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## THE PORTRAYAL OF HEGEMONY AND PATRIARCHY IN LOUISE O' NEILL'S ONLY EVER YOURS

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**Abstract:** This study analyzes patriarchal hegemony portrayed in a dystopian world where young girls are hegemonized to fulfill patriarchal interests written by Louise O' Neill, *Only Ever Yours*. As a counter to utopian writing, dystopian literature emerged as a subgenre of speculative fiction. The objectives of this study are to elucidate the kinds of patriarchal structures and media operated in portraying patriarchal hegemony in the novel. This study employs Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory along with the concept of patriarchy by Sylvia Walby. This study is literary criticism as the researcher interprets and analyzes the literary work. It employs a sociological approach for the analysis and Sylvia Walby's six structures of patriarchy theory along with Gramsci's theory. The data are taken from the words, phrases, and sentences in *Only Ever Yours* published in 2015. The researcher took the data by identifying, classifying and analyzing the data by elucidating the data with the theories. The result of this study shows that there are three patriarchal structures portrayed in the novel which are patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal state, and patriarchal culture. On the other hand, patriarchal hegemony is portrayed through the medium of television.

**Keywords:** *gramsci, hegemony, patriarchy*

## INTRODUCTION

Globalization has marked the movement of revolution and development through a fascinating number of significant changes. This is much in line with Rifai (2013) who states that globalization has brought considerable impacts on various aspects of life such as economic, social, cultural, political, etc. These changes include the worldwide spread of computers, mobile phones, and the Internet for communication along with the advancements in transportation that have resulted in a significant reduction in the

expenses of delivering commodities by air, water, and land (Adesina, 2012). Such changes have indeed brought the efficiency of prosperous life experienced by society today.

However, apart from such changes and facilities that existed today, women's social problems have not been solved yet. Issues in patriarchy still have not disappeared resulting in disadvantages to women due to their stigma of certain limitations. A brief example published in Politico.com (*What Are the Biggest Problems Women Face Today?* - POLITICO Magazine, 2019) has raised the issue of patriarchy in the realm of politics as the biggest obstacle women face today regardless of a woman's experience, education, or skills, society's patriarchal character perpetuates the notion that women are less qualified and capable than men in the United States.

Correspondingly, a study conducted by Estrella et al., (2019) has shown that men's attitudes in Philippines towards partners who attempt to balance the households are not welcomed. Their actions show that they resist lending a hand to women's unfinished chores when they leave for work. Women can merely count on their older children to get household chores done when they come home from school than their husbands. In most cases, women negotiate with their husbands but strive to do household chores beyond their agreement line. Those presented issues portray gender inequality mainly in terms of patriarchal ideology.

A patriarchal system, according to Walby, is a component of social institutions and behaviors of men that dominate, control, and harass women. Patriarchy has undeniably established and presented itself as one of the world's most important social construction modes as a type of gender inequality (Klingorová & Havlíček, 2015). As socially constructed, patriarchy has indeed become one of the significant social problems within society.

The patriarchal system itself is constructed, institutionalized, and socialized through institutions involved every day in life as in family, school, community, religion, place work, until state policy. There are two types of patriarchy, according to Walby (2014), that is private and public. Private patriarchy refers to patriarchy that exists within a family. The dominant male rules and oppresses the submissive female. On the other hand, public patriarchy is the kind of patriarchy that exists in the public domain.

The public patriarchy is most commonly associated with the working community, presented by the patriarchal forces that still operate nowadays.

Regarding the fact that women are labeled as inferior, it has thus become an opportunity for such parties to control or seize women's inferiority ideology through the act known as hegemony through television, institution, or even written forms to gain benefits for men. Men enjoy patriarchy as it has benefited them in household chores, salary differences, and the State position. Based on the concept of hegemony, it can be understood that hegemony is the leadership and supremacy of a social class by using ideological influences agreed upon by certain social classes.

In this study, the researcher analyzes *Only Ever Yours*, a dystopian novel dealing with the struggles of young girls surviving in a dominant patriarchal society. The story itself depicted young girls' horrific lives prioritizing the maintenance of such dreadful beauty standards aiming to please men as their number one priority. In this novel, men are depicted as superior, as only boys are born naturally; girls, on the other hand, are developed in laboratories for no other reason than to serve and reproduce. Girls thus are embedded in the ideology of self-dispossession of their bodies by the state. Furthermore, marriage is the ideal highest honor pursued by girls in the novel. Girls, in this case, must compete to achieve this desirable position of being married. They go to special schools to study how to impress men and keep the standard of beauty upheld. Ironically, there is still a possibility of being eliminated or subjected to medical experimentation if they are not chosen to be a bride.

