Research Paper

Abused Men: Intimate Partner Violence in Anglo-American Literature

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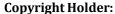
Abstract

Abuse is fair to no one—not even men. While the literature often highlights abuse against women, this study focused on abused men and the feminist defense in William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily", Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Prologue", and Edgar Allan Poe's selected poems. Specifically, this addresses the types of abuse the male characters receive from their female counterparts, the impacts of the abuse on the male victims in the story, and how women justified such abuse. Using content and discourse analysis, characters, themes, and textual evidence (narrative structure, character interactions, and language) in the mentioned literary works were analyzed from the perspectives of masculinity studies and critical feminist theory. Key findings indicated that male characters experienced physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic torture, which caused them to develop psychological trauma and even led to their death. Although these supported the narrative that women were equally capable of abusing men, the feminist point of view framed their actions as self-defense and coping mechanisms for personal trauma. This research contributes to a more critical understanding of gender-based violence and challenges the limitations of legal frameworks that often overlook male victimhood. Further, this can help craft inclusive and effective programs and support services catering to marginalized male victims. This method is also useful for literary scholars interested in gender-based abuse in literature and increases students' awareness of gender roles—encouraging them to develop impartial views on intimate partner violence (IPV) scenarios.

Keywords: *Abused Men, Anglo-American, William Faulkner, Geoffrey Chaucer, Edgar Allan Poe*

INTRODUCTION

William Faulkner, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Edgar Allan Poe—Nobel laureate (Millgate, 1971), celebrated English writer (Lumiansky, 2018), and master of the macabre (Cestre et al., 2019)—these authors are not only known for their unconventional take on the psychological aspect of life and their illustration of power dynamics and gender roles, particularly in the context of intimate relationships. While their works are disparate in time and genre, a common thread emerges: the subversion of traditional gender expectations. "A Rose for Emily" by Faulkner, "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" by Chaucer, and Poe's short stories present female characters who defy the passive, submissive stereotype, wielding power through autonomy and agency. However, their capacity to dominate and control the opposite sex is often overshadowed by society's stereotypical views of men as figures of authority. Concerning this, prevalent narratives on domestic abuse often center on female victims, overlooking the possibility of male victimhood at the hands of female perpetrators.

According to Yaegar (2020), masculinity studies and the men's movement have evolved along two distinct and frequently conflicting trajectories. Although both scholars argue that masculinity is a separate phenomenon to be studied in its own right, they have emerged in quite different political arenas. Masculinity studies grew out of feminist theory and were at the same time, a reaction to the men's movement, a political effort that began in the 1980s to "reclaim"

masculinity from the supposedly emasculating influences of industrial society, feminism, and consumer culture. Although highly diverse, a commonality runs through its various manifestations: the exploration of the nature of masculinity. Conversely, according to Hoskin and Blair (2021), critical femininity challenges the simplistic view of femininity as solely linked to womanhood. Existing research often portrays femininity as a unidimensional, stereotyped construct, neglecting its diverse expressions and the pressure to conform to patriarchal norms. Instead, a critical femininity approach grounded in critical theory examines how intersecting cultural and political norms shape patriarchal femininity and impact various lives. It emphasizes the need to investigate those affected by these norms and the processes. In furtherance, Dahl and Sunden (2018) cited that critical femininity goes beyond reductionist approaches that "always and exclusively associate femininity with the oppression, subordination, sexualization, and objectification of women" (Hoskin & Blair, 2021).

