

## **REPRESENTATION OF FEMINISM IN THE FILM OF JANE EYRE (2011): SEMIOTICS ANALYSIS STUDY OF CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to represent feminism in a film entitled Jane Eyre through elements of Charles Sanders Peirce's Theory of Semiotics. The science of Semiotics used in this study serves as a basis for interpreting the signs found into a clear meaning. By using descriptive qualitative method, the researcher analyzes signs that contain hidden meanings in Jane Eyre's film, which is based on a novel with the same title by Charlotte Bronte. The researcher uses the data found in the film and then analyzes it to be able to interpret it using Pierce's Semiotic Theory. The subject of this research is the Jane Eyre film with the object of research being the scenes which represent the feminism of the main character Jane Eyre. The results of the research conducted, researchers found the meanings of representation of feminism that can be interpreted through the characters, scenes, and properties used in the film. The conclusion of this study is the representation of feminism in the Jane Eyre film which is reflected in the main character Jane Eyre.

Keywords: Feminism; Film; Representation; Semiotics

### **INTRODUCTION**

Film is a medium that combines words and moving pictures with various meanings in it. Film is the result of an art work that has various elements of art to complement spiritual needs. In making the storyline of a film, it must go through a thought process and a technical process, namely the search for ideas and story ideas. While the technical process is in the form of artistic skills to realize all ideas, ideas or stories so that the film can be watched by the audience. According to Wibowo, film is a tool to convey various messages to audiences through story media (Alfiyatun, 2019). Film is also a medium of artistic expression as a tool for artists and

filmmakers to express ideas and story ideas. Along with the development of technology, the visual images displayed by films are increasingly varied and interesting, as are the messages they want to convey. Film is a popular mass media and is often used by people other than television, so that films have become part of human daily life. The story in a film is arranged in such a way so that the message carried can be conveyed to the audience. The messages or values contained in the film can affect the audience both affectively, cognitively and conatively. Graeme Turner refuses to see film as a reflection of society. According to him, the meaning of film as a representation of the reality of society is different from the

film merely as a reflection of reality. As a reflection of reality, films simply transfer reality to the screen without changing that reality. Meanwhile, as a representation of reality, films shape and re-present reality based on the codes, conventions and ideologies of culture (Sobur, 2013).

However, a view that developed in England in the 1970s and has influenced feminist film theory says that representation is not merely a reflection of reality, whether true or deviant, but rather is the product of an active process of selecting and presenting, organizing and shaping, making things that show meaning so that it is called the practice of marking. This marking practice is related to the image of women in a film that does function as a sign, but a sign that gets its meaning not from the reality of women's lives, but from men's desires and fantasies (Jackson & Jones, 2009). One of the films that has a feminist issue in it is *Jane Eyre*. The film is based on a novel of the same name by a Victorian writer named Charlotte Brontë. She was a writer, poet, and novelist in the 19th century. She is also one of the three Brontë sisters, along with Emily and Anne who are renowned for their literary talents. In September 1824, Charlotte and her sisters were sent to the Priestess Girls School on Cowan Bridge, a school for the girls of poor clergymen. The harsh school conditions for the students were later reflected in the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. The film based on the novel *Jane Eyre* is the main discussion in this research.

The problem of representation

becomes important in this research because through the representation of the concepts contained in the human head (abstract concepts) which are displayed through signs, can be understood in the form of meaning through the mediation of language. Representation works on the relationship of sign and meaning, and is a dynamic process because meaning over time also changes according to the intellectual abilities and needs of sign users who are constantly moving and changing, namely humans (Wibowo, 2013). Signs or symbols are tools and materials used in interaction. Communication is a transactional process in which a message (sign) is sent from a person (sender) to a receiver, so that the message can be received effectively, it is necessary to interpret the message. Because humans have the ability to use and interpret symbols, a branch of science has developed that discusses how to understand symbols or symbols, namely semiotics. Based on this background, the researcher is interested in exploring further the representation of feminism in *Jane Eyre's* film. This film has many elements that can be researched and analyzed using a semiotic approach, because film is a relevant field for semiotic analysis.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method with Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of semiotic analysis approach. According to Creswell, the basic concept of a qualitative research is a study that is used to explore and understand the

