



## Women-Centric Movies at the 2023 and 2024 Oscars: A Chance to Reinforce Women's Presence or a Cover for Reproducing Patriarchal Hegemony?

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### ABSTRACT

#### Introduction

In recent years, the increasing public awareness of gender issues and the efforts to establish gender equality have directed attention towards constructive discrimination as a strategy within the realm of cinema, particularly concerning the Oscars, which are regarded as one of the most prestigious accolades in the film industry. This approach prioritizes women and their issues to highlight their role and presence in the industry. This study examines whether the women-centric movement in cinema contributes to the establishment of a genuine and impactful representation of women, or if it merely serves as a cover for the perpetuation of patriarchal hegemony. The divergent dynamics of patriarchy and feminism, along with the quest to establish the criteria that define an individual as a feminist, have engendered conflict in most feminist-oriented research in cinema. Conduction of such research holds great importance because cinema can affect the audience's mind and prioritize its made-up world over reality. Cinema can define standards for femininity by how women are portrayed and dominate their true identity. Thereupon, it is imperative to differentiate between counter-stereotypes and to dismantle stereotypes within cinematic representations. The Oscars, recognized as the most impactful and esteemed international film awards, serve as the primary focus of this research, which examines the influence of cinema. . Movies that are either nominated or selected in different Oscar categories are broadly promoted, have a vast global audience, and hold great power. It is evident that Iran is not exempt from this issue and has been influenced accordingly. Thus, addressing the movies presented in such award shows and clarifying their stance on women is also essential for the Iranian audience.

#### Methodology

The films examined in this study include "Blonde," "Women Talking," "Poor Things," and "Anatomy of a Fall." These films have been selected from the 2023 and 2024 Oscar nominations due to their focus on women's issues and their emphasis on women's perspectives. An interceptive approach is used in this research to analyze these movies. Feminist film theory constitutes the theoretical framework for this analysis, which is executed in three distinct stages: characterization, visual and auditory structure, and narrative structure. The purpose of this research is to transcend superficial analyses of films and investigate the underlying frameworks to ascertain whether they adhere to feminist principles in their composition or if they perpetuate the gender norms associated with patriarchal hegemony.

#### Results

##### Characterization

In the movie "Blonde," Marilyn Monroe is depicted as an ordinary woman who simultaneously embodies the role of a sexual victim. This representation conforms to established gender stereotypes and serves to alleviate men's apprehensions regarding women's image. "Women Talking" portrays women in a different and multi-dimensional way by emphasizing how women are different in personality, and it challenges the stereotypical patterns by which women are categorized. The leading woman in "Poor Things" oscillates between the roles of a virgin and a prostitute, thereby establishing a pattern of femininity that transitions from deviance to the acceptance of gender stereotypes. "The Anatomy of a Fall" attempts to dismantle gender

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stereotypes by depicting a woman who is strange and acts against these stereotypes.

### Visual and Auditory Structure

The visual structure used in the film “Blonde” serves to sexually objectify the female character by accentuating her fetishistic techniques. On the contrary, “Women Talking” employs a voice-over technique to dissociate the female body from the voice, thereby facilitating a form of liberation from physical constraints. Notwithstanding the attempts to recognize the woman’s sexual desires in “Poor Things,” the narrative ultimately engages the audience from a masculine perspective by depicting the female form in a fetishistic manner. “The Anatomy of a Fall” delineates the distinction between the woman’s voice and those of other characters, thereby highlighting a form of social alienation and illustrating the manner in which women are perceived within a patriarchal society.

### Narrative Structure

In the film “Blonde,” the narrative is conveyed through an Oedipal lens, wherein Marilyn’s challenges are ascribed to her interactions with males and her struggles with infertility. This portrayal suggests that her problems are predominantly rooted in biological factors rather than social influences. “Women Talking” substitutes the traditional male protagonist with a collective of women, interrogates the Oedipal narrative, and illustrates that women are equally capable of exploration. “Poor Things” subordinates the woman’s erotic desire throughout its narrative trajectory, ultimately reintegrating her into the paternal domain of symbolic order. In “Anatomy of a Fall,” the masculine anxiety reflects on the men themselves instead of projecting on the woman, and that is how this movie challenges phallic masculinity.

### Conclusion

An analysis of these four films reveals that many cinematic productions continue to conform to gender stereotypes and patriarchal hegemony, especially in their visual and auditory frameworks, despite advancements in the awareness of gender-related issues. Movies like “Blonde” and “Poor Things,” while ostensibly critiquing patriarchal culture, ultimately perpetuate this very culture by reducing women to mere sexual objects. On the other hand, movies like *Anatomy of a Fall* and *Women Talking* portray an authentic image of women, facilitating the expression of femininity by offering alternative portrayals and challenging common clichés. This research shows that women-centric movies require further criticism and revision to go beyond the content and go through alternations in their hidden structures. The findings further illustrate that certain films employ a critique of patriarchal hegemony as a veneer, while simultaneously perpetuating the norms of this hegemony through their fundamental structure, thereby subtly conveying these norms to the audience.

### Conflict of Interest

This research has not been disseminated in any publications inside or outside the country and is the result of all the writers’ hard work, all of who are aware of its publication and give consent to it. This research has been conducted in accordance with established ethical standards and regulations, ensuring that it is devoid of plagiarism and any violations. The responsibility of a probable conflicts of interest report and research sponsors is with the writer and they will take responsibility for all the mentioned matters.

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