Shehabat et al. (2022) argued that Poe experiences an internal conflict stemming from the tension between his psychological trauma and his ego-driven sense of masculinity. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, the researchers discovered that the narrator's tendency toward domestic violence is a manifestation of his inability to overcome this psychological struggle. Further, this is intensified by intrinsic and extrinsic factors outside the limits of alcoholism and mental disorders. They concluded that Poe's "ambiguous yet risky mature masculine identity" prompted him to commit such heinous acts without remorse. Alshiban (2019) discussed the correlation between animal abuse and violence against humans, particularly women and children. He also mentioned that, in line with the feminist view, the murder of the black cat and animal abuse by men, in general, are illustrations of how patriarchy encourages the use of violence by dominant men to subjugate those deemed less powerful, including other animals that are stand-ins for women. Harris (2021) further elaborated on the concept of Felawe Masculinity, asserting that men's tendency to trivialize violence through vulgar language and sexually aggressive humor contributes to the reinforcement of rape culture and the normalization of aggression toward women, a dynamic she identifies within Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Building on the growing scholarly interest in historical representations of gender-based violence, Belda-Medina (2005) examined the prevalence of gender violence in medieval England, where women are classified as either virtuous (Virgin Mary) or sinful (Biblical Eve), and subjected to both physical and psychological abuse. Moreover, the Miller's Tale, for example, featured the objectification of women. As rape is often seen as "a test of masculinity", Belda-Medina, (2005) noted that male aggression is rarely condemned, and female voices are silenced, showcasing the disparity of power among men and women at that time.

On the other hand, He and Tang (2016) explored five perspectives, mainly social background, manifesting forms of violence, criminal behaviors, violence types, and pursuits of protagonists in their study titled A Comparative Analysis of Violence in A Rose for Emily and Lord of the Flies. Further, the researchers mentioned how women's violence is perfectly depicted in A Rose for Emily. However, despite Emily's clear abusive tendencies, her violent nature is attributed to the suppressive patriarchy she experienced from her father, which also equated her as a victim of abuse.

While previous articles have discussed the themes of abuse in the literature, it is crucial to mention that this research highlights the narrative of men abusing women. Although studies on the abuse of women have been abundant, there has been a significant gap in terms of the representation of men as victims and subjects of oppression. Notably, the current study does not nullify the existence of abuse toward women but sheds light on the reality that men are also abused.

This research challenges the prevalent focus on female victims of domestic violence by examining the under-explored theme of male abuse in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," Chaucer's

"The Wife of Bath's Prologue," and selected poems by Poe. Specifically, this study aims to address the following questions:

1. What types of abuse do the male characters experience at the hands of their female counterparts,
2. What are the impacts of this abuse on the male victims within the narratives
3. How do the female characters justify or rationalize this abuse?

This study will analyze character and thematic elements to shed light on the nature of the abuse experienced by male characters, its impact, and the justifications offered by their female counterparts. This study proceeds in two phases. First, investigating the depiction of male abuse through the lens of masculinity theory; second, evaluating the presentation and rationalization of abuse from a feminist perspective, incorporating critical femininity theory. By addressing the types of abuse experienced, their consequences, and the justifications used, this research aims to contribute to a more critical understanding of gender-based violence. It challenges the limitations of legal frameworks that often overlook male victimhood. This can help craft inclusive and effective programs and support services catering to marginalized male victims. Furthermore, it is useful for literary scholars interested in gender-based abuse in literature. For teachers, this study increases students' awareness of gender roles and encourages them to develop impartial views on intimate partner violence (IPV) scenarios.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Abused Men and Masculinity

Men, who are often disbelieved by society, are now the focus of violence, often resulting in shame, denial, and helplessness, leading to the creation and contribution of adverse outcomes (Othilla et al., 2021). In line with this, men's vulnerability arises from different types of abuse perpetrated by women, challenging their sense of masculinity due to the power dynamics and direct or indirect mistreatment from their female partners (Medzani, 2019). Furthermore, masculinity is frequently defined as socially constructed expectations of suitable male actions, attitudes, expressions, and social interaction patterns in a particular society or subculture.

Isley (1996) stated that men carry high amounts of emotional stress and usually hide or remain untouched due to their past emotional difficulties as a means to close any discomfort and bad experiences, resulting in an imbalance of emotion that carries trauma or difficulty in managing relationships. In addition, due to their emotional control and self-reliance, men experience higher depression severity and less help-seeking, leading to a higher chance of reinforcing stigma and less depression diagnosis compared to women (Swetlitz et al., 2024). Moreover, the American Psychological Association stated that men are 3.5 times more likely to commit suicide than women, and their life expectancy is 4.9 years less than that of women.