meaning that for some people or groups is considered to stem from social or humanitarian problems. By using semiotic analysis in it, the focus of this research also lies in the analysis of signs that can be found in the object of research in the form of a film entitled *Jane Eyre* which is then analyzed and produces an interpretation that refers to the theory used. This model was chosen because the researcher wanted to describe the markers and markers contained in the object of research. According to Creswell, there are several important efforts made in the qualitative research process, such as asking questions and procedures, collecting specific data, analyzing data, and interpreting the meaning of the data. In this study, researchers used data in the form of primary and secondary data. Primary data is the main data obtained directly from objects in the form of scene images, properties used, characters, dialogue, gestures, player expressions, setting, and narration. While secondary data is obtained from sources that support primary data such as books, articles, journals, theses, theses, dictionaries, newspapers, internet, videos, and previous studies that are related to this research (Adhi Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Representation

Representation is an illustration, image or depiction. In simple terms, representation can be interpreted as a picture of something that is contained in life which is described through a medium. According to Stuart hall there

are two representations. First, mental representation, namely the concept of something that is in each of our heads (conceptual map), this mental representation is still in the form of something abstract. Second, "language" plays an important role in the process of constructing meaning. Abstract concepts that exist in the human head must be translated into common language so that concepts and ideas can be connected about something with signs from certain symbols (Juliastuti, 2000). Representation is the use of signs. Marcel Danesi defines it as the use of signs (images, sounds, etc.) to relate, describe, photograph or reproduce something that is seen, sensed, imagined or felt in a certain physical form (Danesi, 2012). Representation works on the relationship of sign and meaning. The concept of representation itself can change, there is always a new meaning. Representations change due to changing meanings. So representation is not a static activity or process but a dynamic process that continues to develop along with the intellectual abilities and needs of sign users, namely humans themselves who are also constantly moving and changing.

Representing something means showing something in the mind through description or imagination (Hall, 1997). The first process that makes it possible to make sense of the world by constructing a set of correspondence chains between things with conceptual maps with language or symbols that serve to represent human concepts about things. The relationship between things,

conceptual maps, language and symbols is the main thing in the production of meaning through language. The process of representing is the process of determining the concrete form of abstract ideological concepts, for example the representation of women, workers, families, love, war, and so on. This process is carried out using various systems that can generate signs such as writing, speech, print, video, film and so on. Representation can be referred to as a social process to represent something or the result of the process of representing something. Representation can be described in terms in politics where the representation of the people stands in parliament and represents many people behind them. This is closely related to semiotics because one representation can refer to various references behind that representation.

### **Feminism**

The words feminist or feminism according to Belsey and Moore are political labels indicating support for the aims of the new women's movement which emerged in the late 1960s. Feminist criticism, then, is a specific kind of political discourse: a critical and theoretical, practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender (Belsey & Moore, 1997). Feminism is an understanding that demands the equality of women's rights with men. The word feminism can be interpreted as (1) A recognition of an imbalance of power between the sexes, with woman in a subordinate role to men; (2) A belief that woman condition is social constructed

and therefore can be changed; (3) An emphasis on female autonomy (Myers & Hannam, 2007). Based on this theory, it can be assumed that feminism is an acknowledgment of the power imbalance between male and female sexes. Women are at the bottom while men are at the top. In addition, this understanding believes in a change in the social position of women. This social position demands the autonomy of women's roles in society.

