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WOMEN'S OPPRESSION IN CAROL LYNCH WILLIAMS' *THE CHOSEN ONE*

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Abstract

Woman, like man, is a sociable human, whose existence should be equal to man. However, there is something wrong in viewing woman. This study aims to analyze the forms of women's oppression portrayed in Carol Lynch Williams' novel *The Chosen One*. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method, using the novel as the primary data source. The data are collected through close reading and documentation by identifying dialogues, narration, and events that reflect women's oppression. The analysis is conducted by applying feminist literary criticism to explore how patriarchal values, religious authority, and traditional gender roles influence women's lives and limit their freedom. The result show the woman undergoes oppression by man's domination represented by the prophet and his apostles that nobody cannot get rid of their policy. Besides, the study also shows her resistance against the oppression that comes into fruitful such as escaping from the Compound and getting help from the police officer outside the Compound.

Keywords: *feminism, oppression, resistance*

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Introduction

Man and woman are sociable creature whose existence are in need of each other. In reality, there are differences in viewing



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woman. Culturally woman is marginalized (Saguy et al., 2021), no liberty for expression, no choice of life, no schooling as well as equality at work (Hardiyanti, 2024), no equality sexually (Lovibond, 2015), and no justice in society (Brodsky, 2022). In other words, woman experiences objectification then subject to hostility, attack, as well as eradication (Cruz, 2024).

Women's pressure under men's domination is always an up to date study that becomes authors' interest. Patriarchal ideology produces discrimination towards women in a society in which hetero normative is widely spread. Accordingly, women try to have their rights back (Wardhani, et. al. 2020). The discrimination undergone by women is the limited access to work, education, and political practices, and the total obedience to husband (Salsabila, et. al. 2023). In other words, women are kept silent as well as eliminated because of patriarchal system (Brias, 2020). The marginalized race then tends to conduct resistance against the dominant supremacy (Handayani, et al. 2025) i.e. patriarchal power (Gowthami, 2017) as a result of the women's oppression that can happen in the small surrounding to the wider one (Putri, et. al, 2023).

One of the novels discusses about women's oppression is *the Chosen One*, by Carol Lynch Williams. The novel talks about an underage girl who has to take a matrimony arranged to her. She will be harshly punished unless she accepts the marital arrangement. As long as it deals with oppression, the researcher refers to feminism as it can break up the females' oppression (Suwastini, et. al. 2021).

Feminism is then very important to raise for woman (Benzie, 2024) because a woman has something extremely unique to contribute to the entire awareness of society, whose activity is very significant both as individuality, as collectivity and as a class (Brooke, 2020). Further, feminism comes to the development into the area of religion with its ritual features (Irshai, 2024), into national critique, imperialism, as well as fascism (Carrol, 2024), into economy (Michaeli, 2021, also Wallace, 2024, Cameron, 2023), into female's body (Heaney, 2024, also Malson, 2024), into societal as well as politics (Misero, 2022), referring to the gender difference (Oksala, 2024, also Milstein, 2024), to review the rules of patriarchy of their humility (Nelson, 2024), to woman marginalization as well as oppression (Abdullah, 2025), to authority and dependency (Oeur, 2023), to vocation (Clark, 2024), and to class struggle (Andeweg, 2024). Thus, through men's power towards women in any kind of field, women are oppressed. They then resist against the oppression. How oppression towards women and the women's resistance against the oppression are depicted are the main focus of this study.

Several research has focused on woman's discrimination in the novel. Firstly, Fanani et. al. (2024) studied women's discrimination in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In the study, women are marginalized as well as oppressed known from the method the researcher uses, namely, descriptive and dramatic method. Secondly, the researcher refers to Febrianti et. al (2019) with the study on African-American Female's struggle in Shatterlys' *Hidden Figures*. Using radical feminism, the study finds that the main

character undergoes discrimination. Lastly, the researcher refers to Wardani et. al. (2022) with their study on female's oppression in R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones*. Using Stuart Hall's representation theory, the study finds that the female main character is oppressed through marginalization, powerlessness, violence, and exploitation.

This study explores forced marriage not simply as a violation of women's rights but as a manifestation of systemic oppression that deprives women of autonomy over their bodies, relationships, and future. Based on this elaboration, this study aims to analyze the forms of women's oppression portrayed in Carol Lynch Williams' novel *The Chosen One*.

