



RESEARCH PAPER

Representation of Women in Film Literature: Application of Feminism Film Theory on 'The Princess and the Frog'

¹Muniza Murtza, ²Imtsal Ahmad and ³Dr. Muhammad Arfan Lodhi*

1. M. Phil Scholar, Department of English, NCBA&E University Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan
2. M. Phil Scholar, Department of English, NCBA&E University Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor, Department of English, Higher Education Department (Collegiate Wing) Punjab, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author

samaritan_as@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to find out the portrayal of women in animated movies and which types of roles are assigned to women as compared to men. This study is also being conducted to analyze different types of feminism in an animated movie "The Princess and the Frog". In this work there have been many female characters which are different from one another. The reasons behind those differences are needed to be identified. So this study is being conducted to analyze the difference between the women roles in comparison to each other as well as comparison to male in animated movies. This research is exploratory and data is qualitative in nature. Population and sample of this research was an animated movie "The Princess and the Frog". To make a framework of analysis, character analysis, thematic analysis and comparative analysis are done based upon Jane (2004) Feminist Film Theory. It provides in depth picture of feminine characters as well as their similarities and differences from men in projection. Findings showed that this animated movie "The Princess and the Frog" had significant feminine aspects. Its main protagonist is a female and she is a black American. She suffers from the very beginning of the movie. She faces struggles throughout the movie and society creates struggles against her destiny. Women are given less freedom as compare to men. This study revealed that there is a difference between men and women projection in animated movies. There are feminine perspectives present in the movie which shows that women are struggling from the very beginning of the story and achieve their destiny only with the help of men.

KEYWORDS

Animation, Comparison, Feminism, Feminist Film Theory, Marxist Feminism

Introduction

Globalization Literature is a reflection of life which deals with realities and imaginations. It also deals with metaphysics. Its major purpose is to convey some sort of message. The message is always present in the text. Sometime it is reflected through the actions of characters or situations which can be seen on surface level. But often, some writers keep it in the hidden level. They run a story on a surface level which has hidden meaning. That meaning can be related to problems of any society or imaginations of that particular author.

History has shown us variety of literature. It was started in the form of poetry and drama in the ancient Greek, but later on other forms of literature became common. There are several types of literature that are observed such as prose, novel, short stories, etc. These genres are equally important as they are having particular format. But these all are

used to convey some sort of message. It seems that in the modern times, animated movies have also become a part of literature as they also have characters, themes, plot and some sort of message. This literature is also common to kids. These animations were started in the early part of twentieth century.

All the literature types have some aspects. Writers want to reveal those aspects but a common reader may generally go through from one aspect. In order to analyze other aspects with particular focus, there is a need to use some literary theories. There have been many theories to look a form of literature in a particular way. The major theories are Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Structuralism etc. Feminism is a theory that is used to highlight the women role in any piece of literature. It basically advocates the respect of women and demands equal rights for women. A feminist will only focus on the treatment of women in any piece of literature.

Feminism is an approach that gained popularity in 1970's and 1980's. This approach is used to see a text through the lens of gender equality. According to Hooks (2000), it was a movement that was started to end sexism and exploitation and it is not against men. This approach is used to analyze many texts of literature including children literature to observe oppression of women. Pincock (2017) conducted a research to analyze the effect of oppression on girls' education in Tanzania. A research was also conducted by Albus (2014) to see the impact of strong women characters on audience in animated movies.

There have been many researches on the subject of feminism and its application on the different type of literature. But it seems that it is not applied on an animated movie to analyze the women treatment in that particular genre. Albus (2014) tried to find out the impact of strong women characters on audience but she also did not applied feminist approach to view any animated movie from lens of feminism. Furthermore, animated movies also have different women characters which are needed to be studied.

Therefore, it is necessary to analyze any sort of animated movie through the lens of feminism. "The Princess and the Frog" is an animated movie which has female characters and it is not analyzed from the feministic point of view. This study will create the road map for other researchers to conduct similar kind of research on the animated movies and they will also be able to apply other approaches to this genre. So, this study is being taken to analyze animated movie in the lens of feminism.

Literature Review

Animated literature is a genre of literature which was emerged in the early part of twentieth century. There have been many literary theories which are applied to other forms of genre but it seems that same amount of application is yet to be done on this animated genre. Although, there have been some researches where feminism is applied to analyze the portrayal of females.