According to Freedman and Jacobs, feminism concerns themselves with women's inferior position in society and with discrimination encountered by women because of their sex. Freedman argues that feminism emerged as a struggle against the inferior position of women and their social discrimination caused by their gender. Freedman states that a basic version of this categorization would divide feminisms and feminists into three loose groups: liberal feminism, Marxist or socialist feminism, and radical feminism. According to them, feminism and feminist are divided into three groups, namely: liberal feminism, socialist or Marxist feminism and radical feminism. In his theory, Freedman also explains that liberal feminism is an understanding that carries the concept of equal rights for women in terms of their involvement as citizens to achieve their welfare; social feminist or Marxist concerned with gender inequality and women's oppression in the capitalist and labor systems; then radical feminists view the dominance of men over women as a result of the patriarchal system in the

social strata. Radical feminism is a feminist understanding that refers to the concept of women's social criticism of male domination in society. This domination is radical because it involves the domination of the formation of the concept in society that men are more dominant than women (Freedman & Jacobs, 2004).

### **Semiotics**

Etymologically, the term semiotic comes from the Greek word *Semeion* which means sign and in English it is the study of sign systems such as: language, code, signal and so on. The sign itself is defined as something which on the basis of previously established social conventions can represent something else. The sign was originally interpreted as something that indicates the existence of something else (Wibowo, 2013). Terminologically, semiotics can be defined as the study of a broad range of objects, events, and all cultures as signs. While Van Zoest defines semiotics as the science of signs and everything related to them, the way they function and their acceptance by those who use them (Sobur, 2012).

The signs that are created play an important role in the survival of human life. Therefore, humans create signs that are mutually intelligible. The signs are in the form of signs that can be sensed by humans, both signs in the form of sound, visual signs that can be seen, signs that can be touched, felt, or even smelled (Pradopo, 1998). The signs that are created then become an object that must be studied. With this urgency, a science called Semiotics was born, the science

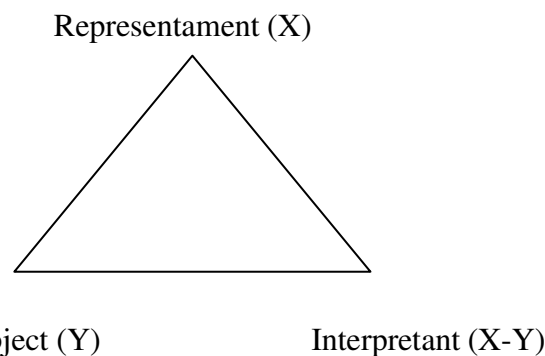
that studies signs. Semiotics studies the systems, rules, and conventions that allow these signs to have meaning (Cushman et al., 2012). Signs can be present in various forms, one of which is verbal or linguistic. In addition, there are also visual signs, namely signs that can be seen, such as statues, paintings, or buildings. In fact, there are also signs in the form of motion, such as dance and action in dramas and films.

### **The Semiotic Theory of Charles Sanders Peirce**

Peirce defines semiotics as a relationship between signs, objects, and meanings (MA & Wardani, 2009). In the study of communication, the center of attention of semiotics is to explore the hidden meanings behind the use of symbols which are then analogized as text or language. Peirce also says that the sign itself is an example of the first, the object is the second and the interpretation of the intermediary element is an example of the third. The three that exist in the context of sign formation also evoke unlimited semiotics, as long as one interpretation (idea) that reads a sign as a sign for another (that is, from a meaning and a signifier) can be captured by other interpretations. This interpretation is an element that must exist to associate the sign with its object (induction, deduction, capture) to form three important types of interpretation. In order to exist as a sign, the meaning must be interpreted. The triangle theory of meaning is a question of how meaning emerges from a sign when the sign is used by people when communicating

(Sobur, 2009). According to Charles Sanders Peirce the sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. A sign is anything that exists in a person to express something else in some respect or capacity. The process of the relationship from the representament to the object is called the process of semiosis. In the meaning of a sign, this semiosis process is not complete because then there is another process which is a continuation called interpretant (interpretation process). Representament is something that is sensory (perceptible) or material that functions as a sign. The existence of the representament raises the same

interpretant with it, in the mind of the interpreter. In other words, representament and interpretant is a sign, ie something that replaces something. Representament appears before interpretant, but the emergence of interpretant because of the representament. Objects are signs that do not have to be concrete, do not have to be observable or exist as empirical reality, but can also be other abstract entities, even imaginary and fictitious, because of their nature that links three aspects, namely representament, object, interpretant in a process. semiosis, Peirce's semiotic theory is called trichotomous (Budiman, 2011).



