



DEFEATED HEROES: THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE FILM *WOMEN FROM ROTE ISLAND*

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the representation of women in the film "Women from Rote Island" through Todorov's narrative structure approach. The film depicts the persistent gender injustice experienced by the female characters, never achieving balance. This study uses narrative analysis with Todorov's theory to identify the characters' journeys in the film. Data were collected from scenes and dialogues that represent gender injustice and women's resistance efforts. The analysis was conducted by highlighting how the film depicts a recurring cycle of violence and powerlessness. The results show that the main characters, Bertha, Martha, and Orpah, never manage to escape the cycle of oppression. Bertha, who attempts to seek justice for her sister, ends in a tragic death. Martha becomes another victim of sexual violence, while Orpah is trapped in an oppressive power relationship. The film emphasizes that patriarchal domination not only limits women's freedom of movement but also destroys any resistance they may make. This study concludes that "Women from Rote Island" represents women as defeated heroes. The women's defeat is not due to a lack of courage, but rather to a system that structurally places them in a subordinate position.

Keywords: *Women from Rote Island, narrative analysis, Todorov, gender inequality.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi perempuan dalam film *Women from Rote Island* melalui pendekatan struktur naratif Todorov. Film ini menampilkan ketidakadilan gender yang terus-menerus dialami oleh tokoh-tokoh perempuan tanpa pernah mencapai keseimbangan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis naratif dengan teori Todorov untuk mengidentifikasi perjalanan karakter dalam film. Data dikumpulkan dari adegan dan dialog yang merepresentasikan ketidakadilan gender serta upaya perlawanan perempuan. Analisis dilakukan dengan menyoroti bagaimana film ini menggambarkan siklus kekerasan dan ketidakberdayaan yang terus berulang. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tokoh utama, yaitu Bertha, Martha, dan Orpa tidak pernah berhasil keluar dari lingkaran penindasan. Bertha, yang berusaha mencari keadilan bagi saudaranya, berakhir dengan kematian tragis. Martha kembali menjadi korban kekerasan seksual, sementara Orpa terjebak dalam relasi kuasa yang menindas. Film ini menegaskan bahwa dominasi patriarki tidak hanya membatasi ruang gerak perempuan tetapi juga menghancurkan setiap upaya perlawanan yang mereka lakukan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa *Women from Rote Island* merepresentasikan perempuan sebagai *pahlawan yang kalah*. Kekalahan para wanita tersebut bukan karena kurangnya keberanian, tetapi karena sistem yang secara struktural menempatkan mereka dalam posisi subordinat.

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Kata Kunci: *Women from Rote Island*, analisis naratif, Todorov, ketidakadilan gender.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality and patriarchal culture remain complex issues in Indonesia (Zuhri & Amalia, 2022). Patriarchal social structures place women in a subordinate position, which is reflected in various aspects of life, including media representation (Blackwood, 2005). As a popular cultural medium, film serves not only as entertainment but also as a tool for representing and reproducing prevailing social constructs in society (Barker & Jane, 2016). Various problems that arise in society are captured and re-imagined in film, including issues of gender inequality (Putri & Nurhajati, 2020).

Films often represent women as victims of sexual violence arising from patriarchal power relations that place women in vulnerable positions (Hasan & Sa'idah, 2025). One interesting film to examine in this context is *Women from Rote Island* (Perempuan Berkelamin Darah), which highlights the struggle of women in East Nusa Tenggara. This film features three main female characters, namely Orpa, Martha, and Bertha. They are portrayed as brave and independent figures in rejecting discrimination and gender-based violence that occurs in Rote (Rini et al., 2025). However, in this film, the resistance carried out by women does not always bring significant change, but often ends in defeat or repeated suffering. This position reinforces the stereotypical view that men play a controlling role, while women are treated as weak objects and suffer (Andrianto & Pudrianisa, 2025). This reflects how women in films are still often placed in narratives that reinforce their position as victims rather than as agents of change (Ningrum et al., 2024) (Ningrum et al., 2024).

