

PATRIARCHAL EDUCATION IN THE VICTORIAN ERA IN *ENOLA HOLMES*: A FEMINIST STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Enola Holmes (2020) is a film directed by Harry Bradbeer set in the Victorian era during the nineteenth century (1837-1901) in England. *Enola Holmes* is an interesting film because it portrays the struggles of women in a patriarchal Victorian society that are still relevant today. The film tells the story of Enola, a young woman who searches for her missing mother while also resisting the social constraints imposed on women, especially in the education system. This study aims to reveal the social critique of patriarchal education in the film *Enola Holmes* (2020). The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, informed by a feminist lens. The data were collected through observation, identification, classification, and interpretation of the film's content. The analysis was conducted through the lens of Wollstonecraft's feminist concept, which advocates for women's right to rational education and freedom of movement. The results of this study indicate that *Enola Holmes* represents a patriarchal education system that limits women and reflects resistance to patriarchal norms. Through the character of Enola, this film highlights the importance of educational equality as a foundation for achieving gender justice in both historical and contemporary contexts.

Keywords: Education, Enola Holmes, Feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft

A. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the fundamental aspects of identity formation and individual empowerment. Through education, a person not only acquires academic knowledge but can also shape the way of thinking, values, and character that become the basis for living a social life. According to Ardiyani (2017), education is the process by which a person gains knowledge, skills, and an attitude change. According to basic principles, education should be organized without discriminating against either men or women. Education needs to be an open and equal space because every individual has the same right to develop intellectually, regardless of gender, background, or social status. Thus, equal education allows women not only to be recipients of information but also to be actors of social change.

However, this principle of equality did not apply in the patriarchal society of the Victorian era in England. The Victorian era was an important transitional period in British history that brought about major changes. This era lasted from 1837 to 1901 and was directly influenced by the major changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution that took place earlier, from 1790 to 1820. As a result, this revolution created major transformations in various aspects of life. According to Wardani (2018), the Industrial Revolution caused turmoil in social, political, legal, and economic aspects. However, the resulting progress was not equitably extended to women, especially concerning their right to education. The patriarchal social system continues to maintain a structure of inequality that hinders women's access to equal education. This is understandable because gender is often conceptualized as a sociocultural construct that distinguishes between men and women, regardless of biological determinants (Candra & Zakki, 2025). At that time, equal education between men and women was very limited. Women did not receive intellectual education; instead, they focused on domestic skills and social etiquette that supported them in the domestic sphere. This shows that Victorian education was not a tool of empowerment for women, but instead became part of a patriarchal system of social control. As Putranto et al. (2022) argue, women's rights must be understood as an intrinsic approach to addressing issues of equality and uniformity, particularly regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexuality, which are often shaped by social hypotheses and political activism. In Victorian society, such intersectional awareness was absent, and the education system functioned to reinforce existing gender norms rather than challenge them.

The late eighteenth century, preceding the Victorian era, marked a pivotal moment in the rapid development of the feminist movement. This movement was born as a response to the unrest of women who have been marginalized, stigmatized, and considered inferior in various aspects of life. This condition then led to a critical awareness of the social order dominated by the patriarchal system. This criticism of inequality has led to the birth of thinkers, especially women, who support the feminist movement as a form of resistance to male domination. From a Western feminist perspective, the concept of gender equality focuses on empowering women in social and political spheres, including the right to vote, freedom to make decisions, and equal opportunities in education (Sabelis, 2024). In line with this, according to Vianingrum and Winarti (2024) some women reject the notion that they cannot obtain the same rights as men in addressing gender inequality. Instead, they hold a different perspective, considering that women have the right to participate actively in society. In the context of education, the picture of this gap became even more apparent in the Victorian era, when gender was seen as a different social class so that women did not have equal access to education with men (Saputri & Nesya, 2021). This historical background is reflected in literature and film, particularly those set during the Victorian era.

