Therefore in order to struggle their equality in sexuality and reproductive right, Anne requires the King to marry and make her as the Queen of England.

Anne Boleyn attempts to dominate King Henry VIII and enslaves the King who urges her to consign the body by giving requirements to make her as the Queen. As has been described before that the second wave feminism aims to gain the sexuality right, Anne Boleyn maintains her sexuality right in order not to be victimized as a tool of sexual gratification of the King without any legitimate bounding. King Henry VIII will follow what Anne's want as long as he can conquer Anne, so that his authority power as a subject will remain maintained. Men have been making specific powers as part of his personality as the essential ones (De Beauvoir 2002, p. 593).

### 3.1.5 Resolution: The Empowerment of Patriarchal Ideology

The last stage of narrative aspect in the film is called Resolution portraying the ending of the film that conveys ideological meaning of what the film is about. The ending of this film has similar correlation with the beginning of the film so that it called as a return or a restoration of new equilibrium. The narrative aspect by Todorov applied in this film shows the circular structure. It is driven by attempts to restore the equilibrium which involves transformation through the progress of disruption.

After the disruption that is shown by the scenes of Anne Boleyn in resisting the patriarchal system, yet the society is still affirmative to traditional gender roles concept which elevates the position of men. Since England parliament system in 16<sup>th</sup> century was Tudor Monarch, hence it was still holding the hierarchal principle and still positioning men in the first position, then women struggle against patriarchal system will be considered as the resistance toward the provision tradition that have been made. Hence, Anne was beheaded since she was considered against the provision norm of patriarchal system.

However, the old England parliament system called as Tudor or absolute monarch has been replaced by a better parliament system that is well-known as constitutional monarch, which is based on the libertines of England people. By achieving the libertines and accomplishing the goal of second wave feminism, the resistance toward patriarchal system performed by Anne Boleyn is considered as one of the feminism activity that shows the women's struggle to end the sexism. In this case, the sexism refers to the arbitrarily act of men that makes women as sexual object and the opportunity of pursuing higher education. Yet, the struggle of Anne Boleyn did not end well since the power of patriarchal ideology still dominates the society.

Furthermore, since England is a country considered as an old country in upholding the royal system and also respecting the historical values, thereby, many products of popular culture also depict the historical life of royal England. By exposing the historical values through several historical fiction films, it will acquaint the existence of England which plays significant role in the development of the world. The instances of the film as the product of popular culture can be seen in the many versions of film such as *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), *Anne of The Thousand Days* (1949), *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1970), *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), *The Tudors Series* (2007 and 2008), and *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2008) (IMDb, n.d). Those historical fiction films above are converting the historical values into something more commercial through the film as pop cultural products. *The Other Boleyn Girl* film (2008)

is the latest version of the film that portrays the life of King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn which portrays the feminism issue.

By looking at the context of the England parliamentary system in 21<sup>st</sup> Century, particularly in 2007 to 2008, the country created the ministry of women and equality with responsibility for prioritizing women's issues (Abrams 2011, p. 1 of 1). This ministry, led by a female minister named Harriet Harman in 2007, will work to address the issues affecting women that covers women equality rights such as the domestic violence, family-friendly employment and child care issues. From the explanation above, we can draw the conclusion that *The Other Boleyn Girl* film (2008) was launched as the influence of feminism issues in England that emphasize on the gender inequality issues experienced by English women that is monitored and protected by the ministry of women and equality of United Kingdom.

### 3.2 Non-Narrative Aspects

Non-narrative aspect is another aspect that plays significant role in analyzing a film. This aspect is used to control over what will appear on the scenes. Film is structured like a language which composes fundamental units that produce meaning (Villarejo 2007, p. 24). Therefore, through the term called *Mise-en-scene*, it can help to narrow the sense of producing the meaning of the film by selecting several aspects that cover camera shot, camera angle and costume. *Mise-en-scene* is literally translated as 'putting on stage' or 'staging' which designates everything appears on the screen – set design, costumes, characters movement etc (Buckland 1998, p. 8).