The film "*Women from Rote Island*" also depicts the harsh reality of gender inequality, where male characters who commit violence against women are not adequately punished. Violence against women in this film is portrayed as inevitable, while women's resistance efforts often end in failure. This representation reinforces the notion that women in a patriarchal society lack the power to change their fate (Damayanti et al., 2024). Previous research has shown that in many Indonesian films, particularly those depicting stories from Eastern Indonesia, representations of women are

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often trapped in harmful stereotypes. (Karolus, 2018) revealed that women in Indonesian cinema are often portrayed as passive and powerless. Meanwhile, Aripurnami (1990) highlighted that Indonesian films still rarely depict women as individuals with power over their own lives. This representation demonstrates how media, including films, plays a role in maintaining an unequal gender hierarchy (Lazar, 2014).

Although various studies have explored the representation of women in Indonesian films, no research specifically analyzing Women from Rote Island within the context of narrative analysis has been found. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the film's narrative structure and how gender inequality is represented within its storyline. Using a narrative analysis approach, this study will explore the stages within the film's story structure that reflect women's struggles and failures in achieving justice.

The approach used in this research is narrative analysis, drawing on Todorov (1971) narrative theory, as modified by Lacey (2000). According to this theory, every narrative follows a specific pattern consisting of five stages: initial equilibrium, disturbance of the equilibrium (disequilibrium), awareness of the disturbance (recognition of the disturbance), attempt to repair the disequilibrium, and restoration to a new equilibrium. This approach will be used to examine how the film depicts gender inequality through its narrative structure and how women are positioned within the story.

The main problem to be discussed in this research is how the film "Women from Rote Island" depicts women's struggles through its narrative structure. The primary focus is on how the representation of women in this film shapes their position within the narrative and the extent to which the film represents the gender injustice experienced by the female characters. Using a narrative analysis approach, this research seeks to explore patterns of gender inequality that occur within the film's narrative.

Based on the above explanation, this study aims to demonstrate how Women from Rote Island illustrates gender inequality through its narrative structure. Using a narrative analysis approach, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how Indonesian films can reproduce inequality and depict the struggles of women hampered by existing social structures.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods with a narrative analysis approach to understand how the representation of women in the film "Women from Rote Island" is constructed. This approach allows researchers to explore the narrative structure and the roles of characters in shaping specific meanings within the film. Through narrative analysis, this research focuses on how the storyline and characterization of female characters are presented within the context of the gender injustice they experience.

This analysis adopts (Todorov, 1971) narrative theory, further modified by (Lacey, 2000), which divides the narrative into five main stages: equilibrium (initial balance), disequilibrium (disruption of the equilibrium), recognition of the disequilibrium (awareness of the disturbance), attempt to repair the disequilibrium (effort to repair the disturbance), and new equilibrium (restoration of equilibrium). This research also pays attention to how the film depicts the process of injustice and the struggles experienced by the female characters in the film.

The research data were obtained through textual and visual analysis of the film "Women from Rote Island." The main focus in data collection is to explore the representation of women through three main characters: Orpah (mother), Martha (older sister), and Bertha (younger sister). Data collection techniques are carried out using visual and textual observation methods, where each scene involving the three female characters is analyzed based on the narrative flow, character development, and how the film depicts their struggles and defeats. According to Bordwell et al. (2010), film analysis does not only depend on visual elements, but also on narrative structures that play an important role in shaping the audience's experience in understanding the meaning contained in the film.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the film "Women from Rote Island" was conducted using a narrative approach to understand how gender inequality is represented through the journeys of the main characters. The narrative structure in this film follows the pattern developed by Todorov (1971) and modified by Lacey (2000), which includes five stages: initial equilibrium, disruption of the equilibrium, awareness of the disruption, attempts to correct the disruption, and recovery to a new equilibrium. In the context of this film, these stages reflect the dynamics of women's struggles

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against an oppressive patriarchal system. The film presents three main female characters: Orpah, Martha, and Bertha; who each have different but intersecting perspectives. Furthermore, all three act against a social structure that is not in favor of women.