Abuse is a set of actions intended to establish or maintain power and control over a partner, with physical violence being one example (loveisrespect.org, 2020). In relation to that statement, violence is defined as the act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of causing physical injury or pain to another person. Considering this, physical abuse is intentional bodily injury that includes slapping, pinching, choking, kicking, shoving, or inappropriately using drugs or physical restraints (Wa.gov, 2024). Abusive situations are reinforced by coercive behaviors and power imbalance toward intimate partners as a result of psychological trauma, an emotional interference that maintains fear and disclosure that silences the victimization of men (Nezhunshi, et al., 2022). In addition, psychological abuse, often called emotional abuse, is a form of abuse characterized by a person subjecting or exposing another person to behavior that may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety, chronic depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. It

is often associated with situations of power imbalance in abusive relationships and may include bullying, gaslighting, and abuse (National Domestic Violence Hotline, 2023).

Women and Femininity

According to McCaslin (2024), women from a feminist perspective exhibit high levels of self-empowerment through their basic ideas of feminist sex, as it serves as a way of justification for them to identify problems and process certain experiences through the use of feminism as an emotional tool for critiquing partners. With this statement in mind, the concept of femininity for women is heavily critiqued in society and was forced to change to establish a mould and embrace various advancements that changed what it means to be a "woman" within women's perspective to differentiate male ideals that challenge the female norm (Brownmiller, 1986). In addition, Gorsky (1992) stated that women and their experiences of gender are influenced by cultural attitudes, specifically literature that is highlighted by men, in which they struggle to define and find their own literary and political voice individually. Moreover, Jones (2020) argued that gender differences between men and women must be understood not in contrast to men but more in their historical terms and the subjected oppression of women within a male-dominated society, as the belief of what is to be deemed as "women" raises literary and political concerns. In this regard, women are lower in status compared to men due to the differences in their characteristics. Despite the influence of masculine and feminine traits, they have changed and improved in concept to society's perspective toward ongoing trends, media, or the norm (Fatimah et al., 2019).

Abuse in Literature

Abuse depicted in media, specifically literature, has gathered interest toward the feminist wave, and this interest results in an extension of perspectives of intimate partner abuse that emphasizes individual couple dynamics and victim-blaming within the literature, mirroring reality (Garrett, 2023). With this statement, Murray (2019) stated that literary representations of abuse related to gender create a perspective that cultivates gender violence as a norm rather than an aberration within a selected environment. With this statement, several studies have differentiated the idea of abuse that comes from men or women within the literature. Harris (2021) argued that men in same-sex contexts use obscenity to denigrate women and perpetuate rape culture, which argues that this paradigm often leads to men having excessive sex and ignoring women's nonconsent that creates a strong opinion and biased perspective toward men within the literature of Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

However, Belda-Medina (2005) states that the involvement of religious tradition through literature categorizes women into martyrs and sinners, with the martyr being a subordinated version of the Virgin Mary and the sinner being an evil representation of Biblical Eve, which creates a strong perspective toward gender violence, either physically or physiologically within Chaucer's Canterbury Tales due to the denouncement of men's excesses and silence of female perspectives. Additionally, according to kelseyreviewsstuff (2020), Chaucer's Canterbury Tales depict violence against women within the stories, reflecting his perspective through written literature and medieval society's perception of females, which shows the submissive nature of women toward men that contributes to an environment that fosters assault on women. Furthermore, Al-Abdulrazaq et al. (2024) stated that within Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Wife of Bathe's Prologue and Tale", women by gender are challenged within a patriarchal society that constantly opposes female identity, which is subjected to many forms of masculine to dominant environments by men.