Description of Marxist theory

Feminism was the movement which was started to abolish the inequalities between men and women. Their main agenda was to advocate for equality of women with men. They did not demand that women should be considered as superior or given more opportunities. Core feminism talked about gender equality as same opportunities should be given to both male and female. Gull et al. (2023) explored that liberty of women needs suitable policies for them rather politics and there are four types i.e., radical, psychoanalytical, racial, and liberal feminism.

Mohajan (2022) described that there were four waves of feminism. He expressed that feminism demands to end sex exploitation. He also advocated for the women rights including stoppage of domestic violence. According to Raina (2020), feminism is a collection of different movements and their focus was to advocate for equality of men and women in every field. He also highlighted history of those movements that advocated for nondiscrimination based on sex. Vindication of the rights of the women (1792) has also described the roles and rights of women in any society. It is considered to be initiative book in the field of feminism. It demands equal rights of women which are exercised by men in any society.

Simone de Beauvoir also laid the foundation of feminism through a book. The Second Sex (1949) tells that women are not born as weak but they are made weak through the process of society. According to Simone de Beauvoir, women are suffering due to three reasons. First is the education through which women are taught that they are born to serve men. Second reason is to create different complexes in them such as beauty. Last reason is that society is giving more rights to men as compare to women.

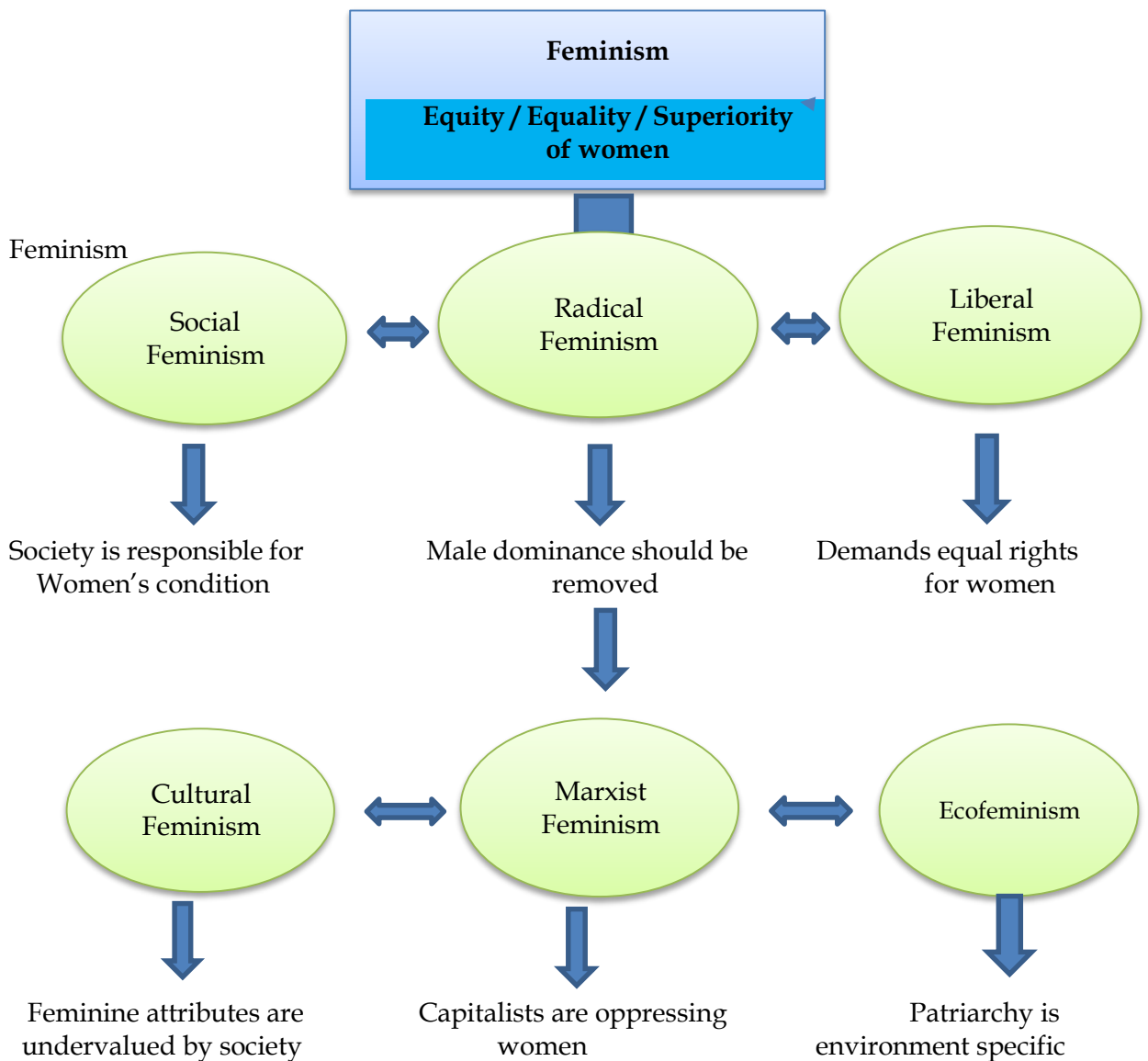


Figure 1. Kinds of Marxism

The exhaustive analysis of the previous researches affirm traces of many researches where feminism is applied to various forms of literature in order to analyze the treatment of women and to explore the oppression and inequality. Khan (2021) analyzed a work of Sidhwa and explained that widows are manipulated and forced through power of different groups. Laswaniyah (2021) discussed feminism in Novel "Catatan Juang" by Fiersa Besari. She identified that there were two types of feminism as women wanted to be equal with men in public space as well as on the basis of language. These two types of feminism were liberal feminism and postmodern feminism in this novel. Azeharie (2021) conducted a study on the TV series "Bridgerton" to analyze feminine perspective. He claimed that director has not given freedom to women to live in their own way throughout all episodes.

Description of animated movie "The Princess and the Frog"

The current study is carried upon an animated movie "The Princess and the Frog". It was an American movie which was released in 2009 by Walt Disney Animations Studio. It is based upon one novel and one folk tale. The novel was "The frog princess" by Aker and folktale was "The frog prince" by Brothers Grimm. The setting was in New Orleans and protagonist of the story is Tiana. She is an African- American who wanted to fulfill her father's dream of a restaurant "Tiana's Palace". She works hard and does two jobs at the same time to fulfill this dream. But a magician spoils the dream when he converts a prince into a frog. When Tiana kisses that frog, she also becomes a frog. Then both of them fight with hurdles of magician. In the end, Tiana and prince both get married and after that they again become human being. Love and desire remains the main themes of this animated movie.