Concerning the gender issues that occurred during the Victorian era, many literary works set in this period attempt to raise the issue of marginalization experienced by women in a patriarchal society. These films often depict women as facing discrimination and social limitations. As Rachmad (2020) notes, films serve as a medium of representation that reflects various aspects of life and social conditions in society. Similarly, Thomas (2021) emphasized that films adapted from Victorian novels often explore the representation of women and their influence on society's perception of gender roles. In this case, the representation of women in films has evolved. Initially, women were often shown in limited, passive domestic roles, but now films increasingly show women as brave, strong, and intelligent. Especially in the context of Victorian history, one of the most widely discussed aspects in films is the injustices experienced by women. The films aim to be a social critique

of the patriarchal system that limited women at the time, especially in terms of access to education and social rights. The films function as a form of social criticism of the patriarchal system that limited women's roles and movement.

Enola Holmes (2020) is an adventure mystery movie that successfully raises social issues that occurred in the Victorian era. The story depicts a female character, Enola, a 16-year-old girl who tries to find her mother after her mysterious disappearance, armed with intelligence, courage, and fighting skills taught by her mother. Since her mother's disappearance, her two older brothers, Mycroft and Sherlock Holmes, return to their hometown to raise and care for Enola. Mycroft Holmes, her eldest brother, forces Enola to attend an all-girls education that severely restricts her movements. Enola tries to defy her brother's rules. Her journey is not only an attempt to find her mother, but also an adventure in self-discovery. Interestingly, this story is categorized as a neo-Victorian work, as Erkal (2017) notes, the use of typical Victorian women's clothing is actually presented as a symbol of empowerment through the character of Enola. *Enola Holmes* (2020) presents a picture of women's struggle to demand the right to equal education and break down the social boundaries that limit their intellectual development.

This struggle aligns with the feminist thought of Mary Wollstonecraft, a pivotal figure in the feminist movement of the late 18th century. In her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft emphasized the importance of education and rational thinking skills for women as a path to gender equality. She is known as a pioneer of liberal feminism who fought for the rights of women to develop intellectually and morally, on par with men. While recognizing women's role in the domestic sphere, Wollstonecraft disagreed that women were restricted to domestic duties without access to the public sphere. Her ideas challenged the prevailing view of her time, which held that women were inferior to men. When women became so mentally and physically weak that they gave in to men, she claimed that they were only seen as a source of comfort for men (Wollstonecraft, 1792, p. 120). Enola's spirit of resistance against self-limiting social expectations and her decision to think and act independently are a clear reflection of the principles championed by Wollstonecraft. Furthermore, Wollstonecraft criticizes the portrayal of women by male writers who portray them as fragile, artificial, and submissive. She asserted that the male-dominated political system and society must be re-educated to give women equal opportunities and rights, thus preventing the corruption of society through inequality (Wollstonecraft, 1792, p. 11).

Several previous studies have explored feminist issues in *Enola Holmes* (2020), particularly regarding women's resistance to patriarchy. First, a study by Mugiarti et al. (2022) entitled *Women's Rebellion Against Domesticity and Political Marginalization in Bradbeer's Enola Holmes (2020): A Feminism Theory in Literary Study* examines the issue of women's rebellion against domestication and political marginalization in the film *Enola Holmes*. This study found that Enola Holmes and her mother, Eudoria Holmes, represent a form of resistance against patriarchal society, particularly concerning the rejection of traditional roles and the struggle for suffrage. Second, research by Saputri and Neisya (2021) entitled *Woman's Struggle towards Stereotypes in 'The Case of the Missing Marquess: An Enola Holmes Mystery'*, examines women's struggle against gender stereotypes in the novel. This study analyzes how the character Enola rejects traditional norms and fights for freedom and equality. The results show that Enola represents an independent, courageous woman who can resist patriarchal social constructs.