A brief explanation of the novel has shown the theme of patriarchal ideology in the novel. Much associated with ideology, hegemony is a well-known ideological theory that is used to explain political, cultural, and ideological structures that are seen to have the potential to alter society (Faruk, 2015). Gramsci also states that “the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as “domination” and as “intellectual and moral leadership” (Gramsci, 1999, p. 193)

Several studies have been already discussed concerning the novel *Only Ever Yours*. Lundén (2017) analyzes thematic similarities between reproduction and physical exploitation in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and O' Neill's *Only Ever Yours* to unveil a continuation of social criticism in the feminist dystopian genre by employing feminist theory. Meanwhile, Muraveva (2018) intends to question media and

advertising discourses, exemplified by an issue of *Cosmopolitan*, from a critical discourse analysis perspective and in a multidisciplinary and interdiscursive manner by comparing the problems that occurred in the novel *Only Ever Yours* to the issue of *Cosmopolitan*.

On the other hand, several analyses regarding the hegemony of a patriarchal ideology have been carried out by Utami et al., (2018) This research explores numerous types of domination of the patriarchal paradigm in the public domain against women, particularly the female figures in the Hanauzumi novel by Junichi Watanabe. Much in line, Andari et al., (2015) also discuss patriarchal hegemony upon the woman in Tohary's novel entitled *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*.

The previous study of hegemony and patriarchy have been conducted before. As shown above, several studies related to the same literary work have been explored by employing feminist theory and critical discourse analysis. Meanwhile, other studies related to the same topic of hegemony in literary works discuss the patriarchal domination and women's oppression due to the patriarchal culture. While other studies focus on the types of domination in the female character, this present study examines how hegemony is conducted through the help of such a medium. Furthermore, patriarchal findings in the novel strengthen the idea that hegemony and patriarchy do come hand-in-hand. Thus, this study is worth conducting to fill the existing gap of hegemony studies.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Sociology of Literature**

Sociology, in general, can be defined as an objective study of humans and society, including the social processes that exist within it (Wahyudi, 2013). Meanwhile, according to Wolff, the sociology of arts and literature is a formless discipline consisting of some empirical studies and various experiments on theory more generally, each of which only has a similarity in that matter all dealing between art or literature and society (Faruk, 2015).

Williams (Faruk, 2015) then explains that the existence of works of literature is one of the hegemony sites, as it becomes the basis of the social formation that is upheld through hegemony. Hegemony, according to Williams (Faruk, 2015), is a process, not a

form of domination that is passive. However, it is a specific thing that must be kept updated continuously, recreated, maintained, and modified. As one of the hegemony sites, literary works are seen as an integral part of the culture. In this case, the author belongs to organic intellectuals, one of the hegemonic apparatuses (Faruk, 2015)

### **Hegemony**

Hegemony (*hēgemonia*), in Greek, refers to a nation's dominance over another. According to Gramsci, hegemony is when society agrees with the ideology of the ruling class, which leads to people giving up their rights. Hegemony is a relationship of agreement based on political and ideological leadership, rather than a relationship of dominance based on power (Siswati, 2018). Thus, hegemony is the ruling class's victory, which is achieved by a consensual procedure including numerous socio-political forces (Siswati, 2018).

Furthermore, in succeeding hegemony, Gramsci (1999, p. 525) also states that every State is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. In reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end—initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes. More directly, the ideology these forces have generated and which has become part of what Gramsci calls “common sense.” This last term is used by Gramsci to mean the uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become “common” in any given epoch. (Gramsci, 1999, p. 625)

### **Patriarchy**

Patriarchy, according to Walby (2014), is a set of societal structures and practices that men use to oppress, exploit, and subjugate women. As a leading British sociologist, Walby puts her ultimate concern upon the issue of patriarchy. In *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Walby (2014) divides patriarchy into several structures. This patriarchal structure goes on and on by transmitting the tendency of gender inequality practices. According to Walby, the patriarchal structures occur in paid work, in which such

patriarchal relationships exist in the form of separation of women's and men's work positions and salary differences, patriarchal production mode which is in the form of full assignments for women in caring for children and doing household tasks, the patriarchal state which is in the form of the women's absence in the government influential positions and the limited number of women who possess a role in law and politics, patriarchal relations in sexuality which is defined as heterosexuality, both in terms of common origins and internal structures such as double standards, male violence in which it is related to male violence in the form of physical, psychological, and verbal violence and patriarchal culture which is in the form of such 'ideal feminine' demands for women in the family, education, religion, and mass media.