The representation of gender inequality in this film is not only evident in the dialogue and interactions between the characters, but also through the narrative construction, which shows how struggles repeatedly end in failure or compromise that continues to disadvantage women. In the following discussion, each character will be analyzed based on the stages of the narrative structure they experience. This analysis aims to show how the film "Women from Rote Island" represents women.

Table 1. Narrative Analysis of the Character Orpa

No	Stage	Event	Scene	Minute
1	equilibrium (initial balance)	-	-	-
2	disequilibrium (disruption of balance)	Orpa's husband (Abram) has died.	Orpa is portrayed insisting on waiting for her child, Martha, to return.	01:11
		Orpa tries to ask Habel, who sent Martha to work abroad, for help.	"Everyone knows you must pay to get a job. Pay and pay again. I want an explanation, Habel!" Orpa demands an explanation from Habel (the neighbor who sent Martha to Malaysia).	3:31
		Orpa goes to the market and violates tribal rules. She experiences harassment there.	A boy at the market is shown pressing his genitals against Orpa's buttocks.	7:42
		Orpa is blamed.	"There were neighbors who could help. Brother Abram has been lying here for eight days. That was your wish, right? Now you did something new. You got harassed, right? That's because you went against tradition!" a female relative says to Orpa.	8:58
		Orpa waits for Martha to return so her husband can be buried according to his will.	"They all doubt Martha can return. They say on the eighth day God the Father is resting. I am waiting. We are all waiting. Because I believe God never breaks His promise. Martha will	10:15

		come home. Abram, Abram, I am struggling here.” Orpa sobs in front of Abram’s body.	
	Orpa’s child returns.	Martha has come home.	16:50
	Orpa’s child experiences mental trauma.	“What illness do you have?” Orpa asks Martha. / “Help, God. Mom, she jumped, Mom! Mom! Mom, she’s here!” Martha screams.	24:20
	Martha burns Kobis’s goat shed. Orpa is held financially responsible.	“The rape perpetrator is still in the hospital but is already being handled by the police,” says a customary elder. / “Orpa, Kobis asks for 45 million in compensation.” / “Respected elders, I apologize. I was wrong. I violated tradition. I’m sorry,” Orpa says at the customary meeting.	1:02:05
	Orpa works hard to earn more money.	Orpa is shown working day and night. / “Martha, don’t forget to eat. Mom is going out for a bit.” / “Come along,” Martha whines. / “No. Mom has to work to get extra money.” / “Come.” / “Just wait. Bertha will be home soon.”	1:12:31
	The family realizes Martha is pregnant and tries to report it to the police.	“Where is the victim, Ma?” / “Oh dear, Sir, I already told you.” / “Sir, she is sick and isolated.”	1:23:59
	Orpa is blamed for not taking good care of her daughter.	“That’s why daughters must be guarded,” a female neighbor says to Orpa.	1:29:15
	Orpa’s child, Bertha, goes missing and is later found dead.	Villagers find Bertha’s motorbike. Orpa tries to search for Bertha.	1:37:14
3	recognition of disequilibrium (awareness of disruption)	Orpa reports to the police for investigation.	Orpa, relatives, and police search an empty house where Bertha was last detected. 1:37:47
	Bertha is found dead and dismembered.	“Mom, Sir, you are Bertha’s family, right? I’m Dr. Bagus. I conducted an external examination. We received information from the police that her body was not intact.”	1:49:36