*Image 1. Peirce's Triangle Model of Meaning.*

Peirce divides signs into three, namely: qualisigns, sinsigns and legisigns. Qualisigns are signs that are interpreted based on their nature. For example: white means pure and clean, clock means time and discipline, and dolls mean cute, cute, and soft. Sinsigns are signs based on the appearance of the sign in reality. For example: the sound of a rooster crowing means it is morning, the sound of a baby crying means hunger, and the sound of laughter means

happiness. While Legisigns are signs on the basis of a generally accepted rule, a convention, or a code. For example: a red light means you have to stop, a zebra cross means a zone to cross, and a nod means you agree to something. Based on the object, Peirce divides the sign into icons, indexes, and symbols. An icon is a sign that contains a physical resemblance (resemblance) to its reference (reference) which later creates a relationship between the



representamen and the object that is manifested as "similarity in several qualities". An index is a sign that has a relationship in terms of events (phenomenal) and existence (existential) between the representamen and the object, or can be referred to as a cause-and-effect relationship. While the symbol acts as a marker that carries out its function as a marker that is in accordance with a common sign. used in society. Meanwhile, based on the interpretant, Peirce divides the sign into rheme, dicent sign, and argument. Rheme is a sign that causes interpretation by choosing. For example,

people whose eyes are swollen can be interpreted that the person has finished crying, or has sore eyes, and or just woke up from sleep. A dicent sign is a sign that corresponds to reality, for example on a road there is often a traffic jam because many vehicles are parked haphazardly, so a no-parking sign is installed there. An argument is a sign that immediately gives a reason for something (Sobur, 2012).

## DISCUSSION

Elements of Peirce's Semiotic Theory can be analyzed from the following images that are part of the Jane Eyre (2011) film scene:



*Image 2. Scene at 00: 01:38*

Based on the picture above, the representation shown is a legisign type, namely Jane Eyre, while the object is an icon type, namely Jane Eyre who is in the middle of a crossroads. The interpretation is that Jane Eyre as the main character looks like she is thinking about something in the middle of the crossroads. This indicates that Jane as a woman has rights and choices over her life. Even in the Victorian era, it was less common for a woman to travel alone and decide on her own. Most women in the

Victorian era did not have the right to live alone. Eyre is a representation of feminism who is determined to determine her own path of choice. Charlotte wants to dispel the stereotype of women in the Victorian era. This film is based on the reality that the writer wants to convey through the characters of Jane Eyre. Thomson states that in Victorian times, it was true that women only did the daily housework and looked after their beauty for the men. Jane Eyre's character is quite representative

of Charlotte's desire to uphold women's rights in her life(Andriadi, 2013).



*Image 3. Scene at 00:05:43*

Based on the scene above, the representation shown is a qualisign type book. Books are objects that are symbols. The type of interpretant used is argument. Based on these data, Charlotte Bronte shows the concept of liberal feminism through the pleasures of Jane Eyre's character. Eyre did want a proper education for her. She demands that there is a change in her life. In the midst of the patriarchal system that was enforced, Eyre experienced subordination and various oppressions. Even so, she still does her favorite activity to read. She wants to prove that not only boys can read, orphan girls can read and do it as a pleasure. In addition,

John Reed's ban on Jane borrowing her book is also a form that illustrates that women are indeed restrained from getting education and knowledge.

Jane Eyre as a child was sent to Lowood boarding school where she learned many things and became a strong woman filled with a desire for freedom. During Jane Eyre's stay at Lowood boarding school, she realized a fact about facing strong and authoritative people like the head of the school, the school inspector, Brocklehurst. Jane always clings to her self-respect and dignity, so as long as she feels cruelly hurt, then she will never obey but resolutely rebel (Gao, 2013).





