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## Patriarchal Picture in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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### Abstract

Patriarchy refers to the domination of men over women in all kinds of field. Women have no rights to do what men can do. There are a lot of studies about patriarchy, most of which are about man's power towards woman with the result of woman's struggle to get equality with the man that is called feminism. This study challenges the previous studies above that study on patriarchy does not always get the responses of feminism. In Oscar Wilde's *the Picture of Dorian Gray*, the researcher studies about patriarchal picture. How the characters Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray reveal their patriarchal words towards women is discussed in this study. Using close reading as a method, this study shows the result that the two men, Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray reveal words about women that are patriarchal: symbolizing women, oppressing women's voices, and manipulating as well as abusing women's emotion that the researcher suggests their words can put women in degradation as well as humiliation that feminist should fight for. Besides, the impacts on women, that is the loss of women's dignity, are also the finding of the study.

**Key words:** patriarchy, symbolizing women, oppressing women's voices, manipulating women's emotion

## INTRODUCTION

Pierik (2022) in *Patriarchal power as a conceptual tool for gender history* and Sultana (2011) in *Patriarchy and women's subordination: A theoretical analysis* have respectively come up with the idea of patriarchy. The former, deriving from Greek's term, refers to father with the meaning of supremacy, family connection as well as hierarchy in society. Further, patriarchy refers to man as man is regarded as destiny to be responsible for his family's requirements and safety of their body, emotion as well as spirit. Besides, man's domination goes beyond women in family's matters such as politics, education, economic, social and legal involvement. The latter refers to the father's instruction or the 'patriarch.'

The domination of man towards woman that is called patriarchy has been noticeable since in the earlier years of God sending His messengers; The patriarchal stories in the religious teaching that God's verdict not to be apart from mankind: God makes the world and mankind, mankind in rebellion then God chooses Abraham, with charitable consequences, both for the Selected People of his family and race and all humanity (Letellier, 2015).

Patriarchal system is defined as traditional man power over women as well as their children in the family life (Agha, 2021). Speaking of religion teaching (Talmud, Bible, and Qur'an), patriarchy refers to man power over women, children as well as other dependents that has given information of the human relation nature as well as the dialogs about these relations (Cuttica, 2016).

From the definitions above it can be said that Patriarchy means things that are quite different from women's activities (Martin, 2020) which then puts women and men in binary opposites (Barlas, 2019). Patriarchal system, further, gives effects to the life of women: the women's life is not free (Budin, 2021), women are put in a subordinate position of dependency and obedience in their married life (Dolan, 2022), and Women feel uncomfortable (Beatty, 2023).

Patriarchal system can be seen either in real life or in literary works. One of the literary works dealing with patriarchal system is Oscar Wilde's *the picture of Dorian Gray*. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* then portrays two characters, Dorian Gray and Lord Henry Wotton, both of whom marginalize women in the novel that are the picture of patriarchal society in which Oscar Wilder lives. The researcher is interested in analyzing patriarchy because the way Dorian Gray and Lord Henry put women below men such as women as symbol, their oppressed voices, and manipulation as well as abuse of their

emotion leads the researcher into considerable awareness that women are worthy of equality as man has. In some ways women can be in the position of men as seen today: to be, in economy point of view, a business woman and in social and politics, to be a President. Then, symbolizing women, oppressing women's voices, and manipulating as well as abusing women's emotion are discussed in this study.

Recently, there has been researchers dealing with patriarchy in their articles; starting with Nirwinastu (2021), in her article *Oppression towards Women as Depicted in Marge Piercy's Selected Poems*, she analyzes how women are oppressed by the patriarchal society. Using feminism, the study finds that Women are taught to trust the patriarchal society's voice as well as to act as what the patriarchal society needs.

In the following year, exactly in 2022, Sampe in her article *Rejection against the Patriarchal Society in Stephen Chbosky and Evan Spiliotopoulos Beauty and The Beast*, analyzes the patriarchal society. Using liberal feminism, the study finds that women are controlled and dominated by men. Besides, women are not happy of being persons. They are under men's patrimony.

Feminism seems to be interesting theory applied in patriarchy. Pillado (2023) in his article *Patriarchy and Women's Struggle in Selected Boom and Post-Boom Novels* analyzes females' position against the picture of patriarchy uncovering women denigration. Using feminism of Simone de Beauvoir's 'second sex' concepts, the study finds that the women characters in the boom novels get stereotyped as well as secondary characters, whilst, in the post-boom fruitfully define themselves and are authorized to discard the patriarchal picture of women.