## **METHOD**

This study is literary criticism as it employs a literary approach for criticizing literary works in the novel *Only Ever Yours* by Louise O' Neill. This study deals with the literary sociology of writer, reader, and texts. In the text, sociology examines social issues related to hegemony as Williams (Faruk, 2015) explains that literary works are one of the hegemony sites. This study employs Gramsci's hegemony theory and Walby's theory of patriarchy to analyze the novel's patriarchal structures and elucidate such media in succeeding patriarchal hegemony in the novel.

The data source of the research is the novel *Only Ever Yours*, published by the Quercus Publication in 2015. The data of this research are in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences from the novel *Only Ever Yours*. Meanwhile, the data are analyzed by analyzing the data related to patriarchal hegemony by employing Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy, verifying the findings by relating the data with the analysis and lastly, concluding the analysis.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

#### ***Patriarchy***

As a fundamental principle of injustice between men and women, patriarchy still leaves a significant space in the scope of a community's life. As a result, justice in

working wages, state obligations, and equality in opportunity is still challenging. Various feminist movements have surfaced to overcome the inequality of working wages, state obligations, and unequal opportunities for women to receive such justice. Following this, as one of the leading sociologists, Walby states that patriarchy can be examined through patriarchy's six structures. However, as this novel's story concerns young girls living in dormitories and studying at school, there are no actions related to patriarchal structures that occur in paid employment, patriarchal relations in sexuality, or male violence. Thus, there are three patriarchal structures found in the dystopian novel *Only Ever Yours*: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal state, and patriarchal culture.

### ***Patriarchal Mode of Production***

In this study, a dystopian novel discusses the struggles of young girls surviving in a patriarchal world that has become the researcher's interest. The novel depicted a horrific life of young girls prioritizing maintenance of such dreadful beauty standards aiming to please men as their number one priority. In this novel, men are depicted as superior, as only boys who are born naturally. Girls are bred in laboratories and are embedded in the ideology of the self-dispossession of their bodies. Furthermore, marriage is the ideal highest honor pursued by girls in the novel as they have to compete to achieve this desirable position of being married.

The pace of the eves' preparation to be a companion is known as the 'Ceremony.' At this moment, the eves are asked to polish themselves in terms of physical appearance. Training will be given to see their mastery in handling such challenges. As their purpose in life is to be a companion, the task given is not far related to the qualities of a wife, which is stereotyped as a homemaker as asserted by Walby (2014), that women have committed themselves to the role of homemaker to such an extent that they have no alternative way of gaining a right livelihood. She also further emphasizes that motherhood remains an essential component of the discourse of femininity. Therefore, household chores have become one of the aspects needed to be carried out upon the wife concerning the femininity discourse. Knowingly, a woman has a pivotal role in carrying out such matter as portrayed in the following quote:

“This is what we have wanted since we were in 4th year, learning how to change diapers on our training dolls in Little mama classes.” (p.55)

"Today, eves, you have been set the task of creating red velvet cupcakes. Go to your cooking stations. Please do not forget your aprons. If I see any stains on your clothing, I will be extremely unhappy." (p.154)

The matter of parenting, which should be a joint responsibility, is now solely women's full responsibility. Likewise, cooking and preparing meals are meant to be carried out by women. Accordingly, apart from seeking assistance from their husbands, this exemplar is considered merely to be the wives' responsibility without having to bother the husbands.

As a result, the husband benefits from this convenience, which is consistent with Walby's assertion that state law is largely motivated by economic high rates of unemployment and income development, both of which are tied to patriarchy and capitalist consolidation (Walby, 2014). Thus, a wife performs work for her husband without receiving compensation, as the work is all a result of the marriage. The husband can control the wife's labor because he has the laborer's power while the wife only produces. Correspondingly, Ortner (2014) states that in most cases, patriarchy is inextricably linked to other powerful institutions, such as capitalism.