This movie is important for research study as it introduces a black protagonist which is a female character. That was the time about 1920 when women of that race were considered inferior. But this twist in any animated movie is necessary to analyze. To analyze a female role, feminism theory is being applied.

Review of previously carried researches related to the Rhyme / cartoon

It seems that the feminism is yet to be applied completely on any animated movie. Because, there have been researches which are done on the genre and its representation of feminine characters in general. Albas in which it was conducted to analyze the effect of strong female characters on audience conducted a general study of feminism on genre of animated movies. Nevertheless, it seems, no proper feminism approach is applied to any animated movie. Another approach of Marxism is applied to some animated movies to analyze it with the lens of class differences and financial situations. Hira (2017) conducted that research in order to analyze the Marxist elements in animated movie "Cinderella". He finds that there are class differences in the movie and Cinderella was being oppressed by her step mother and sisters. She also wanted to change his financial condition. Ulusal (2020) also conducted a similar study on animated movies to know the feminine perspective and women roles in Disney movies. She found that strong women characters are portrayed in Disney animated movies.

Material and Methods

Research Design

This research is exploratory in nature. It tries to answer the questions in depth which are not studied already. In this research, data is qualitative in nature as it deals with non-numeric data. Sample of this study is the animated movie "The Princess and the Frog"

by Walt Disney Animations Studio. Whole movie is selected to analyze the feminine perspective as well as the treatment of women in this animation. Firstly, character analysis of women is used, and then thematic analysis is done and in the end, treatment of women is compared to treatment of men within the animated movie.

Framework of Analysis

The analysis consists of character analysis of women, thematic analysis and comparative analysis to highlight the treatment of all the characters in the animated movie "The Princess and the Frog". Jane (2004) discussed feminist film theory as suitable way to examine gender representation in movies and the perspectives behind them. In this study, the researchers employed salient techniques of feminist film theory while undergoing analysis of the text, dialogues and visual data (ibid).

Results and Discussions

Character analysis of women

Tiana

Tiana was African-American female who is passionate to fulfill her father's dream to construct a restaurant. She is a protagonist of the story. Tiana is the friend of a rich girl Lottie. In spite of the fact that her friend can help her to start restaurant, she does not ask help. She belongs to middle class family. She works at two jobs and collect money each day. Her boss, society and magician creates hurdles for her thorough the movie. Her passion does not change even though she is black and does not have a good job. She even thinks of her passion after becoming a frog. In the end of the story, she marries to prince and start her restaurant.