However, despite the relevance of previous studies on patriarchy and women's resistance, there has been no research that focuses specifically on the patriarchal aspect of education in the Victorian era as depicted in the film *Enola Holmes* (2020), particularly through the lens of Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism. As Damayanti et al. (2024) point out, the irony arises when Enola is actually able to outsmart her famous brother. This contrast highlights both her intelligence and the social constraints that restrict women, thus emphasizing the theme of independence and empowerment. Other research that is in line but has a different background is shown by Kango et al. (2025) research on the film *Suffragette* (2015) demonstrates how Mary Wollstonecraft's liberal feminist values are reflected in the depiction of women fighting against systemic oppression. These findings reinforce the relevance of using Wollstonecraft's perspective in analyzing *Enola Holmes* (2020), particularly in its critique of the patriarchal education system that limits women's access to knowledge and intellectual participation. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the social critique of the patriarchal education system depicted in the film as part of the ongoing struggle for gender equality that remains relevant today.

B. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach as it was used to explore or understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems (Creswell, 2017) through qualitative data collection and analysis techniques (Sugiyono, 2019). A characteristic of descriptive qualitative research is its effort to create a general, systematic, accurate, and factual description of facts and their relationship to the studied phenomenon. This study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data used in this research is derived from *Enola Holmes* (2020) film, directed by Harry Bradbeer. The secondary data consists of studies related to the research object, including articles, books, and other relevant supporting sources. The data collection technique employed in this research is the observation and note-taking technique. This technique involves observing significant linguistic units found in a literary work based on the theoretical concept being applied (Faruk, 2012). This study uses feminist theory developed by Mary Wollstonecraft as the theoretical foundation. This theory is applied to analyze the character of Enola and her resistance against the educational norms imposed on women during that era.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher focuses on presenting findings and discussions based on analyzed data, emphasizing the inequality of the gender-based education system experienced by female characters in the film *Enola Holmes* (2020). The analysis involves the liberal feminist perspective put forward by Wollstonecraft (1792), which highlights the importance of equal education for women as a form of her struggle against the patriarchal system. This study identifies two key points of analysis: (1) women's education system during the Victorian era in *Enola Holmes*, illustrating how formal education functioned as an instrument to sustain patriarchal control, and (2) Enola as a representation of feminist resistance to patriarchal education systems.

1. Women's Education System during the Victorian Era in *Enola Holmes* (2020)

During the reign of Queen Victoria, there were many changes and developments in various fields, including in British society's social and cultural life. These developments had an impact on everyday life, especially on the role of women. Women were expected to be perfect housewives, taking care of children and families, and serving their husbands, and women could not even choose who they would marry (Barrett, 2018). This condition is very

strongly reflected in *Enola Holmes* (2020), especially in the narrative about the women's education system. This film shows how education at that time was not intended to empower women intellectually, but rather to shape them into figures that fit patriarchal expectations.

Uniform as a Symbol of Conformity

One of the scenes that reflects the patriarchal education system of the Victorian era in *Enola Holmes* (2020) is when Mycroft Holmes, her eldest brother, invites a female teacher from an all-girls school, Miss Harrison, to evaluate and enroll Enola in the school. The purpose is not to discuss educational goals, but to measure her for the school uniform.



Figure 1. Mycroft Holmes discussing Enola's future education (0.11.34-0.13.21)



Figure 2. Miss Harrison measuring Enola for the school uniform (0.11.34-0.13.21)

The screenshots in Figures 1 and 2 capture the moment when Mycroft and Miss Harrison discuss Enola's enrollment and the symbolic significance of the school uniform, as illustrated in the dialogue below.

Data 1

Mycroft : Finding a boarding school that is willing to take Enola so she won't be a complete failure in this world. We need to break her and build her up.

Enola : Hips are simply a function of legs, aren't they? What need have they of amplification? I won't enjoy being imprisoned in those preposterous clothes.

Miss Harrison : **These clothes will not imprison. They will be free. They will allow you to fit into society, to take part in its numerous pleasures. To catch an eye, to attract.**

Mycroft : With Miss Harrison's help, we'll make her acceptable to society.