### ***Patriarchal State***

Patriarchy in household affairs has a significant role where an individual male subjugates a female individual. Even in a collective number, patriarchy is still continuously maintained. In particular, the government has contributed to the success of this social system. This contribution is evidenced as below:

"Once again, it is time to give my Public Address to the eves of the final year. I must impress upon all of you how crucial the coming months are to your future. This is the decisive moment; the moment you have spent the last sixteen years preparing for. It is time for you to make a contribution to the society that has created each of you, whether it be as a companion or a concubine." (p.51)

Eves are meant to meet upon their fate, either becoming a companion or concubine. Correspondingly the two choices are inseparably aimed at the interests of men. First, a companion must give offspring, while concubine is only a momentary gratification free to be met and left. They need to accept it gracefully as it's their very own inevitable fate. In this sense, eves are not meant to choose what they desire to do as



the State has decided it. The State takes their freedom of life under the pretext of the need for real contributions to the society that creates them. Grievously, the eves could not do anything else but accept it.

Indeed, women are already aware of their life goals, solely the two choices mentioned above. To maintain women's integrity as patriarchal beings, the State airs a video to illustrate the origins of women bred in laboratories.

“And then she showed us the video. The infamous “girl Graves,” thousands of unwanted daughters disposed of in an ever-expanding hole, their heads crushing against each other like broken china dolls. Drugstores with shelves upon shelves stacked with gender-specific fertility drugs, as easy to buy as chewing gum. And the body learned. It learned that a female baby was an invader, come to steal her mother’s beauty. A female baby was dangerous.” (p.67)

In this case, the Euro-Zone community implies their interest in a specific gender type, mainly male. Ironically, the female baby has been considered a troublemaker and usurper of her mother's beauty so that her presence is loathsome. This fact is a particular example of such implications for their sensitivity in judging or blaspheming other women for the past sixteen years in the school, to be precise in Comparison studies, which is still very much attached to them until now. In particular, the educational system of such an institution plays an important role in both separating men and women and giving males with greater credentials, as well as in the forms of closure against women's subordination, which are usually more subtle due to the explicit discourse of the institution's meritorious achievement (Walby, 2014)

### ***Patriarchal Culture***

Patriarchal culture is in the form of such 'ideal feminine' demands for women in the family, education, religion, and mass media. According to Walby (2014), patriarchal relations in culture are a structure created from a diverse set of patriarchal practices. In the realm of philosophy, religion, education, and the norms of tradition, women are often a subject that is demeaned, while men are entitled to rule. Culture has a vital role in balancing an ideology that has been implanted in a sphere of society to exaggerate and ensure that males always play the dominating roles while women play the inferior roles.

Walby (2014) further argues that patriarchs once openly proclaimed that women were not welcome in certain spheres of life; in contrast, today, they are more likely to deny that women's barriers exist. This denial indicates a change in patriarchal ideology from the open exclusion of women as 'obviously' different to denying the depth of women's difficulties and denying that women's minor 'underachievement' is due to discrimination. Hence, patriarchal ideology is continuously maintained and justified regardless of the notion used.

In Euro-Zone, women are required to be beautiful. Those women who do not fulfill this requirement are considered hideous. The limit of perfection for Euro-Zone women is for those who can fulfill the criteria or culture of the Euro-Zone community. The Euro-Zone community strongly glorifies women who can withstand emotions without showing any slightest expression on their faces. In other words, immune to pain. Additionally, Euro-Zone's women are also competing to become 'good women.' The scope of 'good women' is included in terms of being obedient to men and maintaining weight proportionally. These can be proven by the following excerpt:

"#1-ranked girls from the last ten years rush onto the screen, one girl quickly replaced by another, and another, always a newer, better version to follow. A foto of the best legs winner, long, perfectly shaped, clad in the highest of high heels. The screen on our desktops splits in two, a foto of the perfect legs to the left, a foto of our legs appearing to our respective screens' right. A voice roars from the ceiling, "Room for improvement." (p.50)