Following Pillado in year 2023, Habibullah and Ghimire as well as Jwai'ed discuss patriarchal power in their article, respectively. Habibullah, et. all. (2023), in their article *the Patriarchal Power for Traditional Chinese Women in Pearl S. Buck's the Good Earth*, analyzes the Chinese communal customs governing the lives of women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and illuminate the conventional tradition's consequence on the role of womanly characters. Using the sociological and psychological approaches, the study finds that women are socially low in their status in old China.

Ghimire (2023) in the article *Women as Subalterns: An Analysis of Khaled Hosseini's Novel The Kite Runner*, analyzes how patriarchal ideology became an essential factor of women's marginalization by limiting their speeches, liberty, as well as social movement. Using subaltern theories by Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,

the study finds that mostly, the female characters are mistreated and disregarded in society due to their socio-cultural stereotypes and national and international involvement in their lives.

Jwai'ed (2023) in his article *Women's Sacrifice in the Works of Hawthorne and Heywood: A Comparative Study*, analyzes patriarchy and female sacrifice. Using close reading approach, this study finds that the patriarchy gives influences to females' manners. Again, feminism theory applied in patriarchal study appears in the earlier year of 2024 by Alkhatib, in his article *Women Victimization in Fadia Faqir's Pillars of Salt* that analyzes patriarchal power in Arab world. Using feminism, the study finds that Arabian women are marginalized and silenced.

From the previous studies above, it is clear that the researcher's study of patriarchal picture in the picture of Dorian Gray has a vivid gap; Nirwinastu, Sampe, Pillado, and Alkhatib using feminism, the women get the result of the patriarchy by men that is obedience to men, being unhappy, and being marginalized. Habibullah, Ghimire, and Jwai'ed using sociological and psychological approaches, subaltern theories, and close reading approach, respectively, likewise, the women get result of the patriarchy that is low, mistreated, and mannerly influenced. The researcher's study is different from the mentioned previous studies. Though in some way, there is a similarity in approach of close reading, however, the analysis is quite different. In the previous studies above, the women get the result of the patriarchy by men, whilst, the researcher's analysis only show the patriarchal picture of the men without the women's responses. It is because the women in the novel are discriminated without their response, therefore, it becomes the gap of the previous studies in spite of the fact that it gives more understanding what and how patriarchy is described. Thus, though the title shows only the patriarchal picture, however, to get the deep result of the study, the researcher also discusses the impacts of patriarchy on women's characters. Thus, this study has the novelty.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Approach**

As this study is a literary study, therefore, the instrument is the researcher himself. Further. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. Hossein Nassaji (2015) in *Qualitative and descriptive research: Data type versus data analysis. Language Teaching Research* defines a qualitative descriptive method to determine the complication as well as to observe in what way the research occurs and what factors influence it. It further offers deep observation in comprehending the researches which are not yet

understandable, whilst, lots of things worthy of thorough exploration are still there. Likewise, it is a flawless technique for the analysis of the social aspect of research (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). The aim of this method is to picture patriarchy with its impacts on women in Oscar Wilde's *the Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Besides, the researcher uses descriptive and dramatic methods in analyzing the novel through describing the characters by which the researcher means to perform the character primarily by describing, discussing and reporting the character's dialog and movements (Little, 1966). Accordingly, by description, discussion and report of the character's dialog and movements, the researcher performs and examines the patriarchal attitude of the men. Further, to get clearly analyzed data, the researcher refers to close reading to be a mainly method for the analysis of the patriarchal picture in Oscar Wilde's *the Picture of Dorian Gray*. Close reading is a way of the analysis of the literature focusing on the precise details of a passage or text to recognize deeper meaning. The meaning resulting from the close reading is the reader's understanding of the passage or text. A close reading is never the first reading of a text. Before focusing on the details of a text or passage, it is vital to understand the text as a whole (Pickering, 2019). Thus, the researcher thinks it sufficient to use close reading as the reader merely focuses on the picture of the patriarchy in the mentioned novel.