	Martha's rapist is caught.	The rapist (Habel) is trapped and arrested.	1:52:18
	Orpa investigates her child's death with a witness, Ruben.	Orpa gives money to Ruben. / "Where were you at that time, Ruben?"	1:59:33
	Orpa leads a protest with village mothers at the police station.	"Mothers! Rise up! From Rote we raise our voices!"	2:06:27
	Orpa questions Kobis about her child's death.	"I'm sure you can tell me many things."	2:10:16
	Kobis asks for sex in exchange for information.	"There is one more condition (...) I want us to have sex, now," Kobis says.	2:12:46
	Orpa learns Kobis is Bertha's killer.	"Who? Who is the perpetrator?" Orpa asks. / "Me," Habel answers.	2:16:18
4	attempt to repair disequilibrium (attempt to fix disruption)	Orpa attacks Kobis. Orpa tries to leave the empty house, but Kobis attacks her. In self-defense, Orpa stabs Kobis with a piece of wood.	2:17:05
5	new equilibrium (restoration of balance)	Orpa leaves Kobis behind. Orpa leaves the empty house after defeating Kobis.	2:19:31
	Damar finds Bertha's phone as evidence.	Damar listens to a recording on the phone.	2:19:17

In the film *Women from Rote Island*, Orpa's narrative journey follows a four-stage narrative structure: disequilibrium, recognition of disequilibrium, attempt to repair disequilibrium, and new equilibrium. Unlike the classical narrative structure proposed by Todorov (1971), the film does not begin with an equilibrium stage that signifies balance in the main character's life. Instead, the film immediately immerses the audience in the conflict Orpa faces from the outset.

The disruption in Orpa's life begins with the death of her husband, Abram, which leads to economic and social instability. Abram's request to wait for Martha's return before burying her begins Orpa's stressful struggle. According to Butler (2004), in patriarchal societies, women often bear a disproportionate moral and social burden compared to men. This is evident in how Orpa is forced to bear the consequences of her family's decisions.

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In her struggle, Orpa seeks help from Abel, who took Martha to work in Malaysia, but only receives answers that indicate the uncertainty of her child's fate. The phenomenon of female labor trafficking from remote areas to foreign countries is not new, as noted by Silvey (2006), who points out that female labor migration often leads to exploitation and legal uncertainty. When Orpa went to the market, she experienced sexual harassment, which led to social judgment. In a patriarchal system, victims of harassment are often blamed rather than protected (Nussbaum, 1999).

Martha's return did not bring peace to Orpa. Martha was deeply traumatized by her experiences in Malaysia. The trauma experienced by victims of human trafficking often has not only psychological but also social consequences (True, 2012). Martha even burned Kobis's goat pen, further worsening Orpa's economic situation. When Martha's pregnancy was revealed, the community blamed Orpa again, reflecting how women are often subjected to social control in patriarchal customary systems Murray (1990). When Bertha disappeared and was eventually found dead in a horrific state, Orpa realized she had to act. She reported the case to the police and sought justice. However, as Merry (2009) notes, the legal systems in many developing countries often do not side with women, especially in cases of gender-based violence.

Orpa's struggle culminated when she led a protest with other women demanding justice. However, this movement yielded no tangible results. This aligns with Mohanty (2005) findings, which highlight that women's resistance in patriarchal societies is often hampered by institutions that maintain the status quo. In her quest for the truth, Orpa eventually learns that Kobis is Bertha's killer. However, Orpa must submit to sexual exploitation. This reflects how patriarchal power often exploits women's vulnerable positions (MacKinnon, 1989).

Orpa ultimately resists by stabbing Kobis and fleeing. Meanwhile, Damar finds Bertha's cell phone, which contains crucial recordings that could be used to solve the crime. However, the film does not show how the legal process unfolded. Damar's presence as a man from outside Rote who plays a role in uncovering the truth also reflects how the patriarchal system still dominates in determining who can be the "savior" in a narrative (Spivak, 2023). Through Orpa's narrative journey, this film shows that women's struggles against social injustice and patriarchal culture are far from over. Orpa's decision to fight back demonstrates that women have a strong fighting spirit, but existing social structures continue to hinder the achievement of true justice. Women are often confronted with gender stereotypes that hinder access to fair opportunities and lead to discrimination in decision-

making, both in the domestic, social, and national spheres. Gender stereotypes often hinder women's access to equal opportunities and trigger discrimination in decision-making (Sembiring et al., 2025).