Synthesis

Men are now the new focus of violence (Othilla et al., 2021). Medzani (2019) highlighted that

through abuse, the vulnerability of men's masculinity was situated upon a shift of power dynamics and social expectations of women using violence toward men. Isley (1996) emphasized that men carry high amounts of emotional stress, that that makes them difficult to maintain relationships. Concerning this statement, men are most likely to experience depression and are more likely to engage in suicidal acts (Swetlitz, et al., 2024).

According to loveisrespect.org (2020), abuse is an act of establishing or maintaining power through violence over a partner. With violence at hand, Cook (2009) and Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (2024) stated that physical abuse through violence toward another person is an action that causes intentional bodily injury. However, Nezhunshi et al. (2022) and National Domestic Violence Hotline (2023) emphasized the idea that through violence, psychological trauma, and emotional interference may be cultivated in abusive situations that reinforce coercive behaviors and power imbalance, fostering bullying, gaslighting, and abuse, often leading to power imbalances.

McCaslin (2024) and Brownmiller (1986) argued that feminist women demonstrate self-empowering behaviour through their feminist views on gender, identifying problems and processing experiences that serve feminism as an emotional tool for critiquing partners and challenging male ideals, as it reflects societal changes and advancements in women's perspectives. In relation to this, Gorsky (1992) believed that women are shaped by a culture dominated by men, which results in a deep concern for women's identity. Moreover, Fatimah et al. (2019) believed that women's femininity and men's masculinity are derived from societal forces in which women struggle for individual changes within a male-dominated environment.

Numerous researchers have emphasized the idea of abuse within the literature. Garrett, R. (2023) stated that abuse in media, specifically literature, was created as a means to emphasize individual couple dynamics and victim-blaming. In addition, Murray (2019) stated that the representation of abuse within literature serves as a foundation for the aberration of gender violence. However, Harris (2021), Belda-Medina (2005), and kelseyreviewsstuff, (2020) emphasized and argued that the idea of abuse in literature heavily views men as generally the perpetrators of violence, which often results in the belief and depiction that men are the foundation of said violence rather than women within Geoffrey Chaucer's literature. On the other hand, Al-Abdulrazaq et al. (2024) noted that gender within Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" is challenged due to societal forces as a subject of male-dominated environments.

The selected studies above provide a substantial amount of information regarding the idea of men and women's abuse, in which men being abused in literature are severely lacking compared to women. Given the previous related studies presented, this study aims to present a new perspective addressing the lack of thorough studies on the existing idea of abuse in literature, specifically, abused men in literature.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design
This study adopted a qualitative research approach focused on content and discourse analysis. Instead of relying on quantitative measures, the researchers emphasize an analysis with a thorough, methodologically controlled examination of texts within their communication context. This approach adheres to content bioanalytical principles and systematic models, avoiding superficial quantification. This approach investigated the occurrence and significance of specific words or phrases across various texts (The Raven, Wife of Bathe's Tale, A Rose for Emily, To Helen, Annabel Lee), allowing researchers to infer the underlying philosophical assumptions of the writer, the intended audience and the cultural and temporal context of the literature included in the study. A study by Ali (2023) utilized content analysis by examining language as a social behaviour and

examining the rhetorical and linguistic aspects that can be expressed through language. The research by Straus, (1988) also uses the same design by analyzing the morals, rhetorical forms, and tone present in the text. The research article by Alsahafi (2020) uses discourse analysis as well by using two narrative analysis frameworks focusing on the macrostructure and microstructure aspects of the story. The studies similarly analyzed narrative tone, focusing on how language constructs meaning, reflects social behaviour and reveals rhetorical and narrative structures.

The researchers also used theories of masculine and critical femininity to further examine the characters in the stories. The purpose of gender studies scholarship is to demonstrate the negative impact of patriarchy on both men and women and to emphasize the masculinity of hegemonic programs through the analysis of male protagonists. Hoskin and Blair (2021) stated that Critical feminism examines feminism through a multidimensional framework, moving beyond feminism as a patriarchal tool and examining the historical foundations, ideologies, and positions of feminism, especially the things that affect women. With these frameworks, the researchers investigated how cultural ideals of masculinity affect male character conduct and psychological challenges, particularly in abusive situations. They investigated power dynamics in gendered interactions, revealing historical narratives and ideological assumptions, as well as how literature may question or perpetuate these norms.