This interaction reveals that the school uniform functions not as a mere dress code but as an ideological instrument to enforce gender conformity. Miss Harrison's claim that the clothes will make Enola "fit into society" reflects how women are conditioned to be visually pleasing rather than intellectually engaged. The act of measuring a uniform is not just an administrative procedure. It reflects how women's education at the time focused more on appearance and conformity to rules than on developing their intellect or intellectual potential. Thus, the process of measuring the uniform becomes a metaphor for how women's bodies and identities must be "measured" and conformed to patriarchal molds. In this scene, Enola is not allowed to speak up or determine her own future. This demonstrates Mycroft's control over Enola's life and body and how educational institutions are used as tools of domestication. Mycroft, as a representative of Victorian conservative values, views Enola as wild, uneducated, and in need of being "destroyed and rebuilt." In his view, education is a tool to tame and shape Enola into the ideal woman according to patriarchal society.

Based on the dialogue and screenshots above, the scene from *Enola Holmes* (2020) encapsulates the form of patriarchal ideological domestication that directly contradicts Mary Wollstonecraft's perspective on liberal feminism. Wollstonecraft (1792) stated that women are not merely aesthetic objects or complements to men, but rational beings entitled to proper education. This means that women's education should not aim to make them obedient, physically attractive, and submissive to domestic roles alone, but also have the right to be directed toward developing reason, independence, and moral consciousness. Thus, the educational system reflected through the school uniform measurement scene in this film illustrates how the academic institution of girls' schools becomes a tool for the domestication of women rather than their empowerment.

Furthermore, the power relationship between Mycroft and Enola emphasizes that women are not given autonomy over their bodies and futures. Mycroft represents male domination that controls the direction of Enola's life, while the school institution becomes a representation of power disguised as “education.” This reinforces Wollstonecraft's argument that as long as women's education is designed to serve male interests, inequality will continue. In previous research, Nafis (2021) also highlights how women in *Enola Holmes* (2020) face pressure regarding their physical appearance and how society instils values of obedience and femininity. However, this study expands on that reading by emphasizing the role of educational institutions as ideological media that instill conformity. The scene of measuring uniforms here is not only a symbol of pressure to conform to beauty standards, but also a tangible form of intellectual and social subjugation of women, which contradicts the basic principles of liberal feminism. Thus, the claim that educational institutions are vehicles for women's liberation becomes ironic because, in practice, they emphasize uniformity and conformity through symbols such as school uniforms, which reflect the standardization of identity and submission to patriarchal gender norms. According to Wollstonecraft (1792), this contradicts the essence of education, namely the liberation of the mind and recognition of the dignity of individual women.

Obedience to Systemic Rules

One of the most significant scenes in the film is when Enola is sent by her brother, Mycroft Holmes, to a girls' boarding school. However, the institution is not an educational facility in the true sense, but rather a training ground designed to mold girls into the “ideal women” as defined by patriarchal society, which consist of obedient, polite, well-groomed, and self-restrained. This is illustrated in Figure 3, which shows Miss Harrison instructing the girls on how to behave according to patriarchal expectations, as further demonstrated in the dialogue below.



Figure 3. Miss Harrison training the girls to conform to “ladylike” behavior at the boarding school (1.19.40-1.20.12)

The visual representation in Figure 3 is further clarified through the dialogue in Data 2, which reveals how the school enforces obedience and molds the girls into a socially accepted ideal.

Data 2

*Miss Harrison : Girls, you are here for one reason. And one reason only. **You are here to be made into young ladies.** How do we laugh? We laugh politely. 'Ha ha ha.' You all have the potential, but you are untapped, untested, and most of all, untrained. Walk as we show you to. 'Eyes up! Up! Up!', Speak as we tell you to. 'What whim led white Whitney to whittle?'*

Miss Harrison's rigid and repetitive instructions to her students made it clear that the girls' school functioned more as a tool for instilling obedience to systemic rules than as a space for critical thinking or intellectual development. The focus was not on the intellectual empowerment of women, but on shaping behavior, posture, and speech to conform to patriarchal constructions of femininity. Thus, the education provided did not create independent thinkers, but individuals molded to conform and submit to social expectations. In this regard, Wollstonecraft's thinking is relevant to consider. She states:

"She also maintains that schooling should be co-educational, arguing that men and women, whose marriages are 'the cement of society', should be 'educated after the same model.'" (Wollstonecraft, 1792)

Wollstonecraft emphasized the importance of educational equality because men and women are equally responsible for building society, especially in social relations such as marriage. Coeducational schools with equal standards would produce critical, independent women capable of contributing to a rational society. However, in Enola Holmes (2020), educational institutions actually limit women's potential. Miss Harrison's instructions—from how to walk to how to talk—represent an education narrowed to adherence to patriarchal norms. Enola, raised by Eudoria Holmes with values of independence and freethinking, experiences clashes with these systemic rules. Janice and Mulatsih (2024) stated that Eudoria raised and influenced her daughter to become an independent, brave, and intelligent woman. But these principles are tested by an education system that discourages women. The girls' boarding school functions not simply as a place of care but as an ideological instrument that disguises oppression as education. Enola's experience demonstrates that schools, while seemingly neutral, actually shape women's identities to conform to the dominant order, where obedience is legitimized through hidden social mechanisms.

The “Ideal Wife” as a Patriarchal Construction

In addition to demanding uniformity through uniforms as a symbol of conformity and obedience to systemic rules, the education system in the girls' school in *Enola Holmes* (2020) also serves as a tool for reproducing patriarchal ideology, particularly in shaping women according to the image of the “ideal wife.” Rather than fostering independence and intellectual capacity, the education provided emphasizes domestic skills that reflect submission and politeness by traditional gender norms. The patriarchal construction of the “ideal wife” is clearly illustrated in Figure 4, which depicts Miss Harrison guiding the students in ways that emphasize submission and domestic responsibility.



Figure 4. Miss Harrison instructing the girls to behave according to patriarchal ideals of the “ideal wife” (1.19.37–1.20.29).

Figure 4 captures the moment of instruction, which is further clarified in Data 3 through Miss Harrison’s words emphasizing the domestic roles expected of women.

Data 3

Miss Harrison: Act, think, be as we tell you, and you’ll become acceptable wives and responsible mothers.

In this scene, the girls' school is depicted not as a place to shape girls into independent and rational individuals, but as a tool to produce “ideal wives” according to patriarchal social constructs. Miss Harrison states that students must act, think, and behave as instructed to become acceptable wives and responsible mothers. The education they receive is also very limited to domestic skills, such as embroidery and how to walk and speak in a “gentle” and “polite” manner. This shows that women's contributions in the public sphere are considered unimportant, and they are only directed to live in the private sphere, namely, the household. In line with this, Rahmadana et al. (2023) emphasized that the constructions that society attaches to women tend to narrow their space to develop and be creative. Thus, the school institution functions not as a space for liberation, but as an instrument for socializing patriarchal values that limit women's mobility, freedom of thought, and aspirations from an early age.

Mary Wollstonecraft has long criticized this educational model in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which firmly rejects the idea that women are only educated to please men. In her famous quote, she states:

“Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman’s scepter, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison.” (Mary Wollstonecraft, 1792)

This statement highlights how, from a young age, girls are taught to view beauty as a source of power, thus limiting their intellectual development. In *Enola Holmes* (2020), this is evident in the girls' boarding school system, which mandates uniforms as a symbol of control and teaches them how to walk, talk, and behave according to patriarchal feminine standards. Instead of fostering critical thinking, students are trained to be “acceptable wives” and “responsible mothers.” Wollstonecraft's quote remains relevant, as the female education in the film remains fraught with patterns that stifle intellectual freedom. The “gilded cage” she refers to transforms into a neat and polite school, but in reality, it shapes female identities confined to traditional roles.

Such views do not stand alone but gain legitimacy from social and political structures that idealize domestic women. This concept does not emerge in a vacuum but is reinforced by figures like Queen Victoria, who embodies the hegemony of domestic values. Queen Victoria became the dominant symbol of institutionalized values, that ideal women live in the private sphere, serving as obedient wives and loving mothers (McDonnell, 2018). This view aligns with how the patriarchal system operates in formal education: directing women to be part of the household, not the public sphere or intellectual arena. Mugiarti et al. (2021) notes that Mycroft Holmes' belief that Mrs. Harrison's School would "improve" Enola into a marriageable woman demonstrates how educational institutions are used as ideological tools to mold women according to men's interests. Therefore, the education system in this film not only reflects gender inequality but also perpetuates the social construction of women as "ideal" beings only if they submit to patriarchal norms and expectations.