Table 2. Narrative Analysis of Martha's Character

No	Stage	Event	Scene/Dialog	Minute
1	equilibrium (initial balance)	-	-	-
2	disequilibrium (disruption of balance)	Martha's boyfriend proposes to another woman	Told through Damar's apology to Orpa for his past actions. "Even until she died, a week after our engagement, she never knew," Damar says to Orpa.	26:21
		Martha decides to go to Malaysia	Told through Damar's apology to Orpa. "I already told Martha, Ma. She was angry. It was natural. But a month later, I heard she had gone to Malaysia," Damar says to Orpa.	26:43
		Martha becomes a migrant worker in Malaysia	Told through Damar's apology to Orpa about his past.	26:50
		Martha is revealed to be a victim of sexual harassment by a "Datuk"	"Datuk! Mama Datuk! Clara, Bertha, chase him away!" Martha screams when she sees the man (Uncle Theo).	36:10
		Martha returns to Rote for her father's funeral	Martha has returned home.	16:50
		Martha suffers mental trauma due to harassment	"What illness do you have?" Orpa asks. / "Help, God. Mom, she jumped, Mom!"	

Martha's character in the film *Women from Rote Island* experiences a narrative journey filled with suffering and injustice. Based on Todorov (1971) narrative structure, Martha's journey can be divided into four main stages: disequilibrium, recognition of disequilibrium, attempt to repair disequilibrium, and new equilibrium. The equilibrium stage is not depicted in the film, reinforcing the narrative that the women in the film are constantly in a state of instability and powerlessness (Mulvey, 2013).

The conflict in Martha's journey begins when her lover, Damar, proposes to another woman. Martha's decision to go to Malaysia as an Indonesian migrant worker (TKI) illustrates the limited choices women have in difficult economic conditions. This aligns with research by Karolus (2018),

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which shows that Eastern Indonesian women in films are often portrayed as victims of circumstances with little or no control over their own destinies. This phenomenon is further reinforced by Robinson (2008), who notes that women in patriarchal cultures are often forced to migrate to support their families economically, despite the risk of exploitation and violence.

While abroad, Martha experiences sexual abuse by her employer, whom she refers to as "Datuk." This traumatic experience is compounded by the lack of adequate protection systems for female migrant workers Silvey (2006). When she finally returns to Rote to attend her father's funeral, she experiences another round of abuse, this time by Marco and Ezra. This repetition of traumatic experiences reinforces the notion that women in the film are continually subjected to sexual violence without effective protection mechanisms (Suryakusuma et al., 2011).

Martha eventually realizes her situation and tries to fight back. Together with Bertha, she defends herself against Ezra's attacks. Martha even takes the extreme action of burning down Kobis's cage as a form of resistance against Ezra, who is hiding there. However, instead of receiving justice, Martha is chained by her family, who considers her mentally ill. This illustrates how women who attempt to challenge the patriarchal system are often blamed or criminalized (Aripurnami, 1990). This representation aligns with the concept of gaslighting in feminism, where women who attempt to speak out about injustice are instead dismissed as hysterical or unstable (Ahmed, 2016). When Martha's family attempted to report the case to the police, the response was minimal. Even after Martha gave birth to her child, the police still had not identified the rapist. This reflects structural inequalities in the legal system that tend to neglect justice for victims of sexual violence (Bennett, 2005). In many cases, legal resolutions for female victims of sexual violence in Indonesia often result in customary compromises, even positioning the victim as the perpetrator (Arsawati & Ditayani Antari, 2021).

Ultimately, Martha's rapist, Abel, is successfully framed and arrested. However, the legal implications are not clearly depicted in the film. Although Abel is traditionally forgiven, the formal legal process against him is not explicitly depicted. This demonstrates how justice for female victims of violence often results in customary compromises without firm sanctions against the perpetrators. In the context of the representation of women in Eastern Indonesian films, as examined by (Karolus, 2018), this kind of compromise further reinforces women's subordinate position under the patriarchal system. Gender inequality contributes strongly to the occurrence of gender-based

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violence due to power relations that place women in a subordinate position (Dahal et al., 2022).