### **Kind of Research**

Since it is a literary research, the research then is in the form of description, speech, and action of the main character's picture of patriarchal from Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

### **Data Collection Technique**

There is a way of collecting the data: interview, observation, document, and survey the data (Huberman & Miles, 1984). Since this study is a literary study, therefore, observation, document, and survey the data are worth applying here. By observation, the researcher means to read the whole novel first and find the problem and after that the researcher gets the related theory. By document, the researcher means to classify the data which belong to patriarchal words: symbolizing women, oppressing women's voices, and manipulating as well as abusing women's emotion and to the impacts on women: the loss of dignity. By survey the data, the researcher means to analyze the classified data

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis refers to the research question and the explanation of the research question (Huberman & Miles 1984) that is how symbolizing women, oppressing women's voices, and manipulating, abusing women's emotion spoken by the men as well as the impact of patriarchy on women in Oscar Wilder's *the Picture of Dorian Gray* are discussed here. Then, through close reading theory, the researcher describes, discusses as well as reports the character's conversation and actions related to the patriarchal picture aforesaid.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Patriarchal Picture**

The researcher finds patriarchal picture in three parts as follows: symbolizing women, oppressing women's voices, and manipulating as well as abusing women's emotion, all of which are revealed through the patriarchal words of Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray, therefore, in discussion of the patriarchal picture, the researcher refers to their attitude towards women's physical performances. The discussion, then, is quite different from the previous studies above that involve directly the women as the objects of the patriarchal power with the result of the women's life referring to the women's sorrowful life: total obedience to men, being unhappy, being marginalized, mistreated, and low. Whilst, this discussion refers to how men's words are supposed to be patriarchal by the definition of patriarchy above without involving the effects of the words to the women. Consequently, feminism theory is excluded here because as mentioned above, the women give no responses of what man does towards them. Instead, close reading is worth an application with the different result which is the novelty of this study.

Further, the characters revealing words of patriarchy refer to Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray. As explained above that the women are not involved in responding the patriarchal attitude from the two persons, therefore, feminist responses are excluded here. This condition seems to be the first discussion found since patriarchal discussion is closely related to the feminism which challenges the researcher to explore the novelty of this study. Indeed, it is not easy to explain the patriarchal picture of the two mentioned men, however, through close reading approach, the researcher comes to the decision that what the two men utter about women are patriarchal attitude.

First of all, Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray merely look at women as symbols in that the most valuable spirit within women is regardless. They are simply creatures of physical performances referring to their beauty as well as sexual attraction. "Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it

charmingly” (Wilde, 2007) are the words uttered by Lord Henry Wotton towards Dorian Gray in the conversation about women. The physic of women play a very important role to attract man’s eyes for the hedonistic life of a man. This is a sort of symbol. That women’s physical appearance beautifies man’s life is quite vivid in the quotation. Their existence is merely for sex not more than that. Further, this speech act indicates that Lord Henry Wotton feels more superior than women regardless their moral and spiritual concerns in other words the researcher says that Lord Henry Wotton shows his patriarchy when talking about women. Likewise, ‘decorative sex,’ is sort of property that is possessed by a person, in this case, a man. The researcher would like to refer to the relation of patriarchy and private property with the meaning of sex that the patriarchal family history is functioned as the critical situation in striking reproductive sexual identity (Coward, 1983). Thus, women are property of men viewed from the sexual point of view. When a women is a property, it means that she cannot do anything own her own will. Everything she does must be for the convenience of her owner, a man.

Besides, Lord Henry Wotton confirms his symbolizing women above as sex desire through the following quotation, "The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it" (Wilde, 2007). Though, physically, woman is a little bit different from man, however, moral and spiritual attachment from God are the same in that both man and woman cannot alter their physical appearance unless they are cursed by all people, on one hand, they can manage their moral and spiritual attachment regardless their gender, on the other hand. It has been proved that moral and spiritual attachment play very important roles in raising a dignity of a person. Again, when a man judges a woman from her physic only it means that he shows patriarchy to her because men have strongly shaped physic through which men are in power of women physically as well as sexually. Thus, in the eye of Lord Henry Wotton, the patriarchal picture towards women are symbolized as sex drive for men which leads to the women’s degradation in moral and spiritual quality.