*Image 4. Scene at 00: 13:20*

Based on the scene above, the representation shown is of the legisign type, namely 'ambition', while the object is a woman who is full of ambition who belongs to the symbol type object. The interpretation is Jane Eyre as an ambitious woman in search of a job. Based on this data, Eyre showed seriousness in asking about the job she was looking for. The education she got even as a woman made her want to have a job, be independent, and not depend on others. During the mid and late Victorian era, some ambitious young women were able to find well-paying jobs in new fields, such as saleswomen, cashiers, typists, and secretaries. Throughout the Victorian era, respectable work for

women from middle-class families was largely restricted to working as nannies, school teachers, or private tutors as Jane Eyre once did. Society's prevention of women's desire to live independently makes women seem dependent on men's income. Women are depicted as being surrounded by laws that forbid them from entering the world of work that can support their individual lives, have no property rights, and therefore they must marry. Therefore, Ahmed argued that most women at that time were expected to be housewives or housemaids. The position of women is only as a mother who takes care of her children and keeps the house in an authentic order (Ahmed, 2020).

*Image 5. Scene at 00: 30:05*

Based on the scene above, there is a representative with the type of legisign, namely "education". Objects in the form of Jane Eyre and Adele, this belongs to the type of icon. The interpreter is Jane Eyre who demonstrates her skills in teaching a child named Adele. This indicates that a woman should be smart and have a proper education so that she is able to

channel her expertise to the community. This proves that she is an independent girl for a girl her age. Building an independent image was not easy in Victorian times. In other words, Jane's independence was shaped by her education where she could improve her intellectual and behavior so that her presence as an independent woman in society became an important

consideration. Although women in general in Victorian times were expected to marry and perform household and maternal duties rather than seek formal education. Even women who fail to find husbands are generally expected to remain uneducated, and to take up positions in child care (as caregivers or as support for other family members). The prospects for women seeking education increased when Queen's College in Harley Street, London was founded in 1848. The aim of the college

was to provide caregivers with a marketable education. Later, Cheltenham Ladies' College and other girls' public schools were founded, increasing educational opportunities for girls and eventually leading to the development of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society in 1897. Despite this, the character Jane Eyre remained determined to complete her rigorous education and become a private teacher and not dependent on others.



*Image 6. Scene at 00:31:45*

Based on the scene above, there is a representation with the type of legisign, namely "freedom". The objects in the form of Jane Eyre and Alice Fairfax are classified as icons. The interpretant is Jane who is looking at the outside world through the window of a big house as if she were a bird trapped in a cage, even though her mind and heart are far away. Like wanting the freedom that men have. Therefore, she expects women to have a life like men. Her statement is a feminist movement tucked away from the Jane Eyre film. A

reflection of feminism in a story character can be seen when Jane Eyre experiences a movement to change and struggles for her liberation to get equal rights just as men have. According to Lopez, Jane Eyre's film (2011) on the issue of feminism becomes a means to strengthen the culturally generated ideas of feminism, women's identity, and femininity. This film emphasizes the extent to which these concepts create a relationship of activity that has an impact on visuals and popular culture (Lopez, 2012).



*Image 7. Scene at 00: 33:11*

Based on the scene above, there is a representative with the type of legisign, namely "courage". The object is Jane Eyre which belongs to the icon type. The interpretant is Jane who dares to walk alone in the middle of the forest with the day starting to get dark. This scene gives a sinister feel around Jane Eyre. This can be seen from the forest

which is described as dark, gloomy and scary. Some women in general will feel afraid of darkness and solitude, but here Eyre does not feel afraid and chooses to continue his journey. Eyre's courage is one of the characteristics of her desire to change the stigma of women in Victorian society.