Research Methods

Design

Specifically, this study applied feminist literary criticism to examine the representation of women's oppression in Carol Lynch Williams' *The Chosen One*. The analysis focused on how patriarchal ideology, social rules, religious authority, and gender-based power relations position women in subordinate roles. The study also examined the forms of oppression experienced by the female characters, particularly Kyra, as the main character. Through close reading and interpretation of the novel, the researcher identifies relevant textual evidence and interprets it according to feminist concepts of women's oppression. Close reading was of use in this study insofar as this study refers to literary analysis. By close reading, the researcher had to comprehend the whole text (Pickering, 2019). Further, close reading focused on the text itself instead of things beyond the text, such as the life of the author, the place where the author lived, as well as his/her history. As a novel contains description and dialogue of the characters, consequently, the researcher also used descriptive and dramatic methods to analyze oppression towards women and the women's resistance against oppression through the author's description of her as well as her dialogue.

Data and Source of Data

Since this is a literary study, there are no participants involved; however, the data sources are from a novel. Carol Lynch Williams' *The Chosen One* became the researcher's source to analyze, as the study belonged to literary study. Accordingly, the data were qualitative in that the researcher quoted from the characters' dialogues and descriptions, with the analysis in the form of words instead of numbers, referring to the description of the women's oppression as well as the way they resisted the oppression. The data of this study consist of words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, descriptions, events, and narrative passages in *The Chosen One* that represent women's oppression. The data particularly concern situations in which

female characters experience limitations, discrimination, subordination, coercion, violence, or unequal treatment because of their gender. The primary source of data is Carol Lynch Williams' novel *The Chosen One*, originally published by St. Martin's Press in 2009. The novel centers on Kyra, a teenage girl living in an isolated polygamous community whose religious leader determines that she must marry her much older uncle. The researcher also uses relevant secondary sources, including books and scholarly articles concerning feminist literary criticism, women's oppression, patriarchy, gender discrimination, and previous studies of *The Chosen One*. These secondary sources are used to establish the theoretical framework and support the interpretation of the textual data.

Instrument

Since this study uses a qualitative literary research design, the researcher is the primary instrument. The researcher is responsible for reading, identifying, selecting, classifying, interpreting, and analyzing textual data related to women's oppression in *The Chosen One*. To facilitate systematic data collection, the researcher uses a data sheet or coding table containing several categories, such as data number, quotation, page number, context, form of women's oppression, and interpretation. The categories are developed based on the feminist theory used in the study. The researcher repeatedly reads the novel to ensure that relevant passages are identified accurately and interpreted within their narrative context. The use of a systematic data sheet also helps the researcher organize textual evidence and establish a clear relationship between the selected quotations and the research questions.

Data Collection

The data are collected through close reading and documentation. First, the researcher reads *The Chosen One* several times to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the plot, characters, setting, conflicts, and social conditions represented in the novel. Second, the researcher identifies passages that indicate women's oppression, including dialogue, narration, characterization, and events involving female characters. Third, the relevant passages are highlighted and recorded in a data sheet together with their page numbers and contexts. Fourth, the researcher classifies the collected data according to the forms of oppression identified through the feminist theoretical framework. Particular attention is given to Kyra's experiences with patriarchal authority, forced marriage, restrictions on women's choices, religious control, and other forms of gender-based domination. The process

is repeated through careful rereading to ensure that the selected data are relevant to the research questions. This method is suitable because the novel itself provides the primary textual evidence for examining Kyra's experience in a community characterized by polygamy and strong patriarchal authority.

Data Analysis

The data in this study are analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three main processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. First, data reduction is conducted by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and categorizing the textual data obtained from *The Chosen One*. The researcher reads the novel repeatedly and selects words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, and narrative passages that are relevant to women's oppression. The selected data are then coded and classified according to the forms of oppression experienced by the female characters, particularly Kyra. Irrelevant data are excluded from the analysis. Second, data display is conducted by organizing the reduced data into a systematic form, such as tables containing the data number, quotation, page number, context, category of oppression, and interpretation. The displayed data enable the researcher to identify patterns and relationships among the various forms of women's oppression represented in the novel. The researcher then interprets the textual evidence using the concepts of feminist literary criticism. Third, conclusion drawing and verification are conducted by identifying the main patterns and meanings emerging from the displayed data. The researcher draws conclusions concerning the forms of women's oppression represented in the novel and how patriarchal power contributes to those forms of oppression. The conclusions are continuously verified by comparing them with the original textual data, the research questions, and the theoretical framework to ensure that the interpretations are supported by sufficient and relevant evidence. Through these three processes, the analysis systematically reveals how women's oppression is represented in Carol Lynch Williams' *The Chosen One*.