2. Enola as a Representation of Feminist Resistance to Patriarchal Education Systems

Enola Holmes (2020) presents various scenes that symbolically and explicitly show how Enola refuses to submit to the Victorian-era women's education system that is full of patriarchal values. Through several key moments, we can see that Enola not only refuses to be the "ideal woman" according to society, but also actively fights back through actions, choices, and ideas.

Rejecting the Rules Imposed by the Schooling System

In one scene in *Enola Holmes* (2020), Enola is seen attending a girls' school where she was forcibly enrolled by her brother, Mycroft Holmes. Instead of being a place to develop intelligence and freedom of thought, the school became a symbol of the patriarchal system that sought to mold women according to the moral and social standards of the time. This patriarchal control is visually emphasized in Figure 5, which depicts Enola being instructed on how to walk properly within the school's rigid system.

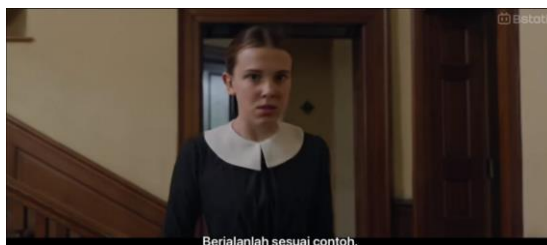


Figure 5. Enola reluctantly following Miss Harrison's walking instructions (1.19.57–1.20.03).

This scene is followed by the dialogue in Data 4, where Miss Harrison instructs the girls to walk and hold their gaze in accordance with the school's rigid standards.

Data 4

Miss Harrison: Walk as we show you to. 'Eyes up! Up! Up!'

In the scene, it is shown that Enola is studying at a special school for girls. She appears uncomfortable and awkward in the school environment. Her restless demeanor and skeptical facial expressions reflect her inner rejection of the doctrines being taught. One of the most striking examples is when the students are taught how to walk "gracefully" and "gently," in accordance with social constructs about how women should move and behave. Instead of

taking the walking exercises seriously, Enola shows a confused and amused expression. She looks at the other students with a cynical gaze, as if asking herself, “Why do women have to be trained like this just to look polite in the eyes of men?” This shows that Enola has a critical awareness. She can see that these teachings are not intellectually educational, but rather about taming women's bodies and characters to conform to patriarchal norms. Instead of developing rational thinking skills, this system emphasizes physical performativity, how women should “look,” “walk,” and “stand”, all of which are aimed at creating an image that is pleasing and acceptable to the masculine social order. Such education makes outward performance the measure of success, rather than intellectual strength or moral integrity.

This situation vividly illustrates Mary Wollstonecraft's critique in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). In her work, Wollstonecraft condemns an educational system that shapes women into decorative objects rather than thinking subjects. She states:

“Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience.” (Wollstonecraft, 1792)

This means that, if women's intelligence is strengthened through substantial education, they are no longer subject to oppressive rules. An education that develops the intellect enables women to think critically, assess reality independently, and reject the roles established by patriarchal norms. In the film *Enola Holmes* (2020), this is evident in Enola's rejection of the girls' boarding school's attempts to shape her into the "ideal" Victorian woman through physical training and gentle demeanor. Enola instead defies these rules with her bodily expression, critical thinking, and skeptical attitude. The film portrays Enola not only as a rebel against the educational system but also as a representation of Wollstonecraft's early feminist spirit, which demanded that women be educated to be rational, autonomous, and independent. This view is reinforced by Azzahra et al. (2023) who explain that *Enola Holmes* represents female rationality as a form of resistance against patriarchal discrimination. Rationality here is not merely intellectual, but also a form of resistance to female subordination. Thus, the film emphasizes resistance while celebrating women's intelligence and courage in confronting unjust norms.