Research Instrument

The BetterEvaluation (2022) introduced a framework matrix as an approach to QDA that emphasizes case- and theme-based data visualization, summary, and synthesis. The proposed method minimizes data volume while maintaining direct access to the primary data. The process is structured and allows for collaboration among individuals or teams. The framework matrix effectively helped the researchers organize the data gathered from the short stories and poems. The researchers have used three columns in each phase. In Table 1, column 1 is labelled with characters (men), column 2 is labelled with the abuse received by the characters, and column 3 is labelled with the feminist defence. In Table 2, column 1 is labelled with the story, column 2 is labelled with the abuse against men, and column 3 is labelled with how this abuse is rationalized by feminists. In Table 3, column 1 is labelled with the poems, column 2 is labelled with the persona's view about women, and column 3 is labelled with the feminist's perspective toward the poem.

Corpus of study

The primary source of data for this study is derived from the literary works of William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily", Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale", and Edgar Allan Poe's selected poems. The researcher conducted a close textual analysis of these works, focusing specifically on phrases, sentences, words, dialogues, descriptions, and quotations. These excerpts were selected based on their thematic relevance to the study's focus on the representation of abused men in literature. The selection process involved a thorough reading and annotation of the texts to identify passages explicitly or implicitly depicting male characters experiencing psychological, emotional, or social forms of abuse. The criteria for selection included the presence of power dynamics, gender role reversals, emotional manipulation, and societal expectations that contribute to male vulnerability or victimization. Each excerpt was assessed for its contribution to the overarching themes of the study, ensuring that the chosen passages offered substantial insight into the literary portrayal of abused men across different historical and cultural contexts.

Data Gathering Procedure

(1) A close reading of the selected stories was undertaken, with repeated readings to grasp

the narrative structure, main storyline, character development and implications of the text. (2) The data was extracted from the novel's narration, character traits, dialogues, and actions. (3) Lastly, a systematic classification of the collected data was conducted to identify recurring themes, patterns and portrayal of the characters. The researchers used masculine and critical femininity theory to depict and evaluate how the theme of abuse is presented and rationalized from the perspective of feminists.

Data Explicitation

The researchers examined the available data using Bingham's (2023) five-stage framework for qualitative data analysis. First, they organized the data and applied attribute coding to facilitate the data collection and analysis process. Next, they categorized topic codes aligned with the study's purpose and research questions. Then, the researchers comprehensively understood the data to uncover emerging ideas. After that, the data is interpreted to identify patterns, themes, and key statements. Finally, by contextualizing the findings and integrating the literature and theories (masculine and critical femininity) relevant to the poems and stories, the researchers could organize, explain, and carry out a systematic and transparent qualitative data analysis. Furthermore, the process associates and supplements the specific methodology used in the article (content analysis)—creating an audit trail to assure the study's dependability and reliability and maintaining the focus on organizational practices, relevant data, and coding schemes necessary for findings and discussion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Phase 1 explains the abuse each character receives from a woman and how she (the feminist) defends such abuse.

Table 1. Abused Men

Characters (Men)	Abused Received	Feminist's Defense
Homer Baron	Murdered	Men murder more women than women murder men
1st to 3rd Old Husband	Emotional Torment/Married them because of their wealth	Men use their wealth to lure women.
4th Young Husband	He made his life a purgatory	Because he was with a mistress
5th Favorite Husband	He was given a whack.	He had hit her first

Homer Barron, who was believed to be Ms. Grierson's suitor, eventually realized he was not truly interested in her. In response, she murdered him and concealed his body inside her room, where it remained undiscovered for thirty years. In Homer Barron's case, he is an outsider, a labourer from the North, who does not fit the typical romantic ideal of a Southern gentleman who is expected to marry a woman of Emily's class. He had failed to adhere to the masculine ideals shaped by society: power, protection, and security. As a potential suitor, Homer is both a hope and a rejection to Emily. However, this is an irony to complain about in the eyes of women, for they will argue that Ms Grierson killed one person out of love, but men kill women on a daily basis for menial reasons. The murder, as Emily's way of preserving her idealized vision of love, highlights her control of her own world, where her agency, at that time, was severely restricted.