Results and Discussion

Results

Kyra, the main character in *the Chosen One*, lives in the Compound with the prophet-whose position as the prophet from bloodline-as the leader with dictatorial leadership such as isolating his society from the outside one as the outside one is regarded as the Satan (Williams, 2009:122), burning books, magazines, novels and on and so forth from outside the Compound called the cleansing day (Williams, 2009:17), and forcefully marrying an

underage girl off to a man she does not love (Williams, 2009:59). The last one becomes Kyra's reason to resist against oppression because man has more privileges than woman.

Women's Oppression

Though the picture of the oppression refers to the marital system in the compound controlled by the prophet and his apostles, all of whom are men, however, the result is quite different from the aforesaid previous studies; in Fanani, et. al. the oppression of women in the form of marginalization, women are objectified through the oral conversation of Dorian Gray and Lord Henry Wotton. They are not oppressed physically like what has been undergone by Kyra in the study. For example, Lord Henry Wotton oppresses women through his words running as follows women are decorative sex (2024). Likewise, Katherine Johnson is oppressed because of her skin color (Febrianti, 2019), and Arya Stark, who likes to do the men's things such as riding horses, which is quite contradictory to the women's life in medieval society (Wardani, 2022).

Forced Marriage

In the study, an underage girl is forced to marry a man that she does not choose and to accept the polygamy. It happens to Kyra's family that Kyra's father marries three underage girls (under fifteen years old) named Sarah, Victoria, and Claire. Sarah is Kyra's own mother but she is not the first wife of Richard, Kyra's father (Williams, 2009:26).

The forceful matchmaking also happens to Kyra when her house is visited by the prophet by mentioning Kyra's name to marry Hyrum Carlson, an apostle, Kyra's own uncle, to be his seventh wife. The prophet's proposal has to be accepted because the prophet claims to have the revelation from God that Kyra has to marry him unless she will be sinful.

'I can't do that,' I say, sick just-like-that to my stomach. I stand, Laura holding my hand so tight my fingers have gone purple. When I look into her face, I see her eyes have filled with tears. I glance at Mother Sarah. She sits up straight in her chair. Father says, 'Prophet Childs, I think there must be a misunderstanding. This man is my brother' (Williams, 2009:25).

The quotation above shows that man has a true domination over woman that Kyra feels oppressed to marry an old man as well as her own uncle. Her sister, Laura and her mother Sarah cannot do anything against the prophet's policy that diminish women. Indeed, Kyra has her own future husband to marry, that is, her school mate that she loves, Joshua (Williams, 2009).

In spite of the fact above, Kyra rejects the matchmaking because the age difference is too far, Hyrum Carlson is almost sixty years older than Kyra, besides he is Kyra's own uncle. In Kyra's mind, he marries her because of mere passion and greediness (Williams, 2009). It is clear that in the Compound led by the prophet, woman is born to serve man regardless the woman is in disadvantageous side.

All in all, Kyra's oppression explained above such as being forced to marry a very old man as well as her own uncle turns out to get the novelty of the study compared to the previous studies above that refer to oral oppression, skin color, and women's habit.

Resistance against Oppression

Dorian Gray and Lord Henry Wotton merely talk about women humiliatingly without responses from the women like what Kyra has done against males, though Fanani's study refers to feminism approach. Accordingly, this previous study confirms the study of the novelty. Likewise, Arya Stark is told to be oppressed in the form of marginalization, powerlessness, and exploitation (Wardani, 2022) without resistance response like Kyra. It turns out that Katherine Johnson, too, undergoes oppression in the form of individual racism, discriminatory beliefs as well as behaviors under the hegemony of the whites without her resistance against the hegemony (Febrianti, 2019). Thus, the two previous studies also confirm the novelty of the study.