At the end of the film, Martha is shown caring for her child and releasing a bird with Damar. This scene indicates that she is trying to move on with her life despite experiencing various tragedies. However, the healing offered in the film feels ambiguous, particularly as there is no significant change in the system that oppresses her (de Beauvoir, 1949). Thus, the film seems to affirm that women can only "adjust" to their circumstances without truly achieving the justice or structural change they need. Furthermore, Martha's recovery from failing to become her own hero is depicted alongside Damar, a man from outside Rote, further emphasizing the absence of female protagonists who have complete control over their own lives.

Martha's narrative in *Women from Rote Island* demonstrates how women in Eastern Indonesian films are still portrayed as persistent victims of violence without any real solution. The film's narrative structure reinforces the view that women from this region are helpless victims who must accept their fate within a powerful patriarchal system. Thus, the film does not offer full liberation for women, but rather perpetuates long-standing stereotypes and inequalities.

Table 3. Bertha Narrative Analysis of the Character Bertha

No	Stage	Event	Scene	Minute
1	equilibrium (initial balance)	-	-	-
2	disequilibrium (disruption of balance)	Bertha's father dies	Bertha's mother, Orpa, is portrayed insisting on waiting for her child, Martha, to return.	01:11
		Bertha's sister, Martha, experiences trauma due to harassment	"Datuk! Mama Datuk! Clara, Bertha, chase him away!" Martha screams when she sees the man (Uncle Theo).	36:10
3	recognition of disequilibrium (awareness of disruption)	Bertha saves Martha from rape	Bertha attacks Ezra, then Ezra targets Bertha.	57:59
		Bertha's family must pay material compensation to Kobis because Martha burned the goat shed	"Orpa, Kobis asks for 45 million in compensation," says the customary elder.	1:02:05
4	attempt to repair disequilibrium	Bertha receives verbal harassment while	"I thought it was our marriage certificate you were	

(attempt to fix disruption)	delivering installment payments to Kobis	signing,” Kobis says to Bertha, “(...) there ar
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The character of Bertha in the film *Women from Rote Island* experiences a narrative journey filled with suffering and injustice. Based on Todorov (1971) narrative structure, Bertha's journey can be divided into three main stages depicted in the film: disequilibrium, recognition of the disequilibrium, and attempt to repair the disequilibrium. However, the stages of equilibrium and new equilibrium are not found, reflecting a tragic story that offers no resolution for the main character.

The film opens with a series of events that shatter the balance in Bertha's life. This disruption is triggered by the death of Bertha's father, which not only brings deep grief to the family but also worsens their economic situation. Bertha's mother, Orpah, is depicted continually awaiting the return of her children, a symbol of women's powerlessness in the face of the harsh reality that befalls them. Bertha's sister, Martha, also experiences trauma due to the sexual violence she suffered. This trauma became a central element in shaping the conflict dynamics within Bertha's family and demonstrated how women in patriarchal societies often become victims without adequate legal protection (Sakina, 2017).

Bertha quickly realized that her family's situation was deteriorating. Her realization culminated when she saved Martha from being raped by Ezra. Although Bertha acted to protect her sister, she faced judgment from other women in the family who considered her the cause of the problem. This demonstrates how women in traditional communities are often blamed for their suffering, as de Beauvoir (1949) argued that women in patriarchal systems are often forced to accept their fate as the Other, an entity controlled by the dominant social system.

Furthermore, Bertha's family also experienced increasing economic pressure. Martha, traumatized, burned Kobis's goat pen, forcing Bertha's family to pay compensation. This economic and social burden further exacerbated the imbalance in Bertha's life. Bertha tried to find a way out of her situation. When she handed over the compensation installment to Kobis, she faced verbal abuse. Bertha attempts to resist with verbal force, even though she remains cornered. This situation demonstrates how women in patriarchal societies are often forced to accept subordination, but Bertha attempts to assert her autonomy through verbal resistance (You, 2021).