As part of the broader exploration of gender and power. The Wife of Bath illustrates a woman's strategic use of marriage for personal gain. She married her first three husbands mainly for their wealth, noting that they were old while she was still young and flirtatious. When confronted, she used clever arguments to avoid conflict and ensure she always maintained control in the relationship. All three of her first husbands died before she had a fourth husband. The first

three suffered depression and emotional torture from their marriage. However, the Wife of Bath, who was a feminist herself, justified her marriage with them. For her, the only happy marriage is when the wives rule the husbands. Books about marriage are written by monks who have not experienced marriage. She also argues that men lure women using their wealth, defending that there were old and rich biblical characters who had countless wives.

The Wife of Bath's fourth husband was the first among her spouses who was younger than she was. By the time of their marriage, she was older, while he was youthful and physically attractive. Despite being married, she continued to socialize and engage with other men. Eventually, her husband also took a mistress. In response, the Wife of Bath stated that once she discovered his infidelity, she made his life exceedingly difficult, making it feel like purgatory until his death. Note that one of the reasons why the fourth Husband cheated was because it was a response to his wife's cheating on her own. He had already been fed up with hearing stories about his wife. Most likely, he had already experienced different emotional turmoils. However, the Wife of Bath argues that she did it (made his life purgatory) because he has a mistress, a very ironic justification, but still under her mantra that marriage is only good when the wife rules the Husband.

The fifth Husband was an academic and deeply engrossed in literature, especially books about male empowerment or those against feminist views. Every night, he reads these books before he sleeps, and she has endured hearing stuff that contradicts her more progressive, self-empowered worldview. From a feminist standpoint, grabbing the book and throwing it to the fireplace was a reclamation of her place and a rejection of patriarchal ideology. She refuted the ideology of reinforcing of intellectual control and dominance in the relationship. The fifth Husband hit her on the ear in response to her sudden behavior. While pretentiously curling with pain, her Husband approached apologetically, but she suddenly whacked him on his head, and his head fell near the fireplace. In the wife's defence, she believed it was the only way to straighten up her Husband, and following the fact that he hit her first, she was threatened by his masculine entitlement.

Each narrative depicts the male characters as victims of abuse by the primary female characters. While one male character is slain, others face emotional torture. The women's actions, while hurtful, may be motivated by their own experiences of victimization, dissatisfaction, or a desperate desire to regain power in a patriarchal culture that frequently limits their agency. Similarly, the suffering of male victims may illustrate the repercussions of disregarding men's vulnerabilities in a society that has traditionally expected them to be stoic and immune to damage. While it is well-documented and obvious that women are commonly abused—both in real life and in literature—it is critical to recognize that men can also be abused, whether physically, emotionally, or psychologically.

Phase 2 explains how the theme portrays abused men and how feminists have rationalized the abuse.

Table 2. Men Abused in Themes

Story	Abuse Against Men	Rationalized by Feminists
A Rose for Emily	Killing a man if he does not love you	Women are also killed by men.
The Wife of Bathe's Prologue	Used men to satisfy her belief in marriage.	Men in history have done the same

"A Rose for Emily" is a short story by William Faulkner that exemplifies the Southern Gothic genre. One of the story's central themes is the extremity of love, leading to punishment for a man's refusal to reciprocate affection. The story portrays how a woman of prominent stature orchestrates the murder of an innocent man because he does not love her back. The story does not excuse murder, but it often leaves a big question of why society justifies male violence as an act of love and heartbreak, yet expresses moral indignation when a woman manifests a parallel reaction. However,

the feminist side justifies her work as normal, considering that in literature and history, women have long been victims of male possessiveness. Men kill more women than women kill men. From a feminist lens, the woman's act serves as a symbolic reversal of patriarchal violence—echoing how, historically, men have punished women for rejecting them.