To fulfill the gap of the study, the study presents the main female character, Kyra, to resist against the domination of men represented by the prophet as well as his apostles. Kyra cannot stand her race, the female, controlled unfairly by man in the compound, therefore, she demands equality with man in that she needs to marry to whom she likes not just completely obedient to the man's wishes. Feminism then plays a very important role in Kyra's resistance. The way she resists against man's domination is that by asking for help for her dream. The researchers regard this as man's domination because the prophet whose position is from man's side thinks he has the revelation from the God about the odd marriage between uncle and his niece. Then, the first effort is that she asks her family for a help. Luckily, Kyra has supports from them, even her own father.

"I will treat you well, Sister Kyra," he says. "We will raise children unto the Lord." "I can't do that," I say, sick just-like-that to my stomach. I stand. Father says, "Prophet Childs, I think there must be a misunderstanding. This man is my brother" (Williams, 2009: 25).

The quotation above shows that Kyra's father minds the marriage of his daughter and his brother by advancing objection to the prophet though the prophet insists that the God told them to get married. In spite of the fact

that it is the way a girl resists against the domination that diminish a woman; the woman has no free choice to whom she will get married and the marriage breaks common law that uncle and niece should not be in under the same roof for matrimony.

The second effort is that she asks her boyfriend for help. Though Kyra and Joshua Johnson, her boyfriend, are in love with each other, however, Joshua still asks permission to the prophet about his marriage to Kyra as he does not want to get trouble by disobeying the prophet's order to marry Kyra off to her uncle. The researchers regard this as feminism conducted by Joshua as he supports the equality of woman and man demanded by Kyra. "He holds me by the shoulders. 'I've made an appointment to meet with Prophet Childs. To speak to him about us. To tell him I want to choose you. I want to marry you'" (Williams, 2009:101). It shows that how strong the power of the prophet in the compound over woman's life that Kyra's beloved boyfriend cannot go on marrying her without the prophet's permit. Yet, Kyra's effort through her boyfriend does not come to fruitful result.

The third effort is that she asks the owner as well as chief Mobile Library on Wheels, Patrick, who lives outside the compound, for help. Likewise, Patrick supports Kyra for the feminist struggle she conducts as Patrick is amazed of her story of the forced marriage to her own uncle. Patrick then asks Kyra to go away from the Compound, however, his effort to release Kyra from the terrible marriage is found and Kyra is sent back home with the result of her immediate marriage to her uncle the following day. "Watch her. The wedding will be held tomorrow" (Williams, 2009:189.) are uttered by the prophet in case of her running away again from the prophet's instruction. It seems that the prophet's authority is beyond the compound that people outside the compound can do nothing against the prophet's rule. Even Kyra's step Mother, Claire reminds Kyra not to escape again because it will put her and her family in danger. This again shows how a woman cannot defend herself to get her rights, even the society cannot advocate her to win her demands against the supreme of man represented by the prophet and his apostles.

The last effort is that she asks the police out of the Compound for help. Though Kyra's is kept in her father's house for the forced and immediate marriage to her uncle, still, her feminist does not stop there. She insists on running away from the Compound and calls 911 through the cellphone Patrick has given before. This time Kyra's effort comes into fruitful. A police officer, O'Neill, helps her and tells the hunters (from the God Squad) to give up chasing her (Williams, 2009).

In a nutshell, Kyra's feminist's ways of getting equality with men has supported from male's side such as from her father, her friend outside the compound as well as from the police officer. In other words, not all men inside and outside the compound agree with the force of the prophet and his apostles to marry off somebody to her own uncle.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that women's oppression in Carol Lynch Williams' *The Chosen One* is primarily manifested through patriarchal domination, particularly in the form of forced marriage and the restriction of women's freedom to determine their own future. Kyra, the main character, experiences gender-based oppression when Prophet Childs uses his religious authority to arrange her marriage to Hyrum Carlson, her uncle, who is approximately sixty years older than her. This situation illustrates how patriarchal ideology positions women as subordinate individuals whose lives and decisions are controlled by men. Kyra is not given the opportunity to choose her future husband, even though she already has a romantic relationship with Joshua. Her situation reflects the argument that patriarchal systems often maintain male superiority by limiting women's autonomy and reinforcing traditional gender roles. As discussed by Salsabila et al. (2023), women's subordination can be manifested through restrictions on their personal choices and the expectation that they must obey male authority. In Kyra's case, the oppression becomes more serious because the prophet legitimizes his decision by claiming to receive divine revelation. Consequently, religious authority becomes an instrument for maintaining patriarchal power rather than protecting women's rights and dignity.