In a quest to become a perfect person, the dialogue above illustrates the idea of possible betterment needed to be cherished by all eyes. In this case, their very own body is open to being compared without their consent. This comparison has become very common as the standard of beauty in Euro-Zone is to have a proportional body shape, neither too fat nor too thin. This awareness is continuously cultivated as a set of institutions function to create women's representation with a patriarchal gaze in various arenas such as religions, education, and the media (Walby, 2014)

### ***Hegemony***

Hegemony is the victory obtained by the ruling class through the consensus mechanism of various socio-political forces. (Siswati, 2018). In a thought-provoking

dystopian novel by Louise O' Neill, the researcher has found one aspect supporting the patriarchal hegemony: hegemony through television. This is elucidated as follows:

### ***Hegemony through Television***

Television has become a sophisticated medium to influence society in the least possible manner of turning it into somewhat despicable. This manner is much in line with Scharrer (2013) who states that individuals of all ages can learn a lot from how men and women, boys and girls, are portrayed in the media; the media can assist shape gender roles perceptions and the actions that result from those perceptions. The media shows the interests of the ruling classes, as shown in the following excerpt:

"The Americas-Zone's Next Top Concubine is playing, newly designated concubines participating in tasks to select the one who will be chosen as the American Father's concubine for a year."(p.84)

A show of competition has expanded its journey to appear on television entitled the Americas-Zone's Next Top Concubine. In this regard, girls who are fated to be concubines strive to be chosen as the American Father's concubine for a year. This broadcast has indeed formed a new prevalent culture within the society of upholding such competition in seeking the best concubine. Concubine, which is a medium of lust, turned out to have a particular spot for the people of the Euro-Zone. Their presence is recognized as a means of pleasure and, without a doubt, is aired and glorified through television.

Such a phenomenon becomes a possible source of inspiration for the audience as it might also trigger the eves and concubines to learn vulgar moves to satisfy the lust of men who are respected in a competition. It is much in line with Hansen et al., (2016) who claimed that gender stereotypes pervade society and are represented in the media. Nonetheless, the media has an impact on how women and men are viewed in their communities. How study findings are published in the popular press has the potential to influence readers' views and attitudes, as well as reinforce stereotypes. Following this, television broadcasts topics related to women which are aired as follows:

"By Sunday afternoon I feel as if I am drowning in boredom. I've seen all the nature shows they are streaming on television and all that's left are reality-show repeats. Wives of the Euro-Zone. Wives of the Americas-Zone. Euro-Wives versus Americas-Wives, Battle to the Death."(p. 91)

The interest in television's content on women's topics is further strengthened by the existence of various programs such as *Wives of the Euro-Zone*, *Wives of the Americas-Zone*, and *Euro-Wives versus Americas-Wives*. This similar pattern of women's content is certainly related to the lifestyle of the Euro-Zone community who are in favor of making women objects that are worth watching.

Additionally, according to Gramsci, the media is a tool employed by the elites to maintain their power, prosperity, and prestige by popularizing philosophy, culture, and morality that benefits them. (Wahid, 2014). Correspondingly, the ruling class not only maintains dominance but also seeks to win the active consent of those ruled (Siswati, 2018) which in this case, is conducted through television.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **Conclusions**

In line with the research questions and objectives, there are three patriarchal structures discovered in the novel which are the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal state, and patriarchal culture. On the other hand, patriarchal hegemony is portrayed through television.

The patriarchal mode of production is depicted in babysitting and cooking lessons in the school for the eves. Meanwhile, the portrayal of the patriarchal state is shown in terms of women's limited life choices and women's prohibition of expressing opinions. On the other hand, patriarchal culture can be seen as women in Euro-Zone must withstand emotions and compete to become 'good women'.

Furthermore, in an attempt to instill patriarchal hegemony upon the Euro-Zone society, the medium of television is operated to succeed the agenda of patriarchal hegemony. It is depicted as the television broadcasts such sensitive content related to women as in the concubine competitions and variety shows of wives in the television shows.

### **Suggestions**

The researcher would like to suggest the future researcher attempt an analysis of *Only Ever Yours* from another perspective. There are still many topics that could be analyzed and discussed deeply, such as Michel Foucault's power-relation notion. The

power-relation concept proposed by Foucault serves as a helpful guide in exploring power relations in a literary work. This research indeed has many weaknesses. Therefore, critics and suggestions are welcome by the researcher.

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