The Wife of Bath announces that she is an authority over marriage because of her experience, having had five husbands. She does not follow Jesus' example of only marrying once, nor does she heed his reproach to the woman at the well with five husbands. Instead, the Wife of Bath interprets Scripture in her own way. She preferred to go forth and multiply, defending her position by pointing to King Solomon, who had many wives, among other Biblical figures who often married.

The Wife of Bath challenges anyone to prove that God commanded virginity. Although it is great for some people, she says, it is not for her. God made sexual organs for both function and pleasure, she claims, and she does not envy any maiden her virginity. The Wife of Bath uses her sexual power to control her five husbands. She believed that marriage is good when the wife controls the husband. All of her husbands were under her whims, and her principle of a perfect marriage is that the wife is on top. For the wife, it is on equal footing with men when she emasculates her husbands because men in history also undermined their female partners.

Both stories depict women as perpetrators of cruelty against males. However, these findings show that women's violent behavior may be a response to existing societal and relational inequities. The story argues that in such cases, women are not fundamentally abusive but rather exercise authority in situations in which they may feel disempowered or underappreciated. This display of dominance is frequently the result of learned behavior, mimicking the patterns of control and authority they have witnessed or experienced in their male counterparts or other figures of influence.

In many situations, this dynamic can be traced back to cultural standards that favor male authority, resulting in relationships in which women believe that their views are muted or dismissed. As a result, when women find themselves in positions of authority, whether temporary or permanent, they may unwittingly repeat the same behaviors of dominance and control that have historically oppressed them.

Table 3.

Poem	Persona's View	Feminist's Perspective
The Raven	Source of Pain	Man is the initial source of pain in the human body
Annabel Lee (October 9, 1849)	Women are people who are incarcerated to men's desires.	A woman should be left alone
To Helen	Symbols of classical beauty	Beauty alone is considered weak

"The Raven" can be described as either a grotesque narrative poem or a darkly romantic classic. It references heaven, hell, and the devil. The poem is written in the first person from the perspective of an unnamed man, who could refer to Edgar Allan Poe himself or a make-believe character. The lonely man mourns his dead lover, Lenore. The Persona is portrayed as a person aching for pain in the memory of his dead lover. It is interesting to see that a man at the time the poem was written (January 29, 1845) laments for his lover. The time of publication of the poem was seen as the height of the women's feminist movement, where more women felt suppressed and wronged. In the poem, however, the woman is seen as the source of pain and stress. The Persona humbles himself in defeat, expressing emotions that contrast sharply with the prevailing attitudes of his time. Women are not a source of pain but rather the receiver of pain. One may agree or disagree that the past and present society are dominantly patriarchal. Men dominate both the home

and the workplace, serving as the primary bearers of authority to which women are expected to submit. Men dominate both the home and the workplace, serving as the primary bearers of authority to which women are expected to submit.

It is accurate to state that the Persona is misleading the social construct of that time. The man is the initial source of pain because he is the authority in the house, and the woman is the owner of man. With that, the man is the trigger for pain. "Annabel Lee" talks about a persona who is madly and compassionately in love with a woman and bathes her memory near a sea. The poem follows Poe's recurrent theme: the death of a young, beautiful, and dearly loved woman. Despite her passing, the man remains deeply connected to Annabel Lee, visiting her tomb and believing their souls are forever intertwined. However, the poem only presents the man's perspective, leaving the voice of Annabel Lee unheard. This is what society dictates as a social norm. It is acceptable for a man to express his love to a woman, but it is not the norm for a woman to do so. Women's emotional experiences are diminished and deemed less significant. The poem only shows the man's side of romance but ignores that a woman can and may also express her love and compassion for a man. Such portrayal reflects the women's movement of the time publication, and, even at present, still struggles to motivate every society for women to get out of the prison of the cultural norms established a long time ago and be free to express their feelings, especially the declaration of love.