Another patriarchy is from Dorian Gray who takes a look at a woman as art and beauty. "She is all the great heroines of the world in one" (Wilde, 2007) are words about his wife, Sybil Vane, as sort of physical compliment of beauty. Likewise, Dorian Gray’s words devaluate women’s existence from moral and spiritual creatures. Through such words, he may say that women are nothing without their beauty which can be seen physically instead of morally as well spiritually, “A woman is a thing to be loved, not understood" (Wilde, 2007). The word love and understand here are different lexically;

love refers to something physically noticeable, whilst, understand refers to invisible. Thus, like Lord Henry Wotton above, Dorian Gray merely takes a look at a woman as symbol of art and aesthetic regardless their moral and spiritual value, therefore, he shows his patriarchal power to women. Again, through close reading approach, the researcher finds that Dorian Gray's mind is closely connected to sex and property. Though sex is excluded here, however, women are still the object of the patriarchal power of men since art and aesthetic are regarded as property belonging, too.

Second of all, patriarchy is shown through oppressing women's voice by Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray. Lord Henry Wotton regards women are not intellectually smart, therefore, their voices are ignored. He always uses insulting words when he talks about women, "I adore simple pleasures. They are the last refuge of the complex.... But I like women. They are so artistic" (Wilde, 2007). Women are liked as they are physically beautiful not intellectually. In other words, Lord Henry Wotton means to say that women are useful when they give sexual drive that can be confirmed when he asks Dorian Gray about his love of his wife, Sibyl Vane, "*You really love her?...* Women are never to be entirely trusted, not the best of them" (Wilde, 2007), indicating that women's voices are silenced. Women are the objects of sexual drive instead of their moral and spiritual values revealing great ideas that sometimes better than men's. Silencing women's voices is made clear by the statement of Lord Henry Wotton when having conversation with Dorian Gray.

"Do you think she will consent?" said the lad.

"My dear fellow, I don't know. Women are not always allowed to have a choice, Dorian" (Wilde, 2007).

In this conversation, Lord Henry discharges the intervention as well as independence of women by denoting that they do not always get the liberty for the choices. It turns out that the social hopes and limits burden women, quieting their voices and sinking them to inactive participants in their own lives. 'He flung himself down on the sofa and turned away his face. "You have killed my love," he muttered' (Wilde, 2007). Through close reading approach, the researcher finds that through their beauty, women are silenced in other words that they are functioned merely for men's sexual needs that also degrades women moral and spiritual quality.

Whilst, Dorian Gray's patriarchy of silencing women is shown in the reaction of Sybil Vane's unacceptable presentation on the stage. This expression of his harsh manner disappointment is the effective way of Dorian's silencing Sybil, in spite of the fact that

Dorian demeans her capabilities as well as reduces her to be a low and unwise person. Other patriarchal manner to his wife is that Dorian's words make Sybil Vane unhappy as well as humiliated. His wife feels unhappy and humiliated as Dorian does not appreciate what his wife has achieved that she has been on the stage for her performance. In family matters, this kind of condition is not worth happening unless one member of the family feels more superior to the other. Further, such condition is the effect of the society that puts man in higher position in any field of life than women. Women seem to have limitation in their activity though their activity can increase their family pride and economy. "Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly" (Wilde, 2007). This kind of patriarchy shown by Dorian Gray reflects the condition of women in the society at that time. Sex is a natural human need, however, when somebody is needed only for sex drive, then, it is not an appreciation that she gets. It is a humiliation. Again, what makes people be in their high level of reward is their moral and spiritual attitude. Like Lord Henry Wotton, Dorian Gray's picture of patriarchy describes women as 'decorative sex' through which they have no choices. If they have no choices for their interest it means that they are kept silenced. This is the patriarchal effects of men's words.

Third of all, patriarchy is found in the form of manipulating as well as abusing women's emotion. Dorian Gray as well as Lord Henry Wotton abuse and manipulate women's emotion through their remark decreasing women's moral and spiritual values. When his wife, Sybil Vane fails in her performance on the stage, as a husband, Dorian Gray, does not encourage her wife's emotion. He decreases it, instead. "You have killed my love. Why did you spoil the romance of my life? Why have you sent [Sybil Vane] to the worst death a woman can die?" (Wilde, 2007). It seems that the quotation reflects the society at that time that put women lower than men that what they do has no appreciation from men (husbands), however, when they fail to do something in the eye of men, they are to blame. 'Why did you spoil the romance of my life?' represents the emotional pain goes to man (Dorian Gray), whilst, his wife is the cause of it. It is kind of manipulation of women's emotion in that women's romance becomes regardless, only men's is regardful. Indeed, this kind of women's emotional manipulation is a patriarchal power of men since women's emotion is not so strong as men, therefore, when a man uses his strength to manipulate a woman's emotion, it is called a patriarchy related to the definition of patriarchy above that is a man power taking control of a woman.