Furthermore, the oppression experienced by Kyra demonstrates the relationship between religious authority and women's powerlessness within a patriarchal community. The Compound is governed by Prophet Childs and his male apostles, who determine the social rules and personal decisions of its members. Their authority is so dominant that even Kyra's parents cannot freely reject the prophet's decision. Although Kyra's father expresses his objection to the proposed marriage because Hyrum is his own brother, his resistance cannot immediately change the prophet's decision. This condition illustrates how patriarchal domination operates not only through direct physical control but also through ideological and institutional power. The prophet uses religious beliefs to construct the assumption that women's obedience to male decisions is a religious obligation. This finding is consistent with the feminist perspective discussed by Putri et al. (2023), which explains how patriarchal systems restrict women's freedom and reinforce gender inequality. Similarly, Wardani et al. (2022) identify

powerlessness, marginalization, and exploitation as forms of women's oppression. However, the oppression in *The Chosen One* has a particular characteristic because the male leader combines religious authority with control over marriage and family relationships. Therefore, the novel illustrates how religious interpretations manipulated by patriarchal leaders can become a means of legitimizing women's subordination.

Another important finding concerns Kyra's resistance against male domination. Although she initially experiences pressure and fear, she does not completely surrender to the prophet's decision. Her resistance is demonstrated through several attempts to seek assistance from people who can support her freedom. First, she receives support from her father, who questions the prophet's decision to arrange her marriage to his own brother. Second, she asks Joshua to speak with the prophet about their relationship and his intention to marry her. Although this attempt does not succeed because the prophet maintains his authority, Joshua's willingness to express his choice demonstrates that resistance against patriarchal domination can also involve male allies. Third, Kyra seeks assistance from Patrick, who encourages her to escape from the Compound. However, this attempt is unsuccessful because she is discovered and returned to her family. Finally, Kyra makes another attempt to escape and contacts the police by using the cellphone Patrick previously gave her. This effort becomes successful when Officer O'Neill helps her escape from the people pursuing her. These experiences demonstrate that women's resistance is not necessarily achieved through direct confrontation with male authority but can also be expressed through seeking support, challenging imposed decisions, and taking action to regain personal freedom. This finding supports Handayani et al. (2025), who emphasize women's resistance against discrimination and patriarchal power. Nevertheless, Kyra's experience adds an important dimension by showing that resistance may involve both individual determination and assistance from people who recognize women's rights.

The findings also highlight that feminism should not be understood exclusively as a movement conducted by women because men can also participate in challenging patriarchal domination. In *The Chosen One*, Kyra represents women's struggle to obtain autonomy and equality, while her father, Joshua, Patrick, and Officer O'Neill demonstrate different forms of support for her struggle. Their actions indicate that gender equality requires the involvement of individuals who are willing to challenge discriminatory practices, regardless of their gender. This perspective is important because patriarchal oppression is not merely an individual problem but a social condition that requires collective awareness and action. Unlike the previous

studies by Fanani et al. (2024), Febrianti et al. (2019), and Wardani et al. (2022), which discuss women's marginalization, discrimination, and powerlessness, the present study emphasizes the relationship between women's oppression and their resistance through the support of male allies. Therefore, the contribution of this study lies in illustrating how feminist resistance can emerge through cooperation between women and men in challenging unequal power relations. Ultimately, Kyra's struggle demonstrates that women should have the right to determine their own lives, particularly in making personal decisions such as marriage. Through the representation of Kyra's experiences, Williams encourages readers to question patriarchal practices that use religious and social authority to restrict women's freedom and reinforces the importance of equality, autonomy, and respect for women's rights.

Conclusion

From the results and discussion above, the researcher comes to the conclusion that feminist mind can be seen within men and women. The former refers to Kyra's father, friend, and the police officer who support Kyra's struggle to release herself from the terrible marriage. The latter refers to Kyra herself as a girl representing the girl in compound oppressed by the prophet and his apostles. In other words, the researcher states that feminism can be conducted by not only female but also male who supports female's demands for her equality with man.

Besides, the researcher is also in considerable hope that there are further researches on the same novel with different theory or different novel with the same theory. To the former, the other researchers can use the theory of characterization explaining how hard Kyra's struggle is. To the latter, the other researchers may use any novel dealing with women's demand for equality with men.

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