Lottie

Lottie is 19-years old and childhood friend of Tiana. She was having a desire to marry a prince since childhood. She belonged to a rich and noble upper class family. Lottie was good by heart as she sacrificed her desire to marry a prince when she realizes that Prince Naveen and Tiana love each other.

Eudora

Eudora was Tiana's mother who died in the middle of the movie. She was very caring for Tiana and her husband. She was also a black American and working women of middle class.

Mama Odie

Mama Odie is 200 years old women who does black magic. She protects Tiana and Prince after becoming frogs. She also gives them solution to become human again. She was against the evil spirits. She was not rich women and was having a small cottage in Jungle.

Thematic Analysis

The movie "The Princess and the Frog" has following major themes.

Passion

This movie majorly revolves around the theme of passion. This passion is connected with all characters but majorly with Tiana and Magician. Tiana have a passion for a restaurant and Magician has a passion to rule over the city through black magic. Lottie was having a passion of becoming a princess from her childhood. Lawrence also wanted to become a rich in her life.

Love

Love is also a major theme of the movie. This love was between Tiana and Prince Naveen. When they become frogs, they get together for survival but in the story they fall in love with each other. In the end, Tiana becomes ready to sacrifice her dream of restaurant and accept life of frog with prince.

Good versus Evil

This theme is also connected with all the characters. Tiana, Lottie, Naveen, their families and friends show moral and goodness. Magician, Lawrence and evil spirits represents evil. First group tries to do good for others and for themselves and did not want to harm others. Magician and Lawrence want to become rich and rule the whole city through black magic.

Supernatural

In this movie, supernatural belongs to two persons. Magician and Old woman both were magicians but there desires were different. They used spirits and magic throughout the story. Magician asks evil spirits to help in many instances to stop Tiana and Prince but old lady use magic to stop those spirits.

Loyalty

Loyalty was projected by Tiana for her father dream, her friends and Prince. Her friends including Lottie also show loyalty to her. They help her throughout the story.

Comparative analysis of women and men characters

Table 1
Character analysis

Comparison	Men Characters	Women Characters
Loyalty	Partial	Complete
Equal Opportunities	More opportunities	Less opportunities
Independence	Men were independent	Women were dependent
Courageous	Men were less courageous	Women were more courageous
Dominance	Men were dominating	Women were dominated
Oppression	Showing over women	Facing oppression
Projection in movie	Men were projected strong	Women faces struggle
Race projection	Black men were strong	Black women were strong

This above table shows the comparison between men and women characters. On the left side, traits are mentioned against which men and women are compared.

Synthesis and Discussions

This study started with the aim of application of feminism theory on the animated movie "The princess and the Frog". The purpose was to analyze the feminine aspects and to make comparison with men in the movie. Character analysis showed that Tiana was a black woman. She was a middle class person but courageous and hardworking. Lottie was princess of a rich family but good by heart. She sacrificed her desire for Tiana. Tiana's mother was also a middle class lady. She was living for her husband and her daughter. Old lady was living in a cottage in forest and she was 200 years old.

Thematic analysis explicated that major theme was desire. Each character is portrayed with some desire. Protagonist was having a desire to buy a restaurant for which she struggles and saves money. Lottie was having a desire to become princess and live a royal life with prince Naveen. Magician and Lawrence were desirous to rule the city. Another theme was love between Tiana and Naveen. Then a sub theme was a fight between good and evil. In the end, goodness prevails.

Comparative analysis portrays that men were partially loyal to each other as well as with women while women were completely loyal to everyone. Men were having more opportunities as compared to women. Prince was wealthy man. Magician was having evil powers and landlords have resources to control women. Women were dependent throughout the story on men. Men also showed dominance over female. Landlord was prime example as he was authoritative and he consistently questions Tiana's ability to fulfill dreams. In this movie racial differences were not seen. Black people were shown more strong than white people.

The findings of the study further illustrate that Protagonist was a black woman. It was a surprising element of the movie as this movie was based on the time of 1920 when women were considered better on the basis of their color. But this movie projects main character Tiana who was black woman. She was loyal and caring for her family, friends and love. All the women were seen desirous including rich Lottie. Women were not given more opportunities as compared to men. All women were having a desire to achieve their dreams and in the end every women was satisfied with what they have. Even Lottie was happy to see her friend getting her love.