Whilst, Lord Henry Wotton, abuses and manipulates women's emotion through his statement, "Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals" (Wilde, 2007). This statement abuses women's spiritual and moral by the fact that all human, man or woman, are morally and spiritually created creature. Therefore, moral triumph should have been achieved by women, too. In other words, the researcher dares say that Lord Henry Wotton does not admit the important roles of women in bringing up children that become the pillars of the nations. Through women's touch, children grow up well. When they are well-brought up, nation becomes strong. Likewise, the statement of Lord Henry Wotton is the influence of the society that disgraces women.

Further, to Lord Henry Wotton, with his statement above, women are inferior morally as well as intellectually. It is truly decreasing women's dignity as human being, man or woman, intellectually and morally created. So by his statement that women is the representation of the triumph of matter over mind, he means to ignore the intellectual and moral value of women. Thus, women are objects to be dominated by man and this kind of domination damages women's existence. Thus is a patriarchy.

Another example of patriarchal attitude by Lord Henry Wotton is his statement, "You know I don't believe in romance... I only believe in realities" (Wilde, 2007) reflecting an indifferent approach towards romantic feelings and emotional connection. This statement is quite an ignorance of women's romance and feeling through which the connection of man and women is maintained. Besides, this statement decreases women's role in balancing the society that women's life without romance and feeling will lead the family life in chaos. The last example of Lord Henry Wotton's patriarchal attitude is his statement that "Women are never disarmed by compliments. Men always are.." (Wilde, 2007) ignoring women's feeling that women are like robots that are stirred by remote control. The effects of this patriarchal attitude is that women are morally down because their intellectual and emotional competence are put aside by man.

All in all, women are marginalized in that they have no chances of dealing with man's business. They exist only from physical point of view from the eyes of man's interest. This kind of judgement by man refers to patriarchy since it ignores women's role. Thus, this study has a novelty since patriarchal behavior are only seen in the man's attitude in words about women.

### **The Impact of Patriarchy on Woman's Characters**

The researcher finds that the only impact refers to the woman's loss of dignity. It has been clearly discussed above that through the conversation of women by Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray, women are underestimated or in other words, women are objects of ridicule. "Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly" (Wilde, 2007). The words from Lord Henry Wotton is an indication that, in the eye of man, women are nothing but for sexual drive satisfaction, the reflection of the society at that times that women play no social roles except for their roles in their inner family that is to serve their husbands. It is quite different from women nowadays that though in some areas women are regarded in one eye, however, in other areas, the roles of women are significantly seen that some of them rule a state and play roles in social and political issues.

Also the words from Dorian Gray that discredits women, "She is all the great heroines of the world in one" (Wilde, 2007). Though the words are about the beauty of his wife, Sybil Vane, yet, it reflects the loss of dignity of women at that times. The women turn out not to have intellectual values in the eye of men. Their values are viewed from their physical beauty, instead. Again, like Lord Henry Wotton's words above, these words indicate that women play no roles in any field in the society at that times that is quite different from what can be seen today that women play important roles in education, medical, social, and political issues. Thus, the two examples of patriarchy shown by Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray are the proofs of women's loss of dignity.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are three things the researcher would like to say in this conclusion. Firstly, it is not easy to discuss patriarchal picture since there are lots of studies on patriarchal power. However, through close reading method, the researcher dares say that patriarchal picture comes to its peak in this study leading to its novelty. Secondly, the researcher comes to the conclusion that what Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray talk above refer to patriarchal manner as their words tend to humiliate as well as marginalize women though there are no responses from the women as what the feminism theory works with. Consequently, the emptiness of the women's responses is a proof of the novelty of this study since the previous studies concentrates not only on the men's patriarchal power but also on the women's feminist act. Thirdly, the patriarchy above leads the women to lose their dignity.

In a nutshell, the researcher hopes so much that this study gets theoretical and practical impacts. The former refers to the attraction from other researchers in that the other researchers conduct studies on the same novel with different theory/approach or with the same theory/approach on different novel. Therefore, the study on literature will develop significantly. The latter refers to the contribution of the study to the development of the study of literature.

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