Demonstrating Independence in Upholding Her Beliefs

Her resistance to such education did not stop there. The following figure illustrates this further by showing Enola's behaviour during the dining lesson.

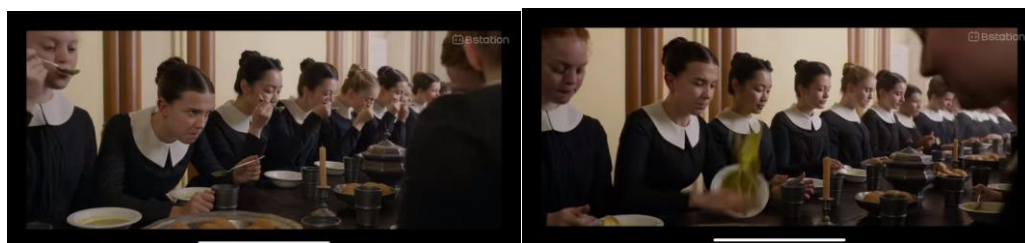


Figure 6. Enola is resisting Miss Harrison's instructions on table manners at the dining table
(1.20.20–1.20.42).

As Figures 6, the visual tension at the dining table is reinforced in Data 5, where Enola directly resists Miss Harrison's teachings through her words and actions.

Miss Harrison : Act, think, be as we tell you, and you'll become acceptable wives and responsible mothers.

Enola : (eating and drinking are not in accordance with Miss Harrison's teachings)

Miss Harrison : follow the path of so many girls who once stood where you do now. And just as we molded the...

Enola : (with a laughing expression, he slams the plate in front of him until all the food spills)

In addition to walking lessons, students at girls' schools are also taught table manners that are considered appropriate for women. The purpose of these lessons is not to foster true character or politeness, but rather to mold girls into marriageable women who are obedient, graceful, and always well-groomed at the dinner table, which symbolizes the domestic sphere. In this lesson, everything from how to hold a spoon, how to sit, to how to laugh must follow strict rules. In contrast, Enola consciously shows opposition to such training. She eats and drinks in a manner contrary to the teacher's instructions, then slams the plate down, causing all the food to spill onto the table. This symbolic action is a form of defiance against the institution's efforts to construct women as obedient domestic beings. Enola's actions are an expression of rejection of a system that only views women as social objects, not as autonomous subjects capable of critical thinking. Enola's view is in line with Mary Wollstonecraft's (1792) thinking:

“It is vain to expect virtue from women till they are in some degree independent of men.” (Wollstonecraft, 1792)

It can be interpreted that women's virtue and moral strength can only flourish if they are free from patriarchal control, both physical and intellectual. Enola, in this scene, bears the consequences of this concept by showing that autonomy of thought must begin with rejecting irrational rules. This scene shows a direct encounter between the patriarchal education system and women who are aware of their rights. Enola appears as a subject who refuses to be manipulated by the system. Her apathy, cynicism, and rejection of symbolic teachings that oppress women make Enola not only the main character in the film's narrative but also a central figure in the narrative of emancipation.

Furthermore, Enola's independence in determining her attitude towards patriarchal social norms becomes the main narrative in this film. As described by Wardani et al. (2025), these actions constitute an empowering narrative that challenges traditional social expectations of women as passive and dependent beings. Through the character of Enola, the film consciously creates an alternative narrative that shows women have the capacity, courage, and right to be agents in their own stories. Thus, through scenes such as etiquette lessons and confrontations with danger, the film constructs a representation of women as rational, autonomous, and free individuals. Enola is not only the main character in the story, but also a symbol of resistance against the patriarchal system that limits women's potential.

Discovering Her Identity and Pursuing Freedom

One of Enola's most significant acts of defiance against the patriarchal education system is shown in a pivotal scene where, with the help of Viscount Tewkesbury, she successfully escapes from the girls' boarding school. This moment marks the culmination of her resistance to being molded into society's version of an "ideal woman." The school, which

was meant to discipline her into obedience and domestic refinement, becomes the very place from which she must liberate herself to reclaim her autonomy. This is visually represented in the following figures.