**Figure 1 (35:43)**

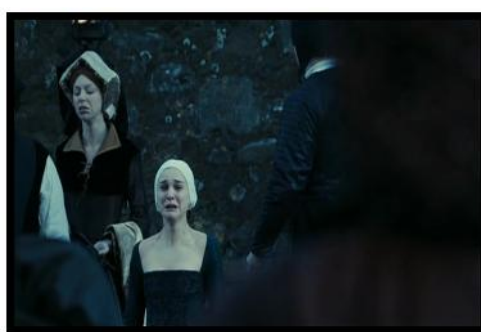


**Figure 2 (50:59)**

**Figure 1** portrays the depiction of women as sexual object. Narratively, this figure depicts the inferiority of women functioned to satisfy men's desire. In showing this scene, medium shoot is used to indicate the situation. In the contrary, **figure 2** portrays the depiction of Anne's position after she was educated in France. Low angle shoot is used to heighten the importance of the subject. It is portrayed that Anne has the same characteristic as men who are rational as it deals with educated people.



**Figure 3 (01:22:38)**



**Figure 4 (01:48:17)**

**Figure 3** portrays the high position of Anne as the second Queen of England and is supported by the lower angle shoot where the camera looks up from below of the object. It conveys the high position and dignity of Anne as a Queen who must be respected. The **figure 4** shows Anne Boleyn going to be beheaded with the allegation of having incest with her brother, George Boleyn, and breaking the normative values. By using the position of camera in the high angle, it conveys the self-contempt of Anne Boleyn in her defeat against patriarchal system.

Costume is important in developing the setting and defining the meaning of the film. The costume of female characters in the film promotes the patriarchal ideology inside. They wear dress with an extremely tight corset to make their appearance looks sexually. That feminine looks suggest that in patriarchal society, the primary needs of women is to enchant men's heart. So that, women are assessed based on their physical attractiveness. Costume also represents the personality and the status of the characters.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The discussion of gender inequality issue still becomes the important issue in the society since most of society remains controlled by patriarchal system. The portrayal of gender inequality can be found in *The Other Boleyn Girl* film by Justin Chadwick. This film depicts the characters of women by showing their femininity and passivity that seem have no power in resisting patriarchal system in 16<sup>th</sup> Century England. Everything was based on the male domination, while women merely took part in the domestic sphere only.

Women characters in the film seem powerless and tend to accept the commandment of patriarchal system. Therefore, it creates the assumption of women as the second sex and object. Women are seen as sexual object for men as King Henry VIII did in satisfying himself through beautiful young girls that will be served as his mistress. This is an example of the oppression towards women which seizes the sexuality right of women.

However, women's characterization that is portrayed through the passivity in this film is not in accordance with the female main character named Anne Boleyn. She is portrayed differently from other female characters. The portrayal of Anne Boleyn represents woman's power in resisting toward male domination. She is known with her intelligence and braveness so that King Henry VIII is enamored and wants Anne to give herself to him. With that talent, Anne Boleyn attempts to control the King and demands him to coronate her as the Queen of England.

Applying second wave feminism has helped to understand that women also can have equal power and opportunity as men have. The struggle of Anne Boleyn in having the right to pursue education in France and the right of sexuality are the examples. Boleyn's struggle in attempting to break the conception of traditional gender roles gets plenty of obstacles and ends up with the Anne's beheaded with the charge of having incest. It shows that power of patriarchal system can be resisted with the attempt of women struggle though England in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is affirmative with the patriarchal values.

The ideology of patriarchy still cannot be defeated by any resistance from woman struggle. There is a transparent barrier, called as glass ceiling, between male and female which distinguishes their position, so that women and men position is never equal since it always keeps women position in the lower position. Men like to be remained as sovereign subject, absolute, superior, and essential creature. They refuse to accept their partners as an equal in a concrete manner.

The ideology of feminism is seen to be against gender concept believed by the society. Anne Boleyn resists the patriarchal system by refusing her feminine side and rejects the passivity devoted to women. Yet, she never succeeds to be as equal as men; instead it makes herself into a monster that will be despised by the society. Therefore, those people who behave deviated from gender role concept will be considered as something negative. Yet, Anne Boleyn represents a symbol of woman's power both in the historical facts of England in 16<sup>th</sup> Century and also in the film launched in 21 century as well.

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