*Image 8. Scene at 00: 53:53*

Based on the scene above, it was found that the representation in the form of a qualisign type globe was found. The object used is a symbol in the form of a globe. The interpretant is a globe which means broad insight. Jane Eyre's intelligence in the world of education or teaching can be seen from the scene above. Not only talented in writing and

painting, Eyre has a broader knowledge such as telling history to her student named Adele. The globe that appears as a film property in the scene above indicates the breadth of insight possessed by someone as educated as Jane Eyre so that she is able to tell history through the globe.



*Image 9. Scene at 01: 18:55*

Based on the scene above, Jane Eyre in this case is a representative of the legisign type. Through the object of a woman and her dialogue, this object belongs to the type of icon. The interpretant is that through her dialogue with Edward, Jane Eyre assumes that humans are free to make their choices. Therefore, she also has the right to determine her own wishes. Here it can be seen clearly that Eyre who is a woman wants freedom for every human being, including women like herself. The Victorian era, which tends to restrain

women, did not dampen Jane Eyre's ambition to gain freedom in making every choice in her life. According to Laurel Loh, Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester reflected a more egalitarian relationship with the political goals of many members of Western society in the 1960s and 1970s. While the new wave of feminism is at its most enthusiastic and hopeful, Jane's rise to power and the domestication of Rochester grabs audiences' attention in this film adaptation (Loh, 2015).



*Image 10. Scene at 01:46:21*

Based on the scene above, Jane Eyre in this case is a representative of the legisign type. Through the object of a woman and her dialogue, this object belongs to the type of icon. The interpretant is through his dialogue with Mr. St. John. Based on these data, it can be seen that Bronte inserts the ideology of liberal feminism in this film. In the sentence

"Marrying you will kill me" Eyre as the main character in this film dares to reject the person she does not love even though she is a woman whose position is inferior in the system of life at that time and this is one of the characteristics of liberal feminism. The Victorian era in England started in 1837 until 1901. At that time, marriage was considered as the most important phase in a woman's life. Most women do not have the right to live alone or not to marry because marriage is considered a necessity for survival.



*Image 11. Scene at 01:43:38*

Based on the scene above, the representation is of the type of legisign, namely "recognition of ability" which is represented by an object in the form of a priest named St. John and this object is an icon type. The interpretant is the recognition of ability by Mr. St. John so that he invites Jane to go to India with him. This incident occurred while Jane was at Moore House. This shows that when opportunities are given to women to develop, they can show their skills.

For example, Jane Eyre can also do what men do. This was based on Mr. St. John's invitation to Jane to go to India with him in order to educate and establish relations with the public world. Mr. Rivers's statement is a proof that women can also be needed in other things besides doing women's work, at the same time this is a criticism in the Victorian era, at that time equality had not been realized.



*Image 12. Scene at 01:53:07*



Based on the scene above, Jane Eyre in this case is a representative of the legision type. Through the object of Jane Eyre as a woman and her dialogue, this object belongs to the type of icon. The interpretant is through her dialogue with Edward. Based on the data above, Bronte shows the concept of liberal feminism. This can be seen from Eyre's expression "Edward I come back to you" above. Based on this context, Eyre finds the person she loves again and expresses her heart that she is happy to be reunited with the person she loves. In this case, Eyre rediscovers the hope of his once lost love. From the actions of the main character of this film, Bronte wants to give a message to the audience that expressing love is not only right for a man but can also be done by a woman as proof that she is pursuing what she hopes and looking for the person she loves and expresses her happiness in finding someone whom she had always loved.

## CONCLUSION

Jane Eyre's film represents feminism through the hidden meanings behind the scenes, characters, characters, or properties used in it. These meanings can be analyzed using Charles Sanders Pierce's Theory of Semiotics. Based on the analysis conducted, Jane Eyre's film represents feminism as reflected in the film's main character, Jane Eyre. She believes that women have the right to make their own choices, both in terms of education, work, life partner, and so on. The woman represented by Jane Eyre is able to appear as an independent woman, free from the oppression and domination of men who put her in a disadvantageous

position. Jane Eyre's freedom is also seen in the choices she made.

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