Figure 7. Enola Escaping the Boarding School with Tewkesbury

The significance of this escape is further reinforced in the subsequent dialogue, as shown in Data 5, where Enola directly expresses her feelings about being confined in the boarding school and acknowledges the collaborative effort behind her liberation.

Data 5

*Enola: Thank you. That was, uh... **You did save me. The best bit was my idea. But you did save me.***

Tewkesbury: You are welcome. I think.

Enola: I didn't like it in here.

In this particular scene, Enola's success in breaking free from patriarchal education is illustrated by her joy in escaping the "cage" of a girls' school that stifled her independence. Her decision marks the beginning of a search for identity based on independence, knowledge, and courage. These values align with the feminist thinking of Wollstonecraft (1792), who emphasized that women should be empowered through an education that develops reason, not simply to please men. With intellectual and moral freedom, women can determine their own destiny. This is reflected in Enola's rejection of a restrictive educational system, choosing the path of detective work, and asserting herself as a free, rational, and critical woman. The values of courage, critical thinking, and resilience inherited from her mother, Eudoria Holmes, strengthen her stance and form the foundation of liberal feminism.

This aligns with Sarah (2022) findings in her research, which state that the representation of feminism in the character of Enola Holmes is evident in various aspects, such as her refusal to wear a corset, her disguise as a man, and her expression of rebellion against social norms and etiquette for European women in the Victorian era. She emphasizes that liberal feminist values are highly prominent in this film, particularly in advocating for equality of rights and rejecting gender discrimination that harms women. Thus, Enola's representation illustrates a shift in the discourse of women from being controlled objects to empowered and free subjects, while also reflecting the actualization of classical feminist thought in contemporary media.

In conclusion, the film *Enola Holmes* (2020) vividly illustrates how patriarchal education during the Victorian era functioned as a mechanism of gender-based control, shaping women to conform to rigid social roles rather than encouraging intellectual development. Through key scenes depicting the imposition of uniforms, behavioural training, and the expectation to become "ideal wives," the film critiques the systemic subjugation of women under the guise of education. Enola's resistance—her rejection of institutional norms, her assertion of

independence, and her ultimate escape—embodies the liberal feminist ideals championed by Mary Wollstonecraft, particularly the demand for rational education and gender equality. These findings demonstrate how the film serves not only as a historical narrative but also as a powerful medium for feminist critique, reinforcing the continued relevance of Wollstonecraft's arguments in contemporary discussions on educational justice and gender emancipation.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions, *Enola Holmes* (2020) serves as a sharp critique of gender inequality in the Victorian era, particularly in the field of education. Through the lens of Mary Wollstonecraft, the film represents Enola's resistance to the patriarchal education system, the ways in which she opposes it, and how she ultimately discovers her true self. This is reflected in two main points, each consisting of six aspects discussed earlier. The patriarchal education system has been proven to limit women's access to education equal to that of men. The character of Enola becomes a symbol of resistance against patriarchal norms that restrict women's intellectual freedom. Additionally, the film reflects Mary Wollstonecraft's idea that women have the same right to education to develop their potential and independence. Beyond aligning with Wollstonecraft's principles, the analysis reveals how *Enola Holmes* (2020) recontextualizes feminist ideals for a modern audience emphasizing not only the importance of rational education for women but also how media today continues to serve as a platform for reasserting those ideals in the face of ongoing gender bias. In doing so, the film revitalizes classical feminist thought in a contemporary framework, making Wollstonecraft's advocacy for women's intellectual liberation ever more relevant. Thus, *Enola Holmes* (2020) stands out as a powerful portrayal of resistance against an oppressive system and serves as a medium for raising public awareness about the importance of equal education that provides equal opportunities for every individual, regardless of gender. This study invites further research on how popular media reinterprets foundational feminist theories and how such representations contribute to the evolving discourse on gender equality in education and beyond.

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