Edgar Allan Poe wrote "To Helen" in honour of Jane Stanard, the mother of a childhood friend who had died recently and with whom he was very close. The use of the name Helen instead of Jane in the poem is most likely Poe's way of connecting Stanard to the famous Helen of Troy. One of Poe's most famous poems, To Helen, celebrates the nurturing power of women. Its lines, "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome", have been referred to as one of Poe's finest and most famous lines. In the poem, Helen is considered the most physically adored woman of his time, comparable to a beautiful goddess. Her face is talked about in all lands that hear her name; no human is like her. In the poem, Helen's or a woman's beauty is celebrated and adored. All men greatly appreciate this scenario. However, from the feminist perspective, is beauty all there? Beauty is merely a façade, not the essence of a woman. Beauty alone is like a flower unprotected by the wind. A woman should not be seen only by beauty but also by other attributes like intelligence, courage, and long-suffering. Beauty alone may be seen as weak or "feminine."

Notably, the Persona perpetuates patriarchal conceptions of control by claiming ownership of women, which clearly violates feminist principles of autonomy and equality. Feminism contends that neither gender should "own" the other, instead advocating for relationships based on mutual respect and agency. By presenting women as goods, the Persona reduces them to objects rather than acknowledging them as autonomous beings with their own voices, choices, and strengths. Furthermore, the Persona overemphasizes women's physical beauty while overlooking other important characteristics, such as intelligence, perseverance, creativity, and emotional depth.

Considering the feminist defense for each poem, it is equally important to mention that Lenore, Annabel Lee, and Helen, despite being characters described from the men's point of view, are evidently capable of manipulating the emotions of their lovers—even in death (in the case of The Raven and Annabel Lee). Moreover, women can influence men to think irrationally. Helen is widely known as "the face who launched a thousand ships." Her ability to allure men with her beauty, ultimately led to the Trojan War and the fall of Troy. These implied that women, too, have power over men and are capable of using this power, whether consciously or unconsciously, to lead men to their demise. This representation appears to act as a manner of gender equality, subtly altering the narrative away from the notion that men are entirely responsible for pain and conflict. By portraying women as both capable and complicit in causing harm, the Persona seeks a sense of balance in allocating blame.

CONCLUSIONS

Through masculinity and critical feminist theory, this research challenged the traditional narrative of women as sole victims and highlighted the complex power dynamics in which women can also be abusers. Building on these insights, this study demonstrated that women's actions as perpetrators of abuse were justified through personal trauma and feminist vindication. Meanwhile, the male characters' experiences expose the psychological and physical consequences due to the dismissal of their emotions. This study, dealing with abused men, reveals how literature reflects the social constructions of gender, thus providing a more thorough understanding of how gender roles, stereotypes, and societal expectations impact both genders, especially in fields where men are frequently marginalized and stigmatized. Other existing scholars who examined themes of abuse in literature focusing on women echoed the patterns observed in the collected data, which may be used as references for future researchers.

Ultimately, acknowledging male vulnerability and the diverse ways abuse can manifest in both male and female genders revealed a meaningful and inclusive understanding of intimate partner violence, both in literary and real-world debates on gender and abuse. The researchers tended to look at more angles on both the masculine and feminist perspectives and to analyze other themes in the texts that may also provide a contradiction to the feminist perspective.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study provides an unconventional perspective on male abuse, as evident in selected literary texts, and how the lens of feminism has defended and rationalized such behavior. However, concepts such as trauma and emotional distress were not thoroughly examined. The absence of psychologically related theories limits the depth of insights related to the mental and emotional states of both victims and oppressors in the texts. Future studies can deepen the understanding of the characters' behaviors and emotional complexity by integrating established psychological theories. In this manner, to build upon existing knowledge, further research relevant to the richer exploration of characters' psychological ramifications is recommended.

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