Women were oppressed by the society and men. Society created hurdles for Tiana, Lottie and all female characters. But they did not give up in the story. Movie has projected females as brave and courageous. Women were not considered superior or inferior on the basis of color. It can be observed by love story of Tiana and Prince Naveen. So it seems there was no racial difference. However, men showed their authority in the movie. Women were facing struggle and men were dominating in the movie. Tiana struggles for her dream throughout the movie. Lottie also runs everywhere to become princess. Tiana's mother was also facing struggle as she was unable to fulfill her husband's dream but she shows love. Men were projected strong as compare to women.

In the end of the story, women were having success due to men not due to their own struggle. They become successful with the help of men. Tiana was able to fulfill her dream with the help of Naveen after becoming princess. She was also dependent on her friends regardless of her struggle.

Another major point in the movie was the presence of Marxism Feminism. From the analysis, it is observed that all the Tiana was example of Marxism feminism. She was suffering due to her middle class element and poor financial condition. It took her twenty

years but she was unable to buy place for restaurant. When she was having enough money to buy that place, Landlord deals with another man who offers him more money. Her boss was also a capitalist who often reminds her that she is simply a waitress and she cannot buy a restaurant. She was working day and night in two jobs but the capitalist society prevails there to stop her. In the end of the story, she achieves when she becomes the part of that capitalist society. She becomes princess and buys that place with authority.

Conclusion

This study reveals that “The Princess and the Frog” was having a significant feminist aspect which is analyzed deeply. This study is done because feminism was applied generally on other forms of literature and this genre of animated movies was only being studied in general. In this study, Feminism approach is applied on the animated movie “The Princess and the Frog”. It reveals that women were projected struggler and dominance was in the hands of men. Women were being oppressed by men and capitalist society. The protagonist runs against the odds to fulfill the desirous dream. All the forces of the society including her financial condition, magic and landlord tries to stop her. In fact she is transformed in to a frog but she did not stop and in the end she was successful.

On the whole this movie is classical has a feminine aspect as there have been varying female characters and each was satisfied in the end in their life. This research fulfills the aims completely as it shows diverse feminine perspective of all females and it also shows Marxist feminism in Tiana’s character. This research is also a guideline for other researchers to make a feminine analysis of any animated movie or any other literary genre.

References

- Alblas, S. (2014). *Alternative female portrayals in animated movies. The impact of strong animated women on the viewing audience*. Erasmus University Thesis Repository.
- Azharie (2022). *Feminism perspective on Bridgerton Drama Series*. Cambridge university press.
- Beauvoir, S. de. (1949). *The second sex*. Vintage Classics.
- Gull, K., Ajmal, M., & Lodhi, M. A. (2023). Challenging gender stereotypes in Pakistani kids' literature: An application of feminist theory on "Teen Bahadur". *The Educational Review, USA*, 7(9), 1248-1253. doi:10.26855/er.2023.09.00
- Hira, Muhamma F. (2017). "Marxist Criticism on Disney's Movie Cinderella." *Lantern*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2017.
- Hooks, B. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. South End Press.
- Jane M. Gaines, (2004). "Film History and the Two Presents of Feminist Film Theory," *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 2004: 113-19.
- Khan, N. (2021). An Intersectional Feminist Reading of Bapsi Sidhwa's Water. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics & Literature*, 4(II), 43-55. doi:10.33195/jll.v4iII.204
- Kibin. (2023). *Female empowerment in a male dominated society in the princess and the frog, a film by john musker*
- Kuleli, M. (2019). Marxist Feminist Discourse in a Turkish Novel with Eugene Nida's Concept of "Equivalence" Applied on Translation Evaluation of the Novel. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 16, 703-720.
- Laswaniyah, M. (2021). Feminism Study of the Novel "Catatan Juang" by Fiersa Besari. *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature*, 1(1), 28-33.
- Mohajan, H. K. (2022). Four Waves of Feminism: A Blessing for Global Humanity. *Studies in Social Science & Humanities*, 1(2), 1-8.
- Pincock, K. (2018). School, sexuality and problematic girlhoods: Reframing 'empowerment' discourse. *Third World Quarterly*, 39 (5), 906-919.
- Raina, J. A. (2020). *Feminism: An Overview*. Macmillan Publishers.
- Ulusal, D. (2020). *Feminist Discourse in Animated Films*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-1774-1.ch012.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1792). *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. J. Johnson.