Furthermore, Bertha discovers that Martha is pregnant as a result of rape, further complicating

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their family's problems. Bertha attempts to identify the perpetrator and eventually follows Ezra, who uncovers the affair between Ezra and Ruben. However, this discovery does not bring a solution for Bertha; instead, she becomes further entangled in a cycle of injustice that leaves no room for women to seek true justice.

Unlike classical narratives, which typically reach a new equilibrium, Bertha's story ends in tragedy. Bertha is found dead, her body dismembered. This death signifies the failure of the system to protect women from violence and injustice. Rather than achieving resolution or healing, Bertha's story represents the suffering of women within a social structure that leaves them no room for freedom or justice (Nugroho, 2012).

Bertha's story reflects how women in a patriarchal society face various forms of oppression, both economic, social, and legal. The film's lack of equilibrium and new equilibrium demonstrates the harsh reality that for some women, struggle doesn't always result in change or justice, but instead ends in despair.

Overall, Bertha's narrative journey in *Women from Rote Island* follows Todorov's narrative structure to some extent, but omits the resolution typically found in traditional narratives. This depicts the reality of women who are continually trapped in a cycle of violence and injustice. The film serves as a social critique of women's conditions in a patriarchal society that leaves them no room for true justice.

In Todorov's narrative analysis, the journeys of Bertha, Martha, and Orpa demonstrate how structural injustice continues to place women in subordinate positions with no real opportunity to achieve equilibrium. Bertha, who attempts to be her sister's savior, ends in a tragic death, demonstrating how the patriarchal system oppresses women who try to resist. Martha, who experiences repeated sexual violence, represents the impact of a culture of impunity on perpetrators of sexual violence in a patriarchal society. Meanwhile, Orpa, who is forced to have sex with Kobis, reflects how women are often oppressed.

Women from Rote Island not only illustrates the cycle of gender-based violence but also shows how this injustice is legitimized by society. When Bertha tries to protect Martha from rape, she is blamed by other women in her family. Patriarchal power persists not only because of male control but also because of the passive acceptance of it by oppressed groups (Bourdieu, 2001). In this context, the women in this film are not only victims of men, but also of the social structures that

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normalize violence and oppression against them.

Furthermore, Bertha's tragic journey as the protagonist who fails to achieve final equilibrium demonstrates how social systems limit women in their quest for justice. Women are often denied the space to define themselves outside the dominant narratives established by power structures (Butler, 2021). Bertha, despite attempting to construct her own narrative of struggle, is ultimately defeated by a system larger than herself.

Thus, *Women from Rote Island* not only presents a personal story of women's suffering but also serves as a critique of the system that continues to reproduce gender inequality. The film asserts that without structural change in society, women like Bertha, Martha, and Orpah will continue to be defeated heroes: not because they lack strength, but because the world they inhabit denies them the opportunity to win.

CONCLUSION

Through a narrative analysis of *Women from Rote Island*, it can be concluded that this film presents women as defeated heroes in an oppressive social structure. Martha, Orpa, and Bertha strive to fight the gender injustice that befalls them, but the patriarchal system that confines their lives renders their struggle futile. They never reach a point of equilibrium, but instead remain in a constant vortex of injustice and suffering (disequilibrium). Although they recognize the oppression they experience (recognition of disequilibrium) and try to improve the situation (attempt to repair disequilibrium), their efforts always end in defeat. Martha, a repeated victim of sexual violence, becomes pregnant as a result of rape; Orpa is forced to submit to Kobis in order to obtain justice for her child, Bertha; and Bertha, who seeks justice, is ultimately silenced by brutal mutilation. This representation demonstrates that in an unequal social structure, women's resistance often fails to yield justice, but instead leads to a new cycle of oppression. The film not only depicts gender inequality but also critiques how women in a patriarchal society are positioned as figures who can only fight within the limits set by the system that oppresses them. Thus, *Women from Rote Island* represents women as defeated heroes. The defeat of Orpah, Martha, and Bertha comes not from their lack of courage, but from the structural domination that destroys